

ERA

Exmouth Residents' Association

ECA

Exmouth Community Association

Planning the Pedestrianisation of the Strand, Rolle Street and Chapel Hill

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25 June 2008

Planning the Pedestrianisation of the Strand, Rolle Street and Chapel Hill

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1. Introduction to the work carried out by the ERA and ECA

Exmouth Residents' Association and Exmouth Community Association have considered how the town centre might best be pedestrianised in order to gain maximum benefit for both traders and the people of Exmouth. Both Associations are in agreement on the way in which they feel that this can be achieved. This report describes our proposals.

2. Why pedestrianise the town centre

We are keen to pedestrianise because we consider that pedestrianisation will create an increased sense of community within the local population. By removing much of the traffic hustle and bustle it provides a calmer more congenial atmosphere allowing people to relax and spend more time together in the town centre. In this quieter, fume free environment people will not be restricted to walking on pavements. They will be able to roam freely through the traffic free areas. A more pleasant atmosphere will result and this should provide opportunities for outdoor activities and entertainment. Alfresco style eating should become popular and bars and restaurants should be allowed to spill out onto the paved "piazza" areas creating a cheerful "holiday feel" to the town. Conservatory style frontages could be allowed in some areas to cater for dining in the evening or when the weather is inclement. All this will encourage casual visitors. The impact on trade is likely to be positive as the town centre should become busier with people lingering and browsing in shop windows. Restaurants and bars in particular should benefit.

3. What do we mean by pedestrianisation?

In simple terms it is the exclusion of vehicles from parts of the town centre. This exclusion can be simply be for a "core period" of each day (e.g. from 9 am to 6 pm) and can have some exceptions, for example buses, taxis, local residents, invalid and emergency vehicles. Throughout the whole day any vehicles in this area will be strictly limited to a maximum speed of 10 or 15 mph. Loading and unloading may be permitted but the supply of stock to local stores will probably be restricted to outside the "core period". A shopmobility scheme is seen as an essential component of any significant pedestrianisation of the town centre.

At night and outside the "core period" It has been commented that entirely pedestrianised areas can be daunting in the evenings and over night when there can be a sense of emptiness. We would recommend that cars are allowed into the pedestrian areas, providing they obey the speed limits, outside the "core period". Street parking should be encouraged at that time providing it does not obstruct bus routes or other specially designated areas. A special "night time" taxi rank might also be considered.

4. Points to consider when planning a successful pedestrianisation of the Strand

We believe that the following should be considered when planning the pedestrianisation of the Strand. Some of these will be dealt with in more detail later in this report. (Not in any priority order):

- i. traffic routing around the pedestrianised areas
- ii. "core period" times
- iii. access for delivery vehicles outside the "core-period"
- iv. taxi ranks
- v. buses routes and bus stops
- vi. disabled parking

- vii. shopmobility
- viii. access for town centre residents
- ix. a strong police presence possibly with a local “police shop” for them to operate from.
- x. exclusion of coaches from the town centre and the provision of suitable adjacent “drop-off” points
- xi. Traffic circulation outside outside the “core period”
- xii. encourage local businesses to take initiatives that will enhance the “Strand experience”
- xiii. Alfresco eating areas and continental style cafe frontages
- xiv. Litter control particularly from “fast food” outlets. Plenty of litter baskets.
- xv. Colour scheme to make the most of the natural beauty and landscaping whilst minimising the intrusiveness of street furniture
- xvi. Eating areas for clients of “fast food” shops
- xvii. Control of seagull nuisance (and possibly pigeons)
- xviii. Pruning or pollarding of trees where necessary to allow sunlight in
- xix. Collection of goods by shoppers

5. What are the key issues?

a) Rolle Street

In our opinion the single most important factor in pedestrianising the central area of the town will be Rolle Street. To gain the best results it is essential that Rolle Street, from the Powder Monkey to the bottom of High Street is pedestrianised. Rolle Street splits the town separating the Strand from the Magnolia Centre and the Magnolia Centre from Tower Street and the route to the sea front. Pedestrianising Rolle Street will enable people to roam freely from one part of the town to another. It is the lynch pin upon which a successful pedestrianisation must be based.

