
School Streets Scheme, Francis Baily, Thatcham

Committee considering report:	Individual Executive Member Decisions
Date of Committee:	19 July 2024
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Stuart Gourley
Report Author:	Cheryl Evans
Forward Plan Ref:	ID 4374

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform the Executive Member for Environment and Highways of the responses received during the statutory consultation of an Experimental Traffic Order, which gives effect to a “Car Free School Streets” initiative at Francis Baily Primary School.
- 1.2 To discuss the level of success of the project during the initial six months of the scheme.
- 1.3 To make recommendations as to the continuing operation of the project.
- 1.4 Explore additional initiatives to help reduce the parking issues raised by local residents in the vicinity of the school site.

2 Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 The Experimental Traffic Regulation Order which gives effect to the traffic restriction is made permanent.
- 2.2 Enforcement of the restriction using an ANPR camera be carried out to improve compliance with the restriction.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	The costs of implementing the permanent order can be funded from an appropriate Capital budget.

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Human Resource:	None.			
Legal:	The Traffic Regulation Order will need to be sealed by the Legal Services team.			
Risk Management:	None.			
Property:	None.			
Policy:	The consultation was in accordance with the Council's consultation procedure.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		N/A
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		N/A
Environmental Impact:	x			Encouraging and enabling active travel will reduce the environmental impact of travel and is part of the Council's Environment Strategy.

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Health Impact:	x			Encouraging and enabling active travel will promote physical activity.
ICT Impact:		x		N/A
Digital Services Impact:		x		N/A
Council Strategy Priorities:	x			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thriving communities with a strong local voice • Tackling the climate and ecological emergency: <p>Successful school streets initiatives will help deliver the priorities within the above plans to reduce the environmental impact of travel and improve the overall network management.</p>
Core Business:		x		Although contributing to the above Council Strategy Priority and wider social and environmental objectives, the delivery of this type of project is not in itself a statutory service.
Data Impact:		x		N/A

Consultation and Engagement:	<p>Local stakeholders and road users were consulted on the proposed school streets initiative by way of;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• School expression of interest survey (July 2022)• Statutory advertisement of Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (Aug 2023 to date)• Public meeting, engagement exercise to consider access concerns raised by local residents prior to the scheme being introduced (Aug 2023)• Set of FAQ's (Aug 2023)• Consultation Hub – Design feedback of implemented scheme (Sept 2023)• 2nd Public meeting, engagement exercise to report on actions raised at 1st meeting and receive updates on local experiences (Feb 2024) <p>This report has been circulated to all Thatcham Ward members ,Thatcham Town Council and shadow and minority members.. The following comments were received:</p> <p>No comments have been received by the time of this report but any comments received up to the date of The ID meeting will be verbally presented during it.</p>
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4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This report highlights the feedback received during the statutory consultation of an Experimental Traffic Order which gives effect to a “Car Free School Street” scheme in the vicinity of Francis Baily School in Thatcham. The purpose of this report is to enable a decision to be made as to whether the scheme is made permanent, modified or discontinued.
- 4.2 Whilst no statutory objections to the making of a permanent Traffic Regulation Order were received, a number of comment and suggestions have been made, particularly in respect of the level of compliance with the restriction and issues concerning displacement of traffic to other roads in the local area.

5 Introduction/Background

Introduction

- 5.1 A “Car Free” School Street is a road near to a school with a temporary restriction prohibiting entry to motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times. The restriction applies to school traffic and through traffic, with exemptions for local residents and those
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with particular needs. The intended result is a safe, healthy and more pleasant environment for everyone.

- 5.2 School Street schemes in isolation will not tackle all safety concerns raised outside schools. Various road safety initiatives need introduction and regular attention to achieve longer term behavioural change, for example Park and Stride schemes, cycling, pedestrian and scooter training programmes and improved infrastructure.

Background

- 5.3 The Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund (Tranche 4), gave the Council the opportunity and an injection of funding (£30K) to undertake a second School Streets scheme in the district, to follow on from the successful pilot scheme introduced in Calcot in 2021.
- 5.4 Francis Baily was chosen for this scheme due to the continued parking issues outside the schools raised by local residents as well as the school at peak drop off and pick up times.
- 5.5 The Traffic and Road Safety team had worked previously with the school on a number of occasions and approached the Head Teacher and Kennet Academy. All parties agreed to participate in the scheme.
- 5.6 This scheme main aims are to:
- (a) Cut down on traffic and parking pressures outside the main school entrance on Skillman Drive.
 - (b) Remind drivers using the A4 that a school is sited along this route and at key times children are present in high numbers.
 - (c) Discourage car journeys to/from school and encourage more walking, cycling and scooting.
 - (d) Encourage those that need to travel by car to use identified Park and Stride locations including Dunstan Green Park and Old Bluecoats.

