



Transition Bath

Analysis of householder responses to the survey entitled 'Chelsea Rd: promoting & enhancing Walking Access'

Aims of the walking access survey

Designed to promote and enhance walking and other non-car access to Chelsea Road - a local centre with a variety of shops and other services. We used earlier surveys of local people and a small group of local residents to create access options that could be generally popular and eventually presented to Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES) for consideration.

Chelsea Road in the Lower Weston area of Bath is a local high street serving a dense residential community. Nearly a quarter of households within walking distance have no car. Transition Bath believes that local high streets are an important heart for the local community and it is important to encourage them to thrive, as they benefit the local economy, health and social identity.

How the Potential Scheme was developed

To understand the area around Chelsea Road, in 2011 we surveyed all the households living north of the river within a 10-minute walk of Chelsea Road to find out their shopping habits and their views on how to improve the high street. We also talked to as many of the traders as possible. Both surveys got a great level of response. We followed the surveys up with public meetings in 2012, to discuss the particular issues and challenges of this area.

Based on the questionnaire responses and the comments and ideas expressed in the meetings, the report 'Making Chelsea Road Local Centre Thrive' was launched in January 2013. We then created a small and diverse working group, and this met in spring and summer 2013, formulating optional schemes for consideration by local people. These were combined to form the survey questionnaire entitled 'Chelsea Rd: promoting & enhancing Walking Access', included as Appendix 1.

On the 2nd October 2013 from 7am to 7pm, B&NES carried out a traffic survey for Chelsea Road (summarised in Appendix 2), and found that only 418 (14.3%, or approximately 1 in 7) of a total 2924 vehicles using Chelsea Road that day stopped, and 156 (5.3%) were parked there. This includes delivery vehicles, cars, lorries, vans and bicycles. The number of these which represented people doing shopping or working in Chelsea Road was not recorded.

