

BRIEFING PAPER

PETITION: Please don't open up Bedford Place to vehicular traffic. Maintain this as a safe area for pedestrians, cyclists and residents with disabilities to enjoy local bars, clubs and restaurants. This was originally a Labour Council initiative but was not strictly political. Supported by central government funding and the full range of Southampton local residents across the political spectrum.

Why is this important?

The Labour Councillors in Southampton originally created this safe space for pedestrians. This is a vibrant area for entertainment and shopping. The opening up of the space for outdoor use for everyone has been hugely beneficial during the pandemic. The continued use will provide some health security for the new-normal and gives safe transit for cyclists and scooter users towards the City centre; and directly promotes a greener, cleaner and safer environment for all. Please don't let this be taken away.

Signed by 1,510 people:

SUBJECT: Bedford Place (road) Pedestrianisation Trial
DATE: 21 July 2021
RECIPIENT: Council

THIS IS NOT A DECISION PAPER

SUMMARY:

1. This paper is in response to the petition received to retain the trial pedestrianisation of Bedford Place (the road). It sets out the rationale behind the reopening of the road and retention of the trial pedestrianisation of Carlton Place and Lower Banister Street. Where Bedford Place is referred to this is the road Bedford Place, the wider area of Bedford Place is referred to as the 'area'.

BACKGROUND AND BRIEFING DETAILS

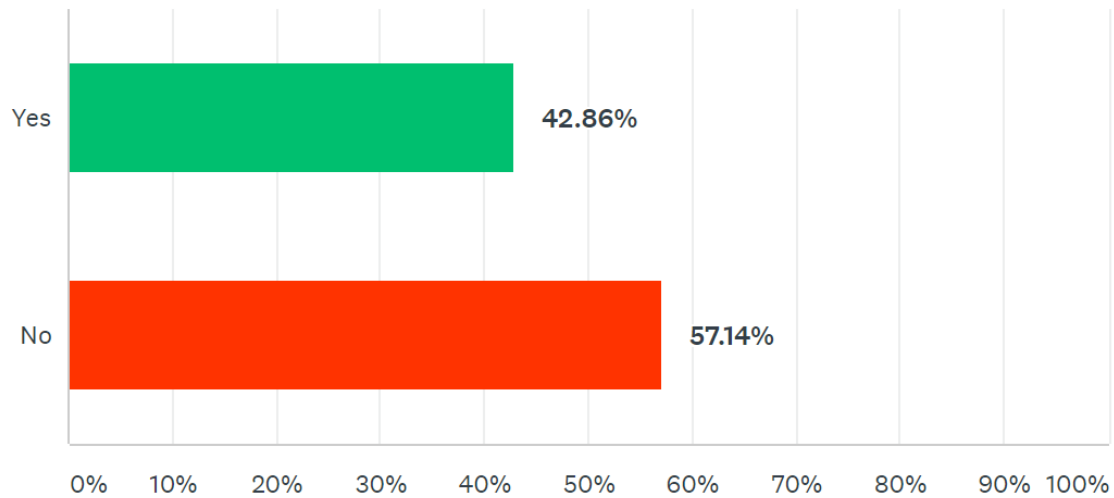
2. The Bedford Place area, centred on Bedford Place the road, is a mixed use area with businesses covering hospitality, local and specialist retail, offices and services. The road was pedestrianised as part of a trial scheme in the Bedford Place area, along with Carlton Place, part of Lower Banister Street and Winchester Street, in August 2020. The pedestrianisation took place to support the hospitality trade and social distancing following the first Covid lockdown by providing additional space for hospitality to increase their footprint for outside dining. In addition to the trial pedestrianisation the Council worked with Go! Southampton on various projects including painted barriers, planting, seating, street art, festive tree and lighting. Tables & Chairs and Pavement Licences were provided for businesses who wished to use the pavement or closed off sections of carriageway to serve their patrons, which for some was essential to allow them to open viably during the pandemic.

