



Northumberland County Council

RECORD OF DECISION TAKEN BY SERVICE DIRECTOR - LOCAL SERVICES

Paul Jones

23 February 2021

'Go Smarter Safer Routes to School' Improvements at St Aidan's Primary School and Thomas Bewick School, Ashington

Cabinet Member: Glen Sanderson – Leader of Council

Purpose of Report

This report sets out the background to the proposed 'Safer Routes to School' Improvements outside St Aidan's Primary School and Thomas Bewick School in Ashington.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the infrastructure improvements which will promote cycling and walking as well as improve road safety are introduced outside St Aidan's Primary School and Thomas Bewick School in Ashington.

Link to Corporate Plan

Living - "We want you to feel safe, healthy and cared for"

Enjoying - "We want you to love where you live"

Learning - "We want you to achieve and realise your potential"

Key Issues

1. The 'Go Smarter Safer Routes to Schools' project focusses on improving road safety and reducing the reliance on the motor vehicle by introducing physical infrastructure measures to promote walking and cycling.
2. Both schools operate within close proximity of one another, resulting in increased congestion during school pick up and drop off times.
3. Those that walk, cycle or scoot to school rely on;
 - narrow footways which are further reduced in width due to parked vehicles

Delegated Decision

- Informal crossing points which in some cases have no dropped kerb provision
 - Indiscriminate parking in the absence of waiting restrictions
4. The Covid-19 Pandemic and resulting 'social distancing' measures mean that schools need to adopt a host of operational changes to the way pupils move around the premises. That includes how they arrive and depart from school using the adopted highway. The Department for Transport has asked for Local Authorities to implement measures around schools to encourage walking and cycling to school via various means.
 5. The proposal has been developed following ongoing concerns raised by residents in the area and school representatives in relation to the volume, and indiscriminate nature, of parking in neighbouring streets around St Aidans Primary School and Thomas Bewick Primary School in Ashington.
 6. Council representatives have been working closely with Councillor Purvis, and the Head Teachers of both St Aidans Primary School and Thomas Bewick Primary School, to consider traffic management proposals that will help promote walking and cycling to school as well as maintaining the required 'social distancing' measures outside the school.
 7. 'The Go Smarter Safer Routes to Schools' programme has been successfully trialed outside other schools and rolled out by other Local Authorities across the country. This is the first of several schools to be chosen to benefit from the scheme in Northumberland.
 8. NCC will write to affected residents in the area to advise of the proposals.
 9. Children should be safe and enjoy their entire school experience as well as the health benefits of walking and cycling, which includes the journey to and from school.
 10. The scheme is supported by Councillor Lang, Councillor Parry and Councillor Purvis as well as being partially funded from their members allocation.
 11. The scheme is made up of funding from a combination of the 'Safer Routes to Schools LTP' and use of the members allocation from Councillor Lang, Councillor Parry and Councillor Purvis.

Background

Northumberland County Council (NCC) has completed a strategic review of the existing walking and cycling measures surrounding schools within the county. The work is aimed at supporting the Go Smarter initiative which seeks to promote the use of sustainable travel modes for daily travel activity to and from work or school. Go Smarter is a shared initiative that is used by each of the authority areas in Tyne and Wear.

First Response

Delegated Decision

St Aidan's Primary School and Thomas Bewick School in Ashington are schools which have been selected to benefit from the Safer Routes to Schools funding after being identified using the council's 'First Response' process. 'First Response' covers any correspondence or elected members requests that come in to the Highways Programme or Strategic Transport and Employability Team in relation to school issues. The issues primarily relate to road safety or congestion within the school vicinity. As assessment is made on the validity and severity of the concern raised by council officers. If deemed necessary, a course of action is set in motion which could include infrastructure improvements, subject to the necessary funding being made available.

Go Smarter Safer Routes to Schools Selection Criteria

Once the school issue is verified using the 'First Response' process, a further assessment is undertaken to establish whether the school or schools meet the criteria for infrastructure measures. The schools are then scored or ranked in order of priority on the basis using the following three key indicators;

- **Modeshift Stars Bronze Silver and Gold accreditation.** The higher the accreditation, the greater the chance of being ranked higher on the list. If not affiliated then the school cannot progress further for consideration of funding.
- **Road Safety Training.** Level of engagement with the Local Authority
- **Propensity for modal shift to be achieved.** Has the school accessed the resources made available by the local authority?
- **Likely impact and viability of infrastructure improvements.** Will the surrounding infrastructure allow for walking and cycling and walking infrastructure?