b) Traffic Routeing

Pedestrianisation in itself is fairly straightforward, you simply exclude traffic from the areas to be pedestrianised. Having excluded traffic the questions arise, where is it to go and how can it bypass the pedestrianised areas? It is therefore essential to decide upon suitable traffic routes for the displaced traffic. If we are unable to find ways to direct traffic around the town effectively we cannot pedestrianise!

Building new roads in the town centre will not be an option and it is therefore necessary to make the best use of the roads that we have got. The success of any pedestrianisation exercise is therefore largely dependent on the creation of sound traffic routes around the pedestrianised area.

6. Other important issues related to pedestrianisation.

a) Parking

Hand in hand with pedestrianisation comes the need for plenty of good parking adjacent to the pedestrian areas preferably inside the new traffic routes so that people can park their cars and quickly walk into the pedestrianised town centre, ideally without having to cross any roads.

b) Public Transport (Trains and buses), coaches and taxis

All these vehicles or means of transport should be able to drop or pick up their passengers within easy walking distance of the pedestrian areas.

c) Shopmobility

A shopmobility scheme on the edge of the pedestrian areas is essential to enable infirm or disabled people to benefit from the new vehicle free spaces.

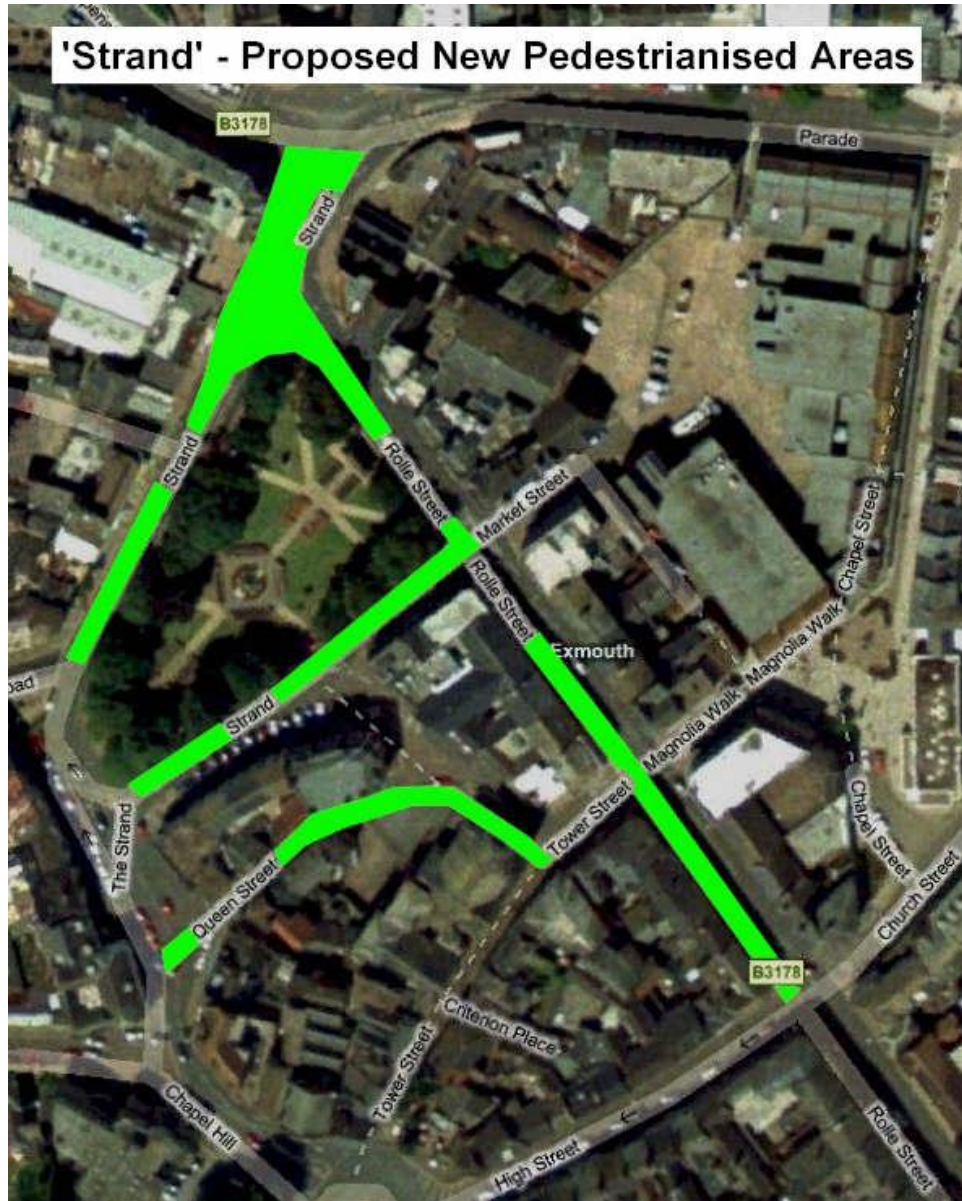
7. Our approach to pedestrianisation.