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3.	<p>The scheme commenced in August 2020 and continued to support the area through subsequent lockdown restrictions in November and the third lockdown from January to March 2021. The easing of the third national lockdown from March 2021 has enabled a fuller utilisation of the pedestrianised areas and a wider understanding of the economic, traffic and social impacts of the scheme, whilst Covid-19 restrictions remain albeit with a gradual easing.</p>																																
4.	<p>The trial pedestrianisation of the streets was carried out utilising an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) with an 18-month duration. An ETRO is a power available to the Council as the Local Highway Authority, enabling schemes to be implemented at short notice, ability to gather responses during the scheme, and having the flexibility to adjust schemes.</p> <p>The scheme consisted of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian & Cycle Zone on Bedford Place between junction with Carlton Place and Henstead Road; • Pedestrian & Cycle Zone on Carlton Place between Bedford Place and Southampton Street; and • A timed Pedestrian & Cycle Zone on Lower Banister & Winchester Streets operating Friday and Saturday nights. 																																
5.	<p>Engagement with businesses, stakeholders and residents occurred before and during the scheme. This consisted of the formal ETRO consultation period where the general public could respond as well as three targeted business surveys.</p> <p>The three business surveys that have been carried out are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The BID carried out a business survey with ~100 business in July-August 2020 to gather initial support for any pedestrianisation scheme. A total of 48 businesses responded, with 34 from Bedford Place itself. Various scenarios were presented with the highest level of support for a 24-hr closure of Bedford Place <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Level of support for scheme by street</th> <th>Supportive</th> <th>Unsupportive</th> <th>Undecided</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Lower Banister</td> <td>25</td> <td>7</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Carlton Place</td> <td>26</td> <td>6</td> <td>12</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bedford Place</td> <td>27</td> <td>10</td> <td>11</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The BID carried out a second business survey from 4th December 2020 into January 2021. This covered the same area as the first but had a lower response rate with 19 responding, 15 from Bedford Place. Of the responses most were not in favour of the Bedford Place trial being retained. Support remained for the trials on Lower Banister Street and Carlton Place. <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Level of support for scheme by street</th> <th>Supportive</th> <th>Unsupportive</th> <th>Undecided</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Lower Banister</td> <td>10</td> <td>4</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Carlton Place</td> <td>11</td> <td>4</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bedford Place</td> <td>6</td> <td>10</td> <td>3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Following these surveys, SCC carried out a third business survey just with businesses (75) along Bedford Place (road) only between 26 May and 9 June 2021. This requested their views on the trial and potential for reopening the road to traffic taking account of the forthcoming easing of all Covid-19 	Level of support for scheme by street	Supportive	Unsupportive	Undecided	Lower Banister	25	7	10	Carlton Place	26	6	12	Bedford Place	27	10	11	Level of support for scheme by street	Supportive	Unsupportive	Undecided	Lower Banister	10	4	6	Carlton Place	11	4	4	Bedford Place	6	10	3
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restrictions over the summer. A total of 42 responses were received from the 75 businesses (56% response rate). Of the respondents 18 (43%) wanted the road to remain pedestrianised with 24 (57%) wanting it to reopen to traffic.



During the ETRO period representations from the general public could be submitted for the first six month period. Proposals were advertised with public notices displayed on street, in the Hampshire Independent newspaper and a letter distributed to 2,896 addresses across the Bedford Place-Polygon area.

119 responses were received of which 59% supported the pedestrianisation and 39% objected to it.

Support	70	59%
Objection	46	39%
Other Response	3	3%
Total	119	

From the responses there was support from the many residents and visitors for “pedestrianisation” in Bedford Place, who have enjoyed the traffic free environment and “café culture” on-street. There were a significant number of objections from residents living in the immediate vicinity and a lack of majority support from the Bedford Place businesses.

Traffic counts have been undertaken before and at various stages during the trial. These have covered traffic flows on Bedford Place and surrounding roads. This has indicated that while traffic on Bedford Place and Henstead Road have decreased there has been the increase in traffic levels on Carlton Crescent and Wilton Avenue.

In deciding on the trial scheme the Council considered its duties under Traffic Management as well as responses to the business surveys, responses to the ETRO, and stakeholder views.

