

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Cabinet
<b>DATE:</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> January 2022
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	A4 Experimental Bus Lane
<b>CHIEF OFFICER:</b>	Richard West
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Savio DeCruz
<b>WARD(S):</b>	All
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Cllr Mann - Transport, Planning and Place
<b>KEY DECISION:</b>	YES
<b>EXEMPT:</b>	NO
<b>DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN:</b>	YES (Note that this report was considered by the Place Scrutiny Panel on 1 December 2021)
<b>APPENDIX PACK:</b>	Appendix 1 - <i>Consultation documents and overview map</i> Appendix 2 – <i>Monitoring Data, review of range of monitoring data</i> Appendix 3 – <i>Bus Journey Time report, Atkins</i> Appendix 4 – <i>Air Quality update, AQ officer update</i> Appendix 5 – <i>EIA Report</i> Appendix 6 - <i>Actions from the Extraordinary Joint Scrutiny meeting (29 Oct 2020)</i>

### **1 Overview**

The core principle of our Transport Strategy is to reduce the use of cars and to favour walking, cycling, scooters and use of buses in preference. Covid-19 lockdown presented us with the opportunity to experiment with the introduction of a Bus and Cycle Lane along the A4. The implementation of Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs) enabled the installation of the A4 bus lane scheme between Dover Road and Uxbridge Road junctions, replacing an east and westbound traffic lane. This was designed to:-

- Improve the experience of pedestrians walking on adjacent footways
  - Shift cyclists to use of the bus lane rather than shared use footways
  - Shift electric scooters to use of the bus lane rather than shared use footways
- Discourage short car journeys / reduce the number of car journeys
- Improve the journey experience of bus passengers

Initially the Bus Lane was 24/7 but this was reviewed following receipt of a petition opposing the scheme signed by over 5,000 respondents and which led to an extraordinary Joint Scrutiny meeting on 29 Oct 2020, the outcome of which was to adopt a peak time only bus lane. The consultation / objection period of the peak time only bus lane resulted in less than 900 responses, so less than 18% of the numbers objecting to a 24/7 Bus Lane.

The key findings show:-

- The volume of car traffic has returned to similar levels to that prior to the pandemic

- To date there has been no material difference in air quality. Effective monitoring has been disrupted by differing levels of COVID-19 restrictions over time and the complexity of gathering robust data.
- The journey time for buses has decreased by 2 minutes. The journey time for a car has increased by just under 3 minutes along the longest link of the scheme being measured, at just under 5.1 miles. However, this should be considered in the context of a lane of east and westbound traffic being removed.
- Some cyclist and scooter users have shifted from the pavements to the bus lane but not the majority.

To make the Peak Hour Bus Lane permanent, we will incur costs of £98,000 to adapt and add to existing lines and signs. If we discontinue the scheme then we will incur costs of £119,000 to remove the existing lines and signs. Expenditure of £98,000 to bring about a permanent Peak Time Only Bus Lane is considered to be the best use of the Integrated Transport Block Funding Grant. Successful introduction of this permanent scheme is an important step in realising the aims of our Transport Strategy and this positions Slough in a strong position to attract further Government funding for modal shift away from car usage.

## Summary and Recommendations

This report presents the consultation and monitoring data collected within the period of the experimental orders relating to this scheme which came into operation on 4 Dec 2020, for a period not extending beyond the end of Feb 2022.

The scheme was introduced as an emergency response to the easing of Covid-19 lockdown measures and to ensure a return to normal would not be car-led, while also facilitating improvements for active travel modes such as cycling and walking. While the bus lane was implemented to create more space for cyclists, the Department for Transport issued an updated local transport note (LTN 1/20) after the A4 bus and cycle lane was implemented, which stated that cycling infrastructure must be strengthened further to encourage greater take up of this mode by less confident cyclists. Therefore, only recommendations for the bus lane measures have been included in this report. Government funding has been secured separately to design an A4 cycle scheme.

The collection of robust data has been challenging due to the scheme being introduced as an emergency transport response, ongoing lockdown periods, uncertainty around travel, new working from home practices and some data being unavailable. Although general traffic volume in 2021 has been gradually increasing to levels comparable to the 2019 baseline data (or, traffic conditions prior to implementation), congestion levels have not been severely impacted despite an east and west bound traffic lane being removed. An analysis of the monitoring data cannot show a compelling case to remove or to retain the scheme, however, the recommendations in this report are made with a consideration of the wider strategic objectives to be realised through prioritising sustainable modes over motor vehicles - by retaining a peak time bus lane and supporting the growth in cycling, walking and use of zero-emission vehicles.

Due to the high number of objections received to the 24-hour bus lane, the scheme was changed in Nov 2020 to a peak-time only bus lane and in Dec 2020 to allow access to hackney cabs and Slough registered private hire vehicles. Currently, over 700 hackney cabs and private hire vehicles are able to use the lane. The recommendation includes authorising electric vehicles displaying a green number plate access – of 245,560 vehicles in the borough 8,470 are electric, a total of 3.45 per cent (Department for Transport, [All vehicles \(VEH01\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/all-vehicles-veh01))

## 1.1 Reports aims

- review feedback and objections to the scheme from statutory consultees, stakeholders and residents
- address issues raised by Members at the Oct 2020 Extraordinary Scrutiny Panel and the Dec 2021 Place Scrutiny Panel
- set out the impact of the experimental bus/cycle lane on traffic congestion and volume
- evaluate changes to bus journey times and sustainable modes use
- evaluate air quality changes along the route
- set out an analysis of evidence, describing the benefits and dis-benefits of the scheme within the context of the Department for Transport's (DfT) Bus Services and Active Travel priorities.

## 2.0 Recommendations:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Consider all matters set out in the Report and appendices and approve the recommendation for the Bus Lane experimental traffic regulation orders (ETROs) to be made permanent
2. Authorise the Executive Director of Place and Community in consultation with the Lead Member for Transport, Planning and Place to proceed through the legal process to enable the ETRO's to be made permanent
3. Approve additional works including signing and lining to be undertaken to improve road safety and approve the update of signs to also permit vehicles with authorised green numbers plates to use the bus lane during operational hours.

### Reason:

Slough's road network is under significant pressure, particularly at peak times, resulting in congestion, safety and air quality issues. Two of the four Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) are located on the A4 in Slough. An AQMA is declared where the national air quality objectives, set by the government, is exceeded. Transport can play a significant role in improving air quality and public health (Local Air Quality Management, Policy guidance, PG16). Retaining the A4 bus lane will support priorities such as encouraging modal shift away from private car to public transport and other sustainable modes, improve journeys along a key public transport corridor and improve bus journey times and reliability. The options have been reviewed and demonstrate that the A4 bus lane, with some changes, will contribute to achieving the Council's wider strategic priorities, contributing towards positive public health and environmental outcomes.

### Comments of the Commissioners:

Commissioners have noted the report and have no observations.

## 2.1 Report

The scheme aims to deliver the following priority outcomes of the Five-Year Plan 2020-2025 and the Infrastructure Projects Service Plan 2020-21.

- *Slough children will grow up to be happy, healthy and successful* - Enable children and young people to lead emotionally and physically healthy lives by improving air quality through schemes that reduce congestion and improve safety at key locations.

- *Our people will be healthier and manage their own care needs* -Through the facilitation of, and uplift in active travel. Build on success in making Slough safer, by incorporating road safety measures into all engineering schemes delivered across the Council.
- *Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and stay* - by improving connectivity of public transport and supporting safer, sustainable travel options that contribute to the improvement of air quality.
- *Slough will attract, retain and grow businesses and investment to provide opportunities for our residents* - Ensure a fit for business transport infrastructure, by reducing congestion and making journey times more reliable and safer.

The scheme aims to address the following Slough Wellbeing Strategy 2020-2025 priorities:

1. *Priority 1: Starting Well*- By encouraging the use of sustainable modes of travel, the bus and cycle lane aims to improve air quality along the route which when achieved, could play an important role in increasing quality of life for young people with respiratory disease and reduce Slough's health inequalities in the long term.
2. *Priority 2: Integration*- By providing transport infrastructure that includes safer access to transport hubs and bus shelters, the bus lanes will enable vulnerable elderly members of the community to gain improved access to health facilities and community centers.
3. *Priority 3: Strong, Healthy and Attractive Neighborhoods* - The experimental bus and cycle lane supports active travel and this plays a crucial role in maintaining good health, preventing illness, supporting mental wellbeing and generally enabling people to be healthier and happier for longer.
4. *Priority 4: Workplace Health*- It is believed that the proposed permanent scheme will improve connectivity between places for home and work and provide reliable and sustainable transport for Slough residents.

## Options considered and Recommendations

**Option 1** - Remove the bus lane and cycle lane to allow all vehicles to use the lanes at all times. Increased traffic volume on the route will result in continued congestion and poor air quality – two of the four Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) are located on the A4 in Slough. This option will reduce journey time reliability for buses. The removal of the bus lane will have cost implications that include the removal of road markings, signage, and enforcement cameras to allow vehicles to use both lanes. The cost to remove the scheme is approximately £119,500. This option is not recommended.

**Option 2**- Revert back to a 24-hour bus and cycle lane. This would improve journey time reliability for buses at all times, but does not balance the needs of other road users which is a key desire of those responding to the consultation. The cost to revert to the 24-hour bus and cycle lane is £81,000. This option is not recommended.

**Option 3 - Do nothing** – This will result in the experimental traffic regulation order expiring and the council removing all the signage and road markings. As with Option 1, Option 3 will cost approximately £119,500 to remove the infrastructure and will see increasing car use as the network will become more attractive to private car use. This option is not recommended.

## Recommendation

**Option 4** - To allow the bus lane to continue to operate as a peak time only bus lane by making the ETRO's permanent. The peak time only bus lane will give the buses an advantage over other traffic by providing congestion free routes that will improve the operational performance and improve bus reliability. Over time, this will enable officers to negotiate reductions in bus fares as efficiencies are improved. Option 4 will provide a long-term solution that will encourage modal shift to sustainable modes and anticipated improvements to air quality. This option permits electric vehicles with authorised green

number plates to use the bus lane which is consistent with the objective of encouraging travel by sustainable modes on the A4.

The cost to make the scheme permanent is approximately £98,000 and includes updating all signs to permit vehicles lawfully displaying green number plates to use the bus lane. This option is recommended.

## **Background**

In May 2020, a significant decision report was approved to introduce an experimental bus and cycle lane. The implementation of Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders permitted installing the A4 bus and cycle lane scheme in August 2020, between Dover Road and Uxbridge Road junctions and replaced an east and westbound traffic lane to provide 24-hour bus priority.

