

CABINET

11 JULY 2023

SAFER, HEALTHIER STREETS PROGRAMME – SCHOOL STREETS

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Simon Curry, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration

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Summary

As part of the renewed emphasis on quality of life and place shaping in local neighbourhoods, the School Streets initiative will provide safe spaces for our school children and their parents, carers, or guardians to travel to and from school. Building on our successful recovery from the pandemic, School Streets will aim to improve air quality in the vicinity of our schools and support the wider community to choose more sustainable ways to travel.

This report provides Cabinet with the details of the School Streets projects within the Safer Healthier Streets Programme, including the results of the recent informal public consultation and proposed next steps. The report seeks approval to progress a formal statutory consultation, and where appropriate, for the School Streets to be implemented.

1. Budget and policy framework

1.1 The introduction of School Streets will help the Council manage the road network, improving safety and traffic flow at specific locations during key parts of the day. School Streets will support Council priorities and contribute to key objectives in the Local Transport Plan including:

- Supporting a safer, healthier and more secure community in Medway by promoting active lifestyles and by reducing the risk of death, injury or ill health or being the victim of crime.
- Supporting a healthier natural environment by contributing to tackling climate change and improving air quality

- 1.2 The School Streets projects contribute to the implementation of the Council's Environment Strategy, the Sustainable School Travel Strategy, the Air Quality Action Plan, Local Transport Plan (LTP) and emerging Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).
- 1.3 The core objectives of the Schools Streets projects are to:
 - provide a safe immediate environment and thereby increase the number of children and carers who walk or cycle to school;
 - reduce traffic levels and air pollution levels; and
 - provide a safe local environment and thereby maximise the number of residents who walk or cycle, reduce traffic congestion and pollution levels from specified residential school roads.
- 1.4 A growing awareness of the impact of climate change and the importance of dedicated action to tackle it, such as the need to improve air quality has been emphasised in recent months, including a report from the Inner South London Coroner, who found local air pollution was a cause of the death of a nine-year-old girl in 2013.
- 1.5 Recent research by The Runnymede Trust also shows 20% of the UK's most deprived areas experience some of the worst impacts of air pollution.
- 1.6 Child-friendly Medway launched in April 2021 as part of Council's ambition to make Medway one of the best places in the country to grow up – a place where children and young people's voices are recognised and they feel safe, valued, and included.
- 1.7 Over 3,000 children and young people participated in a survey, with education, the environment, and access to parks and green spaces all being high priorities for young people. A strong sense of community, which included their school and neighbouring streets, as well as safer public spaces, were also important to children and young people. The School Streets initiative can contribute very positively to the aims and objectives of child-friendly Medway.
- 1.8 School Streets prioritise public space for student pedestrians, and cyclists, rather than vehicles, and make streets near their schools feel safer and more welcoming.
- 1.9 Improving accessibility to schools by walking, cycling and public transport is identified as one of the key ways Medway can support healthy children and young people and is set out in Medway's Children and Young People's Plan 2019-2024.
- 1.10 Local authorities in the UK have powers under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (S1 and S6-9) to regulate traffic and restrict access:
 - to avoid danger to persons or other traffic using the road,
 - to facilitate the passage on the road of any class of traffic (including pedestrians),
 - to prevent the use of a road by vehicular traffic where such use is inappropriate given the street context.

- 1.11 A Traffic Regulation Order is applied to a street around a school, temporarily restricting access to motorised vehicles. That street will, in effect, become a pedestrian and cycle only zone. Times for the restrictions are determined in agreement with the school and local residents. These can be for between 45-60 minutes and only on weekdays, during term times.

2 Background

- 2.1 A School Street is a timed restriction on roads outside schools, which prevent vehicular traffic passing through during school drop-off and pick-up times. They work by introducing measures, often a timed road closure, to significantly reduce the volume of traffic when children are likely to be moving around arriving in the morning and leaving in the afternoon. This means the street becomes a pedestrian and cycle zone at these times.
- 2.2 Roads around schools have become increasingly busy with a surge of traffic concentrated over a 50-minute period at drop off and pick times. This results in increased risk of collisions with vulnerable road users and other motorists, unlawful parking, traffic jams, road rage. People on foot and cycling are left with the feeling that roads are no place for them, and this has long term implications for everyone, especially children.
- 2.3 Statistics from the Department of Transport reveal that 14% of children killed on Great Britain's roads in 2018 were between the morning school run (7-9am) and 23% after school between 3-5pm. A report from insurer Admiral shows a 43% fall of road collisions during the holidays at school run time.
- 2.4 In Medway, over the 3-year period up to the end of December 2022, there were 199 collisions which involved 220 child casualties up to the age of 16.
- 2.5 Analysis by the University of Westminster in 2022 showed School Streets deliver a notable decrease in motorised traffic during temporary restriction hours, but also contribute to a general decrease beyond these times.
- 2.6 At the time of publication of the research (2022), there were more than 500 School Streets in place across London, with walking the primary mode of transport (58%) used by children aged 5-11 for school journeys.
- 2.7 School Keep Clear markings were first established in the 1964 Traffic Signs Regulations and keep the space outside of schools free from parked vehicles so children can be seen more easily when crossing the road. In 1964 there were fewer than 7 million vehicles on the road, today this figure has increased to more than 38 million. School Streets extend this original principle by closing the road outside a school to motor vehicles during drop-off and pick-up times. Access restrictions do not apply to residents and the schemes only operate during term time.
- 2.8 Eleven proposed School Street schemes have been consulted on (two 60-minute time restrictions per day on weekdays, to be enforced during term time

