

Report to: Lead Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 15 July 2024

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: School Streets Consultation

Purpose: To consider responses to the public consultations of the three School Streets schemes in Lewes, Eastbourne and Bexhill and to seek approval to progress the schemes to construction.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) note the previous development work that has been undertaken in developing the East Sussex school streets programme;**
 - (2) note the results of the public consultation on the detailed design of the three school streets schemes for Southover CE Primary, Lewes; Langney Primary, Eastbourne and All Saints CE Primary, Sidley, Bexhill;**
 - (3) agree the recommended measures for inclusion as part of Phase 1 of the School Streets Programme for the 3 School Streets schemes to be taken forward for construction this year; and**
 - (4) agree that an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) is advertised in relation to each of 3 School Streets schemes to seek a view on the proposed timings of the access restrictions.**
-

1 Background Information

1.1 A School Street is where a road outside a school is temporarily restricted to motor vehicles. It remains open to the school community on foot, cycle, or scooter at drop off and pick up times, giving everyone the space, they need to get to school and move around their local environment safely.

1.2 The County Council developed and delivered a School Streets trial programme in 2021 during the Covid 19 pandemic as part of the Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) Programme - Tranche 2. The EATF programme utilised Department for Transport (DfT) funding which had been made available to support local authorities to deliver transport schemes to enable more people to walk and cycle and to support social distancing during the pandemic.

1.3 The trial of School Street schemes aligned with national transport policy and guidance set out in DfT's Gear Change Strategy – A bold vision for walking and cycling published in August 2020 and Local Transport Note 1/20 Cycle Design Infrastructure guidance, which both recommended the re-allocation of road space to enable more people to walk and cycle.

1.4 A request was sent to all primary schools in East Sussex to ask whether they wished to participate in this new initiative. Following an assessment of those schools who wished to be considered, which took account of the impact of displaced traffic on the network; any impacts on the operation of bus services; and geographic location – to enable the trial to be in different locations across the county, the following 6 schools were prioritised for inclusion in the trial:

1. Southover C.E. Primary School, Lewes
2. Harbour Primary & Nursery School, Newhaven
3. Langney Primary Academy, Eastbourne
4. All Saints C.E. Primary School, Sidley, Bexhill
5. All Saints CE Junior Academy, Hastings
6. Ark Blacklands Primary Academy, Hastings

1.5 The trial at each of the 6 schools was enabled by using a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order which allowed the temporary prohibition of motor vehicles during the school drop off and pick

up periods. It was managed by using temporary measures including barriers, signage and paid stewards (managed by sustainable transport charity Sustrans on behalf of the County Council) for a 6-week period between March and May 2021.

1.6 An evaluation of the School Streets trials was undertaken with the school community, residents and businesses. This was alongside the collection of traffic flow data pre, during and post the trial period (including user behaviour at sites) and an independent assessment to determine which schools may be appropriate to take forward for further design work to enable the delivery of more permanent measures.

1.7 The School Streets trial evaluation is outlined in Appendix 1 and highlights the contribution that the trial schemes made to perception of safety on the journey to and from the respective schools. Active travel modes of transport increased at 3 schools and remained unchanged at 1. Park and Stride (leaving the car approximately 10 minutes' walk from school) increased significantly at 4 schools enabling more pupils to walk some or part of their journey. In addition, many schools and families cited the greater sense of space that the trial provided enabling children to play and enabling people to engage with each other.

2 Supporting Information

2.1 Using the outcomes of the evaluation of the trial and the independent assessment, 3 of the 6 trial schools were prioritised for concept design work to be undertaken to enable more permanent school street measures to be explored:

- **Southover CE Primary, Lewes** (located on a narrow one-way lane with historic buildings, small amount of housing, limited footways and within a conservation area)
- **Langney Primary, Eastbourne** (located within a housing estate which includes 2 entrances to the school accessed by different age groups)
- **All Saints CE Primary, Sidley, Bexhill** (located on a one-way lane which has a small amount of housing, a business and a church but with links to Sidley High Street)

2.2 An appraisal was undertaken on the benefits and disbenefits of the various operating approaches for school street schemes. These range from using temporary barriers and signs managed by the school community and volunteers, similar to the trial schemes, through to introducing more permanent interventions. On balance, the introduction of permanent measures as part of a School Street scheme was identified as the preferred approach as it would negate the ongoing need for seeking and training volunteers to manage the scheme at school drop off and pick up times alongside scheme monitoring.

