

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	15 MARCH 2021		
TITLE:	ACTIVE TRAVEL PROGRAMME AND SCHOOL STREETS UPDATE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND REGULATORY SERVICES	WARDS:	ALL
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#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on progress with delivering the Council's Active Travel programme, as approved by Policy Committee in May 2020, and the Council's School Streets initiative, including to seek authority to progress experimental School Street schemes for Wilson Primary School and Thameside Primary School.
- 1.2 Appendix A: Active Travel Fund - Map of Tranche 1 and 2 Schemes  
Appendix B: Wilson Primary School - School Street Traffic Management Plan  
Appendix C: Wilson Primary School - Summary of Consultation Responses  
Appendix D: Thameside Primary School - School Street Traffic Management Plan  
Appendix E: Thameside Primary School - Summary of Consultation Responses

#### 2 RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee notes progress with development of the Active Travel and School Streets schemes as outlined in this report.
- 2.2 That the Committee approves the indicative programme for delivery of the Active Travel Tranche 2 programme and notes that the initial consultation results will be reported to this Committee in July.
- 2.3 That the Committee agrees to:
- 2.3.1 The approval of experimental School Street schemes for Wilson Primary School on Wilson Road and Thameside Primary School on Harley Road.
- 2.3.2 That in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, Ward Councillors, and the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, be authorised to make the appropriate (experimental) Traffic Regulation Orders for the proposed School Streets on Wilson Road and Harley Road

in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.

2.3.3 That subject to no objections being received during the experimental trial period of School Streets operation, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the experimental order permanent.

2.3.4 If objections are received, they will be reported back to the Committee at the appropriate time.

2.4 That the Committee notes a recommendation regarding the proposed School Street on Crescent Road will be brought forward for a future meeting of the Committee.

### **3. POLICY CONTEXT**

3.1 The Council's Corporate Plan supports the delivery of new transport infrastructure in order to manage levels of congestion, improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions, whilst accommodating the significant levels of planned economic growth. The Council's approved Capital Programme provides capital funding of over £50m for key infrastructure projects. Funding is provided from grants received from the Local Enterprise Partnership and Central Government, developer contributions, investment from Network Rail and Great Western Railway (GWR), and Council borrowing.

3.2 Consultation on the Council's new Local Transport Plan (LTP) was undertaken from 4<sup>th</sup> May to 30<sup>th</sup> August 2020. The new strategy is being developed to help achieve wider objectives including the Reading 2050 Vision, the Climate Emergency and improved air quality. The LTP will be heavily focused on addressing these wider challenges through a package of solutions to provide realistic sustainable alternatives to the private car, alongside measures to manage demand to improve air quality and congestion. The new strategy will be aligned with other Council strategies including the new Local Plan and draft Climate Emergency Strategy. The new LTP is planned to be presented for approval later in the year.

### **4. BACKGROUND**

4.1 At the meeting of Policy Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020, Members approved progression of a programme of Active Travel schemes in Reading. These proposals were developed in response to the coronavirus pandemic, which, alongside the Climate Emergency, have dramatically enhanced the focus on enabling greater levels of active travel through the provision of walking and cycling facilities.

4.2 The proposals were developed with a view to short term measures that could be implemented quickly, and medium to longer term measures that, subject to the level of funding released by the Department for Transport (DfT), could be developed and implemented over the next few years. In addition, the proposals are being developed in the context of unknown changes to travel demands as a result of the current pandemic, which may result in less peak hour congestion due to more flexible working arrangements and greater uptake of cycling, walking and public transport.

4.3 In June 2020, the DfT formally announced the Active Travel funding programme to be allocated in two separate tranches. Reading was awarded £221,250 grant funding for Tranche 1 in July 2020, which focused on implementing temporary schemes quickly in response to the pandemic and the need to ensure social distancing. In November 2020, the DfT announced the award of £1.179m to Reading for Tranche 2. This award was on the basis of a detailed, high quality and ambitious bid submitted by the Council, resulting in Reading being awarded 100% of the indicative allocation available.

