



# Northumberland County Council

## **RECORD OF DECISION TAKEN BY SERVICE DIRECTOR – LOCAL SERVICES**

**Paul Jones**

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### **Experimental School Streets Closures Review**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor John Riddle**

**09 January 2023**

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### **Purpose of Report**

This report sets out a review of the experimental School Streets Closures schemes introduced across four schools in Northumberland and proposal to introduce the restrictions on a permanent basis.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the experimental School Streets schemes in the form of a 'Pedestrian & Cycle Zone' are introduced permanently.

### **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 County Council introduced School Streets as a new initiative outside four school entrances to improve road safety and allow for social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. The measures were implemented on an experimental basis, meaning they were to be trialed and reviewed for a period of up to 18 months.
3. The schemes have been supported by the relevant local County Councillors and school representatives.
4. School Streets have been successfully piloted outside other schools in Northumberland since 2019. They are being actively promoted by the

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Department for Transport (DfT) and implemented by other Local Authorities across the region and the country.

5. The Department for Transport (DfT) has asked for Local Authorities to implement streets around schools which encourage walking and cycling to school, through measures such as School Streets, where traffic is restricted at pick-up and drop-off times.
6. Children should be safe, encouraged to play and enjoy their entire school experience, which includes the journey to and from school.
7. Existing signage has been under constant review throughout the trial period. It has been decided that it would be appropriate to continue to omit the "Except for access" supplementary plate from the sign design. Section 6.2.3 in Chapter 3 of the Traffic Signs Manual 2019 states "The use of the permitted variant 'Except for access', on its own or combined with another exception, should be given careful consideration. This could attract too many vehicles and compromise pedestrian safety. It could also make parking enforcement difficult in fully paved roads where yellow lines are not provided". The 'Except for access' signage has caused numerous issues in the sense that the wording is too generic and in turn allows motorists who aren't residents to contravene the restrictions with the Police finding enforcement difficult.
8. Proposals to implement the schemes on a permanent basis are to be funded by the 2022/23 Local Transport Plan (LTP) programme as part of the Safer Routes to Schools initiative.
9. Implementation of the schemes on a permanent basis may assist the Council in achieving its aims of halving the County's carbon footprint by 2025 and make the County carbon neutral by 2030.

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### Background

During the last two years School Streets initiatives have been introduced at four locations across the county. School Streets involve the prohibition of motor vehicles accessing roads situated directly outside school entrances, with the exception for residents who live in that street. 'Pedestrian & Cycle Zone' restrictions during school start and end times were introduced in order to accommodate this, however due to the need for swift implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic and for social distancing to be maintained when schools returned, along with the concept being new in the county, the decision was made to progress these via an experimental Traffic Regulation Order so that they could be continuously reviewed and amended if necessary.

The benefits of sometimes closing a street include but are not limited to:

- Encouraging healthier and more sustainable travel opportunities by leaving the car at home and opting to walk, scoot or cycle;
- Reduction in car use resulting in greener streets and cleaner air quality;
- Reduction in potential conflict between motorists and children therefore improving road safety;
- Reduced access issues for residents;
- Encouraging play and activities before and after school.

Feedback from residents, school representatives and parents alike is largely positive in nature, however concerns have been raised over occasional contraventions to the 'Pedestrian & Cycle Zone' restrictions where parents enter the zone to pick-up or drop-off schoolchildren. The Council constantly works with the school representatives and Northumbria Police, who are currently responsible for the enforcement of moving traffic restrictions such as this, to remind parents that they must not enter the zone during the applied hours.

The Council considers that as the positives outweigh any potential negatives to the School Streets closures, the 'Pedestrian & Cycle Zone' restrictions should be implemented on a permanent basis as follows:

- 1) Hareside Primary School, Cramlington: to be implemented as it currently exists ('Monday-Friday 8:15-9:15am & 2:45-3:45pm');
- 2) Josephine Butler Academy, Ashington: restriction times to be altered from 'Monday-Friday 8:30-9:30am & 2:45-3:45pm' to 'Monday-Friday 8:15-9:15am & 2:45-3:45pm';
- 3) New Delaval Primary School, Blyth: restriction times to be altered from 'Monday-Friday 8:15-9:15am & 2:45-3:30pm' to 'Monday-Friday 8:15-9:15am & 2:45-3:45pm';
- 4) Newsham Primary School, Blyth: to be implemented as it currently exists ('Monday-Friday 8:15-9:15am & 2:45-3:45pm').

Amendments to the proscribed hours are proposed in order to be consistent with restrictions across the county and to remove the hours that were set to

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coincide with temporary school opening times during COVID-19 restrictions, as these need no longer apply.

Northumbria Police, other emergency services and relevant statutory consultees will be notified of these amendments as part of the process for making the Traffic Regulation Order.

It should be noted that it has been decided that it would be appropriate to omit the “Except for access” supplementary plate from the sign design. Section 6.2.3 in Chapter 3 of the Traffic Signs Manual 2019 states “The use of the permitted variant ‘Except for access’, on its own or combined with another exception, should be given careful consideration. This could attract too many vehicles and compromise pedestrian safety. It could also make parking enforcement difficult in fully paved roads where yellow lines are not provided”.

The “Except for access” signage has caused numerous issues in the sense that the wording is too generic and in turn allows motorists who aren't residents to contravene the restrictions with the Police finding enforcement difficult.

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### Implications Arising out of the Report

<b>Policy</b>	Consistent with existing policies
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Scheme will be financed through the LTP 2022/23 programme
<b>Legal</b>	Motorists will be required to comply with the Traffic Regulation Order
<b>Procurement</b>	Signage and road markings to meet Regulations for Traffic Regulation Orders
<b>Human Resources</b>	None
<b>Property</b>	None
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	None
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	Regulations in place to carry out enforcement
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	Statutory consultees and directly affected residents will be informed
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	Promotion of active travel assists with carbon reduction by reducing car usage
<b>Wards</b>	Cramlington Village (Hareside Primary School) Seaton with Newbiggin West (Josephine Butler Academy) Newsham (New Delaval Primary School & Newsham Primary School)

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### **Background Papers:**

File reference –

S:\Highways\PROJECT\22\HE Minor Improvements\HE223606D - TROs  
Countywide\HE223629D South East Northumberland\HE223629D-03  
Experimental School Streets

### **Author**

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Report Author     **William Binks, Programme Officer**

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### DECISION TAKEN

**Title of Officer:** Service Director, Local Services

**Subject:** Experimental School Streets Closure Review

**Consultation:** Engagement with the school, directly affected residents and statutory consultees will be informed

**Decision Taken:** To introduce the experimental 'Pedestrian & Cycle Zone' restrictions outside Hareside Primary School, Josephine Butler Academy, New Delaval Primary School and Newsham Primary School on a permanent basis

Signature of Director



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**Date**

16.01.23

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