Concept Design Work

2.3 In spring 2022 the County Council commissioned Sustrans to undertake a co-design approach with the school community, local members, residents and businesses to develop concept designs of permanent measures for each of the 3 school streets schemes. Workshops were held to enable stakeholders to reflect on what worked and did not work during the trial and to begin to identify the types of permanent measures which could be considered for inclusion in a future scheme, subject to funding being secured.

2.4 The outcome of the concept design work resulted in agreement across all stakeholders at all 3 schools to restrict access at school drop off and pick up in the areas immediately outside of the school, but stakeholders also acknowledged that access still needed to be maintained to local residents in roads directly in the vicinity of the school as well as local businesses and community buildings. The concept designs also included measures within the School Street to start to change the public realm and generated debate around wider measures and initiatives to support active travel for short local journeys within the wider community outside the confines of the school. Appendix 2 outlines the concept design work undertaken with the 3 school communities.

Detailed design work

2.5 Using Emergency Active Travel funding and additional funding secured from Active Travel England's (ATE) Capability Fund, the County Council commissioned Sustrans to undertake the detailed design work for the 3 school streets schemes in 2023/24. A condition of ATE's funding was that the detailed School Streets design also considered potential wider measures to support access to these schemes.

2.6 The detailed co-design involved undertaking a series of further workshops in autumn 2023 with different specific audiences - the school community including pupils, parents and carers and

school staff); local members; residents and businesses – at each of the 3 schools. Each audience was asked to consider which measures subject to funding should be included within the school street scheme and which would support wider access to the schools and local community amenities.

2.7 Prior to public consultation, the detailed designs were assessed by ATE to ensure that the schemes complied with their active travel design guidance. Following ATE's approval of the detailed designs, the scheme proposals for each of the 3 school street schemes, as set out in the maps at Appendix 3, were subject to a 3-week public consultation between 10 and 31 May 2024. This also included consultation with the emergency services.

Public Consultation results and update to schemes

2.8 The analysis of the consultation results are outlined in Appendix 4. In summary the results of the public consultation highlighted the following:

- **Southover CE Primary, Lewes** (190 responses) – 81% of respondents strongly supporting the scheme. Concerns were raised in relation to the location of the proposed planters in Cleve Terrace and The Course and the need for the scheme to improve safety. Requests were also made for a crossing in Southover High Street, for wider measures (encompassing Western Road Primary School) and for a Park and Stride scheme in the vicinity of the school.
- **Langney Primary, Eastbourne** (26 responses) – 50% of respondents strongly supported and 27% supported the proposals with 23% strongly opposing. Those respondents not in support of the proposals raised concerns predominantly about the impact and effectiveness of the Redford Close elements of the scheme. In addition, concern was raised over existing enforcement of parking restrictions and need to consider delivery of wider measures to support active travel for short journeys.
- **All Saints CE Primary, Sidley, Bexhill** (24 responses) – 83% strongly supported the scheme with requests received for the scheme to improve safety and to consider delivery of wider measures to support active travel for school journeys.

2.9 Responses were received from Sussex Police and East Sussex Fire and Rescue, both were supportive, but raised one query in relation to enforcement of the restrictions which are a Police responsibility.

Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) and enforcement

2.10 From an analysis of the potential options for regulating the proposed restricted access in the extent of the School Street, it is recommended that an ETRO is introduced. With exemptions for residential access, this will enable the ongoing evaluation of the scheme over an 18-month period, during which time changes can be made periodically, normally at 6-month intervals, to any restrictions in response to any feedback received. Up to but by the end of the 18-month ETRO period, the restrictions can be made permanent or can be withdrawn if appropriate.

