

Report to Communities, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee

4 March 2024

Active Travel School Streets Trial

Report by Assistant Director (Highways, Transport and Planning)

Summary

As part of the Government's Active Travel Fund (ATF) initiative, the County Council has developed a signage only School Street trial. School Streets provide a safer and more attractive environment to the roads outside of schools, as proven in our current trial.

This paper explains how the School Streets schemes operate, results to date (the trial concludes on 31 March 2024) and how School Streets may be integrated into active travel to school schemes.

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport will make a decision whether to make the trial sites permanent once the trial schemes have been in operation for a minimum time of 6-months.

Focus for Scrutiny

The Committee is invited to:

- 1) Scrutinise the future role of School Streets as part of a wider approach to the emerging Active Travel to School approach.
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1. Background and context

- 1.1. The concept of a School Street has been developed over recent years with the aim of reducing motor vehicle traffic from roads in the vicinity of school entrances at busy times and to make journeys to and from school safer and more appealing for active travel modes i.e. walking and wheeling.
- 1.2. During the last few years, various local authorities ran trials of School Streets which included vehicular access restrictions during school drop off and pick up times. These were made by way of a Traffic Regulation Order and were either self-enforcing or were enforced by street marshals or cameras. Southampton City Council were amongst the first to install School Streets.
- 1.3. These trials have proved largely successful and many of the original School Streets have been made permanent.

1.4. Monitoring and Assessment

- 1.4.1. The monitoring undertaken by Sustrans included user perception surveys, focus groups and pupil travel surveys. Baseline comparisons will be available to view in the end of trial report.
- 1.4.2. Physical monitoring is undertaken by on street sensors. The sensors measure traffic flows, counts, pedestrian and cyclist levels as well as journey times and vehicle speeds. These sensors will remain in place until the projects come to an end.
- 1.4.3. Findings from the trial are outlined below.

1.4.4. Table 1

	Decrease in number of vehicles that drive through the restriction. (Avg. per day & %)				Increase in number of pedestrians using footways towards school. (Avg. per day & %)			
	Baseline Data AM	Live Trial AM	Baseline Data PM	Live Trial PM	Baseline Data AM	Live Trial AM	Baseline Data PM	Live Trial PM
Arundel CE Primary School	N/A	20	N/A	20	50	84 (67.7%)	42	50 (17.7%)
Thomas A Becket Junior School	155	89 (42.9%)	109	75 (31.2%)	200	265 (32.5%)	183	220 (20.3%)
Swiss Gardens Primary School	139	73 (47.5%)	170	100 (41.2%)	180	203 (12.7%)	184	185 (0.5%)

The table above compares data from the baseline (pre-trial) and a 12-week daily average collected to date.

There has been a decrease in the number of vehicles driving through the restriction at all three sites together with an increase in pedestrians walking within the restricted area at all three sites.

Traffic displacement has been observed which was an expected outcome. We received minimal reports of traffic displacement causing congestion or inconsiderate parking issues. All inconsiderate and/or unlawful behaviour was reported to Operation Crackdown.

- 1.5 Displaced and inconsiderate parking: this is the most common public issue raised during the trials. Where possible, additional enforcement (over and above normal deployment patterns) has been provided in order to deal with vehicles parking on existing waiting restrictions such as yellow lines, and it

is hoped that this can continue, but is subject to Civil Enforcement Officer and/or Sussex Police capacity.

- 1.6 Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) can enforce parking infringements where there is a parking restriction. They cannot enforce dangerous or obstructive parking on a footway or across driveways as this is the responsibility of Sussex Police. Parking activity will continue to be monitored and residents may, if they wish, [submit an application to the County Council for new waiting restrictions](#). It should be noted that even if successful, an application may take in excess of a year to process and be implemented on the highway.
- 1.7 Non-compliance with the traffic access restriction tends to be more frequent when weather conditions are not favourable. Contraventions may in the future be managed via ANPR should the County Council adopt a Moving Traffic Enforcement policy.
- 1.8 The trial has demonstrated that a signage only approach can deliver positive outcomes in terms of promoting active travel. There is also school community support at all three of the trial sites.
- 1.9 The trial has highlighted the value and importance of political, community and school leadership support. There has been a mixture of positive and negative responses that ranged from concerns about displaced parking, restriction timings to responses stating increases in walking and fewer vehicles in school street zone.
- 1.10 The trial supports the approach promoted as part of the draft Active Travel Strategy together with the West Sussex Transport Plan.
- 1.11 The school street trial forms part of an emerging approach to promote active travel to school initiatives. There are many potential interventions and initiatives that can be considered to encourage active travel for the journey to and from school, and a School Street would be one of the considerations alongside others such as; footway improvements, park and stride facilities, improved public transport network links and others.

