

**Report to** Norwich highways agency committee

**Item**

24 November 2016

**Joint Report of** Head of city development services and Executive director of community and environmental services

**10**

**Subject** Transport for Norwich – Changes to the access restrictions in pedestrianised areas in the city centre

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### **Purpose**

To seek approval to consult on the proposed changes to access restrictions in the city centre pedestrianised areas.

### **Recommendation**

That the committee:

- (1) agree to consult on the scheme to improve and rationalise loading and access restrictions and access for cycling within the city centre. The options being:
  - (a) access to the existing time restricted areas in the city centre being rationalised, so that access for all vehicles (including cyclists) is only available outside the hours of 10am until 5pm seven days a week;
  - (b) access by vehicle in the time restricted streets rationalised to 10am until 5pm seven days a week, with cycling permitted at all times;
- (2) note that any representations received will be considered by a future meeting of the committee.

### **Corporate and service priorities**

The report helps to meet the corporate priority to provide a safe, clean and low carbon city and the service plan priority of implementation of the Transport for Norwich strategy.

### **Financial implications**

There is a budget funded by the Department for Transport (DfT) of £250,000\*

The cost to update signage and put in any measures for controlled access will come from this budget. The cost will be dependent on the outcome of any consultation and subsequent decision.

\*This project budget includes a second element of works to improve cycle permeability by providing cycle contraflows which will be considered at a later date.

**Ward/s:** Mancroft

**Cabinet member:** Councillor Bremner – Environment and sustainable development

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**Background documents**

None

# Report

## Strategic Objectives

1. Norwich and its surrounding area is becoming an increasingly popular area to live, work and visit. It is the number one shopping destination in the Eastern Region and becoming one the Nation's premier cultural centres. To ensure the Greater Norwich Area continues to be popular and grow, the transport systems need to be able to cope with the increased demand.
2. Norwich is a medieval city with a narrow road system; incorporating a 21st century transport system to cope with the increased demand without sacrificing highway space for a particular transport mode or at the expense of green space and historic buildings is challenging.
3. The Norwich area Transportation Strategy (NATS) now more widely known as Transport for Norwich (TfN), is the adopted strategy which will deliver the transport improvements needed over the next 15 plus years. The strategy recognises everybody's journeys are different and does not look to force people to use one particular mode. It does look to give people viable options on how they choose to travel and actively promote sustainable transport. To do this in some areas of the network there needs to be a re-balance of the highway space available.
4. The Strategy details the plan for future delivery of improvements in order to develop sustainable transport, reduce congestion and improve air quality within the Greater Norwich area. The strategy has already delivered key improvements such as the award winning Norwich Bus Station, St Augustine's Gyratory, a network of Park & Ride facilities, St Stephens and Chapel Field North and various Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) improvements. It also includes the recently completed Postwick hub and the Northern Distributor Road which is due for completion late 2017.
5. The implementation plan for the Norwich Area Transportation Strategy (NATSIP) was agreed by Norfolk County Council in April 2010 and updated in November 2013 ([see link for updated implementation plan http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/view/NCC158241](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/view/NCC158241)). The plan sets out the range of transport measures, together with their general intended phasing, for delivery over the short to medium term.
6. The plan has now been updated to take account of what has been delivered since 2010, and to reflect the latest position on future scheme delivery, given progress with implementation, and now that the growth plans for the area are more clear ([see joint core strategy document: http://www.greaternorwichgrowth.org.uk/dmsdocument/1953](http://www.greaternorwichgrowth.org.uk/dmsdocument/1953)).
7. Cycling is on the increase for both recreation and commuting nationally and the area has a thriving cycling community. The implementation of a City wide cycling network (see link to cycle map <http://www.norwich.gov.uk/TransportAndStreets/Transport/Cycling/Documents/CyclingMapFront.pdf>) is a key part of the Transport for Norwich Strategy as by

delivering a comprehensive city network this reduces a number of short distance car journeys removing pressure on the network, as well as offering improving quality of life and the health benefits that have been well documented.

8. The Greater Norwich area is one of eight urban areas across the country that has been successful in bidding for Cycle Ambition funding from the Department for Transport to comprehensively improve the quality of cycling infrastructure across the Norwich cycle network a copy of the application documents can be found here  
<http://www.norwich.gov.uk/TransportAndStreets/Transport/Cycling/Pages/CycleCityAmbitionGrant2015.aspx>.