only). The consultation started on Friday 2 June 2023 and ended on Sunday 25 June. The schools included in the consultation were:

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Greenfield Road, Gillingham
- The Pilgrim School, Warwick Crescent, Borstal
- St Peter's Infant School, Holcombe Road, Rochester
- St Nicholas Church of England Infant School, Montford Road, Rochester
- Miers Court Primary School, Silverspot Close, Rainham
- Phoenix Primary School, Glencoe Road, Chatham
- Burnt Oak Primary School, Cornwall Road, Gillingham
- Hempstead Junior School, Birch Grove, Hempstead
- St William of Perth Catholic Primary School, Canon Close, Rochester
- St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Bleakwood Road, Walderslade
- Greenvale Primary School, Symons Avenue, Chatham

2.9 It is proposed that the eleven schemes are enforced via the installation of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras with supporting signage. This was made clear within the consultation materials and survey.

2.10 To facilitate enforcement of School Streets via ANPR, Medway Council has made an application for the relevant powers to enforce moving traffic offences. This has been accepted by DfT and Medway is part of the agreement from the Parliamentary, Business and Legislation (PBL) Committee to lay the SI "The Civil Enforcement of Moving Traffic Contraventions Designations Order 2023" on 27 June 2023. This has now been given and this will come into force on 22 July 2023 as planned.

2.11 Enforcement cameras are not surveillance cameras. They do not continuously record and only provide short clips into a secure review system when a contravention occurs, during the controlled times. Privacy Impact Assessments will be undertaken as part of the installation process to address any privacy risks.

3. Options

3.1. There are several design options that can be considered to restrict vehicles entering School Streets, including physical barriers and installation of ANPR camera enforcement.

3.2. **Option A:** Physical Barriers are one design option to restrict vehicle movements within a School Street. This can be by placing barriers or planters across the road at the start of the street. The benefits to this method are very high compliance as vehicles cannot physically drive into the area. However, this option requires volunteers or school staff to install them at the beginning and end of each session, demanding substantial time and resource. This option can also put volunteers at risk, should drivers deliberately disregard the timed restriction. In addition, the use of physical barriers prevents access for

residents or those who require access to property during the time of restriction.

- 3.3. **Option B:** The use of ANPR cameras is a commonly used design option for School Streets. Using ANPR allows exemptions for those who need to access the street during the restricted time, such as emergency service vehicles or Blue Badge holders (a full list of proposed exemptions can be found in the table in section 3.4). In addition, there is no time or resource requirement from volunteers or school staff. Following implementation, a lower compliance rate can be observed for a short period, as drivers may disregard signage and continue to drive along the school street.
- 3.4. A considerable benefit of ANPR cameras is the option to exempt certain drivers from the restrictions. The table below provides the proposed exemption policy for Medway’s School Streets. It draws upon best practice across the country and reflects responses and comments made during consultation and discussion with schools. Exemptions are only required when School Streets are in operation at the start and end of the school day, outside of these times, all drivers can use the street as they normally would.

| Exempt | Not Exempt |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emergency Services ● Residents within the zone ● Blue badge holders needing access ● Carers of vulnerable residents needing access ● Utility providers attending emergencies ● School buses ● Parents/ carers dropping off or collecting students with special educational needs or disabilities ● Bicycles ● Postal Service ● Refuse vehicles ● School staff who are entering the school car park only | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parents ● Delivery drivers ● Tradespeople ● Visitors ● Businesses ● Motorcycles/ motor scooters ● Taxis |

Figure 1 Table of Exemptions

4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1. We recognise there are good reasons to exempt certain road users from the restriction of a School Street which, if managed properly, will not have a detrimental impact on the effectiveness of the scheme, the purpose of which is to provide safe spaces for our school children and their parents, carers or guardians to travel to and from school. All School Streets have therefore been designed with ANPR cameras to enable this.