2. School Streets in West Sussex

- 2.1. On 4 September 2023 West Sussex County Council (WSCC) implemented and tested a signage-only School Streets trial, backed by a minimum 6-month or maximum 18-month Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO). The signage-only approach prohibits motor vehicles entering the road directly at the school gates at drop-off and pick-up times, with exceptions for residents' vehicles, businesses, Blue Badge holders, emergency services and certain others. This is done without any physical infrastructure interventions, except signage, and without the presence of volunteers being implemented to manage the restriction.

- 2.2. The trial seeks to inform ongoing use of School Streets by testing the following matters:
 - 2.2.1. the impact of a School Street on the schools, residents, businesses and wider communities
 - 2.2.2. if a School Street has a positive impact on sustainable travel modes such as walking, wheeling, or cycling.
 - 2.2.3. road user compliance with School Street restrictions
 - 2.2.4. The suitability of individual sites (i.e. location of the school, surrounding environment and impact on local infrastructure, community and school support)
 - 2.2.5. If the sites require further capital infrastructure improvements to support walking and wheeling
 - 2.2.6. the feasibility of delivering a signage only School Street
- 2.3. A Suitability Study was undertaken in advance of the trial to determine which schools could participate. This included a desktop study and site investigations. An emphasis was placed on feasibility and buildability. This pre-work observed the drop off period at the school gates and made note of the existing behaviours. Sites being considered for the trial considered casualty data, existing modal split (what method of travel students used to get to/from school) and willingness of the school leadership to support the trial.
- 2.4. The trial includes strengthened parking enforcement on surrounding roads, together with regular data monitoring throughout the project to ensure effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.
- 2.5. The following schools were chosen as trial sites and restrictions vary at each site:
 - 2.5.1 Arundel CE Primary School, Jarvis Road, Arundel (Restriction: Motor vehicles prohibited between 8am to 9am and 3pm to 4pm)
 - 2.5.2 Thomas A Becket Junior School, Glebeside Avenue, Worthing (Restriction: Motor vehicles prohibited between 8am to 9am and 2:30pm to 3:30pm)
 - 2.5.3 Swiss Gardens Primary School, Swiss Gardens, Shoreham (Restriction: Motor vehicles prohibited between 8am to 9am and 2:30pm to 3:30pm, buses are among permitted vehicles)
- 2.6. The County Council commissioned Sustrans (a national walking and cycling charity, involved in School Streets nationwide) to provide support during

the trial, specifically in relation to school community education and communication.

- 2.7. Initial consideration of the current monitoring data indicates that the trials have had a positive impact on increasing levels of walking and reducing car use for the journey to and from school within the School Street areas.
- 2.8. A full assessment will be undertaken at the end of the 6-month trial review period. This will inform a decision about whether to make the restrictions permanent or not.

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 Other approaches were considered to control access to the school streets trial sites that included a full closure with a barriered system, operated by volunteers and enforced via automatic number plate recognition cameras.
- 3.2 Barriered systems have proved effective elsewhere in the country, but evidence suggests that the dependency on volunteers to manage the scheme is difficult if not impossible to guarantee in perpetuity. A necessary training and insurance model would be required and a system for managing absences would need to be adopted and resourced, like other Local Authorities.
- 3.3 The use of automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras is not yet available to WSCC but may become an option should the County Council adopt Moving Traffic Enforcement powers in future.

4. Consultation, engagement, and advice

- 4.1. Extensive internal and external consultation has been undertaken.
- 4.2. Local county, district and borough councillors all expressed support for the 'School Streets' trials.
- 4.3. An engagement plan, which includes school communities and local residents, was agreed prior to the launch on 5 June 2023 and will continue past the end of the trial on 31 March 2024 to ensure feedback is provided. Letters to inform local residents and parents of the School Street trials were designed in partnership with each school. Posters were printed and displayed on lamp columns in the local area.
- 4.4. An open public engagement survey is available for the duration of the trial period.
- 4.5. The ETRO does not require any prior public advertisement or consultation. Feedback, support and objections are monitored and reviewed on a case-by-case basis and taken into account on their own merit.