The scheme was introduced to allow for social distancing measures and the reprioritisation of road space for pedestrians and cyclists as outlined in the government's Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) guidance. The DfT provided funding to introduce active travel schemes using the EATF grant. Public transport provision was a subsequent step in preparing for the opening of the town after the easing of lockdown restrictions. The scheme provided a 'whole route' approach to create a bus and cycle corridor, implemented with a consideration of the wider context of increasing traffic levels and congestion in the town – 'Slough's road network remains under significant pressure, particularly at peak times resulting in congestion and air quality issues. Between 1993 and 2017, the amount of traffic in the Borough (excluding trunk roads such as the M4) grew by 15%' (Transport vision, 2019). The A4 bus and cycle lane scheme was introduced to ensure that any recovery would not be car led and supported local strategic objectives described in the Local Transport Plan, and other strategies - see section 2.2.

Following introduction of the scheme a 6-month objection period was activated. Objections to the 24-hour bus lane scheme were submitted via a petition which received 5,272 signatures (see point 2.3) and triggered an Extraordinary Joint Meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel on 29 Oct 2020. Following presentations to, and recommendations by the Panel, the bus lane operating times and permissions to use the bus lane were revised. Changes to the experimental scheme thereby permitted:

Hackney carriages, e-scooters, motorbikes, private hire vehicles, any other authorised vehicles to use the bus lane on Monday to Friday and effected a change to a peak time only bus lane, operating between 07:00hrs – 10:00hrs and 15:00hrs – 19:00hrs only.

Actions from the Extraordinary Joint Scrutiny meeting have been summarised in Appendix 6.

The previous ETRO's were revoked and new ETRO's listed below came into operation on 4 Dec 2020 with the 6-month objection period that started from 4 Dec 2020 to 4 Jun 2021. The ETRO's objection period was further extended to 31 Aug 2021 due to the introduction of enforcement cameras along the route. A decision to retain or remove the scheme must be made in order to allow permanent traffic orders to be made before the current ETROs expire on 28 Feb 2022.

The current Experimental Traffic Regulations Orders include:

- i. A4 Section 3 Cippenham Lane to Twinchies Lane Order 57 of 2020
- ii. A4 Section 4 Twinchies Lane to Farnham Road Order 58 of 2020
- iii. A4 Section 5 Farnham Road to High Streets Slough Order 59 of 2020
- iv. A4 Section 6 Wellington Street to Sussex Place Order 60 of 2020

## **2.2 Supporting Policies**

The scheme supports several local and national priorities. The DfT has reiterated the importance of facilitating increased use of sustainable modes, including public transport, cycling, walking and zero-emission vehicles. Funding opportunities are available to Local Authorities able to demonstrate a clear commitment to meeting DfT standards in improving bus priority measures and cycling and walking infrastructure.

Since the installation of the A4 Bus and Cycle Lane, two separate workstreams have been progressed by Officers to respond to government (DfT) grant funding opportunities relating to two distinct but interrelated modes – buses and active travel. The recommendations in this report have been put forward based on consideration of the following contexts.

(i) Bus Service Improvements

Significant work has been undertaken relating to bus service improvements. The government’s National Bus Strategy, Bus Back Better, required a Council response, namely through the development of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and progression to an Enhanced Partnership with bus operators. Funding allocations are yet to be released, but the DfT requires Local Transport Authorities to demonstrate a commitment to improving bus services. The BSIP and proposal to progress to an Enhanced Partnership was presented to Place Scrutiny Committee on the 28 Sept 2021 and approved by Cabinet on 18 Oct 2021 for the draft BSIP to be submitted to the DfT.

(ii) Active Travel improvements

A requirement of the Capability Fund bid, made to the DfT (and which is an extension of the Emergency Active Travel Fund and Access Fund), is to demonstrate a clear commitment to increasing the numbers travelling by active modes (cycling, walking and e-scooter use) and a modal shift away from private car use. The Council is in receipt of the revenue element of this fund (£244k) and is awaiting the outcome of a capital bid. Additional funding has been provided via the Active Travel Fund where Slough placed a successful bid to secure a capital fund of £552k to fund elements of the A4 Cycle Lane work. A significant decision report is being prepared concerning this work but awaiting confirmation of the capital fund before circulation. A designer for an A4 cycle lane had already been procured.

Table 1 summarises how the scheme contributes to a number of SBC’s policy objectives.

Strategy	General	How the A4 Bus/Cycle Lane contributes to this strategy
<b>The Carbon Strategy</b>	The council has committed to challenging targets, with a net zero carbon target by 2040 for the borough, and a stretch target of 2030 for SBC’s operations.	Increased public transport provision will make a significant contribution to reducing carbon emissions through encouraging a shift away from private car use and reduced congestion benefits.
<b>The Low Emission Strategy</b>	Public Transport will have an important part to play in improving air quality across the borough.	Bus priority and enhanced modal interchanges will contribute significantly to low emissions in the town centre and in around the central transport interchange and providing multi modal connectivity.
<b>The Local Transport Plan &amp; Local and Cycling Infrastructure Plan</b>	This is the over-arching plan for the provision of transport services and infrastructure at local level across the borough. The current version (LTP3) is currently under review. LCWIP – The Councils review and prioritisation of proposed cycling and walking networks schemes.	The A4 Bus Lane encompasses the LTP’s objectives to prioritise public transport. There is a commitment to the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership with Bus Operators. Prioritisation of behavioural change measures leading to significant levels of modal shift, in order to deliver a sustainable and integrated transport solution. Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) schemes. Significant commitment required from Government to prioritise Walking and Cycling Schemes.

<b>The Slough Local Plan</b>	The revised Local Plan review is in progress, with the latest proposals put forward in the Spatial Strategy.	The scheme is on a key strategic route in the borough and contributes to objectives such as sustainable economic growth, as well as improving accessibility to good quality housing.
<b>The Strategic Transport Infrastructure Plan (STIP)</b>	Principles adopted by Cabinet to reverse trends in increasing car use, defining a low car urban core and reducing the attractiveness of car use over time, with a focus on the centre of Slough.	Car journeys should be replaced by realistic and achievable alternatives. Prioritising public transport will enable negotiations with bus operators. With greater patronage, realised through improved efficiencies, opportunities exist to make public transport use increasingly attractive – i.e. cost and time savings for residents.
<b>The Network Management Plan</b>	The overall Network Management duty involves provision of expeditious movement of traffic on the network, and also across boundaries with neighbouring authorities.	Increased use of public transport will reduce the number of cars travelling on Slough's roads.
<b>Bus Services Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership</b>	BSIP and EP are both essential processes required in the national bus strategy – <i>Bus Back Better</i> to set out priorities relating to bus priority, fares and ticketing etc.	BSIP noted by Scrutiny on 28 Sep. Presented to Cabinet on 18 October 2021. Slough Borough Council wishes to make it easier for people to travel by bus to get people out of their cars and to provide an alternative for those without access to a car. Bus priority measures such as dedicated bus lanes help to reduce bus journey times and make buses more reliable, thus encouraging people to switch to buses. The A4 bus lanes help to reduce journey times for buses to a wide range of destinations and we hope will provide the conditions in which further improvements to bus services can be made. This is reflected in our Bus Service Improvement Plan, recently published.

Table 1 Supporting Policies

## 2.3 Consultation/ Objections

An Experimental Traffic Regulation Order process allows residents and local businesses to comment on the trial scheme once it has been installed.

After implementing the recommended changes as required by the Extraordinary Scrutiny Panel, another objection period was set 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>. The ETROs' objection period was further extended to 31 Aug 2021 due to the introduction of enforcement cameras along the route.

A total of 862 responses were received and analysed during this objection period, including 40 Stakeholder responses (all residing in Slough), which can be found in Appendix 1. The consultation responses have been categorised into themes, and Officer's responses have been presented in Table 2.

It should be noted that one response may have incorporated multiple themes – each point has been captured and categorised accordingly. Though low in numbers, other themes provided officers with insights into the impact of the experimental scheme more widely. Whilst these themes have not been tabled, officers have noted them as affecting journeys on the route. These ranged from an appreciation of including zero-emission and emergency vehicles in the lane, welcoming changes to how the lanes operate, suggestions to relax enforcement during bank holidays, and permitting HGV's multiple occupancy vehicles. Specifically, comments referred to buses being too expensive to use, that public transport use encourages the spread of COVID-19 and a part-time bus lane is not ideal for buses as this impacts journey time.

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**Comments to online consultation (See Appendix 1)**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Summary of Officer Response</b>
<b>Congestion</b>	508	<p>Links between two Bluetooth detectors (called routes) were created along the A4 to identify any congestion issues in the remaining lane for all use traffic. This allows officers to monitor congestion levels in these particular links, and shows the time it takes for a vehicle to pass through.</p> <p>Journey time data was reviewed for 2019, 2020 and 2021. The section that showed the highest increase is reported as follows.</p> <p>Using Bluetooth device monitors, data was reviewed for Aug and Sep 2019 (when traffic conditions were normal) and before the scheme was introduced. Peak time only data for 2020, Aug and Sep, was compared to the above.</p> <p>Findings indicate that JT on the longest section being measured, a distance of 5.1 miles of the remaining lane for all use traffic did increase but by no more than a maximum of 2 min and 57 (route 15, between Huntercombe Roundabout to M4 Junction 5, East bound, PM only). It should be noted that there were construction works along this route that may have impacted the journey times, (A4 Wexham Road junction improvements).</p>
<b>Road Safety</b>	236	<p>Proposed to improve signage and road markings along the route if the scheme is retained and a Stage 3 Road Safety Audit to identify any road safety concerns.</p>
<b>Air Quality / Environment</b>	204	<p>Analysis of the data from the existing monitoring sites does not suggest that the bus lane is worsening the air quality. Continued monitoring of the route is required to ensure that as a minimum this continues to be the case. As the scheme was introduced as an emergency response, modelling outcomes to date cannot be attributed solely to the bus lane. Two of the four AQMAs in the borough are located in proximity of the route.</p>
<b>Increased Journey Times</b>	176	<p>Data shows that between 2019 -2021, journey time on the remaining lane for all use traffic did not increase significantly with the highest increase recorded on Route 15 Huntercombe Roundabout to M4 Junction 5, eastbound, PM, of 2 mins 57 seconds in 2020.</p> <p>A review of Automatic Traffic Counters along points on the corridor shows that traffic levels gradually returned to normal by Autumn 2021, compared to the baseline traffic levels of 2019 and 'normal traffic conditions'. Given that the scheme removed a lane of east and west bound traffic, the impact of journey times in the remaining lane for all use traffic is not a cause for concern. These findings may also have been affected by Major Projects works that may have negatively impacted journey times in there own right.</p>
<b>Too few buses/ infrequent to justify/buses don't serve right locations</b>	174	<p>Bus Services that use the route include route number 83, X74, 4, 7, 3 and 702. Route number 4 is the only service using the entire route. The Bus Service Improvement Plan is being progressed. Bus Priority measures such as dedicated bus lanes must be introduced to improve efficiencies and improve journey times for Buses. This improves reliability and passenger confidence to use frequently, which will lead to increased patronage and additional buses. Bus Priority measures are essential to facilitate this mode shift.</p>