## **Background**

9. The City Cycle Ambition Grant (CCAG) was originally awarded to Norwich City Council in 2013 and a further grant was made in 2015. The aim of this scheme is to improve facilities for the cyclist and encourage as many people as possible, even the most vulnerable, to use this sustainable and healthy form of travel. It is the intention of the CCAG to encourage more people to cycle throughout the city, to make cycling enjoyable for all and improve the infrastructure to benefit all kinds of cycling from commuter to leisure.
10. As one of 46 different projects the City Centre Access Strategy aims to rationalise and make the restrictions on the pedestrianised streets understandable and enforceable by reviewing the current arrangements for cycling and loading. The project also includes a making a number of streets suitable for contraflow cycling to increase cycle permeability. As two of these streets fall within the City Centre Access review area they will form part of this report. These are Lobster Lane and Little London Street where No Entry signs currently prohibit all vehicle flow including cyclists. Other streets beyond the pedestrianised areas will be considered separately
11. As shown on Plan No.1 attached as appendix 1, cycling and access restrictions in the pedestrian areas of the city centre are varied. The existing arrangement has grown as individual pedestrianised schemes have been installed. This means that although they would have been individually considered appropriate at the time of installation, they now form a very complicated and disconnected pattern of restrictions that are in need of review.
12. Cycling and loading are either banned 24/7 (e.g. parts of London Street), time restricted on city centre streets (e.g. Gentleman's Walk) or permitted at all times (e.g. Bedford Street). The rules have been introduced incrementally through individual projects without a thorough review. Consequently the time restrictions applied also vary between streets. In some streets there are different restrictions on sections of the same street.
13. The network of pedalways established in Norwich all meet at the 'hub' in St Andrews Plain avoiding much of the city centre amenity. At present there is an obstruction for a cyclist accessing the pedalways from other areas in the city centre. If cyclists are banned from certain streets they are forced to cycle on

heavily trafficked roads where accidents do occur. This access problem may deter some more vulnerable cyclists from using the pedalways.

## Research

14. In 1993 DfT published the Traffic advisory Leaflet of Cycling in Pedestrian Areas. In the main conclusions it states "Observation revealed no real factors to justify excluding cyclists from pedestrianised areas, suggesting that cycling could be more widely permitted without detriment to pedestrians" In the findings it states "Cyclists respond to pedestrian density, modifying their speed, dismounting and taking other avoiding action where necessary"
15. Accidents between pedestrians and cyclists are very rarely generated in pedestrianised areas. In Norwich only two pedestrian/cyclist accidents in 5 years in the area of pedestrian streets in this review. This should be viewed against the backdrop that cycling is already seen on these streets and the data shows that the significant numbers of pedestrian and cyclist casualties occur on the surrounding roads and are caused by motorised transport.
16. In 2003 Transport Research Laboratory prepared a report for the DfT called "cycling in vehicle restricted areas" where studies were carried out in Cambridge, Hull and Salisbury. The report considered factual information such as the numbers of cyclists and pedestrians and any interactions between the two parties along with the attitude and concerns of those cyclists and pedestrians. In the conclusions it states "The observation surveys showed that the majority of cyclists in VRAs (Vehicle Restricted Areas) modify their behaviour by slowing down or dismounting as pedestrian numbers increase". Concerning the attitude survey the report concluded "The pedestrian attitude surveys showed that the majority of pedestrians were not particularly concerned about cyclists in the pedestrian area..."
17. In England most cities and towns have pedestrianised areas where cycling is not permitted at various times of the day. In Kendal an experimental "permitting cyclists" Order was made on the pedestrian areas which came into force in June 2006. In July 2007 a report was taken to committee recommending the order is made permanent. The review of the scheme stated "The order has been in force for a little over 12 months and appears to be working safely. No personal injury accidents have been reported but there is some anecdotal evidence of "incidents" between cyclists and pedestrians." There were no formal objections to the order and so far there had been no evidence of collisions, the police did not object to a permanent traffic regulation order permitting cycling.
18. The police have reported they have received concerns from the public about cyclists in the pedestrianised areas in the city centre. We have not been informed of the numbers but this does show that some members of the community consider a pedestrian zone should not have cyclists.