4.6. A breakdown of objections per scheme to date are as follows:

4.6.1. **Table 2**

Relevant School:	Basis of Objection:	Date:
Swiss Gardens Primary School	Negative effect on childminding business as access to parents' houses within the restricted zone is required.	30 November 2023
Swiss Gardens Primary School	Concerns regarding people not following the restriction and this having an impact on traffic speeds. Also mentioned that disabled people are at a disadvantage due to the restriction.	30 November 2023

4.7. A snapshot of positive feedback for each trial are as follows:

4.7.1 **Table 3**

Relevant School:	Supporting feedback comments received:	Whom:
Swiss Gardens Primary School	As a parent who walks to school most days, the improvement to safety has been extremely noticeable. The street is safe to cross, without having to creep out between illegally parked cars into a stream of congested, frustrated drivers who can't pass each other. I will feel much happier when my daughter gets to the age when she can walk to school by herself that she will be able to do so safely without putting herself at risk. On the days that I do have to drive, I can easily find a parking space on streets close by and walk a short distance to school. There has been absolutely no detrimental affect to this scheme at all, only HUGE positives.	Parent
Thomas a Becket Junior School	Today has been so much better!!!!!! what a relief!!!!!! I was wondering if Wiston avenue would be more congested, but it isn't! Because Wiston Avenue drivers aren't trying to turn in to Glebeside, so Wiston Avenue is smoother traffic too! Thank you	Resident of Wiston Avenue
Arundel Primary School	Please make these restrictions permanent all day and extend to other areas in Arun	Parent

5. Finance

- 5.1. The £0.030m revenue cost of the proposal was met from the Active Travel Capability Fund Grant (2022/23), which was carried forward into 2023/24. This has been used to fund education, training and promotion activities undertaken by Sustrans. The capital cost of erecting restriction signing at the three trial sites was £7k. This was met by the highways capital Integrated Transport Block funding.

6. Risk implications and mitigations

- 6.1. Failure to demonstrate the County Council's commitment to active travel improvements may hinder the success of future funding bids to ATE and consequently frustrate plans for investment in associated infrastructure improvements.

6.1.1. Table 4

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
School withdraws support	Each school has had a Memorandum of Understanding detailing that the trial will run for six months as a minimum.
Displacement of vehicles	Type of mitigation will vary according to location and each trial will be regularly monitored.
Public objection	Thorough engagement with local community and key stakeholders shows support for the trials. Any objections will be taken into account and carefully considered.

7. Policy alignment and compliance

- 7.1. School Streets support the ambitions set out in the [Council Plan](#) and the West Sussex Transport Plan. School Streets aim to improve safety outside the school gates for vulnerable road users, giving them the opportunity to choose to travel more actively and sustainably. School Streets respond to concerns raised by communities and schools which ultimately will allow communities to make use of the improved road network. The School Streets trial is included in the draft active travel strategy action plan to be considered alongside a range of other interventions to promote walking, wheeling, and cycling.
- 7.2. Equality duty and human rights assessment – there is a foreseeable positive impact for groups with visible and hidden disabilities. Blue Badge holders may access the School Streets trial areas at all times which will afford them better provision than that afforded to non-Blue Badge holders. There are no human rights implications.

- 7.3. Climate change – this trial may have minor improvements for climate change in that carbon emissions will be reduced in the vicinity of the schools. In addition, it is hoped that some parents and carers will choose not to drive to school. An understanding of this will be known when the perception surveys are returned towards the end of the trial.
- 7.4. Crime and disorder – no impact on crime and anti-social behaviour. As part of the 'School Streets' trial, we have requested a presence from Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) and police at each site, when possible, which will help to mitigate any crime or anti-social behaviour.
- 7.5. Public health – this trial is aimed at improving public health by nurturing confidence in walking, wheeling, and cycling and encouraging communities to choose an active method of travel.
- 7.6. Social value – no implications.

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Appendices

None

Background papers:

None