

Brighton and Hove City Council Urgent Response Transport Action Plan and policy framework

Draft Action Plan

1. Background

The coronavirus (Covid-19) public health crisis has had a significant impact upon the lives and health of people in the city, as well as significant economic consequences. It has also resulted in cleaner air and quieter streets and an increase in residents cycling and walking.

As the city begins to see more people go back to work, there is need for residents to carry on cycling and active travel. With public transport capacity reduced, the city could experience significant congestion unless an increase in alternative sustainable options including cycling is facilitated.

The next phase of the public health crisis also involves a need for physical distancing. This means that pedestrians will need more space and over time restaurants and cafes may also need more space to be able offer a service outside their premises.

As a result of these changes to how people are traveling and using space, towns and cities in the UK and around the world are making or proposing radical changes to their highway networks to accommodate active travel. Re-allocating road space for active travel will not only help the city to respond to the next phase of the pandemic but will also promote healthy and active living to help the city become more resilient for the future.

On 9th May 2020, government issued statutory guidance *Traffic Management Act 2004: network management in response to COVID-19*. The guidance refers to a once in a generation opportunity to deliver a lasting transformative change in how we make short journeys in our towns and cities.

In advance of this guidance being issued, the City Transport service has taken some immediate steps to ensure the continued delivery of vital services, support vulnerable people and keep the city moving, including:

- Introducing 24hr concessionary bus travel for disabled and older people to support them in accessing shops earlier in the day to buy essential items
- Automatic renewal of concessionary travel pass holders to ensure continued provision during the pandemic
- Prioritising parking enforcement on unauthorised disabled bay parking and dangerous obstructions to support disabled road users.
- Closing Madeira Drive to provide more outdoor space for exercise during lockdown and to reduce the safety risk to people walking and cycling
- Providing free parking for social carer workers and NHS staff in on-street parking bays and Council-owned car parks to ensure key workers can continue to provide essential care to the most vulnerable during the crisis
- Automatic renewal of Blue badges and completion of eligibility assessments for new applicants by phone, instead of face-to requests

Brighton and Hove City Council Urgent Response Transport Action Plan and policy framework

- Making the Bike Share scheme available for free to NHS staff and council-contracted care staff during the pandemic, to support the continued care of vulnerable people in the city
- Ensuring important larger-scale redevelopment work in the city can continue with staff working on site taking precautions to protect themselves and the public in line with government guidance.
- Ensuring all necessary highway inspections are taking place and essential works and repairs are completed in a timely way by adjusting working practices to maintain social distancing and new processes that limit the amount of contact staff have with one another.

Many ad hoc requests for further measures are being received, particularly related to cycling and walking. The seafront in particular is the focus of the concerns being expressed by the public. This has only increased the need to act quickly.

2. Key challenges for Transport Network Management

The pandemic has transformed the context in which transport across the city is operating and has highlighted some key challenges:

- The need to impose physical distancing measures has highlighted some of the inadequacies inherent in the way space is allocated on the public highway and in public spaces generally.
- A significant reduction in public transport services, at a time when it is vital for key workers to access workplaces safely, has highlighted the currently lack of high-quality routes for cycling for use as an alternative mode which allows social distancing.
- Massively reduced levels of motor traffic has encouraged many people to turn to walking and cycling, but issues remain with road danger as speed has increased on many roads
- Local businesses are struggling to survive and will need to find new ways to reach their customers
- Vulnerable people are unable to leave their homes and many are now relying on the council to provide them with essential supplies.

Whilst there may be a desire to return to the status quo, pre-Covid-19, this is not likely to be possible for transport and environmental objectives. When planning a transport response to the current situation a key consideration should be avoiding a return to pre-existing motor traffic levels. During the lockdown vehicle movements have been 60% lower than usual, although there is beginning to be an increase as the lockdown continues and demand for parking is expected to rise considerably as the measures are eased.

Clearly, with a focus on social distancing, there is a risk that the good work undertaken in the city to encourage the use of public transport over cars could be undone. To manage this there will be a need for traffic reallocation, together with measures that further promote and enable sustainable forms of travel.

Brighton and Hove City Council Urgent Response Transport Action Plan and policy framework

3. Key principles

In context of Covid-19, key principles for the Transport response are identified as follows:

A. Support vulnerable people and promote Health and Well being

More than 3000 people in the city have either been identified by their GPs as being clinically extremely vulnerable (or shielded) or have requested additional support from the government. Working with the local NHS and key partners we are reaching out to all these residents to ask what help they need through our community advice and support hub.