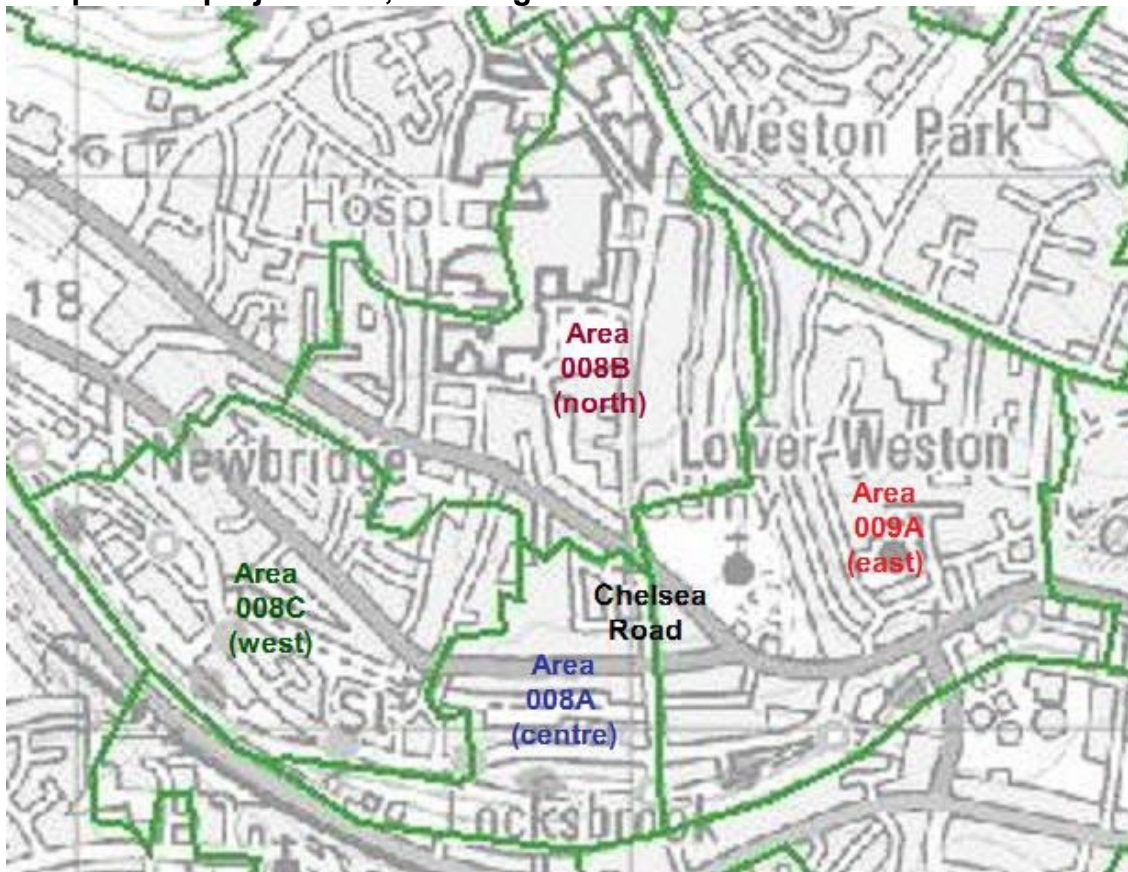
Details of the Potential Schemes

The key proposals included are:

- creating two new crossings over Newbridge Hill, positioned either side of the end of Chelsea Road, to provide safe access;
- moving the crossing over Newbridge Road at the bottom of Chelsea Road nearer to the Post Office and narrowing the road at this point, to make it easier to cross;
- providing a new bus stop on Newbridge Road just to the east of Station Road, for buses coming from the city centre;
- opening up walking and cycling routes through the cemetery, to provide shorter, safer access;
- removal of through traffic without reducing parking, by closing the central section of Chelsea Road, and making this central section available for public and community uses, with trees, seating and cycle racks.

The survey was delivered to all the households north of the river within a 10 minute walk of Chelsea Road in late summer 2014, and hand collected. A return of just under 28% was achieved, very encouraging since generally a return rate of 3-5% is expected. To ease comparison with the previous report 'Making Chelsea Road Local Centre Thrive', the returns were split into the four 'lower level Super Output Areas' (used by the Office for National Statistics) making up the project area (Map 1).

Map 1: The project area, showing the Office for National Statistics areas



The percentage of returns (Table 1) is highest for the central part of the project area and lowest for the eastern part, while for the northern and western parts it is quite similar. This broadly reflects the expected level of impact the potential access schemes would have on the different parts of the local area.