## **Early consultation**

19. The Cycle Campaign, Norfolk Police, Norfolk and Norwich Association for the Blind and Norwich Access Group have given comment on the principals of this project. It was noted that there are small number of sections of some streets that are narrow and not particularly suited to cycling.
20. The Norwich Business Improvement District and Living Streets were also invited to comment but no responses were received.

## **Consideration**

21. Three possible approaches have been considered. The first is a 'Do Nothing' option, whilst the second proposes standardising the time period of the restrictions and allowing cycling in all streets outside peak hours. The final option considers a standardises access restriction for motor vehicles, with cycling access at all times:-

### ***Option 1 – Leave the cycling restrictions as existing in pedestrianised areas (the 'Do Nothing' option).***

22. The reasons people do not follow restrictions are varied, however it is considered that if the signage is too complicated, the restrictions change too frequently, or the public feel the restriction is not necessary or relevant to them, then compliance is reduced. The plan in Appendix 1 demonstrates just how complicated the current arrangements are, with restriction varying along the length of streets in a number of locations. Due to the number of cyclists that presently cycle in the pedestrian areas during the restricted times, it is clear the existing restrictions do not work.
23. All existing restrictions are signed on street in accordance with the DfT Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002. This is standard signage and allows enforcement. It is not possible under the signs regulations to alter or add extra signs for information as this would then make the restriction unenforceable. The existing restrictions send a confusing and negative message to cyclists that they are not welcome in the city and that cycling is not considered a positive sustainable form of transport.
24. The existing loading restrictions also require complicated and confusing signage that is poorly understood. It is, therefore inappropriate to leave the existing arrangements in place. Norfolk Constabulary has been cautious in enforcing the cycling regulations in the pedestrian areas as they consider the signage in some locations to be ambiguous.

### ***Option 2 – amend the timings of the restrictions in pedestrianised areas and allow cycling outside peak hours.***

25. With this option access by vehicles and cyclists would be rationalised such that they could only have access outside revised operational hours of 10am to 5pm seven days a week (see appendix 2). This would create an easy to follow restriction, allow cycling for most commuter journeys, maintain existing motor

vehicle restriction and utilise an entry plate that would be consistent across the city.

26. However there will still need to be standard signs at the beginning of the restriction and these will need to be similar to the existing signs which are considered difficult for the public to understand. In some locations, vehicular access is permitted in a restricted basis to parts of a street, for example access to the Blue Badge spaces within the pedestrianised areas (see motor vehicle restrictions in appendix 4).
27. This option would give a better overall picture for the cyclist in pedestrianised areas. It is not possible to determine how many cycling signs will be needed until the loading restrictions have been decided on, however it is likely there will be a similar number as on street now.
28. As with option 1, the restriction would also be in place when pedestrian flows are relatively light, and there is therefore a significant risk that cyclists would continue to ignore them and enforcement could continue to be difficult. For cycle access this presents an improvement on option 1 but it could go further to encourage the more vulnerable cyclist.
29. Consequently, a change to a uniform restriction to cyclists in the pedestrianised areas would be of some improvement.

