

FOR THE ATTENTION OF CABINET MEMBERS29 JUNE 2005

We are writing this on behalf of Parchment Street traders, all are opposed to the experimental traffic order.

Our concerns can be summarised as follows: -

1. **Alarming downturn in sales figures – over 25%.**
2. **Loss of revenue to business & the local economy – at least £1,000,000 in six months.**
3. **Local employment under threat.**
4. **Increased travelling times for drivers.**
5. **Delivery drivers cannot access Parchment Street to deliver.**
6. **Increased pollution in the city.**
7. **Beneficial to only a few Parchment Street residents (some are strongly opposed to the change).**
8. **Very inconvenient to many other visitors to the city.**

To expand upon these points: -

Downturn in trade

We would like elected members to be aware that trade has seriously suffered as a result of the experiment.

A representative sample comprising 10 traders has provided sales figures for the period of the experimental traffic order. To simplify matters and to keep a degree of confidentiality we have pooled these and taken the average.

This cross section of the trader's figures (including 2 charity shops) shows a drop of more than 25% on average. **In cash terms this means a loss to the local economy of at least £1,000,000 for the period 8 November 2004 to 30 April 2005** compared with the same period in the previous year and corresponding with the period of the temporary traffic order.

Clearly, this reduced level of trade will have an effect on local employment and will ultimately lead to job losses. A small retailer employing 5 staff with an annual turnover of £250,000 would expect to reduce its head count by at least 1.5 personnel. The loss of employment over time could be significant.

This reduction in trade provides a very bleak picture and is considerably worse than the national "High Street" figures recently quoted in the national press. See figure 1. For a more detailed breakdown of sales performance by store.

The footfall that we once had was as a direct result of the passing traffic. Now that the traffic has gone, the footfall **will continue to decline further** and so will the businesses. The footfall decline is exacerbated by the changed response time of the pedestrian crossing at the Parchment Street/St. George's junction. In Parchment Street as in other important secondary shopping areas we know there is a direct correlation between road traffic and footfall.

We fear that a long-term effect will be to drive many of the traders to leave Parchment Street, because the lack of vital passing trade has made their once thriving businesses no longer viable. One trader has already given up and has the business up for sale, and another is on the verge of doing so.

Beneficial to only a Few

About 800 members of the public have asked to sign our petition against the experiment which gives an indication of the number of people who are opposed, whereas we know that not all the residents of Parchment Street want the experiment to become permanent, some are against it. Both the traders and their customers are categorical that it no now takes longer to get in and out of Winchester; this must result in increased pollution and discourage visitors to the city. The residents of North Walls, Friars Gate and St. George’s Street now have to put up with the traffic the residents of Parchment Street don’t want.

Delivery of goods

Many of the delivery drivers of larger vehicles are unable to turn into Parchment Street, so they are forced to stop on St. George’s Street whilst they deliver by hand. This greatly increases congestion and pollution on St. George’s Street and beyond – sometimes right round the one-way system.

Surely, the lifeblood of any town or city is its shops and businesses. Without them the city simply dies. The proposed permanent traffic order is exactly the sort of thing that contributes to destroying smaller, independent business, is this really what the City Fathers want for Winchester?

It is the smaller individual shops rather than the High Street multiples, which make Winchester unique and should therefore be encouraged rather than summarily destroyed.

In the light of the recently published report by the New Economics Foundation listing Winchester as the sixth most cloned town in the country, perhaps now is the time for the City to fight back and really support independent traders. As a city we need a balance of small independent shops and national brands after all, tourists will be discouraged from a city that has a reputation for traffic jams and boring shops.

FROM THE PARCHMENT STREET TRADERS.

Figure 1.

% Reduction in retail sales performance (Turnover) by store 2004/05 when compared with the same period 2003/04

