

London Streetspace Programme (Harrow) School Streets Schemes - November 2020

Introduction

We are making a real difference to our environment to encourage our residents to improve their health through active travel – all while reducing the chance of people catching Covid-19.

The Street spaces initiative will allow more space for people to safely walk or cycle in Harrow amid the coronavirus pandemic. Temporary cycle lanes and wider pavements and areas with reduced traffic flow are among the changes being made in many parts of the borough, thanks to Harrow Council working with TfL and Dft.

In May the Secretary of State for Transport issued statutory guidance under Section 18 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 to all highway authorities in England and the Secretary of State, Grant Shapps, describes the moment as:

“a once in a generation opportunity to deliver a lasting transformative change in how we make short journeys in our towns and cities. According to the National Travel Survey, in 2017-18 over 40% of urban journeys were under 2 miles – perfectly suited to walking and cycling.”

The guidance says that local authorities in areas with high levels of public transport use should take measures to reallocate road space to people walking and cycling to encourage active travel and enable social distancing due to the impact of social distancing on public transport capacity.

The Harrow Street Spaces programme took forward the government directive via Transport for London to deliver a range of active travel schemes including school streets schemes. These schemes are implemented on residential access roads to schools in order to create walking and cycling zones at the school opening and closing times in the week.

The schemes consist of restrictions on vehicular access at the morning and afternoon school drop off and pick up times. Exceptions are granted for vehicles belonging to residents and school staff in the zone. The school streets schemes have been implemented in 4 locations in the borough and the list of schemes is shown in the table below:

SS-01	Grimsdyke School, Hatch End
SS-02	Newton Farm School, Rayners Lane
SS-03	Marlborough School, Wealdstone
SS-04	Park High School, Stanmore, Middx.

Methodology

At the special meeting of TARSAP on 10th August it was recommended and subsequently agreed by the Deputy Leader on the 19th August that a review of the schemes would be conducted on a monthly basis to test the need for the measures to address the health crisis. The methodology to be used to assess the need for the schemes will take account of the following information:

- Pedestrian / cycling / vehicle activity (measured by counts)
- Emergency services comments
- Bus services comments (TfL)
- Officer observations regarding operational performance
- Schools feedback
- Public engagement

All of these factors will be reviewed, and a course of action recommended in this report.

The recommendation will be reviewed by the Portfolio Holder – Environment and Corporate Director – Community and the future of the schemes decided.

Current situation with the pandemic

The national position has shown a decrease in the number of infections reported daily from a high of 25,000 per day at the start of November to approximately 15,000 per day in late November which shows that the second wave of the virus is starting to recede as a consequence of the lockdown that commenced on 5th November.

In Harrow the incidence rate peaked in the period 16th – 22nd November and has started to show a slight decrease. In terms of the number of cases, there has been a reduction of about 60 cases per week across the borough. This is the impact of lockdown, but it must be noted that the rates are still very high and a return to social mixing will lead to a rapid rise in cases. The rate in older adults remains high and the testing rate has been increasing.

From 2nd December when lockdown ends the tiered system of restrictions will return. Councils in England have been placed on "medium", "high" or "very high" alert with different levels of restrictions required. London is in the "high alert" tier 2 level.

Tier 2 restrictions include no mixing of households indoors, including pubs and restaurants, and the "rule of six" applies outdoors including private gardens and public spaces. Businesses and venues can continue to operate, in a COVID-Secure manner, pubs and bars must close, unless operating as restaurants. Hospitality venues can only serve alcohol with substantial meals, early closure (11pm) applies to most venues.

On 16th December London was put into the "very high" tier 3 alert level. The additional restrictions mean that the "rule of six" applies outdoors in some outdoor public places only, hospitality businesses, pubs, restaurants, hotels, entertainment venues must close travel is allowed for essential reasons only but must stay within tier 3 areas.