## **5. CURRENT PROGRESS**

### **Active Travel Programme - Tranche 1**

- 5.1 The delivery of the Tranche 1 schemes was undertaken during spring/summer 2020. The following schemes, which are temporary in nature in line with DfT guidance, have been delivered:
- George Street, Reading Bridge - removal of one inbound lane for general traffic to enable the delivery of new two-way cycle facilities.
  - Southampton Street, Silver Street & Mount Pleasant- reallocation of road space to create new cycle facilities.
  - Whitley Street - reallocation of road space to create new cycle facilities.
  - Sidmouth Street - temporary one-way restriction and lane closure to provide a segregated two-way cycle lane.
  - Oxford Road (between Tilehurst Station and Norcot Road) - reallocation of road space to create new cycle facilities.
  - Oxford Road (between Norcot Road and the town centre) - implementation of cycle markings to raise awareness of cyclists with drivers.
  - Redlands Road - implementation of cycle markings to raise awareness of cyclists with drivers and road safety improvements.
  - Christchurch Road - implementation of cycle markings to raise awareness of cyclists with drivers.
- 5.2 In addition, a temporary one-way scheme in Gosbrook Road and Westfield Road was removed in late August 2020. This was in response to concerns raised by the local community and the dangerous behaviour of a minority of motorists ignoring the one-way system, which had been implemented to assist with social distancing on this busy route to the local centre and primary schools.
- 5.3 A review of the temporary Tranche 1 schemes will be undertaken after a final decision on which Tranche 2 scheme(s) will be taken forward for delivery has been made. Further updates on this review will be reported to a future Committee meeting.

### **Active Travel Programme - Tranche 2**

- 5.4 The bid submitted by the Council to the DfT for Tranche 2 included a programme of high-quality cycle and pedestrian infrastructure proposals on some of Reading's most strategic routes. In order to demonstrate our ambitious longer-term agenda, the bid included schemes which would cost significantly more to deliver than the level of funding available as part of the current tranche of grant allocations. For instance, initial estimated costings suggest that each scheme individually could cost between £750k to over £1m to deliver. Due to the level of funding made available by the DfT at this stage, the top four schemes from the bid have been taken forward for the next stage of development work, as set out below:
- Southampton Street and Oracle Roundabout (Pell Street - Inner Distribution Road/Bridge Street) - Create a segregated cycle lane along Southampton Street, with changes at the junctions at either end, linking with existing cycle infrastructure through the reallocation of road space from general traffic. A key 'missing link' in the existing network, it will provide a continuous link between exiting routes including NCN Routes 4 and 422, and the mandatory cycle lane recently been implemented in Tranche 1 of the Council's Active Travel programme. An alternative option to create a shared cycle and bus lane - with cyclists catered for within a separate lane - is also being considered.

- Bath Road/Castle Hill (Southcote Lane - Inner Distribution Road/Castle Street) - Creation of cycle facilities on this busy route to and from the town centre. A further 'missing link' on the existing network, the scheme would link with the new NCN route 422 and connect with existing routes west of the railway bridge.
- Shinfield Road (Christchurch Green - Whitley Wood Road) - Create segregated cycle facilities linking to the tranche 1 schemes on Redlands Road and Christchurch Road. This would provide a high-quality facility on a key route between South Reading and Royal Berkshire Hospital, the University of Reading, local centres and Reading town centre.
- London Road (Borough boundary to Crown Street) - Reallocate road space from general traffic to create an inbound shared bus and cycle lane from the Borough boundary to Cemetery Junction. The scheme would continue between Cemetery Junction and Crown Street, offering a segregated cycle lane in both directions, by reallocating road space from general traffic.

5.5 Initial feasibility work on these four schemes has been undertaken in accordance with DfT's guidance on the delivery of Tranche 2 schemes, and an initial engagement exercise was launched on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> February. This public consultation for these schemes will consist of a two-stage approach. The first stage will consist of an 8-week initial engagement exercise (phase 1), following this a decision will be taken on the scheme(s) to be taken forward. Subsequently, detailed designs will be produced and taken through the second stage, a 6-week statutory consultation (phase 2). The current engagement exercise has been heavily publicised online, through social media and with postcards delivered to around 5,000 nearby properties for each scheme (with the delivery adhering to strict Covid health and safety measures). The deadline for responses is Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> April.

