

Reading Borough Council - Policy Committee 18th May 2020

Executive Summary

CADRA **supports** the introduction of temporary one-way streets in the western part Gosbrook Road and in Westfield Road.

CADRA **does not support** the introduction of temporary contra-flow cycle lanes the western part Gosbrook Road and in Westfield Road.

CADRA **strongly objects** to making the western part Gosbrook Road and Westfield Road one-way arrangement permanent when the Covid 19 emergency has passed.

CADRA **supports** the temporary introduction of with-flow cycle lanes at Reading Bridge

CADRA **strongly objects** to making the with-flow cycle lanes at Reading Bridge permanent when the Covid 19 emergency has passed.

1 Background

1.1 Reading Borough Council (RBC) will be considering proposals at the Policy Committee meeting on Monday (May 18th) to re-allocate road space in parts of Reading to make walking and cycling easier and in response to the Covid 19 pandemic. If agreed, a number of schemes will be introduced at pace over the coming weeks. They are:

- *Gosbrook Road and Westfield Road: Due to narrowness of pavements, make Gosbrook Road (Westfield Road to Prospect Street) one way and Westfield Road one way (southbound) from Henley Road junction to Gosbrook Road, to increase capacity for walking and cycling. Target of approx June 22nd for introduction. Potential for permanent arrangement with consultation.*
- *Sidmouth Street: One way (northbound) for all traffic and introduce a new contra-flow cycle lane in the current southbound lane to increase space for pedestrians and cycle lanes. This will improve links to the Royal Berkshire Hospital and existing cycle facilities on London Road. Target of approx June 29th for introduction. Potential for permanent arrangement with consultation.*
- *Reading Bridge: Remove inbound lane and existing hatching to create both northbound and southbound cycle lanes. Target for introduction in coming weeks. Possible permanent arrangement.*

2 Comments

2.1 Currently, traffic flow levels in Caversham are particularly low due to the Covid 19 pandemic lockdown and conditions for cyclists are significantly better than those normally experienced. The low traffic flows have allowed some drivers to travel at inappropriate speeds that are similar to those occurring during normal off-peak periods. Higher motor vehicle speeds can be hazardous for cyclists.

2.2 Social distancing makes it difficult for approaching pedestrians to maintain the required two metres separation on narrow footways. Though not ideal, the exceptionally low general

traffic flows do allow pedestrians to step into the road to pass others. This behaviour has been observed in Caversham.

- 2.3 One-way streets with contra-flow cycle lanes can be particularly hazardous for pedestrians when there is no physical separation between footways and the contra flow-cycle lane (eg kerbed up-stands or safety barrier). When crossing roads pedestrians tend look in the direction of motorised traffic and can be struck by contra-flow cyclists travelling, almost silently, at speed.
- 2.4 One-way streets are being abolished throughout the country as it has been found that they cause long diversion routes, speeding traffic and increased severance. Greater vehicle mileages can also increase fuel consumption and reduce air quality. One-way streets can, sometimes, simplify junction designs but the disadvantage of increased flows on diversion routes usually outweighs this advantage.
- 2.5 New one-way streets should only be introduced as a last resort and when there are no other safe alternatives.
- 2.6 These comments are focussed on Caversham but may also be appropriate for other parts of Reading such as Sidmouth Street.

3 Proposal Gosbrook Road and Westfield Road

- 3.1 **Gosbrook Road** proposed one-way (westbound) from Westfield Road to Prospect Street.
- 3.2 This would allow footway widening to aid social distancing but **must not** include a contra-flow cycle arrangement to ensure safe conditions for pedestrians. We suggest that some traffic calming is introduced (eg curved chicanes) to ensure that vehicular speeds are controlled to a maximum of 20mph.
- 3.3 Under **no circumstances** should the temporary one-way arrangement be used as a precedent to justify making the arrangement permanent when traffic flows return to normal following the pandemic. A permanent one-way Gosbrook Road would have all of the disadvantages of one-way streets and no advantages.
- 3.4 **Westfield Road** would be made one-way (southbound) from Henley Road junction to Gosbrook Road.
- 3.5 This road is more challenging as it usually has parked cars on the west side of the road and, therefore, is effectively narrower. The one-way direction would be down hill and this always encourages speeding by all vehicles. Parking also occurs on the eastern side of the road during off-peak periods. Kerbside parking is important for Westfield Road residents as most houses are terraced with no off-street parking. During lockdown cars move less frequently.
- 3.6 Footway widening on the east side of the road could to aid social distancing to be achieved but, again, **must not** include a contra-flow cycle arrangement to ensure safe conditions for cyclists who would have to travel much closer to parked vehicles. We suggest that some traffic calming is introduced (eg curved chicanes) to control vehicular speeds to a maximum of 20mph.

- 3.7 Under **no circumstances** should the temporary one-way arrangement be used as a precedent to justify making the arrangement permanent when traffic flows return to normal following the pandemic. A permanent one-way Westwood Road would have all of the disadvantages of one-way streets and no advantages.
- 3.8 **Prospect Street** – If temporary one-ways are installed in Gosbrook Road and Westfield Road traffic flows are likely to increase but not to pre-pandemic levels.
- 3.9 Under normal traffic flows permanent one-ways in Gosbrook Road and Westfield Road would increase congestion and further reduce air quality in Prospect Street.
- 3.10 **Other impacts** – people travelling towards the east side of Caversham and Reading Bridge would have their journeys extended and would all have to travel southbound in Westfield Road. Again this might not be a problem during low pandemic traffic flows but would be a serious issue when flows return to normal. Any small advantages for the Henley Road junction would be eroded by the higher right-turn flow from Prospect Street into Westfield Road. It is possible that flows over Caversham Bridge would increase as drivers avoid the detour to Reading Bridge.

4 Proposal Reading Bridge

- 4.1 During the pandemic removal of the central traffic lane and approach hatched centre markings at Reading Bridge to install two with-flow cycle lanes would assist cyclists.
- 4.2 Under normal conditions it is likely that removal of the traffic lane would create significant additional congestion that would force even greater use of Caversham Bridge and Caversham centre.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The exceptional circumstances caused by the Covid 19 pandemic require an exceptional response.
- 5.2 Social distancing is difficult to achieve on streets with narrow footways and, therefore, CADRA **supports** the introduction of temporary one-way streets in the western part Gosbrook Road and in Westfield Road. CADRA **does not support** the introduction of temporary contra-flow cycle lanes in either of the two roads due to additional hazards for pedestrians who are trying to obey social distancing guidelines.
- 5.3 CADRA **strongly objects** to making the western part Gosbrook Road and Westfield Road one-way arrangement permanent when the Covid 19 emergency has passed.
- 5.4 Similarly, CADRA **supports** the temporary introduction of with-flow cycle lanes at Reading Bridge but **strongly objects** to making the arrangement permanent when the Covid 19 emergency has passed.
- 5.5 CADRA would welcome a new dialogue with the Council on medium and longer term improvements to Caversham centre and cross river connectivity.