Our approach to pedestrianisation has been to:

- a. Identify key areas that must be pedestrianised for any scheme to be worthwhile. (In our case that means the whole of Rolle Street.)
- b. Pedestrianise adjacent areas if possible to maximise the vehicle-free area.
- c. Where pedestrianisation is not possible try to create a one-way system. This will provide the opportunity for wide pavements and parking (possibly chevron angled parking) if required. Pedestrian safety should be enhanced with traffic approaching from a single direction.
- d. Where two-way traffic systems are necessary we try to ensure that traffic emerging into them turns left and does not therefore cross a lane of traffic. Again this should reduce the incidence of traffic accidents and "hold-ups" caused by drivers emerging and crossing lines of traffic.

8. Streets to be pedestrianised.

The following diagram shows the new roads within the “Strand” area that we believe should be pedestrianised:



If this proposal is accepted it will pedestrianise the whole of the centre of the town with the exception of the Parade and the far end of the Strand (the “Lloyds TSB” end). This will make it possible for people to walk freely throughout the town centre.

We would wish to pedestrianise the Parade in the future but have omitted it in this report as it is only the Strand area that is under consideration.

9. Traffic Routes to By-pass the Pedestrianised Town Centre

We have jointly spent many hours considering how best to route traffic around the town without entering the pedestrianised town centre. Much of our proposal is based on earlier discussions with Tim Askew (Devon CC, Highways Department) and John Wokersien (Town Clerk, Exmouth TC) when a trial proposal for the closure of the Strand was being considered. To that extent many of our suggestions are not new and have been investigated and approved by a Devon CC expert, albeit some years ago.

We are confident that the core scheme is the best that can be devised. Where we have identified alternative routing possibilities we have explained the reasons behind our final recommendation.

The following map shows our proposals (Roads with no markings remain unchanged):



Note: More detailed hand drawings of the key portions of this network are included as Appendices A, B and C. These should be referred to whilst reading the following notes on the proposed changes as they should clarify many of the points raised in the text.

The main features of this proposal are:

a) Chapel Hill to Alexandra Terrace (see Appendix B)

We propose that this should be changed to a one-way system which will:

- i. improve the very dangerous junction with Imperial Road as traffic approaching from the sea front along Alexandra Terrace must turn left into Imperial Road.
- ii. prevent traffic from approaching the town centre over Chapel Hill. In the past this traffic has prevented the creation of a crossing to link the top of Tower Street with Manor Gardens
- iii. by removing one lane of traffic it will create space for landscaping or parking on Chapel Hill and along Alexandra Terrace.

b) Junction of Imperial Road with Alexandra Terrace (by the end of the Manor Gardens) (see Appendix B)

We believe that the priorities on this junction should be changed so that Imperial Road is treated as the main road which then continues by turning right down towards the sea front.

