

Information Briefing – School Road, Moseley

Experimental closure of School Road between Cotton Lane and Greenhill Road

Summary

This note provides an update on the proposal for an experimental closure of School Road, Moseley, between Cotton Lane and Greenhill Road. It explains the background to this decision, and outlines the range of options that have been considered as part of this process. It describes how and why this proposed measure will be implemented, provides details on how local residents, businesses and schools will be informed, involved and able to comment on it, and outlines planned arrangements for monitoring of this scheme.

Background

School Road is used by many drivers to bypass both Kings Heath and Moseley local centres, resulting in a large amount of (through) traffic – particularly during rush hour and school run times – with vehicles often attempting to pass each other at narrow sections of the road. The situation is made worse by the number of parked cars obstructing people and vehicles travelling on this route between Kings Heath and Moseley.

Birmingham City Council was requested to investigate concerns regarding traffic congestion and road safety on School Road, Moseley by local Councillors for the (former) Moseley & Kings Heath ward with a view to this forming part of a ‘Safer Routes to School’ scheme being developed for Kings Heath Primary School.

A number of complaints had been received from residents on School Road and the vicinity regarding the section of the road between Blenheim Road and the Valentine Road/Cambridge Road/ Springfield Road roundabout outside Kings Heath Primary School. These highlighted general issues with traffic congestion as well as from inconsiderate parking and reckless driving, including vehicles regularly mounting the footway to enable them to negotiate around other traffic. Local residents were particularly concerned about the dangers this presented to vulnerable road users, such as those travelling on foot or by bike including school children.

Investigations were carried out by the local engineer for Hall Green District in 2017 with traffic counts, parking surveys and a review of accident data taking place, as well as a letter drop to all roads in the vicinity of School Road, which initially proposed a one-way restriction between Cambridge Road and Blenheim Road. Feedback from local residents to this one-way proposal were 22% in favour of the scheme, 33% not in favour, and 45% agreeing that something needed to be done but not the one-way proposal.

A traffic impact study was then produced by Hall Green District office to present all of this information. This concluded that the one-way scheme initially proposed should not be taken forward, due to the likelihood of increased congestion, reduced capacity and safety problems for other local roads. However, it was clear that this is a serious issue that needs addressing, and that taking no action here is not an option.

A meeting was organised on 11 November 2017 with local residents, Councillors and transportation officers. Residents highlighted recent footage recorded in the local area and discussed issues and possible solutions. A Facebook group was also set up by local residents – ‘School Road Traffic Issues’ – to help share information from meetings and disseminate correspondence from Councillors, council officers and other parties.

A second community meeting was held on 24 January 2018. Building on discussions from the first meeting, a number of potential options for School Road and the surrounding area were presented for further consideration. At this meeting, residents were asked to vote on their preferred option. A local resident also organised a letter drop in surrounding roads to make residents aware of the options that had been put forward and to encourage further responses which were also taken into account.

109 responses were received in total:

- 3 were in favour of Option 1 – a series of one-way streets in the area, including School Road.
- 1 was in favour of Option 2 – a reduced number of one-way streets in the area, but still including School Road.
- 7 were in favour of Option 3 – School Road made one-way southbound towards Kings Heath between Ashfield Avenue and Valentine Road.
- 28 were in favour of Option 4 – a series of waiting (parking) restrictions on School Road between Blenheim Road and Valentine Road, to provide passing places.
- 70 were in favour of Option 5 – an experimental closure of School Road to through-traffic between Cotton Lane and Greenhill Road.

Further details of these various options have been previously circulated and are available on request.

Proposed Intervention

The proposal for an experimental closure of School Road at a point between Cotton Lane and Greenhill Road is an example of “filtered permeability”¹. This uses a strategically placed road closure, or ‘modal filter’ (e.g. bollards or planters), to restrict people from driving motor vehicles through a residential area in preference to a nearby main road. The road is only “closed” to people driving through the area; people are able to walk or cycle through for local journeys. Residents and visitors will still have vehicle access to all properties, sometimes via a slightly different route. Deliveries can still be made, and rubbish collected.