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<b>Reliable bus services /few buses</b>	27	As above
<b>Waste of money</b>	109	The scheme was funded by the Emergency Active Travel Fund, issued by Government to introduce measures which would facilitate social distancing and ensure a non-car led recovery. The scheme contributes to a wide range of non-monetised benefits relating to road safety, air quality improvement and public realm improvements.
<b>Unclear signs / drivers don't understand</b>	86	If the scheme is to be made permanent all signage will be reviewed.
<b>Reduced attractiveness of area to businesses / Shopping</b>	76	Slough's road network is under significant pressure and cannot sustain continued levels of increasing congestion. Improved connectivity, accessibility and sustainability can be delivered through the promotion of sustainable modes. With improved bus connections and increased accessibility shopping areas will become more accessible to customers and to employees of businesses located there. With improved efficiencies in bus operations, lower bus fares will be negotiated through the Enhanced Partnership with bus Operators.
<b>Made travel experience worse /no details/scrap it</b>	61	Data shows that between 2019 and 2021, journey time did not increase significantly on the remaining all traffic use lane with the highest increase recorded on Route 15 Huntercombe Roundabout to M4 Junction 5, eastbound, PM, of 2 mins 57 seconds in 2020. A negative travel experience is expressed by motorists but the scheme will improve the travel experience for other road users including pedestrians, cyclists and those using public transport.
<b>Rat running</b>	34	Designs to reduce rat-running, particularly on the A4 service roads have been prepared. A decision to reduce the impact of closing the service road was made to ensure any impacts caused by the A4 scheme would be lessened. If the scheme is made permanent, the service roads will be monitored and reviewed.

Table 2 Comments received through ETRO process

Emails were sent to statutory consultees requesting their comments. Comments received from the Statutory consultees include road safety concerns such as confusing signage and road markings, a request to retain the bus lane as a 24-hour bus lane only, concerns about other vehicles using the bus lane during operational hours and welcoming of the opportunity for other vehicles to use the bus lanes during operational hours.

A tabled summary of the statutory consultee's comments and Officer response can be found in Table 3.

<b>Statutory Consultees</b>	<b>Summarised Comments</b>	<b>Officers response</b>
Thames valley Buses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add our general support for the bus lanes along the A4 corridor.</li> <li>• Bus lanes have had a noticeable effect on journey times and punctuality, which has been more evident as we move out of lockdown measures.</li> <li>• The opening of the bus lanes prompted us to revise our timetables and reduce our running time between Slough and Langley on services 702 and 703 by two minutes in each direction from November, a saving of over 16% on this leg of the journey - a benefit of over two hours each day – and, with average patronage of 30 passengers, this becomes some considerable benefit in total.</li> <li>• Disappointed by the changes made in December 2020 to modify the bus lanes from 24-hour operation to peak hours only.</li> <li>• Travel habits post Covid are suggesting that traditional peak periods are less spiked and there are more off-peak movements than previously.</li> <li>• Timed operation is more confusing and bus lanes are most effective when there is no ambiguity around their use.</li> </ul>	<p>The scheme was originally introduced as a 24hr bus and cycle route but was amended to peak time only, following consultation, to balance the schemes objectives with the needs of other road users.</p> <p>The Council is keen to work with Bus Operators to progress the Bus Service Improvement Plan that sets out future aspirations for bus service improvements including development of an Enhanced Partnership with Bus Operators.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The eased restrictions have led to an increase of mis-use of the bus lane</li> </ul>	
Reading Buses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very supportive of the vision behind the original introduction of the A4 bus lane, and would like to see it not only retained, but restored to its original 24-hour operation.</li> <li>Need to ensure that public transport journeys are as attractive as possible to help encourage people to switch from less sustainable means, leading to the ideal outcome of reduced congestion and pollution.</li> <li>Appreciate that the removal of the lanes during the off-peak times was to help ensure the lanes were more politically acceptable, however we cannot see what practical benefit this change brought, given that congestion is low during off-peak periods.</li> <li>Bus lanes are most effective when there are no grey areas surrounding their use.</li> <li>The government's National Bus Strategy requires the Council to provide more bus priority measures and deliver enhanced services from April 2022, and the removal of this infrastructure would do the opposite.</li> <li>Keen to work with the Council to develop new and enhanced services in this area of Slough, and the Council's investment in this infrastructure is central to the business case for that.</li> </ul>	As above.
Slough Taxi Federation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We can suggest keep the bus lane for Buses, Taxi and bicycles.</li> <li>This is great for the environment and encourage residents to use public transport.</li> <li>Private hire should not be given the right to use the bus lane as this will create more traffic in the bus lane.</li> </ul>	Noted
Thames Valley Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not possible to accurately provide evidence of the impact the experimental bus lane has had on police response times as there are so many factors that can affect</li> <li>Thames Valley Police objected to the implementation of the bus lane</li> <li>Traffic flows are creeping back up towards pre lockdown levels. Reducing the available space on the A4 will cause congestion and result in an increase in traffic using residential streets off the A4 to avoid queues caused by the bus/cycle lane.</li> <li>Concerns about traffic turning across the bus lane and coming into conflict with pedal cyclists. I think your proposal will bring about a rise in injury collisions along the length of the bus/cycle lane.</li> <li>Congestion caused by the bus lane will reduce the ability of Police to move around the town for routine enquiries which are often urgent but not requiring the use of blue lights</li> <li>Response times to emergency incidents have not unduly been affected as police have an exemption within the TTRO to use the bus lane for emergency response purposes.</li> <li>The number of nearside turnings from lane two across the bus lane is of concern as are major junctions where large volumes of traffic merge into one lane, Tuns crossroads, A4 and High Street/Windsor Road etc. this can affect our ability</li> <li>to negotiate these junctions if traffic is queuing across the junctions.</li> <li>At least one injury collision at the junction of the A4 and Ledgers Road on 15th February 2021 involving a car that left turned across the path of an ambulance that was using the bus lane on an emergency response.</li> <li>All emergency services have finite resources, it is less than desirable for vehicles attending such incidents to be involved in such incidents and this is a continuing risk.</li> <li>Officers are regularly delayed at peak times during bus lane operating hours caused by a reduction in the available road space, we feel this does affect their ability to travel around Slough. A real area of concern is the A4 Wellington Street at its junction with Windsor Road/High Street where the bus lane starts approximately 60 metres west of High Street junction. Two lanes on the main A4 filter into one at the start of the bus lane, a further two lanes merge onto the A4 from High Street</li> </ul>	<p><u>Congestion on the A4</u></p> <p>Comparison of 2019 and 2021 data from permanent traffic counters and blue tooth journey time monitoring devices shows that traffic has returned to almost normal, however journey time has not increased during peak times. Data shows that between 2019 and 2021, journey time did not increase significantly with the highest increase recorded on Route 15 Huntercombe Roundabout to M4 J5, eastbound, PM, of 2 mins 57 seconds in 2020.</p> <p><u>Road safety concerns along the route.</u></p> <p>If the scheme is to be made permanent the signage and road markings along the A4 will be reviewed to improve safety along the route and make it clear to drivers the times they are permitted to use the bus lane. Additionally, a Stage 3 Road Safety Audit will be undertaken to identify any road safety concerns along the route. If any issues are identified by the Stage 3 audit, Officers will undertake remedial works to improve safety along the route. Concerns for cyclists will be addressed through the A4 cycle lane design and complement intersections with the bus lane.</p> <p>Officers have analysed recorded collisions along the A4 between 1 December 2020 and 30 June</p>

	<p>meaning four lanes reduce to one within 60 metres of this junction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officers perception is that the bus lane operating hours are not necessarily understood by the travelling public with comments that the majority of drivers use lane two, even when the bus lane is not in operation. There are also some confusing signing on the eastbound A4 through Slough Trading Estate where direction signs and arrows on the road surface show left turn movements from lane one which, when the bus lane is not in operation is not correct.</li> <li>• A fatal collision happened on Wednesday 7th April 2021 where a Ford Transit van that was speeding undertook slower moving vehicles that were travelling in lane two when they were legally allowed to use lane one. The van collided with a pedestrian who was influenced by alcohol who crossed from the vans nearside.</li> <li>• We see little evidence of the bus lane being used as intended by pedal cycles and E-Scooters riders hired under the Neuron Mobility trial. Most are still illegally using the footway.</li> <li>• The bus lane only seems to be used by a minority of drivers when they are actually allowed to use it</li> <li>• At times coming into Slough from Maidenhead in both directions there is a clear build-up of traffic that I don't recall used to happen with two lanes running.</li> <li>• Where you have cycle lane painted in main road in lane 1 drivers are very unsure what do to and some straddle both lanes." Cycle Lane Thames Valley Police contact Slough Borough Council in July 2020 highlighting concerns about the cycle lane that was implemented to the west of the A4 and raised concerns over its safety. We thought it was a confusing arrangement and were unclear as to whether it was an advisory cycle lane or a traffic lane raising concerns that it would be very difficult to prove fault in any collision involving a car and a pedal cycle in that area, this remains our view</li> </ul>	<p>2021. There are 15 slights, 3 Serious and 1 fatal.</p> <p>The fatal collision that was highlighted by the police involved an LGV travelling east to west colliding with a pedestrian crossing the carriageway. Contributory factors are 306 (Exceeding speed limit), 602 (careless reckless or in a hurry) and 802 (Failed to look properly). To address road safety issues along the A4, Officers are currently investigating road safety intervention measures as part of the A4 Safer Road scheme to be delivered 2022.</p> <p><u>Cycle Lane</u> To comply with the recently published LTN 1/20 The cycle lane between Huntercombe roundabout and Dover Road will be removed if the scheme is made permanent.</p> <p>A separate scheme is being undertaken by Officers to improve cycling along the A4, Officers have submitted a bid to seek capital funding to introduce a segregated cycle lane that complies with the LTN1/20 along the A4 from its junction with Huntercombe Lane to Uxbridge Road.</p>
Freight association	No response	
The Road Haulage Association.	No response	
Ambulance and Fire Authority	No response	