The new one-way part of Alexandra Terrace from Chapel Hill will then be the minor road and traffic on it will have to halt at the junction with Imperial Road before continuing on towards the sea front or turning right into Imperial Road.

c) The Beacon (see Appendices A and B)

The Beacon should be changed to one-way up on to the Beacon. The road is not really suitable for two way traffic and the new one-way system would make it impractical for vehicle to emerge from the The Beacon as they would have to execute an extremely tight turn to continue down the one-way Alexandra Terrace towards the seafront

d) St. Andrew's Road past the Town Hall to Chapel Hill (see Appendix B)

We suggest that this should also be one-way which would:

- i. improve visibility for pedestrians
- ii. enable a new pavement to be created in front of the houses along St. Andrew's Road where there is none at the moment.
- iii. allow the approach to Chapel Hill to be greatly enhanced as there will only be a single lane of traffic going up the hill in front of the Town Hall. This will release a considerable amount of space on the approach to Chapel Hill.
- iv. permit the pavement at the top of Tower Street to be extended out into the existing Road to improve visibility.
- v. allow a short crossing to be created linking the top of Tower Street with the Manor Gardens through which people could walk on their way to Bath Road and the sea front. This route will take visitors past the conveniences in Manor Gardens and the Tourist Information Office.
- vi. Deliveries of fuel to Bentley's Garage will still be possible.

e) St. Andrew's Road via the Strand to Victoria Road (see Appendix C)

We propose that this should be a one-way system exiting onto Imperial Road. We have given considerable thought to what is the best direction for traffic to flow as both directions have their disadvantages. In the end we decide that the best option is for traffic to travel from St. Andrew's Road through the Strand and thence to Victoria Road. If it travels in this direction it will reduce the volume of traffic on Chapel Hill. The disadvantage of this is that vehicles will emerge from Victoria Road into Imperial Road where many will wish to turn right, a situation that we sought to avoid. However the volume of traffic on this section is likely to be low. Chapel Hill is considered a key node when bypassing the town centre and we feel that it is essential to minimise the traffic there as much as possible.

We are suggesting that this one-way system should be created for a number of reasons:

- i. it will assist traders at this end of the Strand and in Victoria Road,
- ii. it will enable disabled parking spaces to be created on the Strand itself,
- iii. a taxi rank could also be established here

f) High Street (see Appendix A)

Probably the most difficult aspect of providing a traffic system that bypasses the town centre is the portion linking the Chapel Hill complex with the roads to Budleigh Salterton and the Avenues. Any solution has an element of compromise.

After considering a number of alternative routes our suggestion is that High Street should be changed into a two-way road. (This suggestion was first made by Tim Askew (Devon CC, Highways Department) in our earlier talks.) This change would have the following implications:

- i. it may be necessary to reduce the amount of parking allowed in High Street,
- ii. traffic lights will probably be needed at the junction of High Street and Church Street with Rolle Street. We would suggest that these should be well set back from the junction to allow plenty of turning space for large vehicles.
- iii. it should be borne in mind that Rolle Street will be pedestrianised from the Strand to the bottom of High Street and therefore only buses will emerge from that direction. We would further suggest that if this portion of Rolle Street is open to traffic outside the "core hours" it should only be for traffic heading towards the Strand. This will mean that motorists and others using the junction at any time will not meet vehicles emerging from the direction of the town centre.

