

Equality Impact Assessment

Directorate: Community and Place	
Service: Transport	
Name of Officer/s completing assessment: Misha Byrne, additional content by Eddie Hewitt	
Date of Assessment: 18 October 2021, revised December 2021	
Name of service/function or policy being assessed: The A4 Bus Lane Scheme	
1.	<p>What are the aims, objectives, outcomes, purpose of the policy, service change, function that you are assessing?</p> <p>The scheme was initially introduced to allow for social distancing measures and reprioritisation of road space for pedestrians and cyclists, in response to the impacts of COVID-19 on the network and all road users in Slough. The objectives of the scheme are to reduce bus journey times, improve bus reliability and encourage the switch from car use to buses. The scheme was also designed to ensure that the recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 was not car-led.</p> <p>Subsequently, the proposal to make the scheme permanent is part of the wider overall response to the need to promote Public Transport (and Active Travel), and to contribute to the overall response to the National Bus Strategy: <i>Bus Back Better</i>. This also aligns with the Council's wider Transport policies, and the related priorities that will lead to the success of the Council's Carbon Strategy.</p>
2.	<p>Who implements or delivers the policy, service or function? State if this is undertaken by more than one team, service, and department including any external partners.</p> <p>The scheme is being delivered by the Transport Strategy Team (Place Directorate, Strategy and Infrastructure).</p>
3.	<p>Who will be affected by this proposal? For example who are the external/internal customers, communities, partners, stakeholders, the workforce etc. Please consider all of the Protected Characteristics listed (more information is available in the background information). Bear in mind that people affected by the proposals may well have more than one protected characteristic.</p> <p>In general, 'normal' traffic will be affected by the proposals, however bus users will benefit from the bus lane.</p>

More widely, the overall expectation is that this proposal will lead to improvements for those who use bus services in Slough, along with those who engage in Active Travel, with wider benefits potentially for all groups. However, it is acknowledged that bus travel may be engaged in and relied upon by certain protected groups more than others and there may be some negative impacts for particular groups.

The following groups are expected to be affected:

Age:

Older people are often particularly reliant on public transport and bus travel to access the high street, community centres and GP surgeries.

Disability:

As above, people with disabilities are often reliant on public transport. Therefore, improved journey times and bus reliability will help them access services with ease.

Pregnancy and maternity:

There may be some specific impacts for this category, relating to access to healthcare and facilities for parents and also young children.

Race:

Generally speaking, there are no specific impacts here. However, there may be some cultural cultural/religious aspects which relate to the perceived and actual benefits or otherwise of public transport services and patronage.

Religion and Belief:

Generally speaking, there are no specific impacts here. However, there may be some impacts, including better access to places of worship. Furthermore, as above, there may be some cultural/religious aspects which relate to the perceived and actual benefits or otherwise of public transport services and patronage.

Gender Reassignment:

No specific impacts associated with this category.

Marriage and Civil Partnership:

No specific impacts associated with this category.

	<p>Sex: No specific impacts associated with this category.</p> <p>Sexual orientation: No specific impacts associated with this category.</p> <p><i>Details relating to the nature of the various, expected impacts are set out in sections 4 and 5 below.</i></p>
4.	<p>What are any likely positive impacts for the group/s identified in (3) above? You may wish to refer to the Equalities Duties detailed in the background information.</p> <p><i>The positive impacts for all groups identified above, and indeed for all bus travellers from all groups in the long term, are likely to be:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More frequent bus services • More reliable journey times <p>The above-mentioned improvements are expected to result in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower fares • Multi-operator ticketing arrangements (a simpler ticket and therefore easier travel) • Better quality buses • Improved air quality, reduced carbon emissions • A more extensive network of services / greater access to places of work and education, shop, services, healthcare, and other destinations <p><i>Nb the above list of likely benefits is not exhaustive. A full package of improvement measures has been included in Slough's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) which is currently being considered by the Department for Transport. The measures included are expected to further strengthen and complement the improvements arising from the A4 Bus Lane Scheme</i></p>

	<p><i>Other likely benefits or aspects which are particularly relevant to the specific groups identified are as follows:</i></p> <p>Age More frequent services with better travel time reliability will be especially helpful to both older people and young people. This will lead to increased perceptions of safety and, for the elderly mainly, greater comfort / minimised physical pain related to traditionally longer waiting times. A more reliable network of services will also increase connectivity and social inclusion, as well as easier access to a range of destinations.</p> <p>Disability As above, similar benefits will arise as for older people.</p> <p>Parents and young children Again, as above, more frequent and reliable services will improve safety (perceived and actual) especially for parents of young children and young children themselves. Benefits will also be associated with better access to healthcare related destinations. Lower fare costs may well be of particular benefit here too.</p> <p>Religion and Belief More reliable bus services, reduced waiting times, and a better bus network are all likely to provide a more attractive travel option to those seeking to travel to places of worship across the borough. In addition, there may also be some benefits in terms of safety – again, perceived or actual – for members of certain religious groups who may generally feel vulnerable on public transport.</p> <p>Low income groups An improved bus network with greater priority for buses is likely to be of particular benefit to people in low income groups, who are less likely to have access to private vehicles.</p> <p>The scheme will also be of benefit to all those who engage in Active Travel, especially cyclists, many of whom will be young people and/or people from low income groups. More widely, greater uptake of active travel will bring benefits to everyone, through improved air quality, better health and enhanced quality of life as well as increased accessibility, connectivity and potential for economic growth.</p>
5.	What are the likely negative impacts for the group/s identified in (3) above? If so then are any particular groups affected more than others and why?

