



Department for Environment and Community Services

Ms MacConnachie
Town Clerk and Responsible
Finance Officer
Thornbury Town Council

Date: 17 May 2022

E-mail: Rachael.Hunt@southglos.gov.uk

By Email

Dear Ms MacConnachie,

Thank you for your letter dated 14th April 2022.

First, on behalf of South Gloucestershire Council, I would like to thank Thornbury Town Council for your work to date to support a thriving high street and look forward to that partnership work continuing.

By way of background it is worth setting out that the High Street was initially closed to most motorists to provide additional space for active travel and social distancing on 8th June 2020 using an emergency traffic order. The scheme aimed to give people confidence to return to a safe environment. Prior to the closure, meetings were held with local stakeholder groups and localised communication took place.

On the expiry of the emergency order, an experimental traffic order was made. This is a legally enforceable order that can last for up to 18 months and allows changes to be made to the highway whilst a consultation is undertaken, enabling residents, visitors and businesses to experience the changes made. An experimental order was made for Thornbury High Street on 17th July 2020 and operative from 28th July 2020.

On the 7th June 2021 South Gloucestershire's Cabinet voted to support the future vision for Thornbury High Street.

As a result of the global pandemic delivery of the project to date has been during unprecedented times; the project team have worked to engage with key stakeholders and provide updates within covid guidance.

I am disappointed to hear your strength of feeling with regards to communication with Thornbury Town Council on the Thornbury High Street project, South Gloucestershire Council Officers Verity Britton and Donna Whinham would like to meet with you to agree how they can work to resolve your concerns. I am aware that my Cabinet colleague Steve Reade has also agreed to meet with you.

In the meantime, I have provided a response to the questions raised in your letter:

1. What are the plans for Rock Street realignment and when will this take place?

The realignment of the road on Rock Street, near the bus stop will be completed June 2022.

2. What were the results of any air quality tests on Rock Street?

The finalised 2021 data is not yet available unfortunately. As soon as it is available, we will let you know. The monitoring data will be published in the Air Quality Annual Status Report due this summer.

In the meantime, however, the results of monitoring in previous years and “raw” data for 2021 gives a good indication of whether there is an air quality problem in the area. The council have monitored nitrogen dioxide in Thornbury High Street (Site 11) for a number of years and the results for 2015 - 2020 are shown in the table below.

Site No.	Site Name	Annual mean NO ₂ concentration (µg/m ³)					
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
11	Thornbury – High Street	25.5	26.8	25.6	24.7	24.2	14.7

The results show the annual average nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels are well below the national target of 40 µg/m³ at this site in all these years. In 2020, the nitrogen dioxide levels fell by nearly 40% compared to 2019 due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions and the closure of Thornbury High Street to vehicles. The raw 2021 data indicates similarly low levels to those monitored in 2020.

While there is no previous data for the new monitoring site in Rock Street (site 187) set up in February 2021 following the changes to the High Street, the raw 2021 data indicates the annual average nitrogen dioxide levels are also likely to be well below the national target (40 µg/m³). It is acknowledged that the pandemic restrictions in 2021 would have reduced traffic volumes, so the monitoring in Rock Street will remain in place to assess any potential ongoing impacts of the changed traffic movements in the town centre, although it is not anticipated that air quality will be significantly affected.

3. The situation on Castle Court is unacceptable and dangerous. Whilst the Traffic Order means that road marks are not compulsory, so I understand, enforcement will be difficult as most of the parking issues are 24 hours. When will the yellow lines be reinstated?

The council are aware of the issues caused by parking on Castle Court, the new Traffic Regulation Orders were introduced on the 17th January 2022. We have experienced some delays with the signing and lining; however, I am pleased to confirm that this work is now complete. Our Civil Enforcement team have been notified and have started enforcement of the new restrictions. Initially this will be using warning notices and giving information to the public to ensure that they understand the new rules, after a couple of weeks they will issue Penalty Charge Notices. Once this happens, we are confident that the parking situation in Castle Court will return to what it once was when the double yellow lines were in place, we will monitor and review the situation further. Unfortunately, any new restrictions take time to bed in and regular visitors to the area will need time to adapt to the new rules.

Information on the restricted parking zone can be found in this frequently asked questions document

<https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/static/9f63a3f8b2caf2a0b92e50a8d36c5730/Frequently-Asked-Questions-V3.pdf>

- 4. Thornbury in Bloom own a number of hanging basket poles on the High Street, but these are currently being used by South Gloucestershire Council to place street signs. When will these signs be removed so that the hanging baskets can be displayed?**

The council were made aware of an issue that has now been resolved.