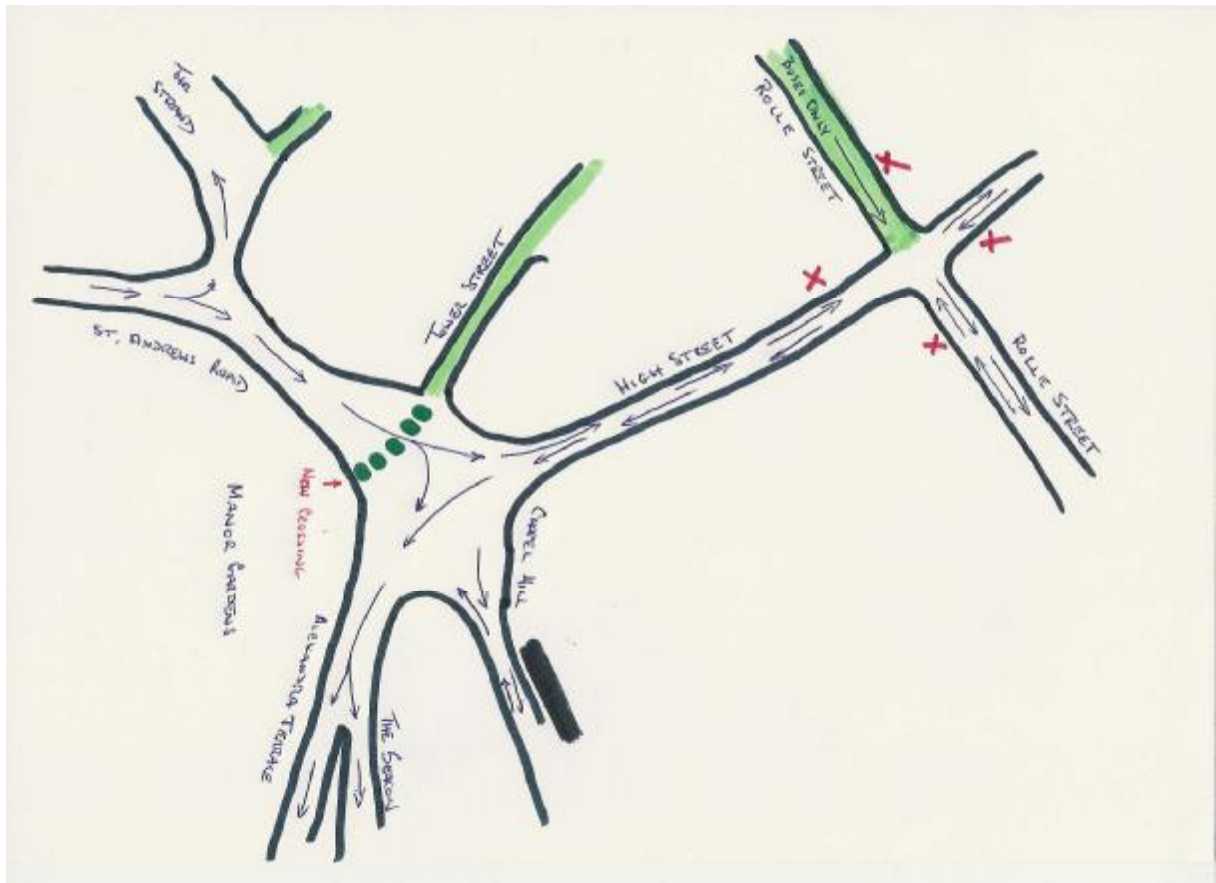
10. What are the next steps?

The creation of a pedestrianised area can be accomplished in two stages. Firstly, the elimination of traffic from the area to be pedestrianised and secondly, the landscaping of the pedestrianised space.

These two stages do not need to be accomplished simultaneously and we believe that the new traffic routes should be established and tested as early as possible so that any problems can be resolved before the pedestrianisation is completed.