Table 1: Returned questionnaires for the four lower level Super Output Areas

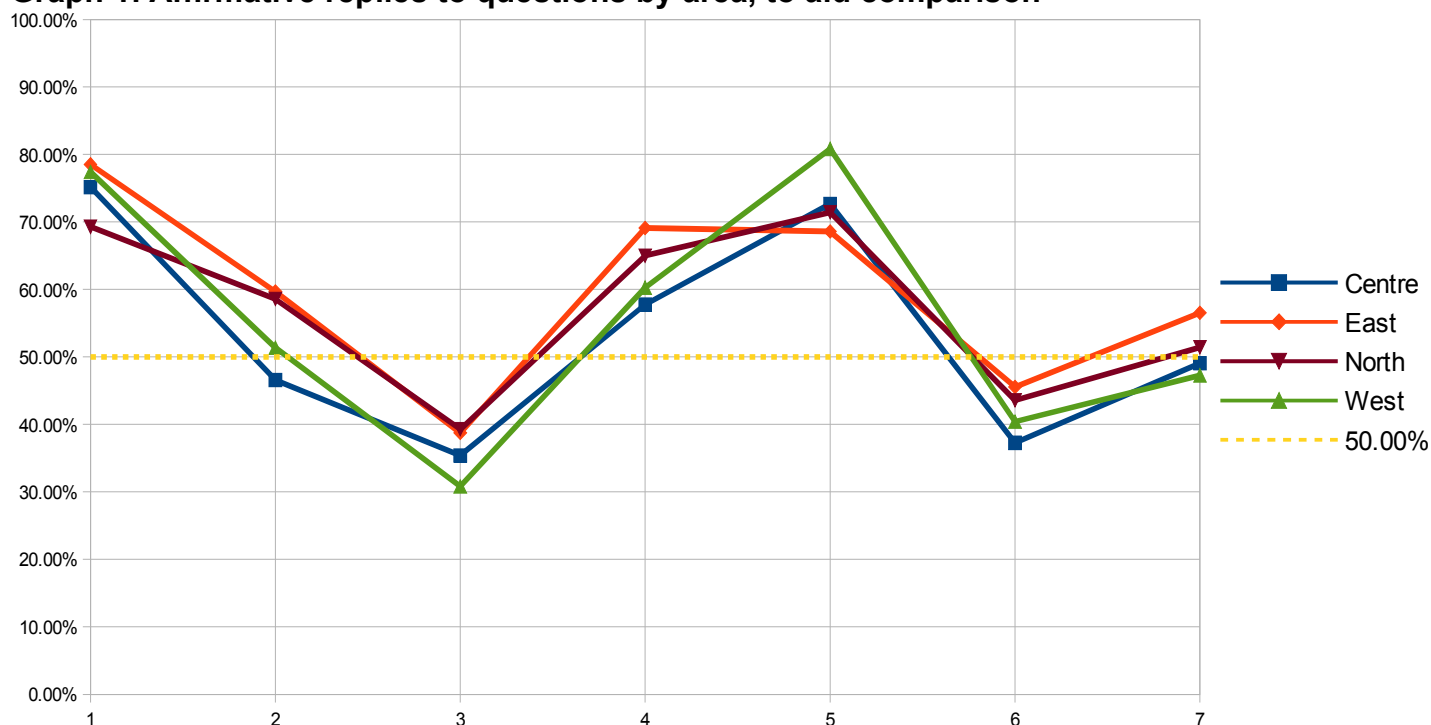
Area and location	Questionnaires delivered	Number collected	Returns percentage (in descending order)
Area 008A (centre)	481	161	33.47%
Area 008C (west)	500	146	29.20%
Area 008B (north)	486	140	28.81%
Area 009A (east)	829	191	23.04%
Totals	2301	638	27.79%

The numbers of people agreeing varied quite widely with each of the seven questions (Table 2 and Graph 1), with most support for new crossings (75%), followed by new routes through the cemetery (73%), and least support for narrowing Newbridge Road (36%), with slightly more supporting the closure of Chelsea Road to through traffic (42%). The figures followed the same general pattern in each of the four areas.

Table 2: Percentage affirmative replies by question for the four areas

Question	Area 008A (centre)	Area 009A (east)	Area 008B (north)	Area 008C (west)	Total percentage	Total number (of 638)
1. Do you agree with creating two new crossings over Newbridge Hill?	75.16%	78.53%	69.29%	77.40%	75.39%	481
2. Do you agree with moving the crossing over Newbridge Road nearer to the Post Office?	46.58%	59.69%	58.57%	51.37%	54.23%	346
3. Do you agree with narrowing Newbridge Road at this crossing point?	35.40%	38.74%	39.29%	30.82%	36.21%	231
4. Do you agree with providing a new bus stop on Newbridge Road to the east of Station Road?	57.76%	69.11%	65.00%	60.27%	63.32%	404
5. Do you agree with opening up walking and cycling routes through the cemetery?	72.67%	68.59%	71.43%	80.82%	73.04%	466
6. Do you agree with closing Chelsea Road to through traffic?	37.27%	45.55%	43.57%	40.41%	41.85%	267
7. Do you agree with making the central section of Chelsea Road available for community uses?	49.07%	56.54%	51.43%	47.26%	51.41%	328

As can be seen from Graph 1, Questions 1 (two new crossings), 4 (new bus stop) and 5 (routes through the cemetery) are supported by significantly more than 50% of respondents. Questions 3 (narrowing Newbridge Road) and 6 (closing Chelsea Road to through traffic) are supported by less than 50%. The responses in the four areas to Questions 2 (moving the crossing by the Post Office) and 7 (community uses) are scattered around 50% support. Exact figures are given in Table 2.

