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# Active Travel Experimental Road Closures and Probation of Motor Vehicles on Lawrences Lane Thatcham, Station Road Newbury and Deadmans Lane Theale Consultation

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<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Individual Executive Member Decisions
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	16 March 2023
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Richard Somner
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	TBC
<b>Report Author:</b>	Gareth Dowding
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	ID4317

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## 1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform the Executive Member for Planning, Transport and Countryside of the responses received during the 6 month consultation of the introduction of an experimental prohibition of motor vehicles Order on Lawrence’s Lane Thatcham, Station Road Newbury and Deadmans Lane Theale and to seek approval of officer recommendations.

## 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that:
- (a) the proposed prohibition of motor vehicles orders on Lawrences Lane Thatcham and Deadmans Lane Theale are not introduced as advertised in the experimental Order and the Experimental Order is formally rescinded and that the supporters and objectors are informed accordingly;
  - (b) the proposed prohibition of motor vehicles order on Station Road Newbury is introduced as advertised and that the objectors are informed accordingly

## 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary

## Active Travel Experimental Road Closures

<b>Financial:</b>	The implementation of any additional physical sign works will be funded from existing Capital budgets as part of the Network Management team's Minor Works Programme for 2023-24.			
<b>Human Resource:</b>	N/A			
<b>Legal:</b>	The Traffic Regulation Order required to formalise the experimental order element associated with Station Road Newbury will be processed and sealed by the Legal Services team.			
<b>Risk Management:</b>	N/A			
<b>Property:</b>	N/A			
<b>Policy:</b>	The consultation was in accordance with the Council's consultation procedure and that of an Experimental traffic Regulation Order.			
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		N/A
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		N/A

## Active Travel Experimental Road Closures

<b>Environmental Impact:</b>		x		N/A
<b>Health Impact:</b>		x		N/A
<b>ICT Impact:</b>		x		N/A
<b>Digital Services Impact:</b>		x		N/A
<b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b>		x		N/A
<b>Core Business:</b>		x		N/A
<b>Data Impact:</b>		x		N/A
<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	<p>Local stakeholders and road users were consulted on the proposed prohibition of motor vehicles orders by way of statutory advertisement of an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order.</p> <p>Affected ward members were also consulted on these proposals as part of the statutory advertisement carried out during the last 6 months and have been sent a copy of this report to comment on. Any comments received will be recorded accordingly during the ID meeting.</p>			

## 4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Executive Member for Planning, Transport and Countryside of responses received during the 6 month statutory consultation period for these prohibition of motor vehicles proposals and to seek approval of officer recommendations.
- 4.2 Objections and support for these closures were received for all the sites. This report summarises the objections and support for the closures and makes a recommendation to the Executive Member what should be implemented as a result of this consultation.

## 5 Supporting Information

### Introduction

5.1 As part of a Government initiative to encourage more active travel by residents of the UK and to encourage the general public to be healthier through activities and sport through the DFT grants were made available to local Authorities to modify and convert existing public highway into quiet traffic free streets for walking, cycling, scootering and leisure activities. These proposals were a result of West Berkshire Council being successful in a bid to the Department for Transport in 2020/21 to fund active travel improvements. The funding had to be used to encourage walking and cycling across the district in response to changing travel habits caused by the CoVid pandemic. .

### Background

5.2 An Experimental Traffic Regulation Order was chosen as the best way to facilitate these prohibition of motor vehicles traffic regulation orders as it allowed consultation evidence to be gathered whilst the physical closure were in place for the first 6 months of the 18 month Experimental Order. The effect of the closure has therefore been properly experienced by both residents and motorist affected by it. It allowed a real world reaction to be experienced and gives a better and more honest consultation result.

5.3 The prohibition of motor vehicles order came into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 and the initial 6 month consultation period commenced accordingly afterwards ending on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2023 for Lawrences Lane and the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2023 for Station Road. Both these restrictions were signed with the appropriate regulatory signs and further enhanced by the inclusion of physical measures to prevent vehicles from entering the restricted areas. On Station Road, the physical measures took the form of large planters in the carriageway. On Lawrences Lane, bollards were installed. The bollards were lightweight and removable to allow those with legitimate access requirements to enter the restricted area. The restriction on Deadmans Lane was unfortunately never implemented on the ground due to issues with an existing access that were not identified at the initial assessment stage.

5.4 A copy of the Order is included as Appendix A.

5.5 Following an issue with the practicalities of installing the Deadmans Lane closure due to a previously unidentified vehicular access along Deadmans Lane. The access being a well used vehicular staff access into the rear of Theale Green school that was developed into a formal access during the build out of an old planning application several years ago without the knowledge of us or the Planning authority but is now by default considered formal and can remain this prohibition was not physically supported by signage and did not therefore result in the same sort of consultation as the other two sites.

## Responses to Statutory Consultation and Officer Comments

### Lawrences Lane

5.6 At the end of the statutory consultation period, 64 comments were received in respect of the Lawrences Lane closure, comprising 34 objections and 30 expressions of support.

5.7 The objections were from Thames Valley Police, South Central Ambulance Service, a Thatcham Town Councillor and residents/users of the lane, although several were from the same resident but raising different reasons for objection each time. The support for the restriction came from Thatcham Town Council, a district Councillor (not the ward member), a Town Councillor and The Mid and West Berkshire Local Access forum.

