

STATEMENT OF REASONS

Following a request from Civitas Academy in Reading this Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) would allow for a trial of a School Street to commence. The temporary closure of Great Knollys Street between its junction with Bedford Road and eastwards adjacent to Civitas Academy and up to the end of this section where there is an existing traffic restriction, will be in place from 8.30am to 9.00am and 2.55pm to 3.40pm, Monday to Friday in term time only. Access will still be made available for permitted vehicles as set out in the Guidance and Application Pack.

An ETRO would allow a School Street scheme to commence on a trial basis. School Streets aim to reduce the volume of traffic using roads past school gates, both school-run and through traffic; improve air quality in and around school gates; increase number of pupils walking and cycling to school; and reduce the number of pupils arriving at the school gate by car.

There are many benefits when children use more active modes, some of which result from increased physical activity while others come from a decrease in traffic around schools.

Healthier Children

- Active school travel helps school-aged children meet the recommendation to accumulate at least 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity, which is linked with improved physical health.
- Active school travel is associated with mental health benefits including reduced stress, depression and anxiety; as well as increased happiness.
- Reduces childhood obesity.

Less Traffic and Pollution

- Reducing the number of children being driven to school reduces particulate air pollution around the school; this improves air quality and reduces associated risks of lung and cardiovascular diseases.

Healthier and Safer Communities

- Reducing traffic volumes creates safer school zones. Improving walking and cycling routes to school also enhances the safety, connectivity and quality of life for the community as a whole.

Better Academic Performance

- The increased physical activity specifically associated with the school journey has been found to increase alertness and attention during the school day.
- Physical activity supports healthy brain development, which can lead to improved learning and academic outcomes.

School Streets also create additional social distancing space in the closed highway outside of schools during the Covid-19 outbreak and delivers health and wellbeing benefits to parents/carers, encouraging them to be more active in their journey to picking up/dropping off. School Streets support long term behaviour changes towards more sustainable modes of travel and align with key policies within Reading Borough Council's Transport Strategy.

The proposed scheme is to create a 'pedestrian and cycle' zone under an ETRO for Great Knollys Street, and at the end of the ETRO period a decision will then be made on whether to introduce the scheme on the respective road permanently. Relevant signing and temporary barriers/cones will be placed in the highway at the closure point to the School Street zone, which will be attended by trained marshals at all times, to ensure that the scheme is achieved as intended.

The Council considers experimental orders to be appropriate because the implications for the surrounding road network are uncertain. As such, the impact of the experiment will be regularly reviewed, monitored and assessed whilst the orders are in operation; the ETRO will allow the Council to react more quickly if circumstances require the measures to be modified or removed. To support the successfulness of a School Street, the school will be encouraged to actively participate and consider complementary measures such as Modeshift STARS, Bikeability cycle training, cycle/scooter parking, park and stride, walking buses and the Living Streets WOW scheme.

The ETRO will last for a maximum of 18 months. During the first six months of the experiment, there will be an opportunity for people to contribute their views and anyone who is opposed to the restrictions continuing on a permanent basis to submit an objection. Such representations will be considered carefully - they may lead to the revisions to the scheme in order to achieve improved results - and will help to determine whether permanent orders should be made, either modified or in like terms to the relevant ETRO.