Table 3 Responses from Statutory Consultees

Following the consultation exercise, Officers prepared a report that was presented to the Place Scrutiny Panel on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021. The report included consultation feedback from residents, statutory consultees, other stakeholders, and monitoring data. Officers have listed the recommendations that were brought forward by the Place Scrutiny Panel and noted the actions to be undertaken to address these. See Table 4

<b>Recommendation from Scrutiny Committee (December 2021)</b>	<b>Action/ Response</b>	<b>Additional comments</b>
<i>Ensure the scheme was part of a broader strategy to improve bus services and public transport provision for Slough residents</i>	Currently underway	Officers are working with Local bus companies via the BSIP to enable provision of improved bus services. At the same time Officers promoting other sustainable modes that assist in completing the last mile. This includes the introduction of segregated cycle lane, improved walking facilities and safer use of e-scooters.
<i>Maximise capacity by using the existing service road as the bus lane where practicable between Huntercombe roundabout and The Three Tuns junction;</i>	Noted. To be reviewed if the scheme is to be made permanent.	If the scheme is made permanent and subject to availability of funding, Officers, will review the entire bus lane to identify service roads to be utilised. Officers are aware that the service roads along the A4 between Dover Road and Tuns junction are mainly used for access by residents and business along the A4. The introduction of a bus lane particularly during

		peak time only will result in residents or businesses not being able to access their properties during operational hours.
<i>Standardise the rules and regulations for the operation of all bus lanes across the borough;</i>	Noted	The Parking Team are currently undertaking a review of all the bus lanes in Slough to standardise the rules and regulations.
<i>Explore localised measures to widen any sections of carriageway where appropriate, to increase capacity to provide the bus lane and relieve traffic congestion, subject to securing external funding.</i>	Noted	If the scheme is to be made permanent and if funding is available, Officers will review the bus lane and identify pinch points along the route.
<i>Take forward plans to segregate the bus lane from the cycle lane to make cycling as safe and attractive alternative mode as possible.</i>	Noted	A capital bid has been submitted to the Department for Transport to seek funding for a segregated cycle lane / mini Holland along the A4 Bath Road from Huntercombe Lane South to Uxbridge Road.
<i>Recognise that existing public transport provision required significant improvement and therefore work with bus operators through the Enhanced Partnership/Bus Service Improvement Plan to seek to lower fares and improve the frequency and reliability of services both on the A4 and elsewhere in the borough;</i>	Noted	Officers are currently working with bus operators to negotiate cheaper fares at the same time as providing infrastructure that will improve bus reliability.
<i>Promote the take up of Electric Vehicles by making the bus lane available to use for zero emission vehicles.</i>	Noted	The Government issued guidance relating to <i>Green Number Plate</i> vehicles in December 2020. The existing ETRO's allows for vehicles lawfully displaying green number plates to use the bus and cycle lane. This includes Electric Vehicles lawfully displaying green number plates. If the scheme is made permanent signage along the bus lanes will need to be updated/replaced to reflect this.

Table 4 Actions from the Place Scrutiny Panel meeting 1st December 2021

The remainder of the report discusses the points raised particularly in relation to congestion levels, road safety and air quality. Data for these areas has been analysed to understand positive and negative impacts experienced a result of the scheme.

## 2.4 Monitoring

Monitoring data has been collected to measure the impact of the experimental scheme on the network throughout the trial period. 'Before' scheme data collected during 2019 and 'After' scheme data (i.e. after the scheme was constructed) has been collected using a range of data capture methods as set out in section 2.6. As a result of the introduction and subsequent easing of restrictions in 2020, findings during this period are skewed. Therefore, a 2019 baseline has been set in some cases, to allow for comparison with 2021 data.

Monitoring the scheme's impacts has been challenging due to the number of national COVID-19 events and Slough specific events that would have impacted travel behaviour and journeys on the A4 route. See Table 5 below.

Date	COVID-19 related events	Slough specific events
23 Mar 2020	National lockdown	
15 Jun 2020	Schools reopen	
Jul 2020	Restaurants and pubs reopen	
Aug 2020	Eat out to help out scheme	
Sept 2020	Schools return	
Oct 2020 – Dec 2020	Regional lockdown. Second lockdown for Slough	Salt Hill Park vaccination site opens 14 December – significant number of journeys

		on A4 (average 469 attendees per day)
4 Jan 2021	National lockdown	
Mar 2021	Schools reopen	
Jun 2021	Lockdown ends	

Table 5 Events that may have contributed to increased journey times

The Salt Hill Park vaccination site increased the pressure on local roads during operational hours of AM 08:00 hrs to PM 20:00 hrs – 7 days a week.

- Between Dec 2020 - Feb 2021 Average 18,750 visitors per month attended the site.
- Mar, Apr, May, Jun 2021 Average 17,250 visitors per month attended the site.
- July 2021 to Sep 2021 Average 15,000 visitors per month attended the site.

Visitors travelled by various means, including foot, organised community buses and coaches. There is a sustained pressure on the road network around this site but modal split for these journeys has not been captured.

## 2.5 Road Works/ Road Closures

Physical road works would have resulted in additional pressure on the A4 such as increasing congestion or reducing journey times. The Smart Motorway works M4 closures are only relevant in considering the full-time bus lane (Aug – Nov 2020) Some sections of the M4 were closed on some weekends between Nov 2020 and Mar 2021. In addition:

- Junction improvement works on A4 Wellington Street / Wexham Road - civil works completed by 10 Nov 2020.
- From 9 Nov– 30 Nov 2020 – 24/7 slip road closure on M4 Junction 7 westbound slip road.

Exemptions have been applied to allow vehicles to use the bus lane if there are any collisions on the M4 that cause congestion on the A4.

## 2. 6 Monitoring Data

The following section reviews the monitoring data. The methods of data capture, the scope of the data and intended monitoring outputs of the review are summarised in Table 6

Appendix Reference	Derived measures	Monitoring outputs	Collection Period	E/W Bound	Peak	24 - Hour	Further information
Appendix 1.1 to 1.8	Responses to consultation	Feedback	4 Dec 2020 – 31 August 2021	n/a	n/a	n/a	Survey was undertaken to collect feedback about the experimental scheme. 862 responses including 40 Stakeholder and 4 statutory consultees responses via emails or individual letters/emails of support
Appendix 2 Monitoring Data	Traffic volume	Increase in traffic volume	Aug 2020 – Aug 2021	✓	✓		Sites: AS009 - A4 Bath Road, west Stowe Road; AS001 - A4 Bath Rd, west Lansdowne Road & AS005 - A4 Sussex Place, west PS071 Toucan
Appendix 2 Monitoring Data	Traffic volume	Increase in traffic volume	Jan 2019 – Sep 2021	✓	✓		Bluetooth devices between Huntercombe roundabout to M4 Junction 5 for traffic. Routes were created along the section to measure journey time.
Appendix 3	Bus journey times	Bus journey time changes	Feb 2020 – Dec 2020	✓	within peak times	✓	Bus Services that use the route include route number 83, X74, 4, 7, 3 and 702, however to identify if there have been any improvements to the bus journey times along the entire corridor, Route 4 was used to evaluate changes as a result of the scheme. 08:00-09:00hrs and the pm peak 17:00hrs – 18:00hrs was used. Despite requests to JMW for journey time monitoring data, no journey time data was received for 2021.
Appendix 2 Monitoring Data	Travel by alternate modes	Cycling Trips		✓		✓	Cycle survey data for Nov 2020 and Oct 2020 at 10 set locations along the A4 include both carriageway and off carriageway counts
Appendix 2 Monitoring Data		SCH Cycling Trips		✓		✓	Scheme closed during first lockdown

Appendix 2 Monitoring Data		E-scooter Trips		✓	✓	E-scooter scheme launched in Nov2020 under the ETRO Trial use of electric scooters order 45 of 2020 dated 9 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2020. A Vehicle Special Order VS 288/2020 to allow e-scooters to operate on the public highway was issued by the Department for Transport on 12 <sup>th</sup> Oct
Appendix 4	NO2 levels / air quality	Air quality change – improvement or worsening		✓	✓	Three of Slough's AQMAs are within close proximity to the A4. The Council has a range of locations where diffusion tubes are in place as part of a general monitoring programme. Diffusion tubes measure Nitrogen Dioxide levels which is closely linked to vehicle emissions. Air Quality improvements have been estimated, but to obtain reliable data would require an extended monitoring period due to the variables that can impact findings
Crashmap Portal Data	Collision and casualty data	Safety and collision rates		✓	✓	Data from Thames Valley Police (TVP) is uploaded onto the Stats 19 database. Typically there is a 3 month lag between data being collected and uploaded. Only accident data where TVP attended is recorded and uploaded onto the system.
Appendix 2 Monitoring Data	Compliance	Compliance rates		✓	✓	Cameras installed in May 2021. 5 cameras along this route, 2 cameras enforcing the westbound bus lane and 3 cameras enforcing the east bound traffic.

Table 6 Data collected for the Experimental bus and cycle lane scheme

**i. Automatic Traffic Counts - Slough Permanent ATCs**

Analysis of the peak time traffic was undertaken to identify if there was any increase in traffic volume along the route. A key trend identified at all three monitoring sites is a noticeable decline in traffic volume from Oct 2020 which coincides with the regional lockdown period. Another sharp decline observed was in Feb 2021 where traffic volume was low compared to the rest of the months in 2020, which reflects the second national lockdown. There is a sudden peak in Mar 2021 at all peak times except for the 19:00hrs peak time period. This increase in traffic volume coincides with the relaxation of the lockdown that enabled schools to open and permitted outdoor gatherings in Mar 2021. There is a drop in traffic volume in Apr 2021 and for the remainder of the year there is a steady decline of traffic volume. This may be attributed to the increase of employees working at home. Traffic volumes recorded from Aug 2020 to Feb 2021 show a similar trend.

Appendix 1 shows tables for each permanent ATC location between Aug 2020 and Aug 2021.