Any changes to the kerbside, including the reallocation of road space or parking suspensions, will need to consider vehicle access for vulnerable households. Changes will also seek to support delivering the Brighton & Hove Health and Wellbeing Strategy which includes the following commitments

- More people will travel actively, and walking and cycling will be prioritised, benefitting physical and mental health
- Air quality will be improved

B. Enable compliance with government guidance

'Lockdown' and social / physical distancing are the main tools currently available to reduce virus transmission. The need for distancing is likely continue well into the recovery period or until such time as other tools become available.

C. Enable essential journeys to be made safely

Key workers, including those providing health and social care, still need to travel during the lockdown period. As restrictions ease, wider groups are likely to be added to the current list and trip making will increase. Journeys both on public transport and by road need to be managed to ensure safety and to maintain low levels of private motor vehicle traffic. While in the short term parking is being offered to keyworkers (both on-street and in car parks), this will need to be reviewed in light of any future ease of lockdown restrictions and the degree to which this will need to be amended.

D. Support a sustainable local economy and transition to a 2030 Carbon Neutral City

As restrictions ease and businesses reopen those that rely on footfall and face to face customer contact, e.g. markets, and more compact shopping areas, e.g. the Lanes, may find conditions particularly difficult. New options for linking businesses and their customers may need to be explored.

The measures will also aim to support the city's commitment to transition to become a carbon neutral city by 2030.

Brighton and Hove City Council Urgent Response Transport Action Plan and policy framework

E. Plan for now, near and longer term

There are urgent actions that need to be taken, principally to satisfy B and C above – protecting public health by enabling physical distancing and reducing road danger. Beyond this we need to consider how to manage the transport network as restrictions are eased and eventually lifted and then through the recovery period. We therefore need a phased approach to our response.

F. Consistency and transparency

Any measures, particularly changes to the highway, must be carefully considered and sit within the existing policy and legislative framework, including our approach to road danger reduction and the relation of this to the Covid-19 public health context. The Council's actions must be clear and transparent to stakeholders.

4. Government's lockdown exit strategy

Before the government is prepared to lift the lockdown measures they have stated that five tests will need to be met:

- i. Evidence that the NHS has adequate capacity.
- ii. A sustained and consistent fall in the daily death rate from coronavirus.
- iii. Evidence that the rate of infection is decreasing to manageable levels.
- iv. Testing capacity and PPE supply is available and able to meet future demand.
- v. Confidence that any adjustments will not risk a second peak of infections.

The Government has and will continue to preparing to announce its lockdown exit strategy to restart the economy whilst keeping the spread of the virus in check. The recent announcement on the 10th May by the Prime Minister indicated that construction and those that cannot work from home can return to work. While a clear message was to avoid Public Transport it has to be acknowledged that it has a major part in moving people around the city and the Action Plan does include measures for enhancing Public Transport and needs to take into account the possible effect that any changes might make on the Public Transport network. Further announcements will be made as the lockdown is gradually relaxed and the Action Plan adapted as necessary.

The guidelines will continue to address:

- The continued need for social distancing until a vaccine has been developed.
- Wearing of personal protective equipment and adherence to enhanced cleaning and hygiene protocols where social distancing is not possible.
- Plans to avoid overcrowding on public transport.
- Constraints on indoor work environments and the need for people to continue working from home.

The Secretary of State for Transport has also issued new guidance "The Traffic Management Act 2004: network management in response to COVID – 19" This guidance will support the action plan.

Brighton and Hove City Council Urgent Response Transport Action Plan and policy framework

5. Legal considerations

Any changes to the highway have to conform to the legislation that is available. The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 provides the powers for Highway Authorities to close roads, make one ways and other changes. Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) are permanent, experimental or temporary; each type has specific processes that have to be followed in relation to consultation and engagement with the community, including specific requirements on advertising and consultation.

Permanent TROs are advertised first to allow anyone to object to the order and they have 21 days to lodge an objection that has to be either reconciled or taken through a formal consideration process (a committee decision). Experimental orders have to be advertised as an intention for 7 days and can then be implemented for a period of 18 months to trial a scheme. There is a 6 month objection period from the start of the order.

Temporary orders have specific reasons as to why they can be used and are normally related to road collapses or works on the highway where the road has to be closed to facilitate works or for the safety of the public. This is the process that was used for Madeira Drive due to the risks to pedestrians and cyclists with speeding vehicles and increased use of the road. The road only has a limited number of businesses and all of these are currently shut so this is a unique road. Normally shutting roads in the city centre, with the need to maintain access for residents and businesses, would have to follow the full permanent or experimental route and associated consultation.

Lane closures and changes to footways can be made using delegated powers without the need for Traffic Regulation orders.

The DfT have relaxed some of the requirements for advertising, but this has not changed the process so will have little effect in shortening the process.