In comparison, there are relatively few negative impacts anticipated for any of the groups identified above. However, there will inevitably be some, as follows:

As a general drawback, any increased levels of congestion on the A4 would be likely to result in delays for all road users.

The following specific groups have responded or been referenced in the public consultation on the proposed scheme:

Older people

Older people may be less able to use public transport, and more reliant on private vehicle travel. Hence, there would be less benefit to this group from the A4 Bus Lane scheme, and potentially some adverse impact due to reduced lane space on the network for cars. From the consultation responses, there is only one response specifically referencing the elderly, and this targets poor bus services rather than congestion (which is one of the main impacts expected to be experienced by all).

People with disabilities

Similarly, people with disabilities may also be less able to use public transport, noting especially the limited space available for wheelchairs on buses, as well as other difficulties.

Again, such people would be more reliant on private vehicle travel, which would be subject to potential adverse impact due to reduced roadspace for cars.

From the consultation responses, there are 3 with specific references to people with disabilities. As above, one of these relates more to quality of bus services rather than impacts (e.g. congestion) expected to be caused by the scheme.

Parents with young children

As above, due to limited space on buses for pushchairs, some parents with young children might be adversely affected by increased priority accorded to buses on the network.

From the consultation responses, there are 3 responses specifically mentioning young children. A further 14 responses mention parents with comments mainly on school journeys, with difficulties expected from increased congestion.

In addition (not referred to in the consultation responses):

	<p>Race</p> <p>Improved bus services are expected to provide a more attractive, more efficient travel option for all, however the benefits here may be less attractive to certain groups within the community. Although it can be hard to demonstrate with empirical evidence, certain attitudes towards public transport may be of particular relevance to certain ethnic minority groups. Themes include actual and perceived safety on public transport. However, the negative impacts of the scheme are most directly associated with anyone who prefers to use their own car, or for whatever reason cannot use public transport.</p> <p>Overall</p> <p>The actual and perceived negative impacts are taken very seriously, however in several cases they appear to be related to more general factors already in existence. To address the various concerns, the scheme is expected to lead to wider improvements in bus services, which in turn is expected to greater modal choice, accessibility and connectivity. In response to comments on school travel, in policy terms there is an overriding requirement for a reduction in school trips by private car. This is an essential part of an overall sustainable transport solution which will ultimately reduce congestion.</p> <p>Nevertheless, a likely outcome in relation to the above impacts could be an increase in shorter journey times due to the actual or perceived cost or difficulty in using public transport. In all the above cases, there would be a disproportionate negative impact due to the scheme for the reasons given. However, this negative impact is deemed to be 'disproportionate' when taking into account the benefits which are expected to be experienced by the same groups (and indeed all groups in many aspects), where such positive benefits are considered to be considerably greater. The greater benefits relate to the expected improvement in air quality, reduction in CO² emissions and the related improvements in public health, as well as the benefit of increased connectivity and social inclusion, and more widely the potential for economic growth, a more vibrant town and overall an enhanced quality of life.</p>
6.	<p>Have the impacts identified in (4) and (5) above been assessed using up to date and reliable evidence and data? Please state evidence sources and conclusions drawn (e.g. survey results, customer complaints, monitoring data etc).</p> <p>A consultation exercise was undertaken to gather feedback/ comments from residents and commuters about how the bus lane was operating. A consultation exercise was undertaken between 4 Dec 2020 and 4 Jun 2021 via the Slough Citizen Space online portal. https://slough.citizenspace.com/transport/experimental-a4-bus-and-cycle-lanes/. Additional survey results can be found in the monitoring report.</p>