**ii. Journey Time Monitoring – Permanent Bluetooth Monitoring Devices**

Data for 2020 has been included in this analysis to present the impact of COVID -19 restrictions on journey times along the route. The routes have been set up as corridors along the scheme. Table 7 shows an analysis of data collected in 2019 which provides baseline data to 2021 when the scheme was operating as a peak time only scheme shows the following:

Route	AM	PM
<b>EASTBOUND JOURNEYS</b>		
<b>Route 15 Huntercombe to M4 J5 EB</b>	<p>Journey time (JT) did not increase but was similar to or slightly lower than the baseline data (2019).</p> <p>JT data recorded in 2020 presents increased JT in Aug, Sept and Oct of not more than 1 min 39 sec. This reflects the period when the scheme was introduced as a 24-hour experimental bus lane.</p>	<p>JT except for May 2021 did not increase but was similar or slightly lower than the baseline data (2019).</p> <p>The highest recording in 2021 was in May and compared to the May 2019, JT increased by at least 28 seconds</p> <p>JT data recorded in 2020 however presents increased JT of not more than 2 mins 57 sec between Aug and September, this reflects the period when the scheme was introduced as a 24-hour experimental bus lane.</p>
<b>Route 15c : Huntercombe Roundabout to Dover Rd EB</b>	<p>JT increased slightly by 39 seconds in January 2020 compared to the baseline data of 2019.</p> <p>(Note the bus lane scheme starts from the A4 Dover Road junction eastbound therefore vehicles between route 15c use both lanes throughout the study period)</p>	<p>Similar to the AM analysis, JT during peak time increased slightly in January 2020 by 14 seconds compared to the 2019 baseline data.</p> <p>This route is not part of the experimental bus lane.</p>
	<p>JT data along this route increased by not more than 16 seconds in May, Jun and Sept 2021.</p>	<p>JT for the PM shows that JT was below the baseline data (2019) and in Sep 2021 the JT</p>



<p><b>Route 15e Dover Rd to Tuns junction EB</b></p>	<p>The analysis shows that in 2020 JT for this route was above the base line data (2019) in Feb, Aug, Sep, Nov and Dec 2020 with not more than 52 seconds.</p>	<p>was slightly higher in 2021 by 13 seconds compared to the baseline data of 2019.</p> <p>2020 data shows an increase in journey time of not more than 1 min 9 sec between Aug and Oct 2020 compared to the other years. Schools returned in Sep 2020.</p>
<p><b>15f HoS to Sainsbury Rdbt EB</b></p>	<p>The JT for this route show an increase throughout all the recorded months in 2021 with an increase of up to 1min and 3seconds in May compared to 2019 data.</p> <p>There is also an increase in Sep journey times across all years and this is likely due to schools returning.</p> <p>The data shows that compared to 2019 JT, in 2020 JT increased by not more than 22 seconds from August to December 2020.</p>	<p>The PM data presents a similar pattern into the AM data, with 2021 JT higher than the base line data in 2019. The highest increase in 2021 was 1min and 53 sec compared to 2019 JT.</p> <p>Compared to 2019 data, 2020 JT data shows a sharp increase of 2 mins and 55 seconds between Aug 2020 to Sep 2020. Though in October to December 2020 journey times is still more than JT for 2019, by not more 27 seconds.</p> <p>The increase in JT may have been influenced by a combination of the A4/ Wexham Road junction works and the introduction of the 24hr experimental bus lane.</p>
<p><b>WESTBOUND JOURNEYS</b></p>		
<p><b>Route 16 Through M4 J5 to Huntercombe WB</b></p>	<p>Similar to the eastbound route, the westbound route 2021 JT did not increase above the base line data.</p> <p>Compared to 2019 JT, 2020 increased by 2 min 5 seconds in Jan 2020.</p>	<p>PM JT data for this route shows that the JT in 2021 increased to not more than 1 min 28 seconds in Aug and Sep compared to 2019 data.</p> <p>Compared to 2019 JT, 2020 increased by 1 min 54 seconds in Jan 2020.</p>
<p><b>Route 16c Dover Rd to Huntercombe Rdbt WB</b></p>	<p>Route 16c JT data does not show any increase to JT. The 2021 JT runs below the base line data except for the month in Sep where the JT time is the same as 2019.</p> <p>Compared to 2019 JT, 2020 increased by 1 min 4 seconds in Jan 2020.</p>	<p>PM JT monitoring shows a similar pattern except from Jul 2021 the JT starts to increase at least by not more than 22 seconds compared to 2019 data.</p>
<p><b>Route 16e Tuns junction to Dover Rd WB</b></p>	<p>2021 JT monitoring along this route shows is below 2019 data until May 2021 where JT increased by not more than 29 seconds.</p> <p>Compared to 2019 JT, 2020 increased by 1 min 6 seconds in Sept 2020.</p>	<p>Similar to am data, the 2021 JT are below the 2019 up to May 2021 where JT increases slightly for the rest of the observed months. The highest JT was observed in June 2021 with not more than 32 seconds compared to 2019 JT.</p>

<b>Route 16d HoS to Tuns Junction WB</b>	Compared to 2019 JT, 2020 increased by 15 seconds in Jan 2020.	The 2021 data is below the baseline until Mar 2021 where the JT continues to be above baseline data (2019) The highest increase in JT is in May 2021 by 57 seconds compared to the 2019 JT.
<b>16F2 Sainsbury's Rdbt to Heart of Slough WB</b>	JT observed in 2021 is below the base line data (2019).	JT observed in 2021 is below the base line data (2019).
<b>Other Routes</b>		
<b>Route 26 Northborough Sheffield Oatlands Drive, Stoke Poges Lane to HOS route</b>	JT observed in 2021 is below base line data except for the month of May and June where there is a slight increase in JT by 48 seconds compared to JT in 2017. Data for this year is not available for the full year. Comparable data for 2017, 2020 and 2021 for journey times in August and September show that journey time in August 2021 is lower than the journey time lower in 2019 but for the September months, journey time is lower in 2020.	JT observed for the pm data shows that there was no increase in journey times between January and February 2021 but journey time was observed to have increased from March 2021. The highest increase was in April 2021 by 2 minutes 14 seconds, compared to JTs in 2017.

Table 7 Comparison of Bluetooth journey data

The comparison of the monthly journey time for each year between 2019 and 2021 shows that the peak time experimental scheme has had a minimum impact to journey time along the A4 Bath Road. Compared to the baseline data of 2019, the highest increase in JT was by 2 min 57 seconds in Aug 2020 on the Route 15 Huntercombe to M4 J5 – EB, with JT 2020

Data from roads that are likely to be used as a short cut by the commuters, shows that there has not been a concerning increase of journey times along the route. Further data showing the monthly journey times for each year for the above listed routes are in appendix 1.

### iii. Bus Journey Time

Bus journey times were derived from JMW for the First Berkshire Bus Service 4 that runs between Heathrow and Maidenhead via Slough. The bus service number 4 was used to monitor the impact of the experimental bus priority measures that have been introduced on the A4 Bath Road between Dover Road and Uxbridge Road from Feb 2020 to Dec 2020.

Between Apr and May 2020, there was a reduced service due to the Covid -19 lockdown measures therefore peak times accommodating the service have been set to start at 07:30hrs and 16:30hrs.

For determining changes in journey time and variability and to monitor the performance of bus priority measures along the A4 through Slough Town Centre, monthly weekday average peak hour times (AM and PM Peak average), for weekdays only at am peak – 08:00-09:00hrs and the pm peak 17:00hrs – 18:00hrs were used.

The study looked at the journey times for the following segments, in both directions:

- Dover Road to Heart of Slough (Library stop now known as The Moxy Hotel);
- Dover Road to Uxbridge Road Sainsbury's.
- Heart of Slough (Library stop) to Dover Road; and
- Uxbridge Road Sainsbury's to Dover Road.

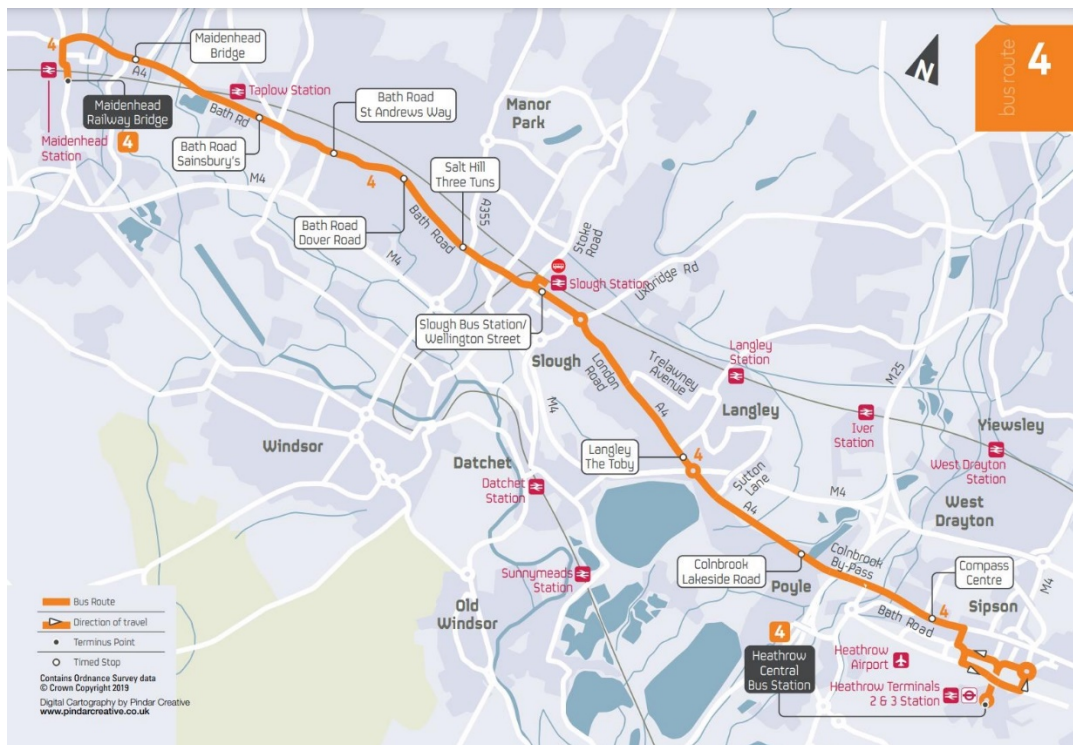


Figure 1 Bus Route for study

Analysis of journey time data collected between Feb 2020 to Nov 2020, indicates high levels of journey variability, which is likely to result in poor reliability of the bus service at each stop between Dover Road and Slough Library along and beyond the study area. Due to Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, there was a reduction in the number of journeys from mid-Mar until early Jun. However, the data shows there was little variability in journey time for the remaining services when in the context of low traffic congestion due to the lockdown travel restrictions, and it can be inferred that congestion has a significant impact on Service 4.

For the Library (now known as The Moxy Hotel) to Dover Road section, no significant patterns can be observed after Apr which shows typically a 5 minute variability and evening peak journey times are often higher compared to AM journeys, but surprisingly, there was only a low increase in journey time after lockdown reopening and the start of the school term in Sep 2020.

Further analysis of the average journey times and standard deviation per month for AM and PM peak shows the late Mar and Apr lockdown journey times presenting a useful 'best case' scenario of low congestion and short journey times for buses. Observed data from Apr shows the lowest journey times across the 10 months for both the segments, Library (6.5minutes) and Uxbridge Road (8.4 minutes). The highest journey times are in Feb 2020 for the Library segment (9.1 minutes), and in Sep 2020 for the Uxbridge Road segment (14.3 minutes).

