

Traffic Management Sub-Committee

14 June 2023



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Crescent Road School Street Scheme
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	James Turner, Senior Transport Planner
Lead councillor	Cllr John Ennis – Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport
Ward	Park
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note the progress of the School Street scheme for Crescent Road as outlined in this report.2. Authorises the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services to make the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order permanent for Crescent Road subject to agreement from the schools to continue co-ordinating the marshals.3. Note observation from the RSA 3 regarding the crossing point from the bus stop on the Wokingham Road and officers to investigate possible solutions as part of BSIP measures.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Traffic Management Sub-Committee to make the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order for the implementation of the Crescent Road School Street Scheme permanent.
- 1.2. The scheme on Crescent Road commenced in February 2022 initially running during the morning period only (8.15-9am), however, from 8th November 2022 the schools were able to also run the scheme during the afternoon period (2.45-3.30pm).

2. Policy context

- 2.1. 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. Funding is provided from grants received from the Local Enterprise Partnership and Central Government including the Department for Transport and Active Travel England, developer contributions, investment from Network Rail and Great Western Railway (GWR), and Council borrowing.

- 2.2. The Council's current Local Transport Plan (LTP) sets out the transport strategy for Reading up to 2026. Development of a Reading's new LTP is on-going with the core principles of the strategy linked to wider objectives including the Reading 2050 Vision, the Climate Emergency and improved air quality, and to be aligned with other Council strategies including the new Local Plan and Health & Wellbeing Strategy.
- 2.3. Whilst the LTP sets the context and overarching vision for future transport provision in Reading, sub-strategies provide more detailed implementation plans for specific topics. These form the basis for preparing funding proposals to deliver key elements of each sub-strategy, including the Bus Service Improvement Plan, Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- 2.4. The Crescent Road 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 as well as promoting active and sustainable travel.

3. The proposal

- 3.1. 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 including at Crescent Road.
- 3.2. In 2021 the three schools in Crescent Road, Maiden Erlegh School (in Reading), UTC Reading and Alfred Sutton Primary School, undertook an informal consultation with affected properties and parents/carers on the proposal to implement an experimental School Street on Crescent Road (between Wokingham Road and Bulmershe Road). The proposed time of the road closure for the School Street would be 8.15 to 9.00 for morning drop-off and 14.45 to 15.30 for afternoon pickup, Monday-Friday during term time only.
- 3.3. A joint School Street application from Maiden Erlegh School in Reading, UTC Reading and Alfred Sutton Primary School was subsequently submitted.
- 3.4. Officers assessed the application including carrying out traffic surveys and parking surveys on the proposed School Street and neighbouring streets, to determine the current baseline usage of the streets. Both a Stage 1 and Stage 2 Road Safety Audit (RSA) were undertaken by an independent road safety auditor on the proposed School Street, and no safety concerns were identified within the report.
- 3.5. A joint School Street application from Maiden Erlegh School in Reading, UTC Reading and Alfred Sutton Primary School covering Crescent Road was received. Delegated authority was granted at the June 2021 SEPT Committee for the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, Ward Councillors, be authorised to make the appropriate (experimental) Traffic Regulation Orders for the proposed School Streets on Crescent Road in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.
- 3.6. Delegated authority was also granted at the June 2021 SEPT Committee that, subject to no objections being received during the experimental trial period of the School Street, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services in agreement with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport be authorised to make the experimental Order permanent