It is anticipated that traffic currently using School Road as a cut-through will divert to other roads that are more suited to this. Properties will still be accessible for local traffic, and this will also make it a safer route for those walking or cycling to Kings Heath and Moseley centres and to local primary schools.

An experimental traffic order such as this can stay in place for up to a maximum of 18 months. During this time, the impact of the measure is monitored and assessed to review how it is operating and inform whether it should remain in place. If it were proposed that it should be turned into a permanent intervention then this would be subject to formal consultation. It is good practice for an experimental traffic order to remain in place for a minimum of 6 months, but the nature of this is such that it can be suspended or withdrawn at any point if circumstances require this.

This proposal has been taken through the city council’s internal project management process and has now been handed across to the Infrastructure Delivery team to make all of the necessary arrangements for implementation. Subject to feedback from emergency services and other stakeholders, and receiving the necessary approvals, it is hoped to implement this closure by Spring 2019.

¹ <https://www.cycling-embassy.org.uk/dictionary/filtered-permeability>

Communication & Engagement

There has already been a considerable amount of communication and engagement in relation to this scheme. Local residents have been actively involved in considering the various options available to address local concerns and in selecting the preferred option to be taken forward. Two community meetings have already taken place, with local Councillors and officers attending these, and social media has been used to cascade information to a wider audience.

A meeting took place on 16 October with members of the School Road Traffic Issues Group to update them on the situation. There was discussion about the importance of ongoing engagement as part of this scheme and how they could support communications with other local residents.

A letter from ward Councillors will be distributed in the first week of December 2018 to make local residents, businesses and schools aware of what is proposed, the rationale to this approach, and envisaged benefits. This will be circulated to all properties in the area that will be directly affected by the proposed experimental closure. It will emphasise that the Council is still listening to the views of residents locally and is committed to continued engagement through the delivery of this intervention. It is important that everyone living in the area affected by this proposal has the opportunity to be informed, involved, and is able to comment on it.

To enable this, two community drop-in engagement events will be held on Friday 11th January 2019 (from 3pm to 5pm at Cambridge Road Methodist Church and from 6pm to 8pm at Kings Heath Primary School). These events will give residents a chance to find out more about what is being proposed and how it will be delivered. It will also give them an opportunity to contribute views and ideas on other measures to improve road safety in the wider area, including potential alternative/additional locations for road closures.

There would also be two further opportunities for residents to formally submit any comments:

- Once an experimental traffic order comes into effect, there is a statutory 6-month period within which anyone can submit written comments or objections;
- Before the intervention could be made permanent, a statutory process would have to be followed, which includes a publication of notice and formal consultation.

As this scheme is being delivered as part of our Safer Routes to School programme we will also work closely with the two schools located at either end of School Road, Kings Heath Primary and Moseley C of E. As part of the Modeshift STARS scheme we can support schools to develop their travel plans and to deliver a range of initiatives that encourage walking and cycling as part of this. Local engagement can also be supported through a series of 20mph toolkits that have recently been produced.

Monitoring Arrangements

It is important that appropriate data is captured both before and during delivery of this intervention so that the success of the scheme can be judged through any differences in traffic volume and travel behaviour as a result of it. This could include traffic speed and volume counts, analysis of collision data, any available information on walking and cycling levels, and feedback from residents/stakeholders.

There is existing data from previous traffic counts carried out at locations in this area last year that can be used to support this, but it will be necessary to review how appropriate these are in relation to the proposed closure and whether any additional counts are required in advance. We will work with the local engineer to identify locations for further counts; they have suggested that the junctions of Oxford Road/St Mary's Row and Billesley Lane/Wake Green Road should be included.

We have started to keep a log of any comments and feedback received from local residents, businesses and schools, and will continue to collate this throughout the duration of the scheme. There may also be potential for conducting resident surveys to enhance this, but that will depend on resource and capacity available. This is in addition to formal consultation that will be conducted during the first six months of the experimental traffic order, and that which is required before such an intervention could be made permanent.