

DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL EXPERIMENTAL ORDER No.1 2021

STATEMENT OF REASONS

The Order is made pursuant to sections 9 and 10 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. In compliance with section 1 of the Act it is considered expedient to make the Order for the following reasons:

1. for avoiding danger to persons or other traffic using the road or any other road or for preventing the likelihood of any such danger arising; and
2. for preserving or improving the amenities of the area through which the road runs.

A letter from Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP - Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government dated 5 March sets out the road map for the Supporting the reopening of outdoor hospitality. This states *“Given the continuing importance of the outdoors to reduce transmission of the virus, I strongly encourage you to plan for outdoor dining and make all necessary changes to local high streets, squares and the public realm so this is as convenient as possible for businesses and members of the public.”*

This is as a direct result of the extension to the pavement licence provisions on 22 July 2020 in the Business and Planning Act 2020. These temporary provisions are currently due to expire on 30 September 2021, but to give further certainty to businesses will be extended for a further 12 months, subject to Parliamentary approval.

The northern carriageway of Coniscliffe Road is currently designated a bus lane (which allows taxis and cycles) to access the Town Centre and serve the existing bus stop on Houndgate. Since the start of the pandemic and introduction of social distancing measures in the town, the bus lane and bus stop on Houndgate has not been operational due to lack of requirement from the bus companies. Bus services are starting to increase in frequency therefore discussions have taken place with Arriva and an alternative route can be provided around Beaumont Street with a new stop provided near to Darlington Central Club with some minor carriageway alterations (including changes to parking restrictions and loading bays) and implementation of a new raised bus platform as mitigation.

The southern carriageway of Coniscliffe Road currently allows for all traffic movements heading west out of town and also provides loading space to serve local businesses and a taxi rank between the hours of 8pm-6am.

The traffic flow and loading will be unaffected along Coniscliffe Road between the hours of 10:30pm and 11:30am to allow hospitality and non-hospitality businesses to function as normal and receive deliveries.

The existing footways and dropped crossings on Coniscliffe Road will remain clear of obstruction and disabled access will be maintained at all times during the period of the road closure.

Cyclists that wish to use the Hummersknot Cycle route would be allowed through the closure on Coniscliffe Road with exact details to be agreed.

The closure area will be actively marshalled by qualified Traffic Management personnel to allow essential access through the area i.e. emergency service vehicles etc. and should any issues arise on site whereby they can be addressed immediately.

An experimental order is being used as a trial to ascertain whether there would be an appropriate degree of uptake from interested hospitality businesses to provide al fresco dining longer term and what affect closing Coniscliffe Road would have on traffic patterns and movement through the Imperial Quarter. This experimental process would provide information to enable the Council to consider whether there should be consideration and engagement of moving to a more permanent arrangement.

A methodology for assessing the success or otherwise of the experimental order will be used to feed into considerations for future proposals in the area and this would involve feedback from local businesses, Town Centre Management Team and local stakeholders including bus and taxi firms and whether suitable traffic flow has been maintained during the closure hours.

A review of the road closure would be carried out 12 months after first implementation to provide sufficient time for the responses to be assessed.

The Police have been consulted on the above proposals and have no objection to the experimental order being introduced.