Graph 1: Affirmative replies to questions by area, to aid comparison


Interestingly, for the routes through the cemetery, support is highest in the western area and lowest for those in the eastern area, who could be considered to use these routes most and benefit more. This mirrors the fact that for the new crossings at the top of Chelsea Road, the percentage of people agreeing was least in the northern area, by nearly 6%. Support for the closure of Chelsea Road to through traffic is also lowest amongst those living nearest to it. This may reflect the fact that, as may be seen in the summary of comments below, many were concerned about a likely rat run moving into the smaller residential roads, parking and safety issues.

Summary of comments

Nearly a third of respondents made comments on the questionnaire, a total of 203 people (31.8%). This equates to 8.8% of all the households in the survey area.

For ease of understanding and comparison between the four areas, these were grouped into topics, then arranged by the total number of people mentioning the subject. Those topics raised by four or more respondents were included in Table 3 and expressed as a percentage. The full text of all the comments made is in Appendix 3.

The percentage of people making comments is highest for the central part of the area and lowest for the eastern part, while for the northern part the figure is slightly lower than for the western part. As with the returns percentages above, this reflects the level of impact each potential access scheme would be expected to have on these different parts of the local area.

In most topics, there were more comments from residents of the central area, the exceptions being:

- walking routes only (no cycling) through the cemetery, most stated by householders in the eastern area (4.19%, compared to 2.48% for the central area);
- a single crossing (rather than two) at the northern end of Chelsea Road, said most by residents of the northern and eastern areas (2.86% and 2.62% respectively, compared to 0.62% for the central area and 1.37% for the western area); and
- the closure of part of Chelsea Road should be decided by those living and working in the immediate area, mentioned most by those in the northern area (2.09%, compared to 0.62% for the central area).

The last topic in the table, approval of plans for trees and new street furniture in Chelsea Road, was only stated by one person in each area. 3 topics in the table were not mentioned by respondents from all four areas, but were raised by 3 or more respondents in a single area so were felt to be important enough to include in the analysis.

66 respondents (10.3%) felt that the schemes would simply move the traffic issues onto the more residential roads, including Rosslyn Road and Apsley Road as well as Kennington Road, Warwick Road, Park Road and Foxcombe Road.

The next two most raised subjects were safety concerns and parking issues, noted on 36 (5.6%) and 34 (5.3%) questionnaires respectively.

19 respondents (3.0%) suggested a variety of alternative traffic calming schemes, and a further 15 felt Chelsea Road should be one way. 14 people (2.2%) commented that the scheme would only work if there were a roundabout or left turn option between Newbridge Road and Newbridge Hill, and perhaps the latter option could have been included on the questionnaire.

A wide variety of other topics were also mentioned (see Appendix 3), the most common of which are listed in table 3 below.