***Option 3 – Remove the existing restrictions and allow access to pedestrian zones by cyclist at all times.***

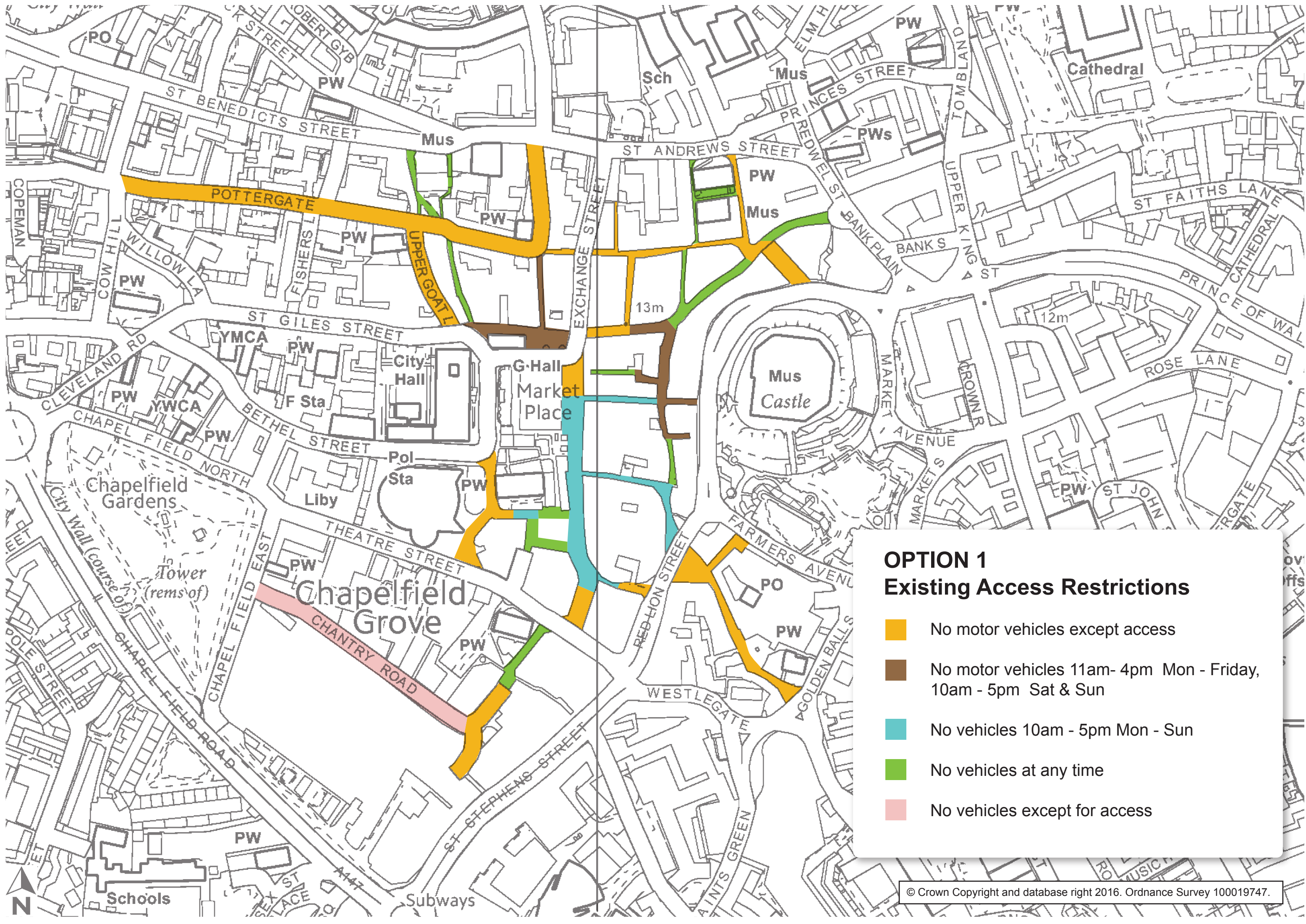
30. In this option, access by vehicles to the time restricted streets would be standardised at 10am to 5pm, seven days a week and cycling would be allowed within the pedestrian areas (see appendix 3).
31. Since the existing city centre signage was installed, DfT have approved the updated *Pedestrian and Cycle Zone* signage. If we simply update the timings for motor vehicle access for loading purposes we can utilise this newer and clearer signage on the streets that permits both walking and cycling. This signage has already been put in place on Westlegate and is more succinct and easier to understand. There would be no expectation of the police to enforce unclear cycling restrictions but it would still be possible to take action against unreasonable cycling behaviour.
32. It would be a great benefit to the less confident cyclist to allow access to all streets in the city centre. This would allow free access to the pedalway routes, city centre attractions and places of employment.
33. Other road users would be aware of the possibility of cyclists in the area at all times which should lead to mutual consideration over time. A publicity campaign, including directions to cyclists to cycle appropriately and with care would assist with this.

