

Cabinet Member for City Services

23 July 2025

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for City Services – Councillor P Hetherton

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Regeneration and Economy

Ward(s) affected:

City Wide

Title:

Petition 48 24-25 – School Streets Private Hire Vehicle Access

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

A petition with 111 signatures was received requesting that Private Hire vehicles be allowed to pick up and drop off children from outside school during restricted hours.

In accordance with the City Council's procedure for dealing with petitions, those relating to road safety are heard by the Cabinet Member for City Services. The Cabinet Member had considered the petition prior to this meeting and requested that the petition was dealt with by letter (determination letter) rather than a formal report being submitted to a meeting, to be able to deal with the matter more efficiently. However, following receipt of the determination letter, the petition sponsor, Councillor S Jobbar, requested that the issue be considered at a Cabinet Member for City Services meeting.

The agreed determination letter advised that the School Streets initiative is intended to aid safe and active travel to school by reducing the number of vehicles on roads leading to schools at the start and end of the school day. As such it would not be appropriate to provide a blanket exemption for Private Hire vehicles as this would be counter to the aims of the scheme. Nevertheless, any vehicle, including Private Hire vehicles, which needs to access a private or commercial property within the school street zone, can continue to do so by applying for a visitor permits either in advance or retrospectively (within 48hrs of entering the zone). This enables the vehicle to access the zone to complete a trip where the start or finish point is located within the zone. Private Hire vehicles taking children to and from school are asked to adhere to the principles of the scheme. Those Private Hire vehicles taking a child to school with a specific access need including blue badge holders

and those with an access to school transport plan, can apply for a permit to access the zone.

The cost of introducing School Streets initiatives is funded from either the Local Network Improvement Plan from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS), or as part of funding bids, typically to Active Travel Fund funding rounds.

Recommendations:

Cabinet Member for City Services is recommended to:

- 1) Note the petitioners' concerns and exemptions already in place to facilitate access to aid journeys to school during restricted hours.
- 2) To decline the request for a specific Private Hire automatic exemption to access school streets during restricted hours.

List of Appendices included:

None

Background Papers:

None

Other useful documents:

Knights Templar Way Area School Street – Evaluation and Next Steps
Report to Cabinet Member for City Services (17th June 2024)

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Petition 48 24-25 – School Streets Private Hire Vehicle Access

1. Context (or background)

1.1 A petition with 111 signatures was received with the following title: School Streets Allow Private Hire vehicles to pick up and drop off children from outside School. The petition was submitted by Councillor N Akhtar and is sponsored by Councillor S Jobbar.

1.2 The petition reads as follows:

“We the undersigned petition the Council to allow Coventry's licensed Private Hire Vehicles to pick up and drop off children from outside the schools in a School Street area during the restricted hours.”

1.3 In September 2024, the Council launched camera-based monitoring followed by enforcement at all five of its School Streets schemes active across the city. These schemes operate at the following locations:

- Templar Primary School – Knights Templar Way, Lomsey Close and Monks Field Close. (Phase 1)
- Cardinal Wiseman School – Potters Green Road (Frankwell Drive to Woodway Lane). (Phase 2)
- Ravensdale Primary School – Ravensdale Road. (Phase 2)
- Stanton Bridge Primary School – Oliver Street (from the junction with Freeman Street). (Phase 2)
- Southfields Primary School – East Street and South Street (to the junction with Read Street). (Phase 2)

1.4 School Streets initiatives are an innovative way to improve and aid safe and active travel to school by reducing the number of vehicles on roads leading to schools at the start and end of the school day. They do this by introducing a short duration restriction which prohibits the use of the road by school related traffic at the start and end of the school day. The schemes have been designed to minimise the impact on surrounding communities and businesses whilst achieving the aim to enhance the environment around the school gate at peak times. In doing so we seek to aid how young people travel to school and reduce the impact of school related traffic and parking issues which are common at schools across the city.

1.5 People walking, scooting, using wheelchairs, mobility scooters and cycles (including adapted cycles) are not restricted and can continue to use the road. Automatic exemptions apply to the following user types to minimise the impact of the restriction on residents:

- emergency vehicles
- Council bin crews
- road maintenance vehicles
- Royal Mail postal vehicles
- utility company vehicles
- Taxis (Hackney carriages only)
- local bus services