There was no clear overall view from the formal and informal consultation activities.

The Go! Southampton led businesses survey pre scheme showed some majority support for the proposal. However, the subsequent surveys of businesses by Go!

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	<p>Southampton in winter 2020 and the Council in May 2021 indicated that there is a majority against the Bedford Place trial pedestrianisation.</p> <p>This was a critical consideration behind the delegated decision by Head of Service for Green City & Infrastructure that Bedford Place (the road) is reopened, which was made in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Growth.</p>
9.	<p>With limited responses on the other two experimental schemes (Carlton Place and Winchester Street) it was recommended that Carlton Place continue as an experimental scheme for the rest of the year and be assessed at a future date with options to make it permanent.</p> <p>The closure of Winchester Street is currently suspended due to the development works on Waterloo Terrace necessitating this ETRO to be suspended. A decision on that would be taken at the same time as the Carlton Place ETRO.</p>
10.	<p>Given the split views in the local community regarding the future of the street, a recommended approach for the next stage would be to run a community co-design on potential longer-term options for the Bedford Place area. Community co-design involves workshops with local businesses, stakeholders and residents with the Council and highways partners to develop a scheme, or series of schemes, for an area. The wider Polygon area has already had Community Co-Design for an Active Travel Zone (ATZ) which identified measures on Bedford Place. This forum would be used again to develop permanent schemes for Bedford Place and to develop any final scheme for Carlton Place. Terms of reference and membership will be developed for a start of co-design in Autumn 2021 and any permanent improvements works programmed to start from 2022.</p>
RESOURCE/POLICY/FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:	
11.	<p>The Government's Reopening High Streets Safely Fund allocated £225,000 to Southampton. Most of the Bedford Place costs thus far have come from this allocation. (The RHSSF has also been used to support other works aside from Bedford Place, as well as wider safety/social distancing messaging).</p> <p>Go! Southampton has been supporting via the curation of street art, winter activation, promotion, and supporting surveys etc.</p> <p>The cost of the pedestrianisation removal on Bedford Place is currently being finalised. It will include the cost of removing or altering traffic management, relocating concrete blocks and planters, and the hiring of new concrete blocks to protect outdoor dining spaces in the parking bays on Bedford Place.</p>
OPTIONS and TIMESCALES:	
12.	<p>Three options were generated for the continuation of the Bedford Place area pedestrianisation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Reopen Bedford Place to traffic in July</u> – after the UEFA EURO 2020 championships and in line with Lockdown Roadmap Step 4 – the road is reopened to all traffic, Carlton Place and Lower Banister Street remain pedestrianised (subject to a review at the end of 2021); 2. <u>Continue the trial pedestrianisation of Bedford Place through Summer</u> – the scheme is retained as is throughout the Summer to reflect the seasonality of

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	<p>demand for hospitality. Bedford Place is reopened to traffic with Carlton Place and Lower Banister Street remaining pedestrianised and reviewed; and</p> <p>3. <u>Hybrid with Bedford Place reopened in July as per Option 1, with a commitment to investigate future alternatives to a 24 hour closure.</u> The review would involve working with local businesses and residents to look at timed pedestrianisations either in evenings, weekends or a combination of both. Responses to the hybrid option were mixed but overall the favourite preference would be for timed evening only closures of Bedford Place. However the implementation of this option would require legislation changes to enable the Council to enforce restrictions via a camera and consideration of safety.</p>
13.	<p>Other options that were considered for Bedford Place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do Nothing – scheme is retained as is and then made permanent overriding the objections and views of businesses. • Do Minimum – the powers allow for an ETRO to be amended, subject to a further six month consultation period. This is not recommended as there needs to be further discussions with residents and businesses on the future of the Bedford Place area and how it can further develop as a destination with less impact on neighbouring roads and improve accessibility.
Appendices/Supporting Information	
	<p>Further details at https://transport.southampton.gov.uk/transport-projects/bedford-placecarlton-place-temporary-pedestrianisation/</p>
Further Information Available From	James Silvester
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