

**INFRASTRUCTURE, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE - 22
MARCH 2022**

PART I - DELEGATED

8. PROPOSAL FOR CONTINUED CLOSURE OF RICKMANSWORTH HIGH STREET (DCES)

1 Summary

- 1.1 The report provides an update of the Rickmansworth High Street road closure and details of a proposal to extend the closure beyond April 2022.
- 1.2 To discuss the recommendation of the Project Board on how the project should proceed, with the proposal to agree that the project should move to a formal trial phase, initially for 6 months with a review at the end of that period and opportunity to trial an alternative closure regime if this is felt appropriate.
- 1.3 To determine Three Rivers DC position on the proposed trial.

2 Details

- 2.1 The current temporary closure of Rickmansworth High Street was an HCC led exercise, supported by TRDC. The scheme was implemented as a public health measure in response to the pandemic to enable social distancing on the High Street and in doing so encourage people back to the High Street.
- 2.2 From June 2020 the scheme involved safety barriers along the High Street which reduced on street parking and essentially allowed a temporary widening of the pavements to allow social distancing. In late August 2020 initially temporary barriers, and then formal gates, were erected at either end of the road closure and relevant signage erected.
- 2.3 A Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) allowed the implementation of the road closure. This Order expires at the beginning of April 2022. Currently, HBC Civil Enforcement Officers manage the opening and closure of the barrier on behalf of TRDC, with Environmental Protection assisting on Monday mornings and Bank Holidays. This is managed within the current Hertsmere BC Partnership contract. The Police are responsible for the enforcement of the road closure.
- 2.4 More recently, with the relocation of the bus stop to Northway, a bus shelter has been constructed on Northway near Solomans Hill. Following ongoing feedback regarding loss of disabled blue badge bays in proximity to the shops TRDC has also revised the Ebury Road car park to include additional blue badge parking bays. Parking on the High Street is currently available until 9.30am on Mondays to Saturdays, allowing cars to move before the 10am road closure. The road reopens at 6pm except for Saturdays when it remains closed until Monday morning.
- 2.5 A Project Board was set up, comprising HCC and TRDC Officers and Members, to consider the future of the High Street closure (after April 2022).
- 2.6 The purpose of the next phase/trial is to further test and monitor the impact of the measures in place as a means to deliver the defined objectives of the projects which are considered to be:
- To support economic recovery by providing flexible outdoor space which could be used for street trading and dining
 - To support economic recovery by increasing footfall and dwell time
 - To support journeys by sustainable modes to and around the town centres
 - To support environmental, sustainability and climate change objectives by reducing motor vehicle movements and traffic levels.

2.7 Stakeholder Engagement (further details contained within the report at **Appendix A**)

Through Summer and Autumn 2021, stakeholder engagement has been taking place to seek feedback on the current measures in place and gauge opinion for a possible trial. This has involved:

- i) Public engagement – HCC online High Street Recovery survey Summer 2021 - used to seek feedback from the public, residents and businesses.*
- ii) Public engagement – Three Rivers High Streets Survey, September 2021 - survey part of a wider project aimed to gather feedback to help the council develop a range of initiatives to support retailers, hospitality, and leisure businesses. The survey was aimed at all retail areas in TRDC and its customers.*

In summary for Rickmansworth Town Centre there is a desire from the public to have it more welcoming and easily accessible. The public favour a more diverse offer, as is the case across the district. Whilst the cost of parking is brought up several times, respondents indicated that there is enough parking. Of those who identified pedestrianisation the majority of those were happy with pedestrianisation to be permanent if the street area was improved and enhanced. There is a desire for regular markets and events and more independent trade to fill the empty shops which have emerged due to national and local closures during the pandemic.

- iii) Emergency Services - the emergency services have been engaged in this project since the initial deployment of emergency measures and this engagement will continue. Representatives have previously provided feedback in relation to the current measures and coded padlocks have been provided to improve access.*

2.8 The Project Board met on three occasions and discussed the current High Street closure, the findings of the surveys and stakeholder meetings and feedback they have received directly from businesses. TRDC Officers also met informally with a number of stakeholders and fed back their views which were predominantly support for a partial closure of the High Street.