- school buses and coaches

- 1.6 In addition to vehicles automatically exempted from the restriction, resident and visitor exemption permits can be applied for which when granted, permit the holder to drive a motor vehicle into the restriction when in force.
- 1.7 There is an intention to further expand the use of school streets across the city and a further report is due to be taken to the September 2025 City Services decision session with a further update on the programme, at which time the proposed next steps will be set out.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 School Streets are intended to remove school related traffic from roads immediately adjacent to the school gate. They have been designed to minimise the size and duration of the restriction to limit the impact on residents, businesses and road users.
- 2.2 Exemptions to the restriction have been provided for various user groups, as outlined in Section 1.5 of this report. This includes a general exemption for Hackney Carriages. This has been granted in recognition of their operational model, which allows them to pick up passengers on a flag-down basis across the city. While Hackney Carriages may cross local authority boundaries when completing a fare, they are not permitted to accept flag-down fares or operate from ranks outside the area in which they are licensed. Consequently, the number of Hackney Carriages operating within the city is limited and subject to close regulation, with approximately 425 currently licensed locally. These vehicles operate on a metered fare structure based on distance and duration. To ensure value for residents using the service it is important that Hackney Carriages can utilise the most efficient routes possible.
- 2.3 Private Hire vehicles differ from Hackney Carriages in that they must be pre-booked and typically operate on a pre-agreed, fixed fare basis. Due to cross-border licensing and operational arrangements, which include a "right to roam" provision, there is a significantly higher number of Private Hire vehicles operating across the city, many of which are licensed by neighbouring authorities such as Wolverhampton City Council. The introduction of an exemption specifically for Coventry City licensed private hire vehicles would create inconsistency and challenge for taxi users, leading to confusion and challenge mindful that frequently customers do not book their taxi based on or cognisant of the taxis licensing location. It is therefore not considered appropriate to provide either a Coventry specific or blanket exemption, both of which would undermine the objectives of the scheme by increasing traffic through the restricted zone during its hours of operation, regardless of the availability of suitable alternative routes.
- 2.4 While an automatic exemption is not deemed appropriate, it is acknowledged that Private Hire vehicles may occasionally need to access a School Street restriction when completing a fare. To accommodate this, any vehicle, including Private Hire vehicles, requiring access to a private or commercial property within the School Street zone may apply for a visitor permit, either in advance or retrospectively within 48 hours of entering the zone. This permit allows access to complete a journey where the pick-up or drop-off location falls within the restricted area.

- 2.5 In light of the reasons outlined above, it is considered that an appropriate mechanism already exists to facilitate the drop-off and collection of children by Private Hire vehicles. Private Hire vehicles transporting children with specific access needs, such as those who are Blue Badge holders or who have an approved school transport access plan, may apply for a permit to enter the restricted zone. Since the scheme's inception, we have worked, and will continue to work, closely with the Council's School Access Team to ensure that children with identified access needs can attend school without restriction. Where no such need has been identified, we request that Private Hire vehicles follow the principles of the scheme and, like private vehicles, begin and end their journeys at the boundary of the restricted area.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 The introduction of the five school street schemes set out in paragraph 1.3 of this report have been introduced in two phases. Each scheme has been introduced as an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO). This approach enables the initiative to be trialled in a real-world scenario so that any impacts can be identified prior to any scheme being installed permanently. Phase 1 of the scheme commenced in February 2023 with a six-month consultation running from February through to August 2023. The scheme continued to be monitored for a further 6 months with a decision subsequently being taken in June 2024 to bring the scheme in to permanent effect. Phase 2 of the scheme was introduced in September 2024 with a 6-month consultation period running through to March 2025. A report is scheduled to be taken to the September City Services Cabinet Member Decision Session which will review the first 12 months of operation and make proposals for phase 2 of the scheme as well as providing an update on the upcoming phase 3 of the initiative.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 N/A

5. Comments from the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Law and Governance

5.1 Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications to the Council of the recommended action.

The cost of introducing a School Streets initiative is funded from either the Local Network Improvement Plan from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS), or as part of funding bids, typically to Active Travel Fund funding rounds.

5.2 Legal implications

School Street Schemes are typically implemented using an ETRO, which permits the Authority to introduce restrictions on how the public highway is used. In exercising these powers, consideration has been given to the impact of the restrictions on residents, businesses, and road users. As a result, several exemptions exist, some applied automatically and others available by request, to minimise the impact of the scheme while enabling its key objectives: enhancing the road environment at the

school gate during drop-off and pick-up times and promoting active travel to and from school.

These exemptions allow any vehicle requiring access to a residential or business premises within the School Street area to apply for a permit, either in advance or retrospectively, as needed. To provide an automatic exemption for private hire vehicles, an amendment to the existing TRO would be required. This amendment would need to be re-advertised and consulted on prior to implementation.

Such an exemption would present significant enforcement challenges, substantially increasing the risk of non-compliance, reducing our ability to enforce the scheme effectively, and undermining its original intent.

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to the One Coventry Plan?

(<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/strategies-plans-policies/one-coventry-plan>)

The introduction of the School Streets schemes is intended to contribute to the City Council's aims of ensuring that citizens, especially children and young people, are safe and the objective of working for better pavements, streets and roads.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

No direct risk identified as part of the decisions recommended by this report. Any project risk will be managed through internal project governance processes.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

None

6.4 Equalities / EIA?

The introduction of a School Streets restriction is intended to aid and encourage accessible and active forms of travel. It will address the impacts of obstructive parking which will directly help those individuals with specific mobility issues including wheelchair and mobility scooter users. Blue badge holders requiring access to a property within a school streets restriction can apply for an exemption permit which will allow them to continue to access the street and the reduction in traffic and obstructive parking will aid access once on site.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment?

School Streets are intended to contribute towards the Council's air quality targets by reducing the reliance on private motor vehicle use and encouraging and enabling active forms of travel to school. It is hoped that by restricting traffic on roads immediately fronting school gates, the environment will be improved which will benefit air quality.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

School Streets are implemented in partnership with West Midlands Police. The form of restrictions introduced historically can only (outside of London) be enforced by a Police Officer. Mindful of limited Police resources, they were unable to regularly attend site to drive compliance with schemes. Transitioning to a camera-based monitoring and enforcement regime has reduced the burden on Police resources whilst enhancing our ability to improve compliance and the operation of schemes.

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