Essentially, the school must be actively engaged with Modeshift Stars and the Local Authorities resources to be considered for any funding. There must be an existing problem such as too many vehicles travelling a short distance to perform pick up and drop off. The problem should be evidence based using modal shift data, generally extracted from the Modeshift Stars engagement process. Finally, there has to be proportionate opportunities to solve the problem using infrastructure measures that would ideally tie in with existing cycle routes, or suitable walking measures.

The schools are then scored and ranked in order of priority. Clearly, the funding made available from the 2020/21 LTP budget is finite in nature. This therefore represents the most fair and transparent means of selecting schools, given that the local authority receives regular complaints about school safety and congestion on a daily basis.

Delegated Decision

The Go Smarter Safer Routes to Schools project is a targeted approach, (meaning school issues are focused and evidence led) which seeks to make tangible improvements which can lead to a reduction in vehicle use, a reduction in resulting congestion and improvements in road safety.

St Aidan's Primary School and Thomas Bewick School in Ashington

Both schools began the First Response process at the end of 2019 after Councillor Purvis approached Council Officers for assistance. The key issues related to road safety in terms of the interaction between motorists and pedestrians, footway parking and indiscriminate parking at junctions and elsewhere.

The identified issues were observed during a site meeting in the AM peak between Council Officers, the Head Teachers and School Safety officers.

Following a desktop study which included a review of the data provided through Modeshift Stars, the site observations and the resulting assessment process, potential opportunities were drawn up and shown to those present at the site meeting by way of an initial consultation.

Proposals

The proposed measures consist of;

- Tightened radii at bends in junctions to reduce vehicle speeds, and increase footway widths.
- Informal crossings and build out at key desire lines where children cross to enter and leave the school.
- Traffic Regulation Orders in the form of 'No Waiting' restrictions to prevent parking where it is considered unsafe to do so and where it creates visibility issues for children when crossing.
- Bollards to physically prevent parking at junctions, on footways and in the vicinity of informal crossing locations.

Delegated Decision

Implications Arising out of the Report

Policy	Consistent with existing policies
Finance and value for money	<p>Scheme will be funded from a combination of LTP 2020/21 (Go Smarter Safer Routes to School Fund) and Local Members Allocation. The split is as follows;</p> <p>Total estimated cost - £29,170.80</p> <p>Safer Routes Allocation - £13,000.00</p> <p>Cllr. Mark Purvis contribution - £10,000.00</p> <p>Cllr. Ken Parry contribution - £3,000.00</p> <p>Cllr. Jim Lang contribution - £3,170.80</p> <p>Total secured funding for scheme - £29,170.80</p>
Legal	Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO 11 101)
Procurement	N/A
Human Resources	None
Property	None
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
Risk Assessment	This proposal has been specifically designed to reduce risks to vulnerable road users.
Crime & Disorder	Regulations in place to carry out enforcement.

Delegated Decision

Customer Consideration	A reduction in speed and motor vehicle traffic will lead to a safer environment for all road users.
Carbon reduction	Speed reduction and motor vehicle reduction assists with carbon reduction
Wards	College Ward

Delegated Decision

Background papers:

<https://northumberland365.sharepoint.com/:f:/r/sites/TS-InfrastructureProgrammeandProduction/Shared%20Documents/Highway%20Safety/Safer%20Routes%20to%20Schools?csf=1&web=1&e=35gbQ4>

Appendix A – Scheme Plan – Scheme Construction Detail

Author and Contact Details

Report Author **Paul McKenna, Programme Engineer**

Delegated Decision

DECISION TAKEN

Title of Officer: Service Director, Local Services

Subject: Proposed 'Go Smarter Safer Routes to School' project for St Aidan's Primary School and Thomas Bewick School, Ashington

Consultation: Engagement with the school and the elected members, then further consultation with affected residents to take place by Council representatives.

Decision Taken: To approve TRO associated with the 'Go Smarter Safer Routes to School' project and associated infrastructure improvement works for St Aidan's Primary School and Thomas Bewick School, Ashington.

Signature of Director



Date

24 March 2021

Delegated Decision