6 Supporting Information

Consultation

- 6.1 The scheme was launched on 5th September 2023, at which point an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order came into force to prohibit motor vehicles from entering the restricted streets, namely Edwin Close, Jedburgh Close and Skillman Drive between the hours of 08:15 and 09:15 and 14:30 and 15:30 Monday to Friday (Term time only), and the necessary regulatory signs were erected at the roadside. The extent of the restriction is shown in **Appendix A**.
- 6.2 When the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order came into force, a statutory consultation began, inviting comments on and objections to the restriction. In addition to the statutory consultation, which is essentially a formal legal process and not especially accessible to many stakeholders, comments were invited via an online
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portal (<https://www.westberks.gov.uk/FBschoolstreets>). Feedback has also been collated from the two public meetings held and from emails. The consultation period ran for six months, at which point the comments received were collated and analysed. Separate documents summarising the consultation process are included as **Appendix B** (Consultation hub) **Appendix C** (public meetings).

6.3 The key messages arising from the consultation are as follows:

- (a) No formal (statutory) objections to the restriction have been received.
- (b) The majority of respondents agreed with the scheme's aims to reduce traffic and parking pressures on Skillman Drive.
- (c) Several respondents said that they felt safer walking or cycling because of the restriction.
- (d) Many respondents have observed over time that some parents are ignoring the restriction and therefore suggested that formal enforcement be carried out.
- (e) Some suggestion that pupils lack road safety awareness and asking for more education to encourage and enable safe walking, cycling, and scooting to school.
- (f) Residents impacted by any displacement and inconsiderate parking issues have raised concerns that the scheme has increased issues in surrounding roads.
- (g) It was suggested that the Council should seek to increase alternative areas where possible to help with the parking displacement.

Monitoring of the scheme

6.4 Data was collected before and after the scheme was launched using variety of methods.

- (a) Speed radar devices.
- (b) Car volume counts.
- (c) Civil Enforcement Officer patrols – 25 visits in total:
 - A4 London Road – 20 visits, 1 notice issued, 3 cars observed.
 - Skillman Drive – 4 visits, 0 notice issued, 0 cars observed.
 - Jedburgh Close – 1 visit, 0 notice issued, 0 cars observed.

6.5 A summary of the results can be found in **Appendix B** (Other monitoring data),

6.6 The main points arising from the collection and monitoring of the data are:

- (a) There is a significant increase in non-resident parking when the school term starts. However, the data does not support the anecdotal reports of an increase of displacement of parking to surrounding streets following the introduction of the school streets scheme.
 - (b) Good early compliance after the scheme was introduced, vehicle parking volumes have decreased across the roads being monitored. There is an assumption the scheme is being monitored and nice weather may have influenced behaviour at these times.
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- (c) At 2 months & 6 months post-scheme introduction data collection identifies increases in non-compliance on Skillman Drive.
- (d) The new 'SLOW DOWN' ProGEN Vehicle Activated Sign situated on the A4 Bath Road either side of the Francis Baily A4 entrance (opposite the Esso garage), results show high driver compliance during drop off and pick up times. The additional message of 'School Ahead' has had a positive impact as demonstrated in the November and beyond data.

Has the scheme met its objectives?

- 6.7 Residents have reported a significant improvement in the previous parent parking issues in Skillman Drive i.e. parking on or blocking resident drives, abusive confrontations with parents.
- 6.8 Active Travel surveys with the school community (Staff, parents, and Year 5 & 6 pupils) highlighted barriers and concerns relating to being more motivated to increase active travel – **Appendix D**.

The following elements have also been introduced and now well used by school community:

- More covered cycle and scooter storage for both pupils and staff along with cycle helmet storage lockers.
- A shelter to help parents to take cover from inclement weather.

- 6.9 Data collected by the ProGEN Vehicle Activated Sign on the A4 Bath Road outside the school shows that vehicle speeds have reduced at school opening and closing times.

Further measures

- 6.10 Various additional measures have been suggested in consultation responses and will be considered in detail and implemented where possible using existing capital budgets.

7 Options for consideration

- 7.1 To discontinue the Francis Baily School Streets scheme and remove the restriction on vehicular access. In view of the positive reaction to the scheme and the encouraging shift towards active travel for journeys to school, this is not recommended.
 - 7.2 To extend the restricted zone to include surrounding roads. Whilst it is acknowledged that surrounding roads do experience parking associated with the schools during term time, our surveys did not indicate a significant increase since the scheme was introduced. Extending the restricted zone is therefore not recommended, but parking issues in will continue to be monitored.
 - 7.3 To make the School Streets scheme and the associated restriction permanent, as proposed below.
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8 Proposals

8.1 In view of the above, it is proposed that:

- (a) The Experimental Traffic Regulation Order which gives effect to the traffic restriction be made permanent.
- (b) Enforcement of the restriction using an ANPR camera be carried out to improve compliance with the restriction.

9 Conclusion

- 9.1 It can be concluded that the School Streets project at Francis Baily has succeeded in encouraging non-car travel to the school via Skillman Drive and creating a safer and more pleasant environment in the vicinity of the school.
- 9.2 In order to maximise the effectiveness of the scheme, enforcement of the restriction and various ancillary measures in the local area are required.

Appendix A – Francis Baily School Streets map

Appendix B – 6 months consultation summary and additional data information

Appendix C – Public Meeting summaries

Appendix D – Active Travel Survey summary (school community)

Background Papers:

[ID4097 - School Streets Pilot Project, Calcot Infant and Junior Schools](#)

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

Wards affected: Thatcham South and Crookham

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