6. Interventions

The tables below detail the identified interventions that could be carried out in the city as a package of measures to help the city come out of lockdown. They are broken down into 3 phases of work, short term (the now), medium term (coming out of lockdown), and long term recovery. A number of other measures were assessed and not progressed for a variety of reasons.

Short Term – Urgent Response				
Location	Issue	Legislation	Strategic fit	Estimated cost
Madeira Drive	Risk to pedestrian and cyclists safety due to speeding vehicles	RTA section 14 – public safety	Yes provides area for local community to exercise and fits LTP objectives	£8k
A270 – Old	No cycling facilities to the west of	No TRO	Provides major cycling	£12k

Brighton and Hove City Council Urgent Response Transport Action Plan and policy framework

Shoreham Road	the city and opportunity to re-use road space. Can be implemented with lining and limited signing and without closing the entire road	required	link to the west of the city encouraging cycling from a car dominated area and fits LTP objectives. Link with existing segregated cycle lane.	
City wide	Traffic signal timings have been capped to reduce cycle times	N/A	Provides quicker crossing opportunities for pedestrians	none

Other options considered in the city

- A259 – assessment can be seen in Appendix, these options are expensive and have a number of safety related issues
- St Georges Road – Legislation difficult and limited benefit strategically
- Boundary Road closure – bus route, legislation difficult and limited benefit strategically
- New Church Road closure - bus route, legislation difficult and limited benefit strategically
- Sackville Road – bus route, legislation difficult
- Portland Road – legislation difficult, bus route and limited benefit strategically
- Richardson Road - legislation difficult, bus route and limited benefit strategically

Medium – following the new guidance “The Traffic Management Act 2004: network management in response to COVID – 19” and forms part of an interim Covid-19 Response Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan				
Location	Issue	Legislation	Strategic fit	Estimated cost
ClockTower – Queens Road/North Street	Heavy pedestrian movements with high bus flows. A number of businesses at the junction could introduce queuing systems. To assist with movement reduce the traffic times so pedestrians receive more green time.	No legislation	Assists with walking and meets LTP objectives to encouraging walking	none
Western Road – full length from Dyke Road to Montpelier Road	Conflict along Western Road and major shops to enable social distancing. Work with bus operator to reduce the number of stops to enable more space for pedestrians. Assessment needed of the road to analyse what other measures could be implemented. Sufficient signage/information would be required for bus users to any changes in bus stop locations, so as not to worsen	No legislation	Assists with walking and meets LTP objectives to encouraging walking	To be determined

Brighton and Hove City Council Urgent Response Transport Action Plan and policy framework

	bus patronage issues.			
Sydney Street/ Gardner Street	The roads are normally closed at weekends. They could also be shut Monday to Friday to provide more space. Requires engagement with businesses before the road can be shut	Existing traffic order in place to enable closure	Assists with walking and meets LTP objectives to encouraging walking. Supports local businesses	none
Marine Parade Cycle Lane	A cycle lane on the Marine parade would provide good links into the city from the whole length of the road	No order required	Assists with walking and meets LTP objectives to encouraging walking.	To be determined
1.Boundary Road, 2.St James Street, 3.London Road	Conflict with pedestrians social distancing and accessing shops. Some opportunity to remove parking to provide greater walking space	No traffic order required	Provides social distancing	To be determined
City wide	Provide priority for cycling and walking at crossings across the city	N/A	Assists with walking and meets LTP objectives to encouraging walking.	None
A259 Bus Lane eastbound from Roedean to Ovingdean Roundabout	Increase the length of the A259 bus lane so that public transport is not delayed to encourage more use	Experimental or traffic order is needed	Assists with encouraging public transport meeting LTP objectives	To be determined
St James Street	Investigate the road to see what measures could be introduced to improve walking and cycling	Traffic Orders required may be difficult to implement	Assists with walking and meets LTP objectives to encouraging walking.	To be determined
The lanes/Old Town	Investigate measures that could be taken to improve walking and cycling. Measures could also assist local business.	Traffic Orders required may be difficult to implement	Assists with walking and meets LTP objectives to encouraging walking.	To be determined
A23	London Road to Preston Park, narrow cycle route. The contra flow cycle route runs on the footway in conflict with trees and pedestrians due to the narrow width. Narrowing the northbound traffic lanes would enable cyclists to use the road, Allowing sufficient space for two way cyclist movement with social distancing.	Currently under review	High – currently a pinch point for the national cycle route and fits LTP objectives	£20k
School Streets	Increased use cars by parents to take children to school	Depending on scheme	Assists with walking and meets LTP objectives to encouraging walking.	Depends on location
Bus Lanes	Assess the current use of Bus Lanes to ensure that the need still exists during the crisis. This includes sharing and extending Bus Lanes across the city and	Traffic Orders required may be difficult to implement	Assist with walking and cycling	Depends on location

Brighton and Hove City Council Urgent Response Transport Action Plan and policy framework

	consideration of delivery of action in the bus network review			
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Other measures considered

- Closing Twittens – difficult as any closure will need a TRO and engagement with effected residents. Unlikely to get support due to possible detour and the need for access to some properties. Temporary signing could be introduced to discourage using narrow lanes as through routes.
- The Lanes and Kensington Gardens – These are parts of the city that have a very narrow space to walk. Introducing one ways or some closures would be challenging due to the necessary legislation and consultation. Signing may be the only option available to try and encourage social distancing.