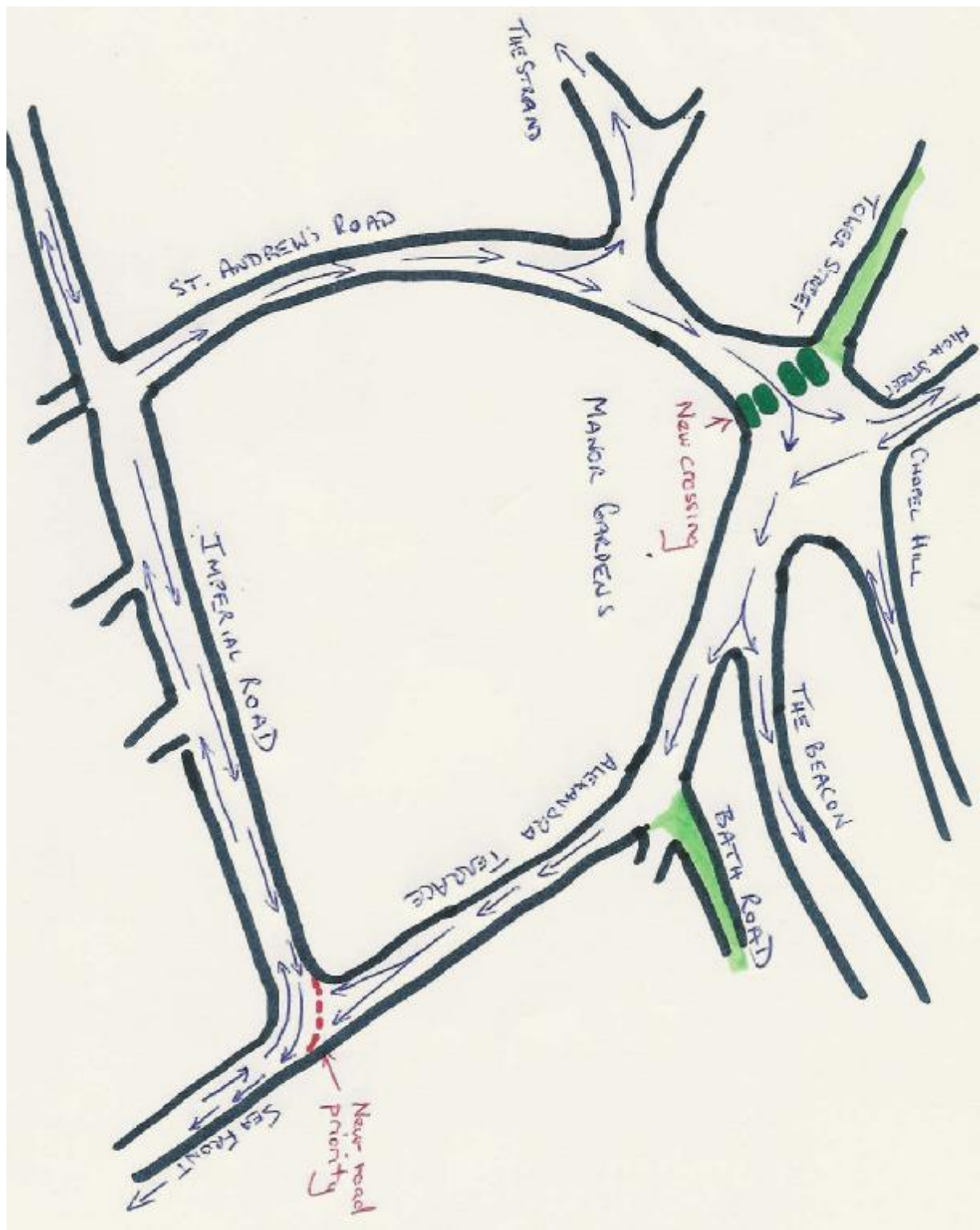
Appendix A – High Street and Chapel Hill Traffic System

Note: Pedestrianised areas shown in green.



Appendix B – The St. Andrews, Chapel Hill, Alexandra Terrace, Imperial Road Traffic Loop

Note: Pedestrianised areas shown in green.



Appendix C – St. Andrew's Road, Strand and Victoria Road Traffic Access System

Note: Pedestrianised areas shown in green.