5.8 Objectors' comments included:

- The lack of an available turning head at the northern end resulting in a private driveway being used to turn around, damaging the surface of the drive;
- Time spent removing and replacing bollards each time for access to adjacent fields to tend to animals;
- Operational difficulties for the police and Ambulance Service with the closure in place ;No need for closure as its not a direct or popular access route for anyone other than residents who live on the lane;
- No accident history even during its peak use by pedestrians during the CoVid lockdowns;
- An unnecessary diversion for residents resulting in a waste of time and fuel;
- The bollards prevent access for horse drawn vehicles, even though they are not prohibited by the Order;
- The restriction was requested originally by those who don't live on the lane and have to use it daily so don't therefore appreciate how awkward and inconvenient it is being closed.

5.9 Supporter Comments included:

- The restriction prevents antisocial driving behaviour along lane especially late at night and provides a quiet lane to walk,cycle up especially at weekends
- The lane is not required for use as a through route as there are alternative routes that are wider and safer
- The restriction enhances the public rights of way access across the Northern part of Thatcham to Cold Ash and beyond.The restriction allows the lane to be used by walkers and cycles without the risk of meeting cars on a lane not wide enough for them to pass safely.

### Station Road

5.10 The restriction on Station Road in Newbury resulted in 35 responses; 29 in support and seven objections.

## **Active Travel Experimental Road Closures**

- 5.11 The objections were received from local residents of adjacent roads and stated that the restriction was unnecessary and that Station Road allows traffic to be spread across the network more evenly. The restriction discourages use of adjacent businesses because potential customers are no longer able to access the former parking bays on Station Road.
- 5.12 The expressions of support were mainly received from local residents and parents of children attending the adjacent school. These pointed out that the closure makes walking to school safer and removes pollution from the school playground. Station Road is not required as a through route, as there has been no noticeable effect on congestion in the town and the road is now more pleasant as a cycle route.

## **Deadmans Lane**

- 5.13 No comments were received in respect of Deadman's Lane in Theale on account of the closure never having been brought into force on site. A comment from the Local Theale Ward member was however received expressing his disappointment that the closure wasn't had not been installed.

## **Officer Comments:**

### **Lawrences Lane**

- 5.14 With regards Lawrences Lane although it is recognised that the prohibition of motor vehicles along the lane will provide a pleasant car free route for walkers and cyclist wishing to use the lane, the practicalities for the residents and land owners who live on or need access to the lane are disproportionately harsh and they are greatly affected by this scheme and suffer from it. Operational reasons given by the Police and Ambulance Service as an objection although minor in comparison to the affects it has on residents is an important point and does present an ongoing worry/concern to residents living on the lane as to whether their own safety in the event of a fire, medical or police incident could be made worse.
- 5.15 There have been a number of incidents where the bollards and bollard sockets at the closure points have been vandalised and if this closure is to be made permanent there will be an going maintenance cost to the Authority for the replacement of those items if the current frequency of vandalism is continued.

### **Station Road**

- 5.16 The level of objection to this scheme has been minor in comparison to the level of support and although the closure of the road has resulted in a reduction of car parking spaces within the Town Centre it has not had any real, impact on the road network in terms of additional congestion or delays. It is therefore considered not to have had any negative affect on the general public or local residents of that area.

## Deadmans Lane

5.17 As mentioned previously this closure didn't happen as it was supposed to have done due to there being a vehicular access point within the length of the closure that had to remain open. As previously mentioned this access is a well-used vehicular staff access into the rear of Theale Green school that was developed into a formal access during the build out of an old planning application several years ago that had to be retained. The location of this access unfortunately resulted in the need for a turning head to be provided close to the entrance to avoid an otherwise excessive reverse and although alternative locations for a revised turning head were considered along with bespoke signage giving advance warning of the lack of a turning head and reduced access we didn't proceed with the physical works side of the ETRO as we did with the other two sites as the narrow nature of the existing road prevented a sensible turning head being provided. There have been no comments for or against this closure received and only the comment from the Ward member as mentioned previously was received

## 6 Proposals

6.1 In view of the above, is proposed that:

- (a) The proposed Prohibition of motor vehicles orders are not made permanent for Lawrences Lane Thatcham and Deadmans Lane Theale and that the objectors and supporters are informed accordingly.
- (b) The proposed prohibition of motor vehicles order is made permanent for Station Road Newbury and that the objectors are informed accordingly.

## 7 Other options considered

- 7.1 To allow the proposed prohibition of motor vehicles orders to be introduced at the 3 locations with additional and enhancements to the existing signing at the Lawrences Lane and Deadmans Lane sites to help to overcome the issues highlighted by the objectors.
- 7.2 The consideration when our Part 6 Powers are approved for the installation of ANPR enforcement cameras to be used in lieu of physical measures which obviously haven't works previously at Lawrences or could be installed at Deadmans Lane and that these changes are introduced before the end of the 18 month ETRO which is December 2023

## 8 Conclusion

## 9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix A –

**Subject to Call-In:**

Yes:  No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position

Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months

Item is Urgent Key Decision

Report is to note only

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**Consultation Drawings SLR/20/05/002**