2.9 The general consensus of the Project Board was the current closure had merit (especially in terms of public health objectives) but also that it was attractive to customers in offering traffic free shopping with more space, and also offered opportunities to businesses to expand their business offerings (in some cases with the use of pavement licences). There was also an encouragement to support markets and other outdoor events whilst the road was closed which would make the High Street more attractive. There was an initial consensus to continue the road closure but with further consideration to opening hours/days of the week.

3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The Project Board have received a report (attached at **Appendix A**) asking them to agree the recommendation to undertake a formal trial, as detailed below. Final confirmation of the Project Board is awaited but details will be provided verbally at the Committee meeting.

3.2 Proposed is an initial 6-month trial of the road closure regime which would commence in April 2022 – retaining the same times of closures as currently operating (closed 10am-6pm Monday to Saturday). Options to enable cycling during the closed period are being considered by the technical team.

3.3 At the end of this 6-month period a review of feedback will be undertaken. This review will inform whether the trial will be continued including options for modifications to be made for a different closure regime

3.4 The physical infrastructure will be similar to that which is currently in place, with a review of planters, signage, disabled parking bay provision and parking/loading undertaken as part of the detailed design process.

3.5 Monitoring will take place throughout the trial period – including monitoring of traffic footfall and user perceptions.

4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council’s agreed policy and budgets.

5 Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre implications

5.1 None specific.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 HCC will lead on the work required to prepare and implement the Traffic Regulation Order and subsequent monitoring. No additional TRDC staffing resource is required.

6.2 If additional planters are required in the High Street this is to be agreed with a third party to provide funding.

7 Legal Implications

6.1 HCC are leading on the preparation of the TRO. All appropriate statutory processes will be adhered to.

7 Communications & Website

7.1 Relevant staff will be informed and the website will be updated accordingly.

8 Staffing

8.1 HCC will lead on the work required to prepare and implement the Traffic Regulation Order and subsequent monitoring. TRDC will support the trial through existing staff resources including operation of the road closure gates.

9 Equal Opportunities Implications

9.1 Relevance Test

Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact?	No
Did the relevance test conclude a full impact assessment was required?	N/A

10 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

10.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council’s duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

10.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Regulatory Services Service Plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan(s).

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response <i>(tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)</i>	Risk Rating <i>(combination of likelihood and impact)</i>
Negative response to any continued closure of the High Street	Poor PR/negative comments Negative impact on High Street footfall	HCC will adhere to appropriate process to make a new TRO There will be an opportunity for continuous feedback, monitoring and review Continue to work closely with HCC to respond to feedback/comments received	Tolerate	4-6

10.3 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Very Likely ----- Likelihood ----- Remote	Low 4	High 8	Very High 12	Very High 16
	Low 3	Medium 6	High 9	Very High 12
	Low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	High 8
	Low 1	Low 2	Low 3	Low 4
		Impact -----> Unacceptable		
Impact Score		Likelihood Score		

4 (Catastrophic)	4 (Very Likely (≥80%))
3 (Critical)	3 (Likely (21-79%))
2 (Significant)	2 (Unlikely (6-20%))
1 (Marginal)	1 (Remote (≤5%))

10.4 In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

11 Recommendation

11.1 That:

- i) Any final decision is delegated to the DCES to consider the formal recommendation of the joint HCC/TRDC Project Board and that it is agreed that the High Street road closure project should move to a formal trial phase, initially for 6 months with a review at the end of that period and opportunity to trial an alternative closure regime if this is felt appropriate.
- ii) Advise HCC of the decision of this Committee and for them to implement accordingly.

Report prepared by: Kimberley Rowley, Head of Regulatory Services

Data Quality

Data sources:

Data checked by:

Data rating:

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	x
3	High	

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Closure of Rickmansworth High Street HCC TRDC Project Board briefing report v 3