- 3.7. The Crescent Road School Street scheme was initially due to launch in November 2021 however was delayed in order to recruit more marshal volunteers. The scheme was subsequently launched in February 2022 operating in the mornings only. The afternoon school street closure was then introduced in November 2022 following the recruitment of more marshal volunteers.
- 3.8. A Road Safety Audit Stage 3 was undertaken in May 2022. The RSA 3 only noted two problems, both in relation to the junction of Bulmershe Road / Crescent Road. Recommendations were made to cut back vegetation and to remove traffic cones placed there to prevent parking/drop-off on the double yellow lines. These were partly accepted by the Council. The RSA 3 also made an observation regarding the crossing point on the Wokingham Road next to the bus stop which the Council will look to address as part of our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) measures.
- 3.9. Transport Officers have made a number of site visits to review the operation of the School Street scheme, including on the surrounding roads outside of the closure. Following initial congestion on the implementation of both the morning and afternoon closures the scheme operated well once parent and carers became used to the arrangements and changed travel habits accordingly.
- 3.10. Traffic surveys, including automated traffic counters, were undertaken before and after the implementation of the school street scheme. This highlighted that there was some displacement of traffic movements to Bulmershe Road and the surrounding network including Eastern Avenue, Hamilton Road and Culver Lane but these were minor and considered to be manageable within the existing network. Officers will continue to monitor the traffic levels in the surrounding area.
- 3.11. Throughout the school street scheme officers have requested visits by parking enforcement officers and Thames Valley Policy officers to monitor vehicles and encourage safe and legal practice and this has proved to be effective. It is recommended that the Transport Officers continue to review the traffic in the surrounding area to the scheme.
- 3.12. The results of the statutory consultation are detailed further on in the report and there was a 66.7% support for making the scheme permanent.
- 3.13. It is therefore officer's recommendation that the school street scheme at Crescent Road is made permanent subject to the agreement by the schools to continue providing and co-ordinating marshals.

4. Contribution to strategic aims

- 4.1. The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:
- Healthy Environment
 - Thriving Communities
 - Inclusive Economy
- 4.2. This School Street will directly support the Council's 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.
- 4.3. The initiative is part of the Council's wider ambitions for encouraging more active travel, such as cycling and walking, and as a result support better physical and mental health, lower carbon generation and improved air quality.

5. Environmental and climate implications

- 5.1. 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.
- 5.2. 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.

6. Community engagement

- 6.1. 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.
- 6.2. Prior to implementation of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order an informal consultation was undertaken by Maiden Erlegh School, UTC Reading and Alfred Sutton Primary School. Over 150 consultation responses were received by the school community and the local community. As part of the consultation letters were sent to properties on Crescent Road, Bulmershe Road and Hamilton Road, and in addition signs advising of the consultation were placed in Eastern Avenue, Culver Road, College Road, Wokingham Road local centre, Pitcroft Avenue, Norris Road and Grange Avenue. Of these responses, 77% supported or were neutral to the proposal and 23% opposed the proposal.

Response	Number of Respondents
Yes (support proposal)	84 (53.5%)
Maybe	37 (23.6%)
No (oppose proposal)	36 (22.9%)

- 6.3. A Statutory consultation was conducted between 28th February 2022 and 28 August 2022 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.
- 6.4. There were 48 responses to the statutory consultation which asked respondents; “Do you support or object to the proposal (to make the Crescent Road School Street permanent)?”. The response in support of the proposal was 66.7% with 31.2% opposed and 2% did not answer.
- 6.5. Many of the comments in support of making the scheme permanent are in relation to the safety improvements for children and parents/carers as well as making the street quieter and more pleasant. Comments also included that it stops pavement parking, driver frustration and driving at inappropriate speeds. Comments also include that more children will have benefitted from cleaner air. Children will walk or cycle and so will be physically fitter from the exercise.
- 6.6. The negative comments include that the closure has just moved vehicles and traffic to other streets in the area with an increase in pollution and congestion in Bulmershe Road, Hamilton Road and on the Wokingham Road.

7. Equality impact assessment

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority 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.
- 7.2. It is not considered that an Equality Impact Assessment is relevant as the proposal is not deemed to be discriminatory to persons with protected characteristics and statutory consultation provide an opportunity for the content of objections/support/concerns to be considered prior to a decision being made on whether to implement the proposals.

8. Other relevant considerations

- 8.1. None

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 during the consultation period, after which the Council can 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 Crescent Road School Street 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 original purpose of this funding was to manage travel demand following the Covid lockdowns and to encourage a mode shift towards more sustainable modes. The introduction of School Streets was one element of this work which included 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, marshal training and any ancillary equipment required and general Transport Officer support to maintain the School Street. This is not expected to exceed £1k per annum.

11. Timetable for implementation

- 11.1. The school street Scheme is already in operation under the current Experimental Order and will continue in September 2023 under a permanent order.

12. Background papers

- 12.1. Active Travel Programme Report, Policy Committee - 18th May 2020
- 12.2. Active Travel Programme and School Streets Update Report, Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee – from July 2020 onwards

Appendices

- 1. **Crescent Road Statutory Consultation – Full Results**