2.11 The County Council does not have the powers to enforce where timed restrictions are introduced under either an experimental or permanent Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and this is the responsibility of the Police. This is a factor that many local authorities delivering these schemes are facing. Whilst the scheme is supported by Sussex Police, they have highlighted that they are not able to provide direct enforcement of the timed restrictions due to their available resources.

2.12 Using an ETRO will enable the Council to monitor any issues associated with this and make adjustments accordingly, but to embed the delivery and operation of the scheme East Sussex County Council (ESCC) has secured funding from ATE to deliver a travel behaviour change programme for the 3 schools. This will include scheme promotion and walking and cycling initiatives with each school and the wider community, with a greater emphasis on this prior to the delivery of the scheme and during the early stages of the ETRO coming into effect. This approach is not dissimilar to how other local authorities, including West Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council, are managing the delivery of similar schemes.

Next Steps

2.13 The consultation results have been considered alongside an assessment of deliverability of the proposed Phase 1 measures by East Sussex Highways contractor Balfour Beatty Living Places, who will be managing the construction of the scheme.

2.14 The planned delivery timescales and the potential need for further buildability assessments to be undertaken has resulted in some measures initially identified for Phase 1 needing to be re-prioritised and incorporated into a second phase of measures for delivery at a later date. Therefore, the initial focus for the 3 School Street schemes will be on delivering the access restrictions via the ETRO alongside some more minor access improvements within each School Street and their wider respective areas. The recommended School Street scheme measures for Phases 1 and 2 are set out in Appendix 5.

2.15 The delivery of the Phase 1 measures for each of the three schools is programmed for construction during the 2024 school summer holiday period. These schemes will be delivered using capital funding secured from ATE. Further work will be undertaken on those identified Phase 2 measures to establish whether further assessment or design work is required to bring them forward alongside exploring funding opportunities to enable their delivery in the future.

Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The introduction of school street schemes supports ESCC's draft Local Transport Plan objectives by enabling safer and more accessible journeys to school, supporting healthier lifestyles and communities, and decarbonising travel thereby providing benefits which are twofold for the school and its wider community.

3.2 Following School Street schemes being trialled at 6 schools in 2021, 3 schools - Southover CE Primary, Lewes; Langney Primary, Eastbourne; and All Saints CE Primary, Sidley, Bexhill - were identified to be taken forward to co-design and deliver permanent schemes. In doing so, considerable engagement has been undertaken trialling this co-design approach with the 3 school communities and key local stakeholders through from the initial trial scheme to the development of the concept and detailed scheme designs. Following public consultation on the 3 school street schemes undertaken in May 2024, there is overall support for the package of phased measures proposed for each school.

3.3 Due to the planned delivery timescales and need for further buildability assessments of some of the proposed measures, the first phase of interventions at each school as set out in Appendix 5 will be focussed on delivering the School Street access restrictions alongside some more minor access improvements within each School Street and their wider respective areas. Further work will be undertaken on developing the second phase of proposed measures for each school alongside exploring funding opportunities to enable their delivery.

3.4 In order to monitor the effectiveness of the proposed timed access restrictions, it is recommended that the Lead Member agrees to an ETRO being published in relation to each of 3 school streets schemes in order to seek views on the access restrictions whilst in situ. This will enable feedback to be received on the timed access restrictions for a period of up to 18 months with periodic opportunities, normally at 6-month intervals, to make changes to any restrictions. Up to but by the end of the 18 month ETRO period, the restrictions can be made permanent or can be withdrawn if appropriate. In parallel, the County Council will continue to liaise with other local authorities delivering similar schemes to seek and share learning through the Sustrans South School Streets network, Active Travel England and Transport for the South East.

3.5 It is therefore recommended that the Lead Member agrees to the measures for inclusion as part of Phase 1 of the School Streets Programme as set out in Appendix 5 and agrees that the 3 School Streets schemes are taken forward to construction during summer 2024.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Contact Officers: Lisa Simmonds & Eleanor Togut

Tel. No. 07519 293 184, 07849 701853

Email: lisa.simmonds@eastsussex.gov.uk, eleanor.togut@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillors Azad, Maples and Tutt

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None