- 4.2. An informal consultation commenced on Friday 2 June 2023 and ended on Sunday 25 June 2023. The consultation programme has been outlined in section 6 of this report.
- 4.3. A total of 1,482 survey responses were received across the eleven School Streets proposals. Appendix A provides a summary of the responses of the consultation. Appendix B provides a more detailed breakdown of all responses received by each School Street proposal.
- 4.4. The following key findings have been identified through analysis of the consultation responses.
- 4.5. There has been support in response to six of the eleven School Streets and we are therefore proposing to take these schools forward to the next stage of statutory consultation. These are:

- **St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Greenfield Road, Gillingham**
- **St Peter's Infant School, Holcombe Road, Rochester**
- **Miers Court Primary School, Silverspot Close, Rainham**
- **Burnt Oak Primary School, Cornwall Road, Gillingham**
- **St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Bleakwood Road, Walderslade**
- **Greenvale Primary School, Symons Avenue, Chatham**

- 4.6. Although there has been a mixed response to two of the eleven School Streets, we are proposing to take these forward to the next stage of statutory consultation. These are:

Phoenix Primary School, Glencoe Road, Chatham

- Parents who responded were supportive of the proposal.
- Local residents who responded had concerns about displacement and access to neighbouring roads. These concerns will be alleviated through the delivery of the Greenvale Primary School Street and local resident exemptions.
- Some responses were received from staff members who suggested alternative start times, which will be considered in discussion with the school.

St William of Perth Catholic Primary School, Canon Close, Rochester

- Local residents who responded were supportive of the proposal, however parents of children at the school were unsupportive overall.
- Multiple respondents felt the afternoon restriction times should be reviewed to better suit school pick-up times, which will be considered in discussion with the school and changed appropriately.
- Some responses were concern about displacement traffic in consideration to the nearby grammar schools. As part of the proposed school street we will monitor traffic and changes in travel patterns to understand any issues that may develop.

- 4.7. There has been opposition in response to three of the eleven School Streets proposals and we are therefore not proposing to take these school streets forward. These are:
- **The Pilgrim School, Warwick Crescent, Borstal**
 - **Hempstead Junior School, Birch Grove, Hempstead**
 - **St Nicholas Church of England Infant School, Montford Road, Rochester**
- 4.8. Given the proximity of three infant/junior schools in the neighbourhood of St Nicholas Church of England Infant School it is proposed that at a future date to be determined consideration is given for a neighbourhood micro place shaping approach.
- 4.9. During the consultation period, we received feedback from additional schools and residents outside of the eleven School Streets proposals who are keen to be part of the Safer Healthier Streets programme. Requests for a School Street were received for:
- **High Halstow Primary Academy**
 - **St Benedict's Catholic Primary School**
- 4.10. Given the positive indication of support from the additional schools listed in section 4.9, School Streets at these locations will be investigated and where feasible, it is recommended a public and statutory consultation is progressed to understand if parents, local residents, and stakeholders would welcome the introduction of a School Street at the additional locations. This would be supported by comprehensive communications and allow Council to respond quickly to these requests from community.
- 4.11. A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has been undertaken to identify potential impacts of the schemes on school pupils and their families, residents and visitors to the areas and identified mitigations where needed. A full range of stakeholders were consulted for this purpose, including the Emergency Services.
- 4.12. Overall, School Streets advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristics, but in particular regarding age – with improved public health outcomes for young people. Where suggested, mitigation measures arising from the DIA will be incorporated into the detailed scheme designs where possible, and others will be met via the proposed exemptions policy and carried across into the relevant Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs).
- ## 5. Risk management
- 5.1. The table below identifies some potential risk with the programme and the actions to manage that risk.

| Risk | Description | Action to avoid or mitigate risk | Risk rating |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|-------------|
| Procurement of ANPR cameras | The procurement of the ANPR camera's following agreement to continue may delay the progress of the programme | Discussion are already being held with the procurement team to ensure all necessary process are put in place ready to action should they be required | D2 |
| Objections to Statutory consultation | Within the next stage of consultation there maybe objections to the schemes. | By undertaking an informal consultation first, we have identified any key concerns and through exemption and detail design phase have provide solutions where possible. | C2 |

Likelihood

- A Very high
- B High
- C Significant
- D Low
- E Very low
- F Almost impossible

Impact:

- 1 Catastrophic (Showstopper)
- 2 Critical
- 3 Marginal
- 4 Negligible

6. Consultation

- 6.1. In May 2023, ahead of the consultation, all eleven schools were contacted to arrange a meeting to discuss the proposed School Street. Meetings were hosted with seven schools who responded, discussion was had with two further schools via email correspondence and one school participated in a telephone conversation. the remaining three schools did not respond to requests to meet.
- 6.2. An informal public consultation began on Friday 2 June 2023 and ended on Sunday 25 June 2023. Residents within an agreed distribution area were hand-delivered leaflets detailing information on what a School Street is, how it is enforced, as well as providing details on exemptions. A QR code to the website was provided where more information was detailed, as well as the link to the survey. An example of the leaflet can be found in Appendix C.
- 6.3. A leaflet with a QR code and website link was developed for schools and parents and was emailed to all eleven schools for them to circulate via parent/guardian mailing lists.
- 6.4. As a support measure, one metre advertisement boards were placed along three points of the proposed School Street, these boards had information relating to the scheme, and provided the website link and QR code.