It is recognised that some sections of the community may be very wary of this approach, but it is hoped with the correct public information these concerns will






be reduced. Existing research and experience elsewhere has demonstrated that, in reality, these concerns are unsubstantiated (see paragraphs 14-17)

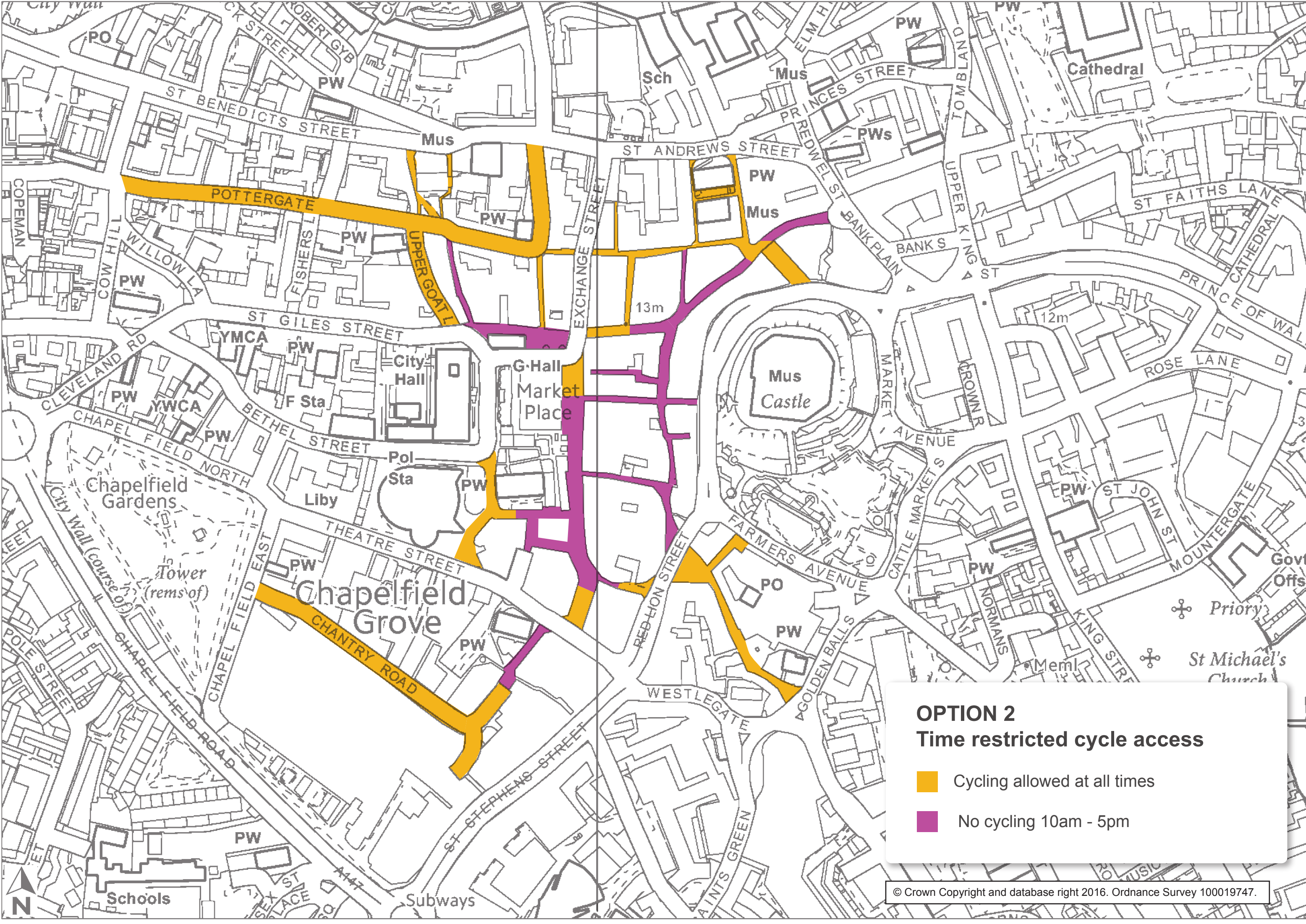
## **Conclusion**

34. The existing access, loading and cycling restrictions in the pedestrianised areas are inconsistent, confusing, and the required signage is complex and difficult to understand. Consequently there is a need to rationalise the existing arrangements
35. Two possible scenarios for consultation are recommended. Firstly, a standardisation of access hours across all the streets that currently operate under a time restriction, so that no vehicles (including cyclists) would be permitted between the hours of 10am and 5pm on any day. The second option would restrict motorised vehicles only outside of these hours, with cycling permitted at all times.
36. The consultation should also include proposals to provide for contraflow cycling west bound on Lobster Lane and north bound on Little London Street where cycling and general traffic is currently allowed in one direction only. These would require the provision on an 'Except Cycles' sub plate.