Post-lockdown and at the start of the school term in September, bus journey times were negatively impacted by reopening on the section between Library and Uxbridge Road. It appears that nearly half of the journey time between Dover Road and Uxbridge Road is made up of congestion-related delays, with a low-to high journey time gap of 5.9 minutes between Apr and Sep. Whilst journey times up to Heart of Slough (Library) remain relatively consistent across the year, the last three stops, between Library and Uxbridge Road, contribute to a significant increase in journey time. However, there is a positive trend beyond Sep 2020, with journey times decreasing towards the end of 2020.

The section between Dover Road and Slough Library improved in both journey time and reliability after the implementation of bus lanes, saving 2 minutes in journey time, compared to pre-lockdown conditions and becoming significantly more reliable. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that the

bus lanes were providing buses with a comparative advantage over car journeys, particularly as traffic builds up (post-lockdown), with some exceptions on the longer route (to Uxbridge Road Sainsbury's) mainly seen in Oct.

### **Comparison of Bus journey time vs Normal traffic**

General traffic journey time data was extracted from the Slough real-time 'Drakewell' database for the same segments and time periods.

The comparison of general traffic journey times and bus journey time data shows that in most months, through 2020, bus journey times were lower than general traffic journey times for both journey segments in the eastbound direction, (i.e., between Dover Road and the Library and between Dover Road and Uxbridge Road Sainsbury's), with the exception of Feb, Mar and Oct, when bus journey times were slightly higher on the longer route section only. Furthermore, the difference in journey times, between buses and general traffic, were greatest between Aug and Nov, likely related to the introduction of the bus lanes reducing bus journey times, as well as to some extent related to the fact that overall traffic flows were likely to be higher due to the easing of lockdown restrictions, related to COVID-19, during these times, pushing up general traffic times. In particular, on the segment between Dover Road and the Library stops, bus journey times remained relatively constant (Apr to Nov), whilst the traffic journey times increased from Jul. They are also notably lower than comparative months of Feb and Mar (pre-lockdown), suggesting the bus lanes have some impact here. Overall, it therefore suggests that the bus lanes were providing buses with a comparative advantage over car journeys, particularly as traffic builds up (post-lockdown), with some exceptions on the longer route (to Uxbridge Road Sainsbury's) mainly seen in Oct.

Journey times for the westbound direction on the A4 in Slough section between the Library and Dover Road, between Uxbridge Road Sainsbury's and Dover Road shows less overall variation in journey times across the year, compared to the eastbound direction, except for a slight dip between Apr and Jun, which could be due to the lockdown restrictions resulting in less traffic on the roads. There is also less variation in journey times between buses and general traffic, on both route segments throughout the year. It should also be noted that on the longer route segment, average bus journey times are actually longer than the general traffic journey times between Apr and Aug which could be explained again by the lockdown restrictions that resulted in less traffic on the roads and hence relative less congestion for general traffic.

There is some evidence, however, that as journey times increased for general traffic on both the longer and shorter route segments, notably between Aug and Nov, bus journey times remained fairly constant (despite overall traffic flow increases), which could be attributed to the introduction of the bus lanes. The bus journey times were comparatively much higher in Feb and Mar 2020, on the shorter route segment, before the bus lanes were introduced.

#### **iv. Cycle Data**

Cycle survey data for Oct, Nov and Dec 2020 was recorded and collected at 10 set locations along the A4 including both carriageway and off carriageway counts. Cycle data collected between Oct and Dec 2020 shows there is a high number of cyclists using off road routes compared to the on-road cycling route (using the bus lane) between Heart of Slough and Burnham Lane. The A4 has a shared cycle/pedestrian lane in place, where footways have been demarcated for both modes. Cycling on a bus lane suits confident cyclists. The highest recorded number of cyclists captured at Site 6 (A4 Bath Road/ East of Tuns Lane) in Oct 2020 with a total of 5,787 cyclists passing this point. Cyclist numbers decreased in December for all monitoring sites with the lowest recording of 577 cyclists passing site 10 (A4 Wellington Street/ East of Aldin Avenue South). While take up of cycling was significant, this may infer that many of the additional cyclists may have been less experienced cyclists.

Data collected in Nov 2020 shows that there continues to be a high number of recorded cyclists between Heart of Slough / Town Centre and Burnham Lane. This increase is influenced by the land uses including the Trading Estate, Burnham Station, Slough Station and Town Centre area that are served by the route. Compared to the previous month, the recorded

cycle flows for both on carriageway and off carriageway cyclists show slight changes to the cycle flows captured in Nov 2020. However, the data continues to show a high number of cyclists using the off-road cycle routes compared to on road cycling. There is missing footage between 12- 31 Oct 2020 for site 4 that has affected the westbound cycle flow data.

See Appendix 2 for Slough Cycle Hire trip data.

#### v. Cycle Hire

Compared to 2019, cycle hire scheme usage along this route has decreased. The scheme was closed for a period soon after the first lockdown between 26 March 2020 – 29 June. The reduced use to the cycle hire along this route may have been as a result of competition from the newly introduced e-scooter scheme as well as the reduced number of workers using the cycle hire between the two main stations to the trading estate. The cycle hire usage continued to decrease across all the stations. Separately, a full review of the cycle hire scheme was set out in a Significant Decision report dated Jun 2021. Slough Cycle Hire data, at this time does not contribute to the consideration of the A4 Bus and Cycle Lane.

#### vi. E-Scooters

The E-scooter scheme was launched in Oct 2020 and Nov 2020 has seen an increase in the total number of trips, riding hours and distance covered by e-scooter users. Data obtained from Neuron Mobility shows that e-scooters continue to grow with total number of trips recorded being 222,032 and an overall distance of 475,288 km covered since the scheme was launched in Oct 2020. The data shows that the growth in ridership has been significant, with high levels of use and shows the use of the scheme for the entire scheme with the highest recorded trips of 36,583 in Jul 2021 and an overall 475,000 km covered since the scheme started. This is an average of 20,000 trips made per month (including low use periods due to lockdown in Jan/Feb 2021).

Monthly Data	Total Number of trips	Total riding hours	Total distance covered (km)
Oct-20	7,973	1,396	11,561
Nov-20	14,928	2,932	28,942
Dec-20	13,156	2,221	23,164
Jan-21	8,185	1,364	15,127
Feb-21	8,512	1,486	16,076
Mar-21	15,417	2,739	30,478
Apr-21	24,036	4,255	72,756
May-21	27,348	4,530	73,771
Jun-21	31,859	5,326	91,132
Jul-21	36,853	6,140	112,281
Aug-21	33,765	5,676	101,295
<b>Total</b>	<b>222,032</b>	<b>38,065</b>	<b>475,288</b>

Table 8 Monthly data for e-scooter trips

While it is not possible to attribute any growth in this mode due to the A4 Bus/Cycle Lane, a user survey issued by the e-scooter provider, Neuron Mobility showed that 50% of e-scooter trips replaced car trips. Combined, 57% of scooter trips are introducing individuals to micro mobility infrastructure, making them more aware of active travel options. There was a recognition when the A4 Bus and Cycle Lane was introduced in August utilising the Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) that there had been a significant increase in active travel nationwide. The success of e-scooters in Slough indicates that behaviour change, away from private car use is a realistic aim.

The e-scooter user data has been analysed to understand this mode's impact on the private car use and modal shift. During the month of September 2021, there were 21,569 e-scooter rides. 1,794 of these started in close proximity to the Bath Road area between the Huntercombe roundabout and the Uxbridge Road Junction with the A4 and 2,078 trips ended in this location. This means that at least 18% of trips have more than likely used the Bath Road.

Applying this percentage to the 285,000 trips Neuron Mobility have had since launch in October 2020, indicates that at least 51,000 of these trips have used the Bath Road. Using the user survey data that showed 50% of e-scooter users trips replaced car trips then this results in over 4 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, as shown by the below calculations.

*51,000 km travelled x 50% car displacement rate x 160g CO<sub>2</sub>e / km) = 4 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> saved.*

*(1 tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> is equivalent to driving 6000km with a diesel car).*

The carbon saving figure of 4 tonnes saved is conservative and further interrogation of the e-scooter user data and ride-through journeys is likely to show higher carbon savings.

#### **vii. Air Quality**

Two of Slough's four AQMAs are in close proximity to the A4. Air quality therefore is one of the key factors to be considered when reviewing the impacts of the bus lane scheme. As the bus lane was installed where traffic volumes were reduced far below typical levels, this resulted in a positive air quality impact.

A review of the bus lane related impacts however using monitoring data is challenging, as the effect of the pandemic is likely to have masked bus lane related impacts. While an analysis of the data from the existing monitoring sites does not suggest that the bus lane is worsening the air quality, there are many factors which influence air quality, with weather being the primary one. It is therefore not possible, to state with confidence that the bus lane is the cause of the low concentrations experienced in 2021 but may be a contributing factor.

The data (presented in Appendix 1) suggests that neither the full time, nor peak time only bus lane schemes have caused a worsening of air quality at monitoring locations in close proximity to the scheme or on connecting roads. Short term monitoring is unlikely to demonstrate that the scheme has a strong positive impact. There is risk that the congestion that is likely to be caused by the scheme may result in a worsening of air quality on the A4 and connecting roads, as vehicles are restricted to using one lane of traffic only, but conversely the scheme has potential to improve air quality by increasing the distance between the receptors and the main traffic flow, and allowing for greater increase of active travel and use of public transport, reducing congestion in the long term. The evidence for the impact of traffic related air pollution on human health is well founded but it is not always easy to assess the outcomes associated with individual transport measures, due in part to the cross-cutting nature of pollution sources and multiple benefits that may arise from any given action (Local Air Quality Management, Policy Guidance, PG16, Defra).

Due to the influence of the pandemic on traffic levels, it remains difficult to ascertain the level of improvement that the bus lane has on NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations, as most impacts would be masked by the positive effect of the pandemic. When reviewing 2021 data, NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations across Slough have not returned to pre-Covid-19 levels, despite traffic volumes starting to return to typical levels. This may be due to climatic effects or could be due to schemes such as the experimental bus lane, however the data suggests that low concentrations of NO<sub>2</sub> are experienced borough wide, rather than just at locations in close proximity to the bus lane scheme. It may be that both factors are causing a positive impact on air quality, however to determine the full impact of the scheme, further monitoring should be undertaken to determine whether NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations continue to remain low as traffic levels continue to rise.