Table 3: Percentage of respondents making comments by topic, for the four areas

	Area 008A (centre)	Area 009A (east)	Area 008B (north)	Area 008C (west)	Total percentage	Total number
Total respondents making comments	38.51%	26.70%	32.14%	30.82%	31.82%	203
The rat run would move to the smaller residential roads, or other roads in the area	17.39%	5.24%	8.57%	10.96%	10.34%	66
Safety concerns	8.07%	4.71%	4.29%	5.48%	5.64%	36
Parking issues	9.32%	6.28%	2.86%	2.05%	5.33%	34
Chelsea Road shops will lose custom	4.97%	5.24%	5.71%	1.37%	4.39%	28
Congestion and high volume of traffic	5.59%	2.62%	1.43%	5.48%	3.76%	24
Inappropriate use of cemetery	4.97%	2.62%	2.86%	2.74%	3.29%	21
Alternative traffic calming suggestions	4.97%	1.57%	2.14%	3.42%	2.98%	19
Funding and value for money concerns	4.97%	1.05%	2.86%	3.42%	2.98%	19
Concerns about delivery lorries and buses	5.59%	1.05%	1.43%	3.42%	2.82%	18
Support new routes through the cemetery, but only for walking	2.48%	4.19%	2.14%	2.05%	2.82%	18
Make Chelsea Road one way instead	3.73%	1.05%	3.57%	1.37%	2.35%	15
Roundabout or left turn required between Newbridge Road and Newbridge Hill	4.97%	1.05%	0.71%	2.05%	2.19%	14
One crossing only at northern end	0.62%	2.62%	2.86%	1.37%	1.88%	12
Occasional closure only for special events	1.86%	1.05%	2.14%	0.68%	1.41%	9
Lack of previous consultation	4.97%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.25%	8
Nearby residents & traders should decide closure	0.62%	2.09%	0.71%	0.68%	1.10%	7
Concerns over ambulances and emergency routes	1.86%	0.00%	2.14%	0.68%	1.10%	7
Queries over community uses	0.62%	2.09%	0.00%	0.68%	0.94%	6
Why is the survey anonymous?	1.86%	0.00%	1.43%	0.00%	0.78%	5
Approve of plans for trees and new street furniture in Chelsea Road	0.62%	0.52%	0.71%	0.68%	0.63%	4
Other comments	10.56%	12.04%	8.57%	6.16%	9.56%	61

Conclusions

We had a high rate of response, showing the important of access to Chelsea Road to local householders. Some of the proposals in the survey had widespread support in all four areas:

- Over 75% of respondents agreed with the idea of having two new crossings over Newbridge Hill at the north end of Chelsea Road (although 12 people (1.9%) felt that only one was needed);
- 73% approved of opening up walking and cycling routes through the cemetery, with a further 18 respondents (2.8%) approving of walking only (although 3.3% felt this was disrespectful); and
- 63.3% supported the scheme for a new bus stop on Newbridge Road.

However, other elements do not:

- Only 36.2% of householders supported narrowing Newbridge Road at the crossing point;
- Only 41.9% approved of the closure of the central section of Chelsea Road; while
- 66 people (10.3%) felt this would cause worse problems on other roads, and
- 14 respondents (2.2%) stated that this would only work if there were a left turn option or roundabout between Newbridge Road and Newbridge Hill.

Two further proposals have just over 50% approval, meaning opinion is divided over them:

- 54.2% agreed with moving the crossing over Newbridge Road nearer to the Post Office; and
- 51.4% supported the idea of making the central section of Chelsea Road available for community uses, although
- 6 respondents (0.9%) were unsure community uses would entail.

We also got a large number of additional comments: in total nearly a third of respondents (203 households, 8.8% of all those in the survey area) made comments, covering a wide range of topics including those mentioned above. Some others to highlight are:

- 36 householders (5.6%) considered that the proposals could have safety implications;
- 19 respondents (3.0%) felt that there could be funding and value for money concerns;
- 19 people (3.0%) suggested a variety of alternative traffic calming measures;
- 15 respondents (2.4%) would prefer Chelsea Road to be one way; and
- 9 householders (1.4%) felt that Chelsea Road should only be closed occasionally for special events.

The views of local traders on the schemes are being investigated and analysed separately.

As a result of this project we anticipate at the very least that local people in tandem with traders can explore in greater depth some of the survey findings and consider the prospect of developing firm proposals to enhance walking access to Chelsea Road. The 2100+ households within a 10 minute walk of the Chelsea Road shops are one of the key platforms for enabling the shopping centre to become commercially and socially sustainable. The collated evidence demonstrates local support for Chelsea Road.

It is hoped traders/residents with their local ward councillors can seize the opportunity to help Chelsea Road become one of Bath's vibrant neighbourhood hubs.

Analysis and report by Isobel Russell; survey and supporting work by Isobel Russell, Dick Daniel, Peter Metcalfe, Mark Russell, Roger Houghton, Gill Risbridger & Chris Heward.

To see all the stages of this project and access the reports produced, please see the website www.transitionbath.org/chelsea-road-project/.