

Traffic Management Sub-Committee

13 June 2024



Reading
Borough Council
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Title	Exbourne Road School Street Scheme
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	James Clements, Transport Programme Manager
Lead Councillor	Cllr John Ennis – Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport
Ward	Whitley
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That the report be noted.2. That the making of an experimental School Street on Exbourne Road, Reading be approved.3. That in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy & Transport, officers be authorised to make minor amends to the scheme, prior to and during the operational period of the school street.4. That in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy & Transport and Ward Councillors, that the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the appropriate (experimental) traffic regulation order for the proposed School Street on Exbourne Road in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.5. That the commencement of a six-month statutory consultation from the commencement of the experimental scheme be approved.6. That subject to no objections being received during the statutory consultation period, that the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the experimental order permanent.7. That in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy & Transport, officers be authorised to make minor amends to the Civitas school street scheme, prior to and during the operational period of the school street.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Traffic Management Sub-Committee to make an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order for the implementation of a School Street scheme on Exbourne Road. This would serve three schools: Geoffrey Field Junior School, Geoffrey Field Infant School and Christ the King Roman Catholic Primary School with a combined 950+ children attending all three schools.

- 1.2. That further to the report presented to and approved by the Sub-Committee on Wednesday 6 March 2024 (Minutes 50 refers), that the Sub-Committee note the progress made on the implementation of the Civitas School Street and authorises for officers to make amendments to this scheme.

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. Reading's new LTP, the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 has been developed and is due to be adopted at the months Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport (SEPT) Committee. Its core principles of the strategy are 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 Exbourne 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 on pupils and parents during drop-offs and pick-ups as well as promoting active and sustainable travel.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. The Council launched a School Street application process and guidance in 2020 and has subsequently engaged with several schools which have expressed an interest in the potential implementation of a School Street on the highway outside their school. The Council now has 4 school street schemes in operation across the borough with a fifth scheme approved by the Traffic Management Sub Committee earlier this year and is due for implementation later this summer.
- 3.2. In 2023 Transport Officers met with the Head Teachers of Geoffrey Field Junior and Infant Schools and Christ The King Primary School to discuss the travel and transport issues that the schools were experiencing. The prospect of a school street scheme on Exbourne Road was discussed. Following this meeting there has been further engagement with the schools including with Reading's Active Travel Officer.
- 3.3. In January 2024 the schools undertook an informal consultation with parents and with local residents who would be affected by the school street closure on Exbourne Road. The consultation ran for 3 weeks, as per Reading Borough Council's school street guidance and requirements and the results of which are outlined in section 6 of this report.
- 3.4. A School Street application was submitted to the Council in February 2024.

- 3.5. The proposal is for the closure of Exbourne Road to all but eligible vehicles immediately at its entrance from the roundabout with Blandford Road and Meadowcroft Road as per the attached traffic management plan (Appendix 1). The closure will be from this point for the full length of Exbourne Road, which is a cul-de-sac and has no other vehicle access points.
- 3.6. Apart from the school the only properties that would be affected within the closure area would be residential with 4 residential properties in Exbourne Road and the residents of Rossington Place. Under the terms of Reading's school street scheme these vehicles would retain access under the eligible vehicle category.
- 3.7. The proposed time of the road closure for the School Street would be 8.20 to 9.05 for morning drop-off and 14.50 to 15.30 for afternoon pick-up, Monday-Friday during term time only.
- 3.8. Officers have assessed the application including carrying out site visits during both drop-off and pick-up periods on the proposed School Street and neighbouring streets, to determine the current baseline usage of the streets. From Transport Officers observations we agree with the road safety issues that have been reported from the school and have also been cited in the responses to the consultation. Based on Transport Officers observations and assessment it has been determined that there is adequate capacity on the highway network surrounding the area to accommodate displaced vehicles.
- 3.9. As with all school streets the success of the scheme will be dependent on the school leadership team working with parents and carers to promote active travel and, where travel by car is necessary, appropriate locations in the surrounding network be promoted and considerate parking behaviour be observed.
- 3.10. A Stage 1 and 2 Road Safety Audit (RSA) was undertaken by an independent road safety auditor on the proposed School Street with no safety concerns being identified within the report.
- 3.11. There is strong support from the school's leadership and senior management team for this scheme, and Transport Officers endorse and recommend this scheme for approval.

Civitas School Street Update

- 3.12. Officers have continued to work with the Headteacher of Civitas school and the scheme is expected to launch on Monday 24 June 2024, subject to the signage being delivered and installed and all other measures being in place. Further to these discussions the Headteacher has requested a five minute extension to the school street duration in the afternoon, with the restrictions now commencing from 2:50pm, Officers support this proposal and do not envisage it having an adverse impact and will further support the aims of the school street.
- 3.13. Officers are therefore seeking approval from the Sub-Committee to make this change, and to be authorised to make any other necessary minor amendments for the duration of this school street scheme.

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. An informal consultation was undertaken by the school in January 2024 and a letter outlining the proposed scheme was sent to both parents and carers of children attending the school as well as to local residents both within the closure point and the surrounding network.
- 6.2. A total of 91 responses were received from parents and carers with an approximate even split from each school. In total 76.9% of the responses were supportive of the school street scheme and 13.2% were opposed with 9.9% of respondents being undecided.
- 6.3. In total 7 responses were received from local residents with 57.1% in support of the scheme, 14.3% opposed to the scheme and 28.6% undecided.

7. Equality Implications

- 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. 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.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. There are none.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. The Experimental Traffic Regulation Order is made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and will be 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.
- 9.4. When considering whether to make a traffic order the Council has a duty pursuant to section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to secure, so far as practicable, the expeditious, convenient, and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians). Thorough consideration has been given to this duty and regard to the matters specified in Section 122(2) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. Funding for the Exbourne Road School Street has been allocated from the Department for Transport's Active Travel Capability Fund allocation for Reading.
- 10.2. 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 £5k.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. Subject to committee approval for the experimental traffic order it is anticipated that, in conjunction with the school, the school street scheme will come into effect as soon as possible, subject to the legal process being complete in July 2024 to take advantage of introducing the scheme in the summer term. This will also be dependent on the traffic management and signage being installed, marshal's being trained and appropriate publicity to communicate the scheme being released.
- 11.2. If this is not possible then the scheme will be introduced from the start of the autumn term in September 2024 on Thursday 5th September 2024. Councillors will be informed accordingly.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1. None

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Exbourne Road School Street Traffic Management Plan