Sustainable travel to aid social distancing and economic recovery: Proposals for Cheltenham Borough

The Government is clearly seeking responses to the unprecedented challenges to town centres and wider retail and commercial areas posed by the pandemic; as demonstrated by its recent national BID funding boost and the high street recovery task force, which has Diane Savory of GFirst as a member. The schedule below is presented by Cheltenham Borough Council, Cheltenham Development Taskforce and Cheltenham BID in context of DfT active travel announcements and Gloucestershire County Council May 2020 Briefing paper on Walking and Cycling to assist social distancing and economic restart.

As part of the local adaptive strategies and in-line with the government commitment to a 'green' recovery that prioritises actions that contribute to reducing the climate challenge, CBC in consultation with the BID have identified a range of interventions that could assist in re-establishing footfall and driving longer term transformational change.   Where possible we have engaged with available businesses to 'test' the appetite for proposals presented in this paper as possible interventions to support COVID-19 recovery.

All of the proposals relate to public highway and how locally we can create space for social distancing, make alternative use of spaces, encourage modal shift and as a result re-boot footfall for the benefit of the economy.

We fully recognise that the current TRO system is too slow and cumbersome for the emergency changes required so are seeking support from GCC to expedite quick and easy wins utilising government proposed 'flexibilities'. Some changes are simply removing on-street parking whilst others embrace the principles of neighbourhood streets/zones.

The nature of the 'asks' are deliberately low cost to implement – paint, bollards, planters and where possible no 'civils' required. This would allow for quick deployment, illustrate the temporary nature of the change but equally allow easy removal or alternatively permanent installation at a later date, should the 'change' be deemed a success. However, they also pick up more strategic asks as set out in the Connecting Cheltenham strategy and supported by the emerging LTP which would be suitable to form part of a bid to government for delivery funding.

In addition to 'reclaiming' elements of the highway CBC also seek delegated powers to be able to use the space for other purposes – trading, festivals, community events etc. We welcome an early conversation with you about your views on this point.

We note that Gloucestershire County Council has commenced plans to address the issues now being experienced caused by the reopening of Boots Corner and we welcome continued progress on this to maximise modal shift.

The asks highlighted green below are those which are agreed priorities having engaged with lead members of Cheltenham Borough Council, Cheltenham Development Task Force and Cheltenham BID. These are;
1. Regents Street
2. Rodney Road/Winchcombe Street
3. Montpellier

The ask highlighted amber (Bath Road) is what we understand to be already being scoped by Gloucestershire Highways Team.

The asks highlighted blue are those we consider would be appropriate for bid for government funding.

We welcome the opportunity to work with you on the detail of the priorities and should further funding become available, progress the broader asks on the schedule below. Tracey Crews – Director of Planning will be the point of contact.

Ask – location and proposal	Rationale
Quick Wins – 3-6 months	
Priority 1 Regent Street from north end to the entrance to the Regent Arcade Car Park. Restrict to deliveries am (delivery movements need to reflect both day time and night time economy) before 10and relocate the disabled parking.	Regent Street is a changing area of the town centre, with the recent introduction of new F&B together with existing. It is a key pedestrian link between the Promenade/Regent Arcade/High Street Connecting Cheltenham – Liveable Streets
Priority 2 1. Rodney Road closure (apart from access) with turning head near High Street. Make two way by removing on-street parking. Need to relocate disabled parking close to high street. Links to Winchcombe Street	A key pedestrian route into the town centre from the south and also 'closes' a stretch of the High Street to through traffic, making the Strand to Boots Corner vehicle traffic free Connecting Cheltenham – Liveable Streets
2. Winchcombe Street limited vehicle access with turnhead at high street, apart from access. Make two way by removing on-street parking but protecting loading and disabled parking	A key pedestrian route into the town centre from the north and also 'closes' a stretch of the High Street to through traffic, making the Strand to Boots Corner vehicle traffic free Connecting Cheltenham – Liveable Streets
3. ****Linked to asks of Rodney Road/Winchcombe Street****High Street closure between Rodney Road and High Street, apart from access	No long required for vehicle access if Winchcombe and Rodney are closed. Key part of the High Street which currently serves to split the high street Connecting Cheltenham – Liveable Streets
Promenade – Remove bus stops and relocate to outside of Imperial Gardens. Consideration of closure on Saturday / Sunday as required	Key part of the town centre currently dominated by vehicles Would enable the use of the space for retail spill out and events, create weekly 'streets for people'. Connecting Cheltenham – Liveable Streets
Lower High Street – remove c.50% of parking spaces and replace with areas for tables and chairs, pedestrians and cycle parking. Local parking available at High St West and Henrietta Street car parks which need to be better signposted.	An important part of the town centre currently dominated by the road. More pedestrian space would enable social distancing, support businesses in the area etc. Connecting Cheltenham – Liveable Streets
Bath Road – creation of space for pedestrian	A key local centre with a range of businesses and

queuing where necessary by removing on street parking, creation of space for cycling and cycle parking by removing on street parking, creation of space for pedestrian passing by removing parking. Options – remove 1 side of parking. Bath Road car park to cater for loss of parking engagement with Norwood Arms pub to utilise for additional car parking. On street carpark available on Leckhampton Road	services, Existing footpaths narrow making social distancing difficult.