5.6 The indicative timeline for the tranche 2 programme is set out below:

- Phase 1 consultation - February to April 2021
- Phase 1 consultation results review and detailed design for scheme(s) to be taken forward - May to July 2021
- Committee approval to undertake statutory consultation - July 2021
- Phase 2 statutory consultation - Summer/Autumn 2021
- Phase 2 consultation results review and update scheme design - Autumn/Winter 2021
- Scheme delivery - from Winter 2021/22 onwards

5.7 This approach of developing and consulting on more schemes than can be delivered with the current level of grant funding, will put the Council in the best possible position to bid for future funding. Officers will continue to seek further funding opportunities from the DfT and other external sources in order to progress additional schemes set out within our tranche 2 programme. The location of the Tranche 2 schemes, as well as those delivered in Tranche 1, are illustrated in Appendix A.

### School Streets

5.8 The Council launched a School Street application process and guidance in spring 2020, and has subsequently engaged with several schools which have expressed an interest in the potential implementation of a School Street outside their school. Park Lane Primary (Junior School) was the first school to submit an application and Committee approval was granted in November 2020 to implement an experimental School Street on Downing Road and Lambourne Close. Three further School Street applications have now been

received from Wilson Primary School, Thameside Primary School and a joint submission from Maiden Erlegh School in Reading, UTC Reading and Alfred Sutton Primary School.

- 5.9 The Park Lane Primary (Junior School) School Street was due to commence on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021, however due to school closures as a result of the latest Covid-19 lockdown, the introduction of this School Street has been delayed until schools return following the Easter holiday. Since approval of this proposal, School Street marshals identified by the school have undertaken specific training on road safety, conflict management and the general role and responsibilities involved. A further Stage 2 Road Safety Audit has also been completed. Progress on this School Street will be reported in the coming months.
- 5.10 Wilson Primary School have undertaken an informal consultation with affected properties and parents/carers on the proposal to implement an experimental School Street on Wilson Road, including Lundy Lane, Tofrek Terrace and Westbourne Terrace, details of which are shown in the Traffic Management Plan - Appendix B. A summary of the consultation responses received by the school is provided at Appendix C of this report.
- 5.11 In assessing the application, Officers have carried out parking and traffic surveys on the proposed School Street and neighbouring streets, to determine the current baseline usage of the streets. A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit has been undertaken by an independent road safety auditor on the proposed School Street, and no safety concerns were identified within the report. Subject to approval of this School Street proposal, a Stage 2 Road Safety Audit will be carried out prior to its implementation.
- 5.12 As a result of this assessment, and in agreement with Wilson Primary School, officers recommend that a School Street covering a reduced area, Wilson Road (Oxford Road to Westbourne Terrace), is recommended for approval. However, the impact of the School Street on neighbouring roads, including Westbourne Terrace, Lundy Lane and Tofrek Terrace will be monitored during the initial trial period, in response to concerns raised by some residents through the consultation.
- 5.13 Thameside Primary School have undertaken an informal consultation with affected properties and parents/carers on the proposal to implement an experimental School Street on Harley Road, details of which are shown in the Traffic Management Plan - Appendix D. A summary of the consultation responses received by the school is provided at Appendix E of this report.
- 5.14 In assessing the application, officers have carried out traffic surveys on the proposed School Street and neighbouring streets, to determine the current baseline usage of the streets. A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit has been undertaken by an independent road safety auditor on the proposed School Street, and no safety concerns were identified within the report. Subject to approval of this School Street proposal, a Stage 2 Road Safety Audit will be carried out prior to its implementation.
- 5.15 As a result of this assessment, officers recommend that a School Street on Harley Road is recommended for approval. However, the impact of the School Street on neighbouring roads, including Elliotts Way and Wolsey Road, will be monitored during the initial trial period in response to concerns raised by some residents through the consultation.
- 5.16 Subject to approval of the above two recommendations, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services will make the appropriate (experimental) traffic regulation order in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.

5.17 After an initial 6 month period of the experimental order, and provided no objections are received, the Committee is asked to authorise the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services to make the traffic regulation order permanent. Should objections be received during the experimental trial period of School Streets operation - which may be extended up to a maximum period of 18 months - these will be reported back to Committee at the appropriate time.

5.18 In addition, the Council has recently received a joint application from Maiden Erlegh School in Reading, UTC Reading and Alfred Sutton Primary School for a proposed School Street on Crescent Road (Wokingham Road - Bulmershe Road). The schools have undertaken an informal consultation with affected properties and parents/carers on the proposal. This consultation resulted in a significant number of responses and therefore officers are currently undertaking a full review of this application and the supporting information provided by the schools, prior to bringing a recommendation forward to a future Committee meeting.

## **6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

6.1 The delivery of the schemes outlined in this report help to deliver the following service priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan:

- Securing the economic success of Reading and provision of job opportunities.
- Keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe.
- Promoting health, education, culture & wellbeing.

## **7. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Transport is the biggest greenhouse gas emitting sector in the UK accounting for around 27% of total carbon emissions. As set out in the draft Climate Emergency Strategy this figure is lower in Reading with transport accounting for around 20% of carbon emissions, however significant investment in sustainable transport solutions is vital in order to respond to the Climate Emergency declared by the Council in February 2019 and to help achieve our target of a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.

7.2 Proposals set out in this paper seek to support a step-change in transport infrastructure and services and a shift towards walking and cycling as attractive alternatives to private vehicles. This builds on the considerable success of increasing the number of walking, cycling and public transport trips into Reading town centre to 80% as part of the delivery of previous Local Transport Plans.

## **8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

8.1 Advertising of the Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders will be conducted in accordance with appropriate legislation. Notices will be advertised in the local printed newspaper and erected on lamp columns within the affected area. If this is not possible, alternative means will be proposed such as delivering the notice to each property within the affected area and promoting the notice in the online version of local media.

8.2 Public consultation on the Active Tranche 2 and Schools Street schemes has/will be undertaken as set out within the report.

## **9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

9.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149 the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.

- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

9.2 The Council has reviewed the scope of the proposals as outlined within this report and considers that the proposals have no direct impact on any groups with protected characteristics. However, further work will be undertaken for the Active travel Tranche 2 schemes as designs are developed further.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 Some interventions will not require Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). Others will require TROs, of which there are different types. The main ones are:

- Permanent: this process includes prior consultation on the proposed scheme design, a 21-day notice period for statutory consultees and others who can log objections; there could be a public inquiry in some circumstances.
- Temporary: these can be in place for up to 18 months. There is a 7-day notice period prior to making the TRO and a 14-day notification requirement after it is made, plus publicity requirements. These are most suitable for putting in place temporary measures and road closures. Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders will require advertisement, in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. A Temporary Traffic Regulation Order will be made in accordance with section 14(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, as amended.
- Experimental: any experimental orders will be made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and advertised in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure)(England and Wales) Regulations 1996. The order can operate for a maximum of 18 months. Any comments or objections to the order can be made during the first 6 months of operation, after which the Council will consider and decide to either continue with the experiment for a further 12 months, remove the experiment or make the scheme permanent.

10.2 Necessary changes to Highway signs and road markings, including temporary, will need to be implemented in accordance with the Traffic Signs, Regulations and General Directions 2016 and associated Code of Practice for temporary Highway signing.

## **11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 Funding for the schemes set out within this report has been allocated from the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund and Travel Demand Management grant funding allocations for Reading.

## **12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

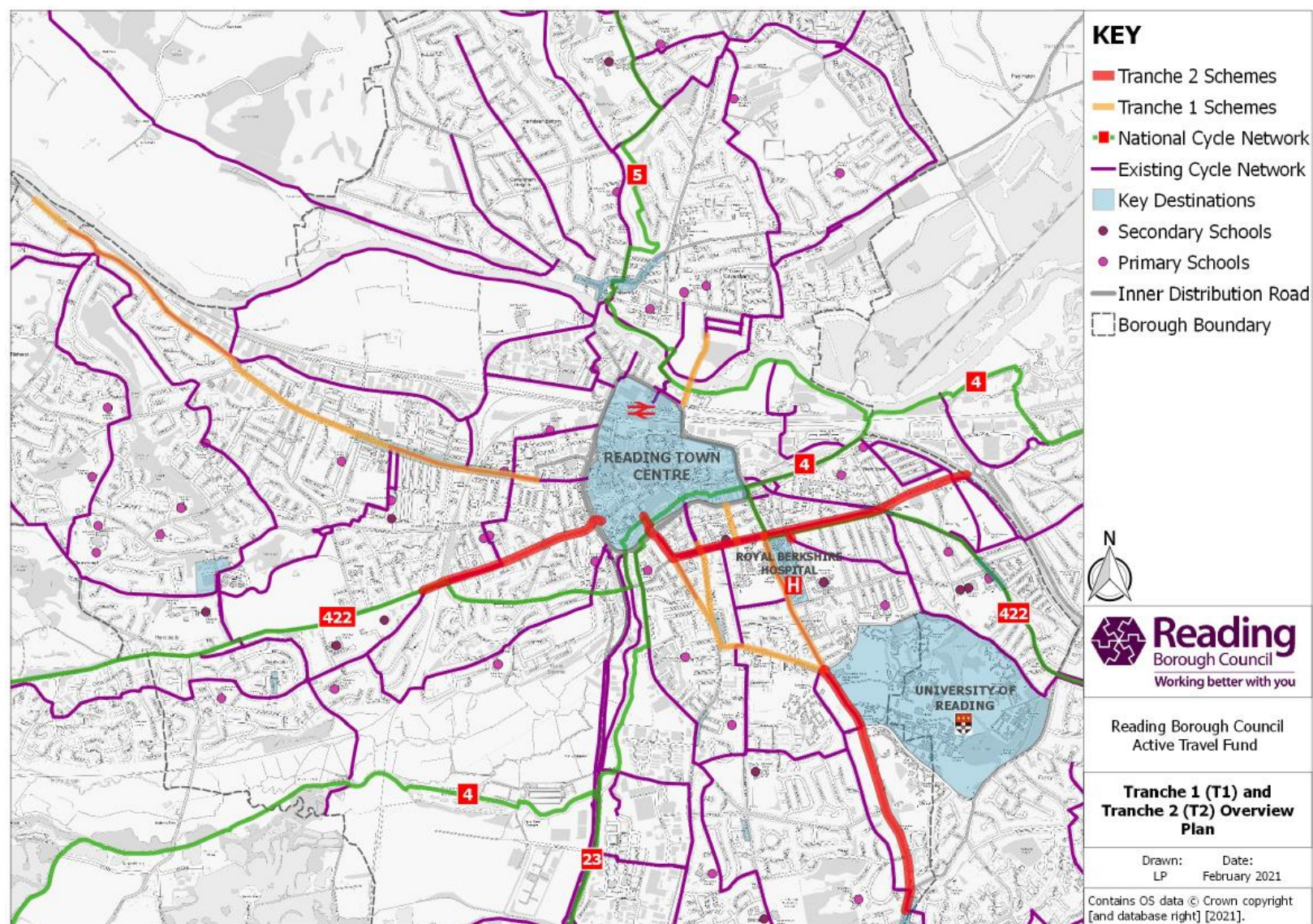
12.1 Active Travel Programme Report, Policy Committee - 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020

12.2 Active Travel Programme and School Streets Update Reports, Traffic Management Sub-Committee - 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 and 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020

12.3 Active Travel Programme and School Streets Update Report, Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee - 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020

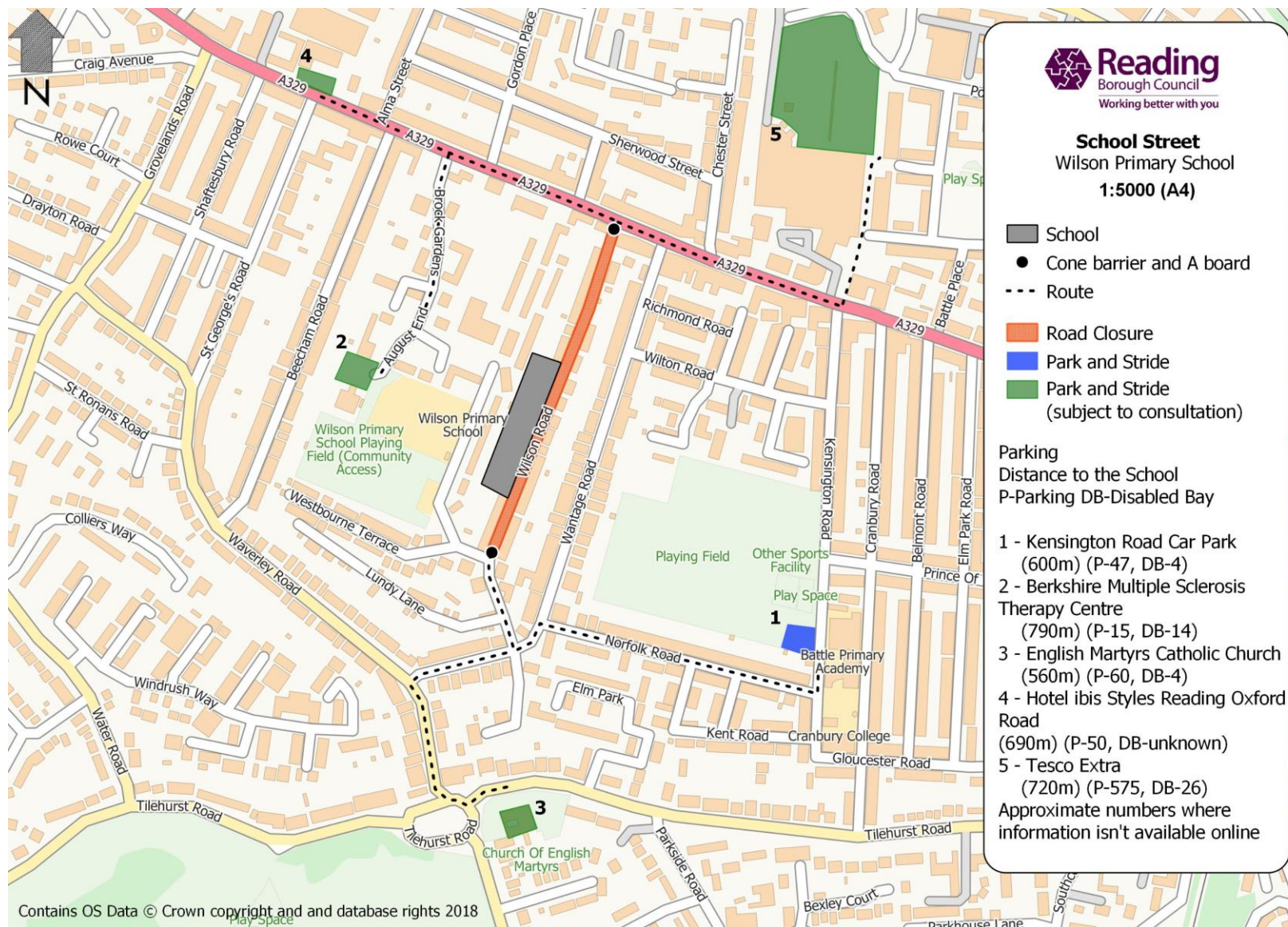


## APPENDIX A - MAP OF ACTIVE TRAVEL FUND TRANCHE 1 AND 2 SCHEMES





## APPENDIX B - WILSON PRIMARY SCHOOL - SCHOOL STREET TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN

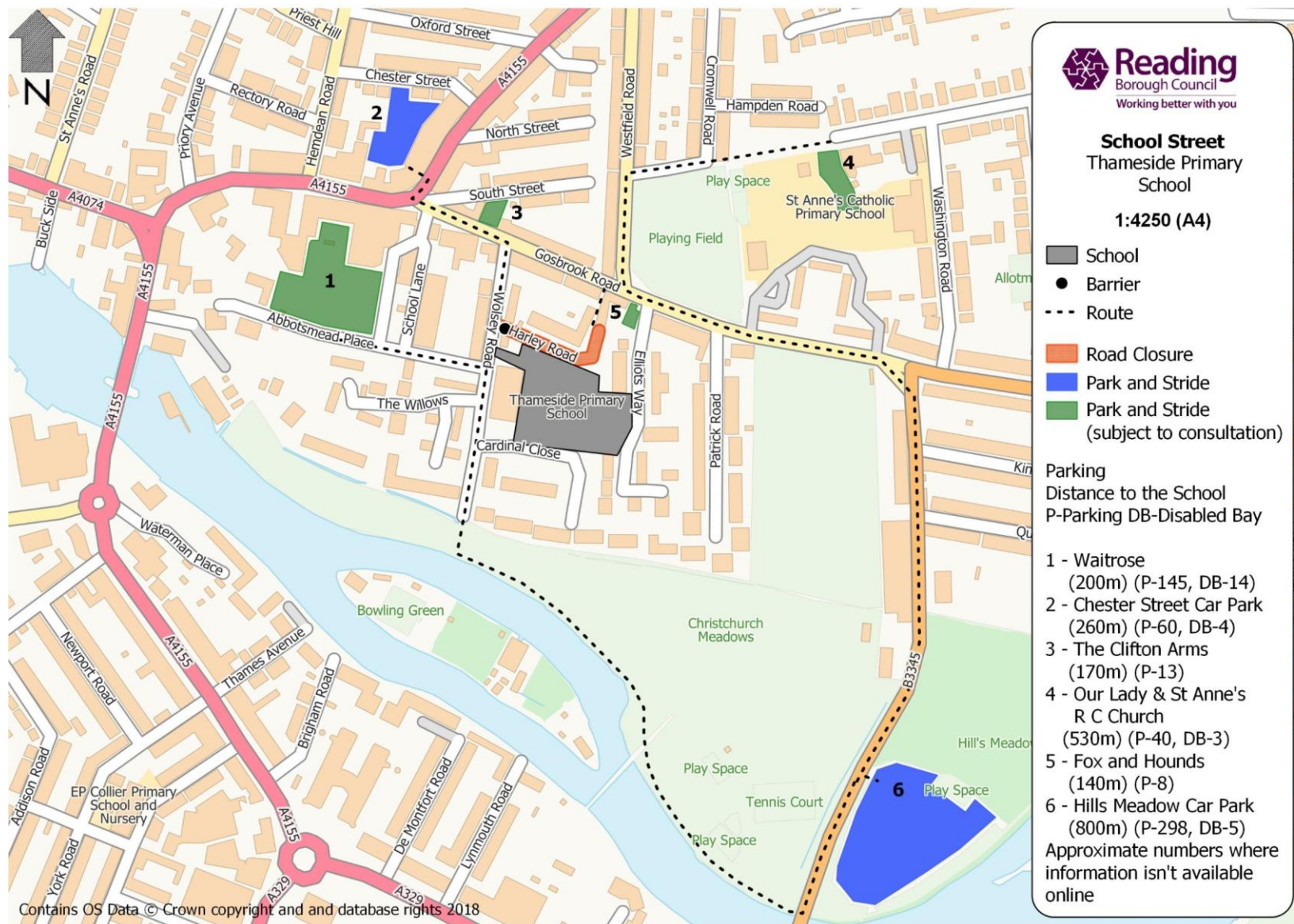


APPENDIX C - WILSON PRIMARY SCHOOL - SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

SEE SEPARATE SHEET ATTACHED



## APPENDIX D - THAMESIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL - SCHOOL STREET TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN



APPENDIX E - THAMESIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL - SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

SEE SEPARATE SHEET ATTACHED