

Business Survey Report: Vehicle Access in Kingsmead Square



Introduction & Context

Bath & North East Somerset Council is considering vehicle access restrictions in Kingsmead Square, in association with the Public Realm and Movement Strategy for Bath City Centre.

The Public Realm and Movement Strategy aims to rebalance the city centre's transport systems in favour of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. The strategy recommends enhancing Kingsmead Square and Trinity Street through traffic management and public realm improvements to allow the hosting of specialist markets and kiosks with outdoor seating / café culture.

The Council's Highways and Design specialists consider that a vehicle restriction could be introduced every day, between the hours of **11am and midnight**. The road would be closed through use of a locked bollard (emergency services would have access). Outside of these hours vehicles would be allowed as usual, enabling access to the flats, shops and cafes for essential loading, servicing and refuse collection.

In October - November 2018 a survey was carried out to help understand business servicing in Kingsmead Square and get their views on whether they could service their business outside the time and locational constraints that the suggested vehicle access restriction would impose. The survey also asked whether businesses supported the principle behind the vehicle access restriction, and what they felt and benefits and disbenefits of the scheme would be.

A total of 36 businesses were identified within the study area and surveyed face to face by a council officer. Approximately 100 individual business visits were carried out and full survey responses were received from 21 businesses. Verbal comments from a further four businesses have also been noted and considered as part of this work.

Business Survey - Summary Findings

Deliveries

Survey respondents recorded an average of 4.8 deliveries per day. However for many businesses the majority of deliveries came from small vans or couriers. Weekends were fairly light in terms of quantity of deliveries and there was no standout in terms of busiest day for deliveries.

Delivery Timings

Most business deliveries took place during the **10am – midday** and **midday – 6pm** timeslots, meaning that survey respondents would be materially affected by the proposed vehicle access restrictions and would need to change servicing arrangements with suppliers, couriers and customers.

Refuse

The clear majority of refuse collections take place between midday and 6pm. Should the proposed vehicle access restrictions be enacted then alternative arrangements would need to be made with waste companies to service the area outside the time or geographical boundaries of the scheme.

Feasibility of servicing outside the Study Area geographical boundary

13 businesses (62%) responding to the survey felt that their business could be serviced from outside of the scheme boundary. 6 (29%) respondents felt that this wasn't feasible while 2 (9%) were unsure. Weight of goods, historic access and alternative service/warehouse locations were among the issues cited in the comments provided. A number of negative responses to this question assumed access to the Westpoint car park would be affected. Access to this car park would be unchanged by the scheme.

Feasibility of servicing outside of the proposed pedestrianisation times (11am – midnight)

13 businesses (62%) responding to the survey felt their business could be serviced between the hours of midnight and 11am. 8 businesses (38%) didn't believe servicing would be feasible during this time period. One business explained that certain products are not made until 1pm hence deliveries before this time would not be feasible. Some respondents said that their suppliers are flexible, while others explained how the nature of their business would make shifting delivery times very difficult. A number of negative responses to this question assumed access to the Westpoint car park would be affected. Access to this car park would be unchanged by the scheme.

A total of five businesses stated that servicing outside the time **and** geographical constraints of the scheme would not be feasible. Access to Westpoint car park addresses two of the five businesses' concerns but it should be noted that three businesses require their specific concerns to be addressed and solutions provided. All are A3 café/restaurant businesses. A further business cited

their dependence on finding a separate warehouse as critical to being able to feasibly service the business under the proposed Vehicle Access Restrictions. A full dossier of evidence from suppliers and property searches was provided in this instance.

Principal of Vehicle Access Restrictions to allow hosting of markets and promote café culture

16 (76%) of the businesses responding to the survey agreed with the principle of the scheme. A variety of comments were provided to back up why they supported the principle, or any qualifications behind their support. The majority of those opposed to the principle of the scheme were offices, who felt that the conditions created by the scheme would add to noise pollution and make their business operations more difficult.

Scheme Benefits

Improved café culture/space, improved pedestrian access, attracting more businesses/jobs and improved public realm were the scheme benefits listed most often by businesses.

Scheme Disbenefits

More complicated deliveries and refuse collections, noise pollution, inconvenience to business and impacting the business negatively were the scheme disbenefits listed most often by respondents.

Further Comments

A couple of business have stated that it may affect decision making around remaining in Bath if the scheme was to go ahead, while another comments mentioned the importance of managing any noise, anti-social behavior and waste generated from increased activities on the square. Other respondents questioned whether there could be communal management of tables, chairs and waste/recycling. Businesses also wanted to know how any communal tables and chairs would be distributed on the square.

There were concerns about the growth in food markets on the square, especially those that excluded bricks and mortar traders. Some businesses offered their assistance with the scheme and would like to get involved. A clear message was also provided that amplified noise is not welcome (be it from events, markets or buskers) during normal office hours.

Loss of car parking was a concern in comments, with another respondent asking whether additional loading bays could be provided. Safety concerns were raised for workers who may have to walk further to their vehicles following a shift.

Sector Split – Survey Responses

Office	7
Shop	5
Café / Restaurant	8
Market Stall	1

Office – survey summary findings

Offices overall were slightly in favour of the principal of vehicle access restrictions, while a number of offices felt they could not be serviced either outside of the proposed scheme geographies or timings.

	Yes	No	Unsure
Feasible to service business outside of scheme geography?	4	2	1
Feasible to service business outside of scheme timings?	5	2	0
Support principal of vehicle access restrictions?	4	3	0

Café and restaurant – survey summary findings

Cafés and restaurants were overwhelmingly in support of the principal of vehicle access restrictions, however they were split in terms of whether they could feasibly service their business outside of the proposed scheme boundary or timings.

	Yes	No	Unsure
Feasible to service business outside of scheme geography?	4	4	0
Feasible to service business outside of scheme timings?	4	4	0
Support principal of vehicle access restrictions?	7	1	0

Shop and market stall – survey summary findings

The market stall has been combined with the shops sector in order to protect anonymity. Respondents here were overwhelmingly support of the principal of vehicle access restrictions, and more businesses within this sector felt they could service their business outside of the scheme

geographies and timings compared with cafes and restaurants. However a number of businesses still felt the timings of the restrictions would make unfeasible and therefore their concerns need to be addressed by the council.

	Yes	No	Unsure
Feasible to service busines outside of scheme geography?	5	0	1
Feasible to service business outside of scheme timings?	4	2	0
Support principal of vehicle access restrictions?	7	1	0

Conclusion

Given that the proposed scheme has split opinion amongst the resident business community it is suggested that further liaison is carried out to involve them and address their specific concerns should a trial vehicle access restriction take place. Further consideration should also be given to the fact that the majority of high-value employers in the area (in salary and GVA terms) are either neutral or negative to the scheme; their concerns regarding potential noise impacts resulting from the scheme should be addressed.

Survey Respondents

Abel & Imray	Kingsmead Kitchen
Age UK	Mission Burrito
Avonvale Carpets	Phat Yaks
Bath Contract Flooring	Sally Salon Service
Bath Station Fruit	Silcox Son & Wicks
Catchy Agency	Society Café
EIP	Starbucks
Gong Fu	Swoon Gelato
Grace & Ted	The Bath Coffee Co
Gradwell	Zenith Global Ltd
HPH	

Verbal comments were received and noted from Boston Tea Party, Coral, F45 and Wickes.