#### **viii. Accident data**

Feedback from the consultation highlighted road safety concerns particularly at key junctions along the route. An analysis was undertaken by officers by reviewing the available data to identify if there are recorded collisions that have occurred along the bus lane. Officers analysed the 19 recorded collisions between 1 December 2020 and 30 June 2021. The data shows that there are 15 slights, 3 Serious and 1 fatal. Of the 19 recorded collisions 2 occurred following left turns by vehicles exiting the A4 and 1 collided with pedestrian whilst the vehicle was travelling in the bus lane. The fatal collision that was highlighted by the police involved an LGV travelling east to west colliding with a pedestrian crossing the carriageway. Contributory factors are 306 (Exceeding speed limit), 602 (careless reckless or in a hurry) and 802 (Failed to look properly). To address road safety issues along the A4, a review of the bus lane signage and road markings will be undertaken if the scheme is to be made permanent and also as part of an independent Stage 3 Road Safety Audit. Officers are currently investigating road safety intervention measures as part of the A4 Safer Road scheme to be delivered late 2022. Funding is already in place for this work, secured through the Safer Roads Fund issued by the DfT and focused on Road Danger Reduction measures which will address the root of issues identified on the A4.

## **ix. Parking Enforcement**

The enforcement data shows that the westbound cameras on A4 Bath Road near Eden Girls (LP161) and A4 Bath Road towards Dover Road (LP115) have the highest number of penalty charge notices (PCNs) issued. The PCN data presented shows that despite the introduction of enforcement along this route, vehicles still use the bus lane- this may have been influenced by the relaxation of Covid- 19 restrictions and returning commuters being unfamiliar with the bus lane. See Appendix 1 for PCN Data.

### **Summary**

Data from various sources discussed in the report do not fully capture the extent of the performance/impact of the experimental bus lane on the network and bus journey times. The following summarises whether the evaluation has answered the study's aims as set out in the introduction and also sets out potential mitigation measures. It is recognised that continued monitoring is required to identify continued improvements.

Consultation feedback mainly highlighted the impact of the bus lane on journey time and congestion. However, an analysis of traffic monitoring sites did not identify any increase in traffic volume that may have been of concern between Aug 2020 and Aug 2021 when the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order started. This analysis is further supported by journey time data that shows delays to normal traffic travelling along the route have not increased to any levels of concern. Although the scheme does not present a notable improvement, there has been no material worsening of congestion levels. This is significant given the removal of the traffic lane and the reallocation of road space during peak times.

A likely diversion route was selected to understand if there was any rat-running. Data was reviewed for one direction only along Northborough Road via Farnham Road via – Sheffield Road, Oatlands, Stoke Poges Lane to the Heart of Slough - Wellington Street. The data for this route was inconsistent over certain periods, and therefore 2017 was set as the baseline. The data obtained from the study period shows that there has been an increase of journey time on this diversion route between Apr 2021 and May 2021 by not more than 48 seconds for the AM. For PM peak time, journey time increased by at least 2 minutes 14 seconds in 2021, compared to journey times in May 2017

The A4 remains a key diversion route when the M4 experiences planned and emergency closures. To mitigate congestion and journey time delays caused by planned or unpredicted events, monitoring of the A4 is required, which enables actioning the correct response. For example, the new vaccination site opening at Salt Hill Park on the A4 caused significant tailbacks on the route. The Parking Enforcement team was able to suspend enforcement during these times, enabling an

appropriate response at a critical time. Optimising existing infrastructure and adopting technology to improve traffic flow is an aim to be applied across the entire road network.

From Feb 2020 to Nov 2020, bus journey times have been collected to identify any journey time improvements for Bus route 4. The data shows that the bus journey time has improved by 2 minutes compared to pre-lockdown levels and is becoming more reliable. However, given the various factors that have influenced traffic behaviour on the network, such as changes to working patterns, it has not been possible to fully infer the benefits of the scheme.

Unlike other data collection methods where less data can be analysed for insights, for air quality data, the monitoring period is not sufficiently long enough to conclude if there are any benefits or disbenefits to air quality along the A4. It is concluded that there is no worsening of air quality due to the scheme, despite traffic lanes being reduced, but further monitoring is required to fully understand the impact of the bus lane. It is also not possible to attribute improvements to Air Quality as a result of the scheme solely; however, studies and government guidance continue to highlight the 'strong evidence for the significant contribution of transport emissions to air pollution in urban areas, (Air Pollution in the UK, Publication series, Defra <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/library/annualreport/index>).

The comparison data was collected during Covid-19 restrictions when concerns around contracting or spreading the virus by commuters alongside the new way of working from home resulted in a significant change in commuter travel behaviour. The scale of the Covid-19 crisis could trigger even more significant and longer-lasting effects on mobility patterns, particularly for public transport journeys. The government recognised the decline in bus patronage and set out a strategy to stimulate its growth. Bus journey improvements such as better journey times, reliability and cheaper fares are aims in SBC's Bus Services Improvement Plan. Bus priority infrastructure improvements must be introduced to prioritise buses, particularly during peak times, to achieve these aims. The A4 bus scheme upholds these objectives.

Additionally, the introduction of the bus lane will unlock several opportunity corridors supporting the expected growth of the residential dwellings, which will increase patronage along the route. The return of commuter journeys to Heathrow will also support bus patronage growth. The scheme complements previous sustainable schemes that focus on improving Slough's journey times and including the delivery of SMaRT projects. By enhancing favourable conditions for a modal shift favouring public transport, the bus lane is critical in facilitating sustainable travel choices and curbing an increase in traffic levels and the associated dis-benefits of private car use, with improved bus operational conditions enabling greater accessibility and connectivity.



### 3. Implications of the Recommendation

#### 3.1 Financial implications

Should the Experimental Traffic regulation order for the scheme be made permanent, associated signage and road markings will have to be introduced to improve road safety.

- i. Scheme cost breakdown to make the scheme permanent scheme are set out in Table 9 below.

Item	Costs
A road safety audit Stage 3 Audit undertaken for all six sections by an independent auditor to identify any potential hazards or road features that may affect the safety of all road users.	£6,000
Costs for the removal of the road markings for the cycle lane on the A4 junctions between Huntercombe Roundabout and Dover Road.	£30, 000
The approximate total cost for additional works (revision to TRO, additional signage and meeting road safety report recommendations.	£32,000
Costs to update signs to include EV's along all bus lanes in the borough (optional)	£30,000
<b>Approximate Total for all costs</b>	<b>£98,000</b>

Table 9 Approximate costs to make scheme permanent

- ii. Scheme costs to remove the scheme including all associated road markings including the cycle lane, signs, signposts, and enforcement cameras are set out in Table 10:

Item	Costs
Costs to remove the scheme including all associated road markings (hydroblasting), signs and signposts.	£82, 000
Costs for the removal of the road markings for the cycle lane on the A4 junctions between Huntercombe Roundabout and Dover Road.	£30,000
Approximate costs to remove the enforcement cameras	£ 7,500
<b>Approximate Total for all costs</b>	<b>£119,500</b>

Table 10 Approximate Costs to remove the scheme

- iii. Scheme costs to revert back to the 24 hour experimental bus and cycle lane are set out in Table 11

Item	Costs
A road safety audit Stage 3 Audit undertaken for all six sections by an independent auditor to identify any potential hazards or road features that may affect the safety of all road users.	£6,000
Costs for the removal of the road markings for the cycle lane on the A4 junctions between Huntercombe Roundabout and Dover Road.	£30, 000
The approximate total cost for additional works (revision to TRO, additional signage and meeting road safety report recommendations.	£15,000
Costs to update signs to include EV's along all bus lanes in the borough (optional)	£30,000
<b>Approximate Total for all costs</b>	<b>£81,000</b>

Table 11 Approximate Costs to revert back to a 24hr Experimental Bus and Cycle Lane

Costs for scheme changes will be met through the Integrated Transport Budget in P192 Integrated Transport block grant. This is an annual grant issued by Government to Transport Authorities to deliver transport related improvements.

### 3.2 Legal implications

- 3.2.3 The Traffic Management Act 2004 (Section 16(1)) imposes a Network Management Duty to ensure that Slough Borough Council secures the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network and facilitates the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority. From 30 July 2021, Councils shall have regard to the statutory guidance 'Traffic Management Act 2004: network management to support recovery from Covid-19' to deliver their management duty under that Act.
- 3.2.4 The guidance emphasises that the Public Sector Equality Duty still applies and in making any changes to their road networks, Councils must ensure that elements of a scheme do not discriminate, directly or indirectly and must consider their duty to make reasonable adjustments anticipating the needs of those with protected characteristics, for example, by carrying out equality impact assessments on proposed schemes. Engagement with groups representing disabled people and others with protected characteristics should be carried out at an early stage of scheme development. Visually impaired people, particularly, may find navigating through changed layouts difficult if they are not thought through at the design and consultation stage.
- 3.2.5 Thus, the Committee must take into account all the relevant information, as set out in this report and Appendices, including the monitoring data, consultation responses and the EIA Report, and carry out a balancing exercise and make a decision as to the weight to be given to each consideration, concluding whether the ETRO's should be made permanent.
- 3.2.6 The Council as a Local Transport Authority (LTA) has statutory functions under the Local Transport Act 2008 and has statutory duty to comply with the Transport Act 2000, as amended by the Bus Services Act 2017. The Council is also under a statutory duty to comply with the National Bus Strategy
- 3.2.7 If, having considered the consultation responses, the scheme is to be approved, it will require the existing Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders to be made permanent. The process will be subject to procedures under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (RTRA 1984) (s.9) and the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 (reg.23). It should be noted that under the RTRA 1984 s.122 the Council has the duty to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and involves a balancing exercise in accordance with that Act.
- 3.2.8 The ETRO's can be made permanent as no variation or modification of the experimental order was made in the 12 months from the date of the ETRO's and without the requirement to undergo the consultation process, publicity and objection requirements. Before making the ETRO's permanent, the Council must consider all objections made and not withdrawn. The Council also has a discretion to hold a public inquiry under regulation 9(1).
- 3.2.9 Recommendations to undertake remedial works that include signage and road markings will be undertaken using the Councils statutory powers as the Highway Authority and The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016.
- 3.2.10 Contraventions (Penalty Charges, Adjudication and Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2005. The Bus Lane Contraventions (Approved Local Authorities)

(England) Order 2005 enables Slough Borough Council to undertake those powers of enforcement on the bus lane.

3.2.11 In accordance with the Council's Constitution, under Part 3.5, the Cabinet has responsibility for executive functions relating to Transport matters (including Traffic Regulation Orders and related management matters). This function relating to Operational Transport and Traffic matters can be delegated to Officers in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation. Under Part 3.7 of the Constitution, the Lead Member for Sustainable Transport & The Environment has the responsibility for Public Transport & Travel Plans and relationships with Bus & Rail Operators and Heathrow Airport Ltd.