Long term/ Recovery – delivered through Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)				
Measures	Issue	Legislation	Strategic fit	Estimated cost
Identification of strategic cycling and walking routes into and through the city	This work is a key element of the full LCWIP and will develop the schemes that are needed to improve active travel	N/A	Key element of LCWIP	To be determined
Parking policies car free city centre	There is a direct correlation between measures taken and their success with parking.	N/A	Assists with walking and meets LTP objectives to encouraging walking. Supports local businesses	Could impact parking income
Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ)	ETS Committee have requested that officers bring forward options for an extended ULEZ	N/A	The main delivery tool in improving air quality	To be determined
Review data on measures implemented	Limited data available and all measures should consider how they can be monitored (inform work on LCWIP and LTP5)	N/A	Supports permanent changes	To be determined

7. Monitoring the impact of interventions

Existing traffic data tools such as Traffic master can provide us with ‘normal’ expected traffic levels for a certain street / area as a baseline in relation to these measures, particularly in terms of informing where measures should be implemented. However in terms of monitoring the impact of such measures, the data is only updated every six months and therefore cannot be utilised as ‘after’ data relating to measures implemented in this fast-

Brighton and Hove City Council Urgent Response Transport Action Plan and policy framework

changing environment. In this unprecedented situation it will be difficult to ensure all schemes and measures are measured to the same degree as normal.

There are a series of traffic counters / cycle counters in place at key locations across the city (e.g Old Shoreham Road, Lewes Road) which could be used to gather broad motor / cycle traffic trends across the city.

Additionally, the use of anecdotal evidence / qualitative feedback on the efficacy of schemes could be considered given the circumstances.

Appendix A

Consideration of A259 Lane closure

The existing cycle lane is constrained and with the increased numbers of pedestrians social distancing has become more difficult. Providing larger separate areas would help, but again care needs to be taken as the intention is not encourage greater demand as the Police have already intervened along the seafront to discourage gatherings on the beach. Two options have been considered, but both have significant cost implications. The area considered is from the Aquarium Roundabout to just beyond the I360.

Option one

Take out the southern inside lane so that cyclists can contra flow, achieved by using water filled barriers that will separate vehicles from cyclists.

Issues

- Barriers will take time to install and are currently difficult to obtain due to the lockdown and as there are limited suppliers
- Contra flow cyclists will not receive red signals at pedestrian crossings (safety risk)
- West Street junction is a constraint due to Shelter Hall so vehicles would sit in right turn lane - even with low flows could cause safety issues with vehicle wishing to go straight ahead
- Does not help pedestrians as cyclist will remain on the promenade
- Reduced access to Lower promenade
- Access/egress issues for cyclists on any 'new' section causing a safety risk

Cost in excess of £60,000 for the hire of the equipment and implementation (even if they could be sourced). This option has a number of safety concerns and is not supported by the seafront office due to the implications for access. Obtaining the barriers and cost make this an unviable option.

Option two

Brighton and Hove City Council Urgent Response Transport Action Plan and policy framework

Take out both the inside lane for both north and south sides of the A259 so east bound cyclists would need to move over to the north side to the west of Preston Street. The cycle lanes on the north side could be coned and tapered at junctions similar to how normal cycle lanes operate in the city when with flow lanes are implemented. Would allow the promenade to be used wholly by pedestrians and no longer shared.

Issues

- Detailed look at Shelter Hall needed to consider the lane constraints and its implications
- An initial review by road safety has highlighted concerns related to the conflict between cyclists and left turning traffic
- Using cones will make it feel that the lane is being worked on and drivers might not expect cyclists to emerge at junctions
- Coning will require constant monitoring to ensure the safety of cyclists
- Will require significant temporary signing that currently is difficult to obtain due to the normal suppliers being shut
- It is likely cyclists will continue to use existing cycle lane

Cost in the region of £58,000 not including the continued monitoring of the coned areas or signing costs.

Due to the cost, safety concerns and limited benefit these options, it is proposed that this will not be pursued in the urgent response phase. Consideration can be given to the A259 as part of the Interim LCWIP Covid-19 response that is proposed.