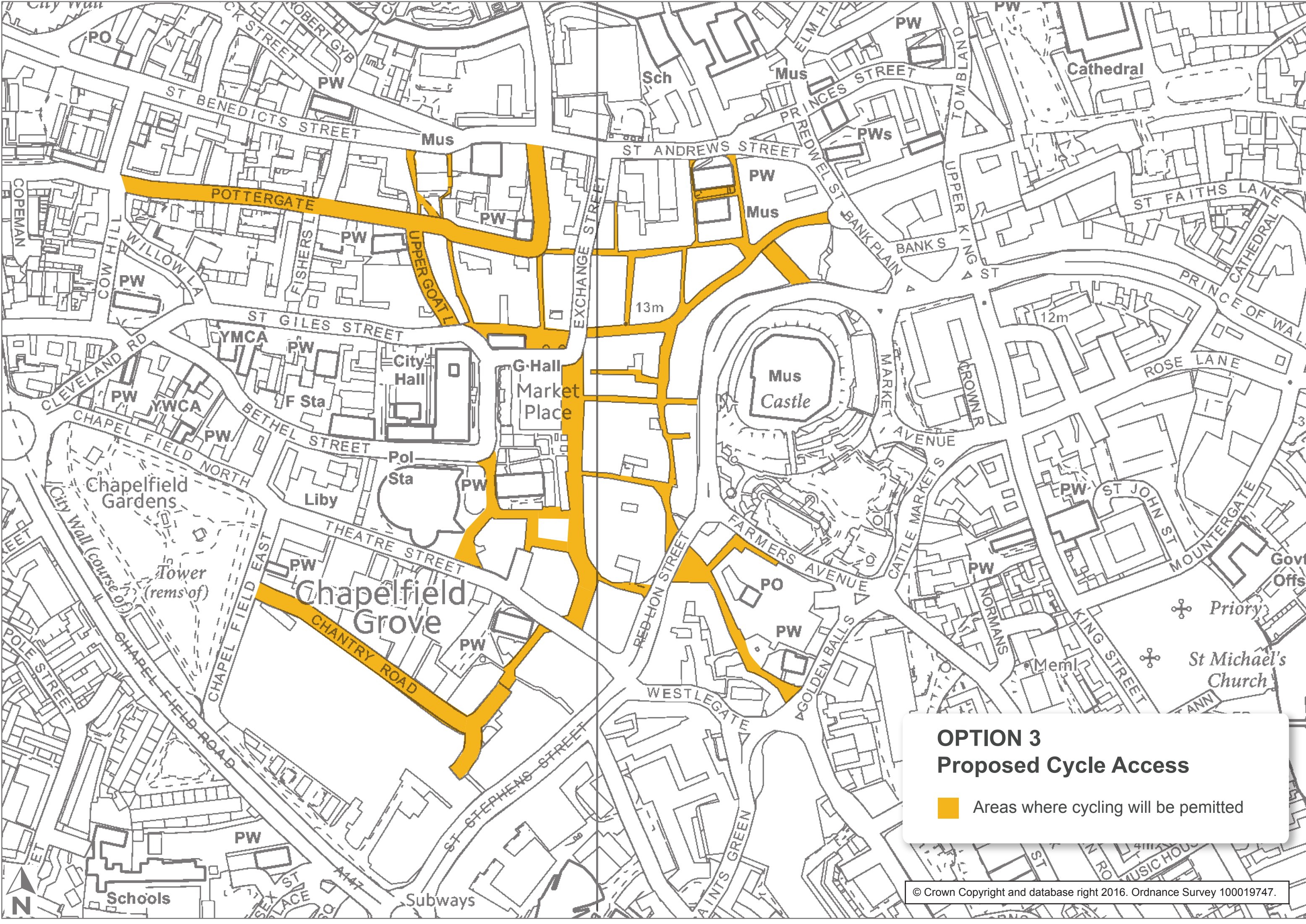
**OPTION 1**  
**Existing Access Restrictions**

-  No motor vehicles except access
-  No motor vehicles 11am- 4pm Mon - Friday,  
10am - 5pm Sat & Sun
-  No vehicles 10am - 5pm Mon - Sun
-  No vehicles at any time
-  No vehicles except for access