7.	<p>Have you engaged or consulted with any identified groups or individuals if necessary and what were the results, e.g. have the staff forums/unions/ community groups been involved?</p> <p>Officers analysed a total of 862 responses (including 40 Stakeholder responses). The respondents highlighted issues with journey time delays, congestion on the network and road safety.</p>
8.	<p>Have you considered the impact the policy might have on local community relations?</p> <p>Public Transport plays a valuable role in the borough, and nationally, in providing greater mobility and accessibility to all members of the community. Permanent scheme will introduce a number of measures and proposals designed to have the overall effect of improving connectivity within and across the town. This will be achieved through more frequent services, more reliable journeys, better value with fares, and all associated benefits. All of these impacts are expected to be valued by the community, and specific community groups, as referred to in section 4.</p> <p>The expected benefits arising from the improved air quality, reduced carbon emissions, reduced congestion levels, will all be particularly valuable in terms of greater social and environmental sustainability. Better, more reliable access to jobs, education and shopping areas will all be expected to lead to greater economic sustainability, with positive implications for all within the various communities.</p> <p>The Council is committed to greater ongoing engagement with residents and community groups.</p>
9.	<p>What plans do you have in place, or are developing, that will mitigate any likely identified negative impacts? For example what plans, if any, will be put in place to reduce the impact?</p> <p>From the analysis of consultation responses and the wider understanding, as covered about in the review of expected impacts above, what makes public transport prohibitive to people is generally cost, concerns about safety, lack of flexibility/routes, physical inaccessibility. There are limits as to how far the proposed scheme can address these issues, noting that the scheme is essentially based on road-space re-allocation. However, in parallel to the introduction of the proposed scheme and related schemes being considered, a range of mitigation measures has been considered and included in the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), which is dedicated to encouraging wider use of public transport and behavioural change. The full table of measures is available in the BSIP documentation, and this is subsequently being carried forward into the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme (EP).</p>

	<p>It is generally understood that the most difficult period is usually the beginning when people are reluctant to change behaviours and are unclear of the rules, so the Transport service will continue to provide clear messaging about long term benefits to all and clarity on rules. This information will be disseminated via the usual channels including the SBC website and press releases, as well as possible further consultations.</p> <p>In addition, officers will continue to collect the monitoring data which inform reviews of the scheme and potential further enhancements.</p> <p>Ultimately, the success of the A4 Bus Lane scheme will be influenced by the related and various improvements proposed in the Bus Service Improvement Plan, as well as through continual monitoring of transport and travel activity on the network in Slough, taking into account the needs and wishes of the public and all relevant stakeholders.</p>
10.	<p>What plans do you have in place to monitor the impact of the proposals once they have been implemented? (The full impact of the decision may only be known after the proposals have been implemented). Please see action plan below.</p> <p>The proposals have already been introduced under an experimental scheme, however as part of the permanent scheme data will be monitored via permanent automatic counters and permanent Bluetooth detectors along the A4.</p> <p>Furthermore, the development of the Enhanced Partnership Plan (EPP) with the bus operators of local registered services in Slough will follow on from the initial BSIP. The EPP is currently being prepared for submission to the DfT.</p> <p>The success of the EPP and BSIP will both be reliant on continual review of network and bus service performance, and progress towards measures. This includes the monitoring of bus priority infrastructure measures in particular.</p>

What course of action does this EIA suggest you take? More than one of the following may apply	✓
Outcome 1: No major change required. The EIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken	✓
Outcome 2: Adjust the policy to remove barriers identified by the EIA or better promote equality. Are you satisfied that the proposed adjustments will remove the barriers identified? (Complete action plan).	✓
Outcome 3: Continue the policy despite potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality identified. You will need to ensure that the EIA clearly sets out the justifications for continuing with it. You should consider whether there are sufficient plans to reduce the negative impact and/or plans to monitor the actual impact (see questions below). (Complete action plan).	
Outcome 4: Stop and rethink the policy when the EIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination. (Complete action plan).	


Action Plan and Timetable for Implementation

At this stage a timetabled Action Plan should be developed to address any concerns/issues related to equality in the existing or proposed policy/service or function. This plan will need to be integrated into the appropriate Service/Business Plan.

Action	Target Groups	Lead Responsibility	Outcomes/Success Criteria	Monitoring & Evaluation	Target Date	Progress to Date
Submit Scrutiny report	All Groups	Misha Byrne	To inform the Committee about the proposed scheme.	Undertaken as part of the Scrutiny report	1 st December 2021	On track
Submit Cabinet report	All groups	Misha Byrne	To obtain permission to introduce the permanent scheme.	Undertaken as part of the Cabinet report.	20 December 2021	On track
	All groups	Misha Byrne	Review existing road	A road	March	Awaiting

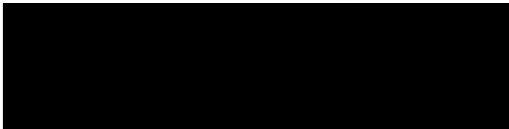
Undertake remedial works			markings and signage before making the scheme permanent.	safety audit will be undertaken to review the scheme.	2022	Cabinet decision
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Name: Misha Byrne

Signed: 

And Eddie Hewitt

Signed:



(Persons completing the EIA)

Name:

Signed:(Policy Lead if not same as above)

Date: