

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB COMMITTEE		
DATE:	15 June 2022	AGENDA ITEM:	6 (b)
TITLE:	SCHOOL STREET - THAMESIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	TONY PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	CLIMATE STRATEGY & TRANSPORT
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 In Spring 2020 the Council launched a School Street application process including guidance and subsequently engaged with several schools which expressed an interest in the potential implementation of a School Street outside their school. In March 2021 approval was granted by the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport (SEPT) Committee to implement an experimental School Street on Harley Road (Thameside Primary School).
- 1.2 Delegated authority was previously granted at the March 2021 SEPT Committee for the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services to be authorised to make the experimental Traffic Regulation Order permanent on the basis that no objections were received. However during the duration of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order for the School Street one objection to the scheme was received and is detail in paragraph 4.5.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to update the Sub Committee on progress with delivering the Thameside Primary School Street as part of the Council's Active Travel programme and to seek approval to make the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order permanent.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Sub Committee notes the progress of the School Street scheme for Thameside Primary School as outlined in this report.
- 2.2 That the Sub Committee authorises the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services to make the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order permanent for Thameside Primary School.

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 for key infrastructure projects.
- 3.2 Consultation on the Council's new Local Transport Plan (LTP) was undertaken from 4 May to 30 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.
- 3.3 The Thameside Primary School Street scheme aligns with the principles of the Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP), Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), Climate Emergency Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy by addressing safety and parking issues that can impact in pupils and parents during drops-off and picks-up.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 At the meeting of SEPT Committee in March 2021, approval was granted to implement an experimental School Street on Harley Road (Thameside Primary School).
- 4.2 On the 19 May 2021 Reading Borough Council made an experimental Traffic Regulation Order under Section 9 and 10 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. The effect of which prohibited any motor vehicle, except eligible vehicles as agreed by Reading Borough Council, to enter into or proceed in the full length of Harley Road from 8.30am to 9.15am and 2.50pm to 3.30pm, Monday to Friday term time only.
- 4.3 The Experimental Traffic Regulation Order came into operation on 7 June 2021 for a maximum period of eighteen months from that date.
- 4.4 On the 25 August 2021 Reading Borough Council made adjustments to the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order. The new order ("the Variation Order") came into operation on 2 September 2021. The effect of this Variation Order

was to amend the definition of “prescribed hours” of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order to 8.15am - 9.15am and 2.40 - 3.40pm, Monday to Friday term time only. All other provisions of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order were re-imposed and remained the same. The Experimental Traffic Regulation Order, as varied continued for a period not exceeding 18 months from the date it originally came into operation.

- 4.5 The experimental Traffic Regulation Order is due to end on 7 December 2022.
- 4.6 During the period of the Experimental Order one objection was received due to an increase in traffic congestion on Wolsey Road. Officers will continue monitoring the situation and increase the enforcement in the area when necessary.
- 4.7 Since implementing the Experimental School Street, Council Officers have continued to undertake parking and traffic surveys on Harley Road and neighbouring roads, to determine the current baseline usage of the streets. The results of the surveys are as follows:
 - Analysis of the parking survey has shown a significant reduction in cars parked on nearby roads during pick-up times, which may suggest increased walking and cycling.
 - Officers have undertaken traffic surveys in relation to pedestrian and vehicle movements during school street periods. The analysis shows that during the School Street restrictions there is an increase in number of pedestrians on the surrounding roads, which may suggest a modal shift.
 - The survey also identified a reduction in vehicles on the School Street, Harley Road, although did note an increase in the vehicles going through Wolsey Road, which may indicate that parents are parking on nearby roads or the Waitrose car park, for park and stride.
- 4.8 A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit (RSA) was undertaken on 18th of December 2020 by an independent road safety auditor, followed by a further RSA Stage 2 on 23 April 2021. Some recommendations were made during the RSA Stage 2 (relating to PPE, signage, marshalling and training), all of which were addressed as part of the RSA Stage 3 and prior to implementation of the scheme.
- 4.9 Officers have continued to liaise with the school throughout the period of the Experimental Order and have confirmed the intention to make the order permanent. The school has raised concerns with the availability of volunteers to marshal the scheme, and officers are working with the school to support recruitment.
- 4.10 As this Experimental Order does not expire until 7 December 2022, officers will continue to monitor the availability of volunteers, particularly following the commencement of the new school year in September 2022 and subject to endorsement of this report, officers will decide in consultation with Legal Services and the School as to whether the Order should be made permanent.
- 4.11 Officers are also continuing to explore alternative methods of enforcement to simplify the management of the school street and potentially encourage other schools to come forward with an application.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 In order to support the achievement of the Councils vision, as identified within its Corporate Plan 2022/25, the Council has developed three key themes:

- Healthy Environment
- Thriving Communities
- Inclusive Economy

5.2 This School Street will directly support the Councils vision for a Healthy Environment, and will have a positive impact for students, school staff, parents and residents, providing a safer environment during school drop off / collection.

5.3 Transport is integral to the functioning of business and the economy and monitoring of the Experimental School Street scheme suggests that this measure has had a positive impact in promoting active travel.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Transport is the biggest greenhouse gas emitting sector in the UK accounting for around 27% of total carbon emissions. As set out in the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25, 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.

6.2 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.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

7.1 The schemes included within the current major transport scheme programme have and will be communicated to the local community through public exhibitions, consultations and Council meetings as set out within the report.

7.2 Prior to implementation of the experimental Traffic Regulation Order an informal consultation was undertaken by Thameside Primary School. An informal consultation letter was sent to all residents in Harley Road on the 28th of September 2020. Officers carried out a further informal consultation through the Council's website, which was undertaken from the 5th of December 2020 to the 26th of December 2020.

7.3 A summary of the consultation responses was presented to the SEPT Committee on the 15 March 2021.

7.4 A Statutory consultation was conducted between 20 May 2021 and 7 December 2021 in accordance with appropriate legislation, including Traffic Regulation

Orders as appropriate. Notices were advertised in the local printed newspaper and were erected on lamp columns within the affected area. h

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, a public authority must 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, and
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Experimental Traffic Regulation Order is made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and has been advertised in accordance with the procedure laid down by Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure)(England and Wales) Regulations 1996. 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.
- 9.2 If agreed to become permanent, the Traffic Regulation Order 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.
- 9.3 If once the permanent TRO is made the school is no longer able to marshal the school street, Officers will decide in consultation with Legal Services and the School as to whether the Order should be revoked, or whether this is a temporary situation. Officers will also consider whether alternative methods of enforcement can be introduced.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Funding for the Thameside Primary School Street is has been allocated from the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund, Capability Fund and Travel Demand Management grant funding allocations for Reading.
- 10.2 The purpose of this funding is to manage travel demand following the Covid lockdowns and to encourage a mode shift towards more sustainable modes. School Streets is one element of this work which includes a programme of incentivisation and information initiatives with a particular focus on walking and cycling.
- 10.3 The Council will continue to provide the necessary PPE, signage and any ancillary equipment required to maintain the School Street. This is not expected to exceed £1k per annum.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 Strategic transport schemes update 14 March 2022

11.2 Major transport schemes update 16 November 2021

11.3 Active Travel Programme and School Streets Update 30 June 2021

11.4 Active Travel Programme and School Streets Update 15 March 2021