Pedestrian / cycling / vehicle activity (measured by counts)

Pedestrian and cycle activity counts and vehicle volume counts are being regularly undertaken at the sites. The pedestrian and cycle counts are taken at a mid-point in the scheme and repeat counts are undertaken at the same points for consistency. Both a weekday and weekend day are surveyed between 7am and 7pm to cover the busy periods. Surveys are undertaken by recording CCTV footage during the period of observation and later analysed by the survey company at their premises. Automatic traffic counters have also been used at each site to monitor traffic flows over the period of a week and calculate the average volume of daily vehicular traffic flow. The dates for data collection are as follows:

CCTV counts

- August 19th
- September 16th
- October 14th
- November

Automatic traffic counters

- July 8th – 14th
- September 16th – 22nd
- October 12th – 18th
- November

The surveys were undertaken at the following locations as follows:

- Sylvia Avenue - east of Lyndon Avenue (SS-01)
- Sylvia avenue – north of Colburn Avenue (SS-01)
- Drake Road – east of Kings Road (SS-02)
- Drake Road – west of Alexandra Avenue (SS-02)
- Ravenswood Crescent – east of Kings Road (SS-02)
- Marlborough Hill – west of Badminton Close (SS-03)
- Marlborough Hill – east of Harrow View (SS-03)
- Burnell Gardens – south of Crowshott Avenue (SS-04)
- Thistlecroft Gardens – south of Crowshott Avenue (SS-04)

The table below gives details of all the pedestrian, cycle and vehicle counts undertaken at the survey points.

Morning	SS-01 Grimsdyke School			SS-02 Newton Farm School			SS-03 Marlborough School			SS-04 Park High School		
	Pedestrians	Cyclists	Vehicles	Pedestrians	Cyclists	Vehicles	Pedestrians	Cyclists	Vehicles	Pedestrians	Cyclists	Vehicles
July / August	12	5	125	35	1	161	175	11	306	11	0	74
September	874	3	159	398	15	254	1003	23	605	315	5	113
October	983	3	88	600	18	153	1087	13	365	48	2	77
November	1019	8	70	604	16	201	1113	12	258	297	7	68

Afternoon	SS-01 Grimsdyke School			SS-02 Newton Farm School			SS-03 Marlborough School			SS-04 Park High School		
	Pedestrians	Cyclists	Vehicles	Pedestrians	Cyclists	Vehicles	Pedestrians	Cyclists	Vehicles	Pedestrians	Cyclists	Vehicles
July / August	3	1	80	5	3	153	69	4	269	5	0	80
September	713	2	104	343	14	226	896	10	569	284	5	58
October	938	1	47	511	20	116	1060	6	299	32	4	49
November	963	3	65	531	11	171	1070	11	268	232	4	47

The counts in July / August reflect conditions prior to the schools opening, in September the conditions when the schools opened without a school streets scheme and thereafter the conditions with a school streets scheme operating.

The vehicle flows at all sites clearly show an increase in September when the schools opened and then a reduction from October when the school streets scheme was introduced. Significantly the volume of pedestrians has increased at primary school sites in conjunction with a reduction in vehicles since September. This is likely to be as a consequence of more local walking to school. For Park High School the October data is not showing many pedestrians as the school was not open to students on that particular survey date. The flows in November are slightly lower than for September. The volume of cyclists has remained low despite the introduction of the school streets. This is probably due to the school street only improving conditions in the immediate vicinity of the school rather than over the whole of the route being used by cyclists between home and school. The overall journey experience is important to successfully increasing the uptake in cycling.

It will take much longer to change the uptake of cycling and this was likely to be the case early on in the trial. The weather conditions are also not favourable for cycling as the trial runs into autumn and winter.

Emergency services comments

The Metropolitan Police, Fire & Rescue Service and Ambulance service have been contacted to seek their views about the impact of the school streets schemes on their respective services. No operational issues have been highlighted.

TfL bus services comments

Transport for London oversee the commissioning and operation of bus services in London and they have been contacted to seek their views about the impact of the school streets schemes on bus services. No operational issues have been highlighted.

Officer observations regarding operational performance

Officers have undertaken on-site observations periodically to check on the operation of the schemes.

There is generally good compliance by vehicles within the restricted areas. Fixed CCTV enforcement is in place at Park High school and Grimsdyke school. The other sites are being enforced by the deployment of the camera cars. Currently enforcement is soft with only warning letters being issued to vehicles not complying with the restrictions. The introduction of hard enforcement with the issue of penalty charge notices will be considered at a later date.

The issue of permits to residents and school staff exempt from the restrictions has gone smoothly and there have been very few operational issues. The web portals setup for applications are functioning well.