- 6.5. Pop-up sessions took place from the Monday 12 June 2023 to Monday 19 June 2023 where Council representatives visited the eleven schools during school pick-up and drop-off to answer any questions and provide information about the proposed School Streets.
- 6.6. Following the approval of the recommendations set out in section 10 of this report, a statutory 21-day consultation is proposed for each School Street.

7. Climate change implications

- 7.1. The School Streets initiative will contribute to Medway Council achieving its Climate Change Action Plan. This initiative will actively encourage schools to take part in discussions on providing sustainable routes to school and the impact of travel on air quality, and public health. In turn, we expect to see a reduction in the number of school journeys by private car during the most congested part of the day.
- 7.2. If School Streets are not implemented, this could negatively impact, and delay, achievement towards targets set out the Medway Climate Change Action Plan.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1. There are several implementation costs associated with the introduction of nine school street sites. This includes the design, undertaking engagement and consultation, associated advertisement costs, a statutory consultation, CCTV infrastructure (ANPR Cameras), carriageway changes and new signage.
- 8.2. As part of the 2023/24 budget build, it was agreed that the introduction of these school routes would generate income to fund highways services of £245,000. Amendments moved by the then Leader and agreed by Full Council in setting the budget for 2023/24 increased the total income from safer streets improvements by £200,000, with £62,341 attributable to school routes. As such the 2023/24 budget includes an income target of £307,341.
- 8.3. The total implementation cost is approximately £690,000, which has been added to the capital programme as part of the overall capital scheme for Moving Traffic offences of £2,019,488, funded from borrowing. A breakdown of these costs has been set out below:
 - £420,000 for the purchase of ANPR cameras
 - £95,000 for Design, stakeholder engagement, Consultation, and statutory traffic management orders.
 - £80,000 for data collection and monitoring including traffic, pedestrian and air quality
 - £50,000 for infrastructure improvements of signage and markings
 - £45,000 for Engagement and Communications on the implementation enforcement programme.

8.4. The introduction of an increase in ANPR enforcement will necessitate a new back-office exemptions team to be considered in the interim for implementation at the end of 2023/24. This team will process the issuing of exemptions and undertake camera evidence reviews for enforcement.

9. Legal implications

9.1. The making of any Traffic Management Order is authorised by the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 as amended, which includes a general power to take into account anything that a local authority might consider relevant.

9.2. In processing permanent traffic orders in due course the provisions of The Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, as amended, will need to be followed.

9.3. In making a traffic order a local authority also follows the provisions of The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, as amended. Failure to follow all requirements in making a traffic order would expose the Council to risk.

10. Recommendations

10.1. The Cabinet is asked to:

10.1.1. Note the results of the School Streets consultation as set out in Appendix A and B.

10.1.2. Agree to progressing the following eight School Streets, as detailed in paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6 in this report, to statutory consultation, and subject to the statutory process, delegate authority to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration to proceed with necessary infrastructure work and implementation:

- Burnt Oak Primary School, Cornwall Road, Gillingham
- Greenvale Primary School, Symons Avenue, Chatham
- Miers Court Primary School, Silverspot Close, Rainham
- Phoenix Primary School, Glencoe Road, Chatham
- St William of Perth Catholic Primary School, Canon Close, Rochester
- St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Greenfield Road, Gillingham
- St Peter's Infant School, Holcombe Road, Rochester
- St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Bleakwood Road, Walderslade

10.1.3. Agree to progressing immediate feasibility study for the following two Schools Streets, as detailed in paragraph 4.9 of this report, and where appropriate, delegate authority to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, to

proceed to statutory consultation and, subject to the statutory process, proceed with any necessary infrastructure work and implementation:.

- High Halstow Primary Academy, High Halstow
- St Benedict's Catholic Primary School, Lambourn Way, Chatham

11. Suggested reasons for decision(s)

11.1. The School Streets initiative, within the Safer Healthier Programme, meet several key strategic policies and action plans set out by the Council. The implementation of the recommendations will create a safer environment for students, the wider school community, and residents, by enabling and encouraging more sustainable transport choices.

Lead officer contact

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Appendices

Appendix A – Summary of Consultation responses
Appendix B – Detailed breakdown of responses
Appendix C – DIA
Appendix D – Example of Consultation leaflet

Background papers

None