

# Temporary/Emergency Closure of A335 Thomas Lewis Way – Protocol for Portswood Road Bus Gate

## Introduction:

The A335 Thomas Lewis Way is a main route into Southampton City Centre from M27 Junction 5. It runs parallel to Portswood Road and is designed to accommodate strategic traffic rather than using Portswood Road. As part of the development of bus priority in Southampton Portswood Road, between Westridge Road and Highfield Lane, is planned to be made bus, taxi & cycle only (known as a 'Bus Gate').

In the event of an exceptional event that causes the blockage or closure of A335 Thomas Lewis Way, it may become necessary to temporarily suspend the Portswood Road Bus Gate to general traffic ensure that strategic traffic is able to divert continue as smoothly as possible. This should only be done for a short period as possible to maintain bus priority and bus journey times.

The Bus Gate is proposed to be controlled by cameras, which enable Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) to be issued for illegal use of the bus gate (i.e. by vehicles not permitted to access it in line with the Traffic Regulation Order).

This protocol outlines the steps to be taken in such a situation and when such an action should be taken.

The first action would

## Reasons for Temporary Bus Gate Suspension:

A335 Thomas Lewis Way may be closed due to a variety of reasons, such as flooding, road crashes, trees, adverse weather, or other emergencies that require urgent action.

### **Step 1:** Assess the Situation

The first step is to assess the situation and determine the nature and extent of any blockage along A335 Thomas Lewis Way.

To provide additional surveillance along the route the Council will install additional CCTV to be monitored via CityWatch which will help to determine when and what action should be taken and improve reaction time. officer should also need to be available to conduct an emergency site visit should an issue occur.

There are several reasons why the main road may be blocked, and these may include:

- **Flooding:** Heavy rains or flash floods can cause the main road to become impassable for vehicles.
- **Road or rail accidents:** Accidents involving vehicles on the main road can result in blockages that prevent traffic from moving through, or a critical incident on the Southwestern Main Line running parallel to the A335.
- **Adverse Weather:** impacts because of adverse weather (heavy rains, strong winds, snow), landslides, and other natural disasters can cause damage to the main road, create obstructions such as trees and other foliage making it unsafe or impassable for vehicles.

- Other emergencies: Other emergencies such as fires, explosions, or terrorist attacks may also require the main road to be closed for safety reasons.

In these cases, it may be necessary to temporarily suspend the Portswood Road Bus Gate enforcement camera to general traffic to allow traffic to divert from A335 to use Portswood Road as a diversion route.

**Step 2:** Identify if the Portswood Broadway Bus Gate needs to be Opened to general traffic.

Officers will need to assess if strategic access to the City Centre has been compromised.

The first action should be to strategically divert traffic onto other routes in Southampton using the Enhanced Variable Message Signs (EVMS) and other signs. This could either be via M27 to Junction 3 and M271 into Southampton, or A35 Burgess Road to A33 The Avenue.

The opening of the Portswood Road bus gate should be a last resort (e.g. if the alternative routes are also closed or severely congested impacting on bus journey times) to preserve bus priority.

If the A335 Thomas Lewis Way is completely closed as a result of an incident and the assessment identified significant impact on strategic access, then it could be recommended that the Portswood Broadway Bus Gate be temporarily suspended. Final decision should be made by Head of Transport and Planning or most senior officer available.

If a partial blockage of the main road is identified, then measures should be taken first to resolve the current situation and only if there is significant congestion or risk to life should the protocol be followed for Portswood Broadway Bus Gate be suspended.

**Step 3:** Communicate the Plan to bus operators, emergency services and stakeholders.

It is important to communicate the plan to all relevant stakeholders, including residents, bus operators, businesses, and emergency services. This should include information of initial implementation of the suspension, the expected duration, what is being done to resolve the situation and any other relevant information.

**Step 4:** Alerting Parking Services and Citywatch that the bus gate is suspended, and no charge should be made to general traffic who pass through the area once suspended.

**Step 5:** Open Portswood Broadway Bus Gate and Monitor Traffic Flow

Once the Portswood Broadway Bus Gate has been opened, it is important to monitor traffic flow and adjust as necessary. This may include adjusting traffic signals or implementing other traffic management measures to ensure the safe and efficient flow of traffic.

**Step 6:** Alert Drivers of the Change

There are three Enhanced Variable Message Signs on Thomas Lewis Way (southbound at Stoneham Way, and south of Dukes Road, northbound at near St Denys Station). An additional location has also been identified to alert northbound traffic at the junction on the A335 with Bevois Hill. These, and others across the city, will be used to communicate to road users drivers to the change in traffic conditions. The signage will need to be clearly visible and provide information about the reason for the closure of the main road and the route that drivers should take to access their destination.

The signage will include:

- Hazard signs that provide information about the closure of the main road and direct drivers to Portswood Broadway.
- Advanced warning signs that give drivers advance notice of the closure and the need to divert to Portswood Broadway.
- The EVMS to provide real-time updates about traffic conditions and any changes to the diversion route.

#### Conclusion:

In summary, this emergency protocol document outlines the steps to be taken if A335 Thomas Lewis Way is closed due to a critical or emergency relating to the Portswood Road Bus Gate.

In this case the bus gate could be temporarily suspended to permit general traffic. However, this should be last resort with use of other strategic routes such as A33 or A35

By following these steps, traffic flow can be maintained and disruptions to access across the area be minimised. By alerting drivers to the change in traffic conditions with appropriate signage, the Council can help to ensure that drivers are aware of the change and can navigate safely through the area.