An on-going review of any potential parking and traffic issues caused by displaced drop off and pick up of pupils / students is being undertaken on neighbouring roads surrounding

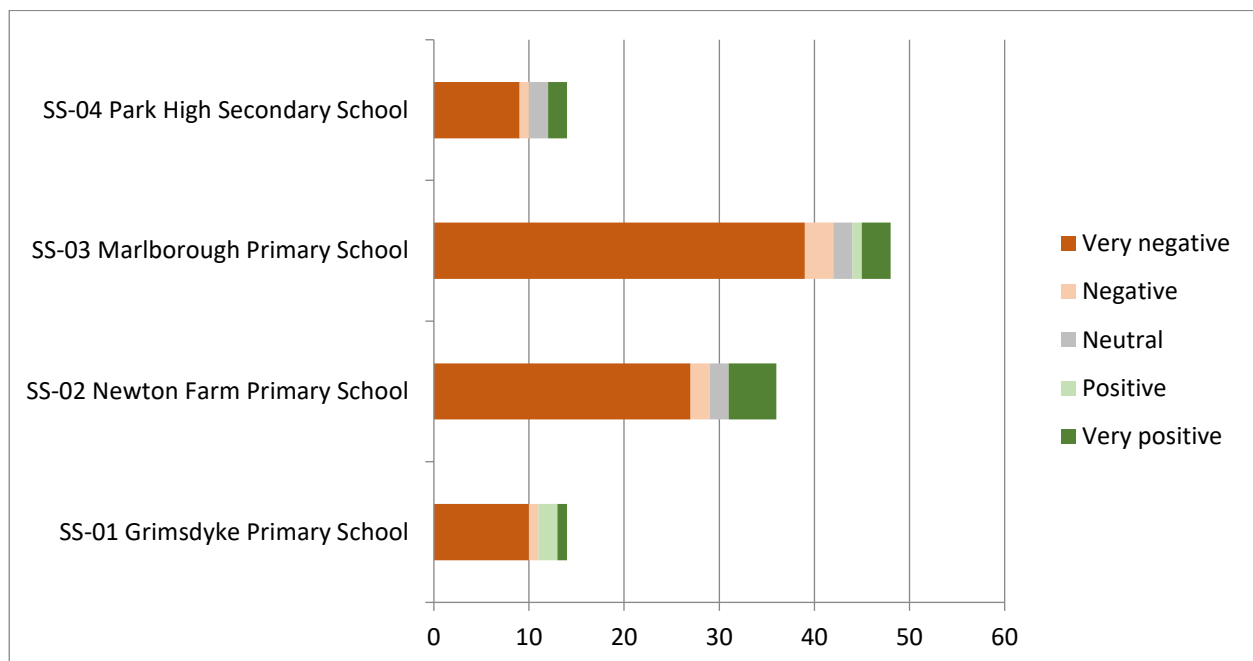
the restricted streets. This is a known potential consequence of school street schemes and will be regularly monitored.

Schools feedback

The Schools have been contacted to seek their views about the impact of the school streets schemes on the schools. No operational issues have been highlighted.

Public engagement

An engagement portal was setup at the beginning of October to facilitate the receipt of public comments for all of the on-going streetspace schemes trials. A summary of the feedback for school streets schemes in October can be seen in the table below.



The engagement feedback indicates a continuing level of unpopularity amongst the community towards these schemes. A more detailed analysis of the free comments received highlighted the following common issues:

- About 44% of responses were from residents, the remainder were non-residents travelling in the area.
- Some concerns were expressed that working parents can't adjust to the changes easily.
- Some concerns were expressed that traffic and parking has just been displaced away from the school and affects traffic congestion.
- There is an impact on tradesman or visitors needing to visit premises in restricted streets.
- Students being picked up and dropped off by car takes longer because of having to park further away.
- There were many derogatory comments that were not substantiated with any reasons.

Most comments are a reaction to changes that affect lifestyles that rely heavily on using the private car and it is expected that making changes is something that will happen over a longer period of time. This is the experience of other London boroughs that have introduced similar schemes. The initial reaction to the schemes is understandably more negative as a consequence.

Options

Detailed below are the options for consideration:

- That the school streets schemes are retained until the next review is undertaken.
- The next review of the schemes is undertaken before the end of December.

Decision

Noted