3.2.12 Part 3.6 of the Constitution sets out the Scheme of Delegation to Officers and under Section 2 - Executive Directors' general delegated powers include: taking and implementing any decision required for operational effectiveness, taking any action necessary to ensure the effective development and implementation of the Council's key strategies and services relating to directorates and attending and representing the Council on partnership boards. Under section 4, specific delegation is given to the Executive Director – Place & Community for the function relating to Transport planning.

### 3.3 Risk management implications

<i>Description of risk</i>	<i>Risk/Threats/Opportunities</i>	<i>Current Controls</i>	<i>Proposed future controls</i>
Objection to the permanent scheme due to unfavourable response to the wider public consultation.	Provides the Council with the opportunity to analyse the feedback and identify if there are any additional measures to be undertaken to improve the route.	a) Analyse the existing data to identify if the bus lane has had an impact to the journey times. b) Introduce ETRO's along the route to allow revoking of one or more section as and when required to reduce impacts.	TRO process has followed the statutory process and is advertised as per requirements of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 – Section 9 and the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996-Regulation 22.
Financial impact on the Council as a result of the additional works	High costs towards the removal of the bus lane markings, signs and equipment associated with enforcement.	No remedial works have been undertaken until a decision has been made.	a) Additional bids have been submitted to the DfT to support expansion of cycling and walking infrastructure. b) Continued project management and financial monitoring of the scheme.
Likelihood of collisions because of unclear signage.	Increase of KSI's due to unclear signs	A Road Safety Audit stage 1 and 2 has been undertaken and if the scheme is to be made permanent a Stage 3 RSA will be undertaken.	New signage to be introduced following approval to make the scheme permanent. Undertake a road safety audit if additional signs are to be introduced or if the scheme is to be made permanent.

### 3.4 Environmental implications

3.4.1 The Council's ambitions are described in key corporate strategies including the Wellbeing Strategy and the Five Year Plan. Additional strategies, such as the 2040 Vision and Climate Change Strategy are currently being prepared but their key principles are upheld through

delivery of measures such as an A4 Bus and Cycle Lane. These ambitions can be summarised as follows:

- To protect and enhance the built and natural environment and contribute to tackling climate change.
- To create attractive, accessible and liveable places that contribute to better healthy, wellbeing and where everyone has the same access to opportunity and
- To provide the conditions for sustainable, inclusive and resilient economic growth, including enabling regeneration and redevelopment.

In its recently published strategies, the government set out its vision for a net zero transport system which will benefit all. Public transport and active travel will be the natural first choice for daily activities; cars used less and residents able to rely on a convenient, cost-effective and coherent public transport network. The bus is the most efficient user of road space and a vital part of an environmentally friendly local sustainable transport system. Actions taken by the council that negatively impact on bus service provision will make it difficult to achieve this vision. It would also be contrary to the Council's own carbon priority agreed to in the Corporate Strategy.

### 3.5 Equality implications

3.5.1 The Equality Act 2010 outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equalities Duty and under s.149 it requires Public Bodies as decision makers to have 'due regard' to achieving a number of equality goals, which includes the need to:

- a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- b. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- c. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

3.5.2 Relevant protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

3.5.3 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day to day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design policies and the delivery of services.

3.5.4 In order to assist in meeting its duty the Council has carried out an initial Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) for the A4 Experimental Bus and cycle Lane scheme and this is provided as Appendix 5 to this report.

The overall expectations are as follows:

- a) The impacts of the permanent scheme will be generally positive for all groups in society, with improvements across the borough. Benefits will be directly experienced in particular by those who travel by Public Transport and by Active Travel Modes, or those who intend to do so. Further improvements to bus journey times and cycling infrastructure will help realise these benefits.
- b) The main positive impacts are extensive and relate in particular to improvement in air quality, reduced congestion levels, better journey times for buses, increased activity and connectivity, and better road safety. Again, these aspects will be of benefit to all, with specific benefits for certain protected groups.

*However,*

- c) There will be some negative impacts from the scheme on certain groups. However, it is considered that any such negative impacts of the scheme are outweighed by the positive impacts expected for all, including those specifically adversely affected to any extent.

3.5.5. The positive benefits identified in the EIA as a result of the introduction of the permanent scheme are as follows:

- more frequent buses
- reliable bus journey times – bus journey times are affected by congestion. Service punctuality is an important factor in choosing this mode. Bus lanes are one type of measure to improve bus journey reliability as well as traffic signal priority and reducing delays at signals for buses.
- a shift to sustainable modes of transport and improvements to the public realm
- continued support for the strategic objectives linked to road safety
- improved air quality and public health improvements through increased activity (Cycling and Walking for individual and population health benefits, Public Health England, 2018, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/757756/Cycling\\_and\\_walking\\_for\\_individual\\_and\\_population\\_health\\_benefits.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/757756/Cycling_and_walking_for_individual_and_population_health_benefits.pdf))
- 

3.5.6. Examples of the main positive impacts on specific groups, expected to be experienced as a result of the scheme, are as follows:

- Reliable services will be especially helpful to the elderly. This will lead to increased perceptions of safety and greater comfort / minimised physical pain related to traditionally longer waiting times. A more reliable network of services will also improve connectivity and social inclusion, as well as access to a range of destinations.
- Similar benefits will also be expected for people with disabilities, through a greater understanding of the issues, which will be shared by the operators and the Council.
- More frequent and more reliable services will also improve safety (perceived and actual) especially for mothers of young children and the elderly. Benefits will also be associated with better access to healthcare related destinations. Lower fare costs may well be of particular benefit here too.
- Improved bus services are expected to provide a more attractive, more efficient travel option for specific cultural groups, where there is typically a strong 'car culture' and a reluctance to travel on public transport.
- More reliable bus services, reduced waiting times, and a better bus network are all likely to provide a safer and more attractive travel option, especially to young people (including school children and those seeking to travel to places of worship across the borough).
- Low income groups, with less access to private vehicles, will benefit from reliable greater travel options and opportunities.

3.5.7. The main negative impacts identified in the EIA are as follows:

- Older people who prefer to use their car and not willing to use public transport would not see benefits as a result of the bus lane due to some degree of adverse impact from reduced lane space on the network for cars
- The same principle applies to people with disabilities, who again may be less able or willing to use public transport and are reliant on the use of their private car.
- 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.
- Reduced lanes to accommodate a bus lane may result in congestions when collisions occur along the route.
- 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.

#### 3.5.8. Overall assessment

As above, there are some groups where both positive and negative impacts may be experienced to varying degrees. A likely outcome on the network in relation to the negative impacts could be an increase in shorter journeys due to the actual or perceived cost or difficulty in using public transport. However, the impact of this outcome would be considered disproportionate when taking into account the positive impacts which are expected to be experienced by the same groups (and indeed all groups in many aspects). Overall, the positive benefits are considered to be considerably more extensive.

These greater benefits relate to the expected improvement in air quality, reduction in CO<sup>2</sup> emissions and the related improvements in public health, as well as increased connectivity and social inclusion, the potential for economic growth, a more vibrant town and overall an enhanced quality of life.

#### 3.5.9. Consultation and responses

The scheme has been designed and proposed with reference to the views and wishes of residents and commuters. A consultation exercise was undertaken between December 2020 and August 2021 to gather feedback / comments from residents and commuters about how the bus lane was operating and the impacts it was having, 862 responses were reviewed by Officers and the top five most common key themes from the feedback were mainly road safety concerns, congestion, fewer buses using the bus lanes, increased journey times and concerns about the impact on Air quality. From the consultation responses, there are three with specific references to people with disabilities. One of these relate more to quality of bus services rather than impacts (e.g. congestion) considered to be caused by the scheme. Similarly, there is only one response specifically referencing the elderly, and this again targets poor bus services rather than congestion.

There are three responses specifically mentioning young children. A further 14 responses mention parents with comments mainly on school journeys.

The perceived negative impacts are noted, however in several cases they appear to be related to more general factors already in existence, and to address these concerns, the scheme is expected to lead to wider improvements in bus services. Furthermore, 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.

Similarly, the EIA has been prepared taking into account the responses from this consultation. Further details are also available in the monitoring reports.

There are limits as to how far the proposed scheme can address any negative impacts identified in the EIA (and in turn in response to the consultation), 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, with extensive benefits expected for all.

#### 3.5.10. Ongoing EIA review

The assessment for this scheme will be continually reviewed, with ongoing monitoring and further action proposed and included in the EIA as a *'live document'*.

### 3.6 Procurement implications

*None*

### 3.7 Workforce implications

None

### 3.8 Property implications

None

## **4. Background Papers**

- Officers submitted an SD in May 2020 to undertake the experimental scheme.
- A report was prepared and submitted Extraordinary Joint Meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel on 29th Oct 2020 that enabled the introduction of peak time only experimental bus lane that also allowed permitted vehicles to use the route.
- A consultation was prepared and uploaded on Citizen to Space to seek feedback from commuters and residents. <https://slough.citizenspace.com/transport/experimental-a4-bus-and-cycle-lanes/>. Letters were sent to Statutory Consultees to inform them about the scheme and seek feedback.
- SD A4 Bus Lane Amends was submitted in November 2020

Related reports include:

- Strategic Transport Infrastructure Plan - <https://democracy.slough.gov.uk/documents/s62834/Appendix%20-%20STIP%20slides.pdf>
- Emergency Active Travel and E-Scooter Trial - July 2020
- LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan) - July 2020
- BSIP and Enhanced Partnership- July 2021
- <https://www.slough.gov.uk/transport-travel/national-bus-strategy-bus-back-better/3>
- E-Scooter extension - Sep 2021
- Cycle Hire Review - Jun 2021

**Sign off procedure (NOT TO BE INCLUDED IN PUBLISHED REPORT)**

Statutory Officers: *(Finance and legal colleagues should be involved in projects etc from start of the work so that all financial and legal implications can be fully considered throughout. Minor reports should be provided to legal and finance 5 days before Executive Board meeting)*

Approved by or on behalf of s.151 Officer

Name:

Date:

Approved by or on behalf of Monitoring Officer

Name:

Date:

Approved by Executive Board:

Date:

Other officers consulted (consult officers as appropriate):

Procurement:

Name:

Date:

Equalities:

Name:

Date:

Communications:

Name:

Date:

Lead Member consulted:

Name:

Date:



Ward Councillors notified: YES/NO

Call in waived by Chair of Overview & Scrutiny: YES/NO (for completion by Democratic Services)