

What are the aims of the Safer School Streets project?

The Frome Safer School Streets scheme aims to make conditions safer for walking and cycling to and from 4 of Frome's schools- Trinity, Oakfield, Avanti and Critchill. The scheme has been collaboratively designed by Sustrans and the local community, in partnership with Frome Town Council and Somerset County Council. 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.

Active travel (walking, cycling, wheeling) has a huge number of benefits for people in Frome, including positive environmental, financial, health and wellbeing impacts. The School Streets scheme is an opportunity make the streets safer to walk and cycle to school, reducing traffic volumes by encouraging a modal shift towards active travel.

When will the roads be closed, and who will still be allowed through?

A timed road closure will operate 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 8:10-9:00am and 2:45-3:30pm. Residents, blue badge holders, buses and emergency services will still be able to travel through the closure zone.

A separate timed road closure will operate on Park Road between the hours of 8:25-8:55am and 3:00-3:30pm at Avanti. Residents, blue badge holders, buses and emergency services will still be able to travel through the closure zone.

What infrastructure works are taking place?

Measures associated with the Safer School Streets trial include planters, thermoplastic patterns on the carriageway outside the schools, and signage alerting people to the timed restrictions.

Some permanent improvements to the National Cycle Network route 24 on Somerset and Oakfield Road will be delivered alongside the temporary measures- this includes upgrades to junctions and crossing points.

An extension to the existing 20mph zone will also be introduced across the area- a map of the proposed extent can be found below:

<https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Overview-School-Streets.pdf>

The plans are being finalised based on the results of a technical audit from Somerset Highways and budget. The plans will be available on Frome Town Council's website once this process is complete.

When will this start?

We expect the infrastructure work to be completed over Summer/ Autumn 2023. However, the timed restrictions will not be introduced until Spring 2024, to allow for all highways work to be completed before the trial begins.

Will there be need/evidence-based permits for entry to the time-restricted zones of the School Streets?

There will be no additional permits allocated as part of the scheme. Residents and blue badge holders will be exempt from the timed closures.

How will the restricted streets be enforced, in terms of access, parking and speed? Will police or parking attendants be more present?

The restrictions will be enforced through an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO). This means that it will be enforceable by law. Local parking services and police will assist with enforcement. We will be taking an 'as necessary' approach to enforcement, which can be updated during the trial, depending on how well the scheme is complied with, and how well safety and travel behaviour improves overall.

Won't this just displace traffic?

Evidence from other School Streets schemes around the UK suggests that rather than displacing traffic, the number of people walking and cycling typically increases, as it is viewed safer to do so. This leaves more space for those who have no choice but to use their cars, to park up safely a short distance from the closure zone. Safety for walking and cycling was a key concern raised by parents and residents at every stage of engagement.

The benefit of this project being a pilot is that it gives chances to understand the real impacts of what works and what doesn't once changes are in place. Since this is an 'experimental' trial, there will also be some scope to adjust things as the pilot progresses.

For additional information, research and evidence on this topic, there are a number of resources on the following web page: <http://schoolstreets.org.uk/resources/>

Why are there no controlled crossings in the plans?

A typical zebra crossing in Somerset costs around £50-£70k to install. The total project budget is just over £200k and therefore informal crossings have been proposed to allow for many more crossings to be provided where they are needed, along with other changes to improve the street environment for everyone. However, as a result of working on the project and the feedback received during the co-design process, Sustrans have secured funding to design controlled crossings at the much needed locations of Broadway at the top of Oakfield Road and the Butts at the bottom of Somerset Road. They will be applying for funding for Somerset Council to deliver these junctions - this is subject to funding being secured and is not yet guaranteed.

How will the trial be evaluated?

Frome Town Council will work with the schools and Somerset Council to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the scheme over the 18 month trial period. We will use surveys and traffic monitoring to understand whether the scheme has led to the desired increase in walking and cycling to school, and reduction in road traffic on the surrounding roads. Somerset Council will install air pollution monitors ahead of the trial. We will conduct surveys with the schools and residents before and after the scheme is implemented, to understand whether public experience is improved by the scheme over time. An online platform, Commonplace, will be open throughout the 18 month trial to allow anyone to provide feedback. Reviews will be taken at 6 and 12 months.

How will vehicles from Nunney access Frome during the timed closures?

There are currently two primary vehicle routes between Nunney and Frome, one is via Frome Road/Critch Hill (which will have a timed restriction during the trial) and the other is via Marston Road/The Butts using the bypass. During the closure periods traffic in both directions will be asked to use the bypass.

What is a Quiet Way?

In addition to the School Streets trial, Sustrans has secured £250k 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, raised footways across the Nunney Rd/Oakfield Rd junction, and safer crossing points.

Speeding and lack of safe crossings for the walk to school is a problem way beyond this area. Can other key streets used to reach the schools be made safer, too?

The budget of this scheme is funded to focus on the areas immediately surrounding these schools. However, Frome Town Council has created a Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan with Somerset Council, which will cover a network of routes and will be used to attract investment for much needed improvements across the town.

Learning from the school streets pilot will help to build the case for further improvements and funding applications in the future.

Are there opportunities for further School Streets in Frome?

Somerset Council is also looking to roll out school streets schemes in other areas of the county, so in the future it is possible that further funding may be secured to trial more school streets elsewhere in Frome.