Connecting Cheltenham – Liveable Streets |
| Suffolks – create neighbourhood zone. Enables residents/ business parking to be retained whilst recognising space for pedestrians and cyclists also using that space. | Challenging environment due to narrow streets, but one where quick wins could build on community capital that has been created through COVID-19.

Connecting Cheltenham – Liveable Streets |
| **Priority 3**
Montpellier - Remove 50% of carparking on Montpellier Street to enable spill out of businesses and social distancing. Do so by removing parking on right-hand-side of street in direction of vehicular travel. Allow businesses to spill out on to pavement with tables and chairs.
Engage with businesses on Montpellier Walk to close private car parking area to enable spill out of businesses and social distancing. Allow F & B businesses on A4015 between Fauconberg Road and Montpellier Arcade to spill out on to pavement with tables and chairs, while keeping pavement open on the other side of the road. | The ambition is to create a "café culture" in Montpellier, where many hospitality businesses will be in desperate need of help to survive. Create significant spaces in Montpellier Street and Montpellier Walk for them to expand into, where they will be able to serve their customers.

Connecting Cheltenham – Liveable Streets |
| St Pauls - create neighbourhood zone. Enables residents parking to be retained whilst recognising space for pedestrians and cyclists also using that space. | Challenging environment due to narrow streets and pressure from through traffic/parked cars, but one where quick wins could build on community capital that has been created through COVID-19.

Connecting Cheltenham – Liveable Streets |
| All of the above – implement '20mph is plenty' signage etc. Look at wider areas across the borough where 20's plenty will support neighbourhood zones.

Agree delivery approach for speed limit plan (i.e. number of phases, geography and approach to signing and measures) | Clear demonstration of how we can build on community capital that has been created through COVID-19.

Connecting Cheltenham - Liveable Streets |
| Albion Street –/ Gloucester Place narrow pavements – application of a neighbourhood zone | Connecting Cheltenham - Liveable Streets |
| Creation of cycle lanes by splitting existing footpaths on Tewkesbury Road, Evesham Road/PE Way | Promotion of cycling at low cost along key access routes

Connecting Cheltenham – Strategic Connections |

Additional cycle parking provision in town centre locations	Connecting Cheltenham - Liveable Streets / Cycle Cheltways
Promotion of Bike Parking provision at railway station. Also link to bus provision education from rail station to town centre	Connecting Cheltenham – Strategic Connections / Cycle Cheltways
Think Travel - high impact campaign on walking and cycling	Connecting Cheltenham – Behaviour Change
School Street, removing parking directly outside schools	Connecting Cheltenham - Liveable Streets
Warden Hill – Bournside cycle link	Connecting Cheltenham – Cycle Cheltways
Medium term asks – 6-12 months	
Tewkesbury Road – turning 1 lane each way from all traffic to public transport only lanes	To support the promotion of public transport provision, increasing efficiency and speed etc. link into transport work as part of NW Cheltenham planning application
Proper cycle lane joining highway junctions wherever cycle ways finish – esp. Chelt walk/St Georges Place, Churchill Garden/High St/Park St, Vernon Place/Bath Road	Connecting Cheltenham – Cycle Cheltways
Creation of cycleway on Shurdington Road	Connecting Cheltenham – Cycle Cheltways
A town wide restriction on pavement parking, to ensure footpaths are as wide as possible to enable social distancing.	Connecting Cheltenham – Liveable Streets
Establish programme of improved crossing facilities and side road treatments on Main Streets	Connecting Cheltenham – Liveable Streets
Develop design for Cycle Cheltway Bishop's Cleeve to Gloucester (see 'Cycle Cheltways' below)	Connecting Cheltenham – Strategic Connections
Develop design for Cycle Cheltway Bishop's Cleeve to Gloucester (see 'Cycle Cheltways' below)	Connecting Cheltenham – Strategic Connections
Develop Cycle Cheltway Network Plan and Implementation Strategy – **suitable for Government bid for funding**	Connecting Cheltenham – Cycle Cheltways
Develop first phase of Cycle Cheltway Network, including connection between Bishop's Cleeve and Gloucester **– suitable for Government bid for funding**	Connecting Cheltenham – Cycle Cheltways
Think Travel: • Establish a Cheltenham Active Travel brand for marketing and communications activities, to include programmes for raising awareness of existing and new infrastructure and services • Establish partnerships with other stakeholders including bus and train operators to develop incentives to trial public transport, including taster tickets and mobility credits	Connecting Cheltenham – Behaviour Change