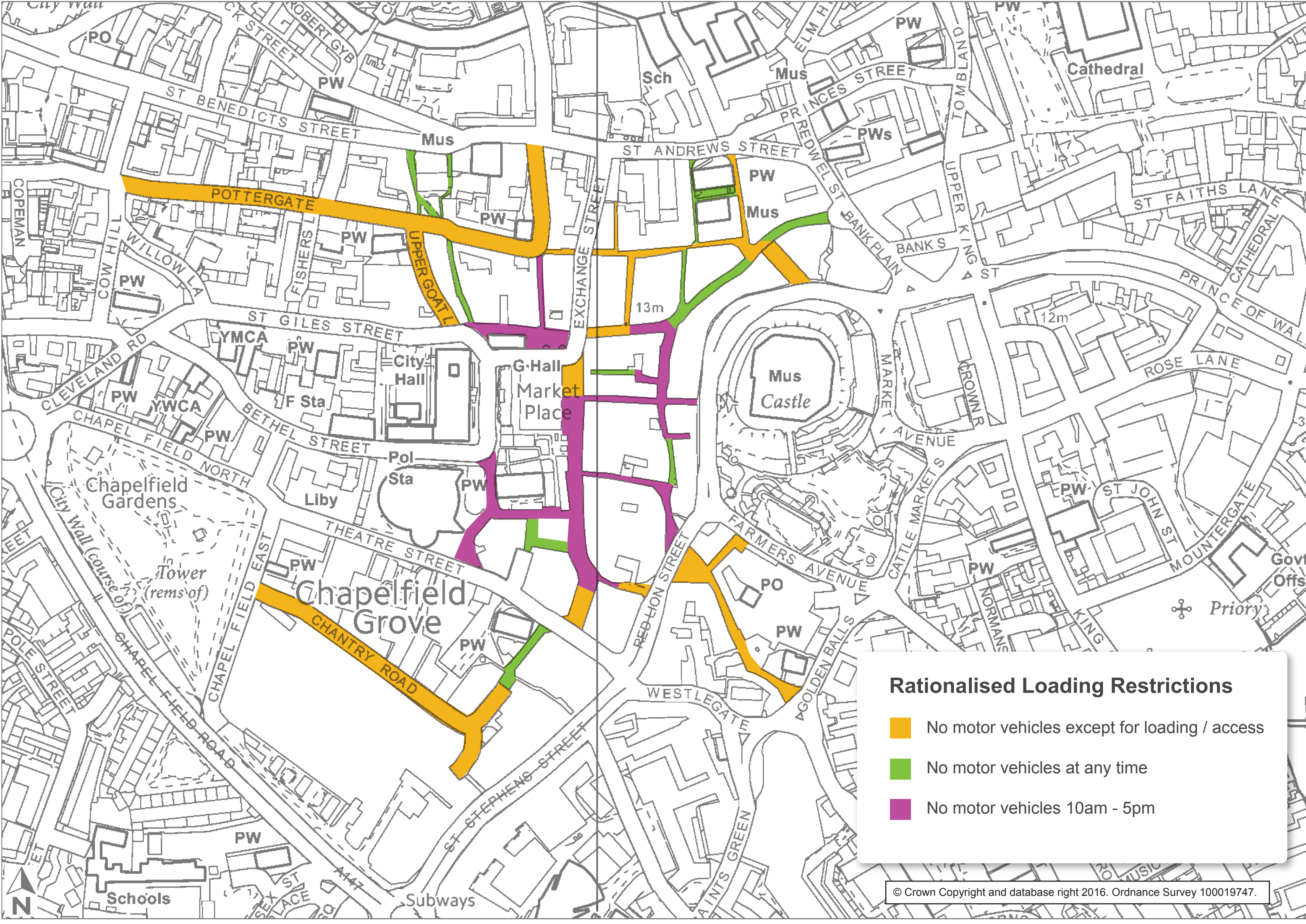
**OPTION 2**  
**Time restricted cycle access**

-  Cycling allowed at all times
-  No cycling 10am - 5pm






**OPTION 3**  
**Proposed Cycle Access**

 Areas where cycling will be permitted



**Rationalised Loading Restrictions**

-  No motor vehicles except for loading / access
-  No motor vehicles at any time
-  No motor vehicles 10am - 5pm