- 5. Local businesses use the old pavement to leave their dustbins and leave litter in bags. This has a negative impact on the street scene. Will this be addressed?**

Please provide more detail on the specific locations in Thornbury so that Waste Management can visit and take action where appropriate.

- 6. What is the plan for maintaining the planters?**

The council have awarded Thornbury in Bloom funding to maintain the planters.

- 7. Regarding the arrangement of planters outside the Malthouse, South Gloucestershire Council were going to review the design in that area. What progress has been made on this?**

The current outdoor seating licence expires September 2022.

Street Licencing and the project team are engaging with local businesses to understand their requirements for outdoor seating in the permanent scheme.

- 8. South Gloucestershire Council undertook to approach the community bus company to see if they would provide a bus service up the high street. Has this been progressed?**

The project team met with Four Towns Community Transport who confirmed that they regularly pick up and drop off passengers on Thornbury High Street.

- 9. South Gloucestershire has cited national figures when talking about improving retail figures. Do you have any local evidence?**

Please provide clarification on this question.

- 10. The recent update from Donna Whinham and Verity Britton said that the one-way system would be enforced by the police and use of CCTV. Please can you provide specific details on the how enforcement will work? What arrangements will there be for enforcement in the evenings?**

The new Traffic Regulation Orders were introduced on the 17th January 2022. South Gloucestershire Council are working with key stakeholders to implement, monitor and enforce the new scheme.

- 11. The Prezzo outdoor space appears to have been abandoned. Have you engaged Prezzo, and other tenants regarding such spaces, and what is the outcome on this? If the retailers do not have any plans for this area, do you have any plans for licensing to other businesses.**

The current outdoor seating licence expires September 2022.

Street Licencing and the project team are engaging with local businesses to understand their requirements for outdoor seating in the permanent scheme.

- 12. At the last update provided by South Gloucestershire Council to our Planning and Town Development Committee on 29 March there was still no news on whether buses will return to the High Street nor how will they be accommodated if they do return. It is not acceptable to say, as was said at the meeting, that buses (if they do return) will simply stop in the middle of a one-way street with all the hold ups for other traffic that this would entail. To do so seems to risk (perhaps this is South Gloucestershire Council's intended outcome?) inviting the bus operators to decide not to return to the High Street. Will you be providing specific laybys for buses, so they do not block the roads?**

The council are working with public transport operators and the West of England Combined Authority (who are the transport authority for our area) to facilitate the return of bus services to Thornbury High Street; initial conversations suggest that services are likely to return once the construction on the High Street is complete. To date, public transport providers have responded positively to the opportunity to service Thornbury High Street.

The permanent bus stop and shelter on Thornbury High Street will be outside of Costa, the bus stop location is on the latest High Street plan (released March 2022).

The bus cage will be marked in the single carriageway outside of Costa. Any traffic that drives through the High Street while the bus is loading, and un-loading must wait for the bus to finish boarding. Traffic movement through the High Street has significantly reduced.

- 13. South Gloucestershire Council's business case to obtain funding for the High Street project appears to assume that that an additional 2,000 walking/cycling trips of 1.1 miles to and from the High Street would occur as a result of the implementation of the scheme. Where is the evidence for this assumption and were any surveys taken prior to covid to form a base against which future walking/cycling activity can be judged?**

The business case has been through WECA full assurance to confirm the benefits associated with the delivery of the scheme.

- 14. South Gloucestershire Council seem to have assumed that a third of the £6 million claimed financial benefit from the High Street scheme comes from relieving traffic congestions at junctions elsewhere in the town. Whilst the Town Council have already asked for, and would welcome action taken, to reduce traffic congestion at junctions in the town, the reality of the situation is that the current level of congestion has been brought about by South Gloucestershire Council's decision to close the High Street to through traffic. Please give your view on this.**

The pedestrian prioritisation scheme on the High Street has currently resulted in some displaced traffic trips. The permanent scheme will deliver active and sustainable initiatives that will reduce congestion, improve air quality, alongside physical and mental health benefits.

In summary, we recognise that there is more work to do with you along with residents and businesses as we continue to implement our agreed vision for the high street and to help it thrive into the future. The unprecedented funding package for the high street, alongside investment in Thornbury's schools (notably Castle and Marlwood) and in purchasing the Thornbury Hospital site demonstrates our commitment as a council to support an exciting future for the town.

We look forward to continuing to work with you as local partners.

Yours sincerely

A light blue rectangular box containing the handwritten signature "Rachael Hunt" in a cursive script.

Cllr Rachael Hunt
Executive Member for Communities and Local Place