

Agenda Item 4

For decision - Frome School Streets design

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Summary

The Frome School Streets scheme is proposed to make conditions safer for walking and cycling to and from 5 of Frome's schools- Trinity, Oakfield, Avanti, Critchill and Bright Stars Nursery. The proposed scheme has been designed by Sustrans for Frome Town Council in consultation with the community. The intention is to implement the scheme for a trial period of 18 months in order to monitor its effectiveness in reducing traffic, improving safety and increasing levels of active travel on the school run.

What is the Frome School Streets project?

A School Street is a street that is designed to make it safer to walk and cycle to school. Most School Street schemes restrict traffic directly outside the school for 30 minutes to 1 hour at either end of the school day.

The key proposals for Frome's School Streets zone are listed below and detailed on the maps at [Appendix 1, which can be viewed on the website here](#). Images of specific parts of the proposed scheme will be presented at the meeting

1. Timed road closures
 - A timed road closure is proposed from the junction of Nunney and Oakfield Road along Oakfield Road to the Royal Oak pub and down to the bottom of Critchill (including Whitemill Lane). The closure will operate between the hours of 8:00-9:15 and 2:45-3:30. Residents, blue badge holders, buses and emergency services are still able to travel through the closure zone.
 - A separate timed road closure will operate on Park Road between the hours of 8:25-9:00 and 2:45-3:30 at Avanti. Residents, blue badge holders, buses and emergency services are still able to travel through the closure zone. Use of the private car parks by the Church and other service users will be able to continue as usual.
 - Map 1 appended to this paper shows the proposed extent of the closure zone in red. In response to concerns raised by residents during the consultation process, Whitemill Lane has been included in the closure area to avoid traffic being diverted along this narrow single track.
2. 20mph zone
 - There was strong support from parents and residents in the area to extend the existing 20mph limit across the School Streets zone. Map 1 appended shows the

proposed zomph area in blue, which will be subject to police and Highways approval.

3. Planters, trees, street patterns
 - Planters, street trees and street patterns outside each school create a strong visual message that this is not a “usual” carriageway, that children will be walking and cycling in the area and that drivers should slow down and give way. At various locations planters and street trees act as chicanes to slow traffic. [The locations of these markings and trees is shown in the plans below the street map at Appendix 1, which can be viewed on the website here.](#)
4. Quiet Way- Oakfield and Somerset Road
 - In addition to the School Streets trial, Sustrans has secured £150k to make Quiet Way improvements to Somerset and Oakfield Roads, as these form part of the National Cycle Network (NCN) route 24.
 - The Quiet Way complements the School Streets scheme by providing further traffic calming measures including a median strip to visually narrow the road, parking bays to encourage parking on one side of the road (there are no restrictions to parking on either side), street trees and planters.
 - Raised footways across the two main 4-way junctions will provide safer crossing points.
5. Junctions at Broadway and the Butts
 - During consultation with residents safer crossings at the junctions of Oakfield Rd and Broadway, and Somerset Road and the Butts, were repeatedly highlighted as a priority.
 - While the necessary crossings are not affordable within the budget of the School Streets scheme, Sustrans have secured funding to design crossings at both these junctions and will be pursuing funding to implement them through National Cycle Network funding.

Frome’s School Streets zone includes Trinity, Oakfield, Critchill and Avanti schools and Bright Stars Nursery. The scheme has been designed by Sustrans in partnership with the schools, Frome Town Council and Somerset County Council, using a co-design process with the schools, parents, and residents.

The scheme will be implemented through an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) for a trial period of 18 months, which we hope to begin in Spring 2023.

The scheme will be monitored and evaluated throughout the 18-month period, and a decision will be taken with the community at the end of this period as to whether to make the scheme permanent.

Why do we need School Streets?

1. Safety and congestion
 - Schools, parents and residents in Frome have raised significant concerns about safety at school pick-up and drop-off times, due to congestion, traffic speeds and dangerous manoeuvring. Accidents and frequent near misses involving children have been reported on these streets during the school run.
 - In a 2020 survey of over 500 people, Frome residents highlighted the Nunney/Oakfield Road area 2nd out of 69 locations for concerns about safety.
 - School run related traffic accounts for a quarter of cars on the road at drop off and pick up time
 - Children are most likely to be killed or injured by a car during the school run. A report from insurer Admiral shows a 43% fall of road collisions during the holidays at school run time.

2. Air quality, health and wellbeing
 - Children are exposed to particularly high levels of air pollution during the school run - including those who are driven to school - as pollution inside a car can be far higher than outside.
 - Pollution intensifies around schools at drop off time, so that children are exposed to levels of NO₂ five times higher when travelling to school in the morning than while at school
 - Physical activity helps with learning. According to Sustrans, “teachers find that pupils who cycle, walk or scoot arrive at school more relaxed, alert and ready to start the day than those who travel by car”

3. Carbon emissions
 - Private transport accounts for 10% of Frome’s total carbon emissions. Switching to active travel for short journeys not only reduces emissions but encourages a healthier lifestyle and reduces fuel costs.

Public engagement

The scheme has been produced using a co-design approach with the local community. In September-October 2021 seven public events were held in Victoria Park, at Critchill and Avanti schools, in the Town Centre, at Town Hall and online. We had hundreds of conversations across these events, which aimed to collect views on the scheme and highlight areas of concern regarding safety.

The information gathered in the co-design sessions was used to create a concept design that was shared in April 2022. The designs were on display at Town Hall and online, and sessions were held outside the schools to allow people to view the designs and provide feedback.

People had 1 month to comment on the draft design via paper forms or online via Commonplace. 5000 letters distributed to residents and parents to inform them of the consultation and provide links to the designs online. The results from the consultation can be viewed on the Frome Town Council website [insert hyperlink](#).

The 18-month trial will be the most significant opportunity for engagement, evidence gathering and monitoring. A decision will be taken with the community at the end of this period as to whether to make the scheme permanent.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation will be critical to understand whether the scheme works. Frome Town Council and Somerset County Council will monitor air quality, traffic, and pedestrian volumes before and during the trial. Surveys with pupils, parents and residents will measure the increase in walking and cycling and perceptions of safety before and during the trial.

Delivery

The scheme is being funded by the Department for Transport and Public Health England. It is expected that the scheme will be delivered by Frome Town Council via a Section 278 agreement with Somerset County Council. The designs presented are subject to Road Safety Audits, and approval from Somerset County Council. These mean that the detail of the proposed scheme may change at the margin.

Recommendation

Approve the design of the proposed School Streets scheme and work with Somerset County Council and Sustrans to engage the community, to implement it and to monitor its effectiveness while noting that because the scheme is subject to technical audits and sign-off from Somerset County Council as the Highways Authority it may change at the margin