

Full Time Pedestrianisation of Merrion Street East

Date: 14th December 2021

Report of: City Centre Management

Report to: Highways Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- 'Merrion Street East' is the small section of Merrion Street that is home to primarily bars and restaurants, between New Briggate and Vicar Lane. It is already pedestrianised each day from 11am through to 6am the next day, with access allowed for loading each morning. Each day, street cafes are placed on the closed street. This report proposes that a TRO is introduced in order to prohibit motor vehicles 24 hours per day, every day, and to revoke the existing one-way order.
- The next phase of the Council's City Centre Vehicle Access Scheme will see permanent measures introduced at each end of Merrion Street East, in order to improve the safety of the street, from a vehicle access point of view. Due to space constraints, this scheme will see manual (rather than automated) bollards installed at each end of the street. The proposal contained within this report will significantly reduce the capital and ongoing costs of this new system, because it will remove the need for a team of people to visit the street twice a day, every day, to open and close the system.
- A consultation exercise related to the 24/7 pedestrianisation was completed on 8th November with no objections.
- Merrion Street East has already been closed 24/7 for a period of 16 weeks during 2021. This was as a result of a temporary TRO being introduced to allow outside seating under pavement licences with a temporary canopy covering as part of the Covid recovery efforts. This appeared to create no major issues from a vehicle movement, emergency service or loading point of view.

Recommendations

The Chief Officer (Highways and Transportation) is requested to:

- a) Support the proposal to prohibit motor traffic on Merrion Street East 24 hours per day, seven days per week, and to revoke the existing one-way order.
- b) Request the City Solicitor to advertise the draft Traffic Regulation Order and if no valid objections are received, to make, seal and implement the Order as advertised.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 The 24/7 pedestrianisation of Merrion Street East will remove the need for a team of people to visit the street twice a day, every day, to open and close the proposed vehicle access system. It will make the installation of the vehicle access system easier and cheaper. It will also enable the possibility for a permanent canopy covering to be introduced over the street, to provide weather protection for visitors (although this will need a series of additional approvals which are not sought here).

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards Affected: Little London and Woodhouse

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 2 The proposal contained within this report will close Merrion Street East to all motor vehicles at all times. The exception will be when emergency access is required to e.g. repair underground services, repair a building or for the fire service to gain access to a property. The proposal will also revoke the existing one-way order.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 3.1 A wide-ranging consultation exercise took place between mid October and 8th November 2021 with:
 - LCC departments including Traffic Engineering, Network Management, LeedsWatch and Engineering & Infrastructure.
 - The emergency services and WYCA
 - Businesses based on and around the street, and property owners adjacent to the site.
 - Statutory Undertakers

No objections were received for the proposal. Key businesses on the street strongly support the proposal. There are aspirations for a permanent canopy covering to be installed, providing better weather protection for their customers and that is subject to discussions with Planning, Highways, Building Control as part of a separate Planning process.

3.2 Merrion Street East has already been closed 24/7 for a period of 16 weeks during 2021, as a result of a temporary TRO (TTRO) being introduced to allow a temporary canopy covering. This temporary canopy covering was agreed by Leeds City Council in conjunction with the issuing of Pavement Licences as a measure to support hospitality businesses as they re-opened from the Covid pandemic. This was viewed by businesses as being successful in ensuring their survival.

3.3 This TTRO has demonstrated that for a relatively long period of time, business operations on the street can function normally while the street is closed to traffic 24/7. No significant issues have arisen as a consequence of this TTRO.

3.4 The main implications of closing the street, in practical terms, are around the impact on deliveries and refuse collection. This has been considered as part of this proposal, and no objections were received from the businesses who take the deliveries and make use of the refuse collection services. A loading bay is provided on Vicar Lane, very close to the junction with Merrion Street East, and it is known that businesses use the adjacent street Merrion Place to load from.

What are the resource implications?

4.1 The primary reason for the introduction of the 24/7 TRO is to:

- Remove the need for a team of people to visit the street twice a day, every day, to open and close the system, saving around £18,000 per year.
- Make the installation of the vehicle access system cheaper, because the provision of high-rated moveable bollards (as would be needed at the New Briggate end) is more technically difficult and expensive than static bollards.

4.2 The costs of advertising and making the proposed TRO can be met by existing budgets within City Centre Management.

4.3 Resource will need to be allocated within Traffic Engineering to draft the schedules and arrange the advertisement of the Order.

What are the legal implications?

- 5 The proposed permanent TRO will need to be advertised and any representations or objections considered appropriately.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 6 The fact that the Temporary TRO has had the effect of closing the road 24/7 for 16 weeks already in 2021 considerably de-risks the proposed permanent TRO. The TTRO has demonstrated that business operations like loading and refuse collections can function while the street is closed to traffic 24/7.

- 7 The key risk arising from this report is that an objection will be forthcoming during the advertising process. At that point, a decision will need to be taken as to how and if to continue the proposal.

Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth Health and Wellbeing Climate Emergency

- 8 The proposal closes a street to traffic 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The removal of vehicles brings about localised air quality benefits. It promotes a traffic free, more walkable and cyclable street. It also delivers a business friendly environment that will have knock-on positive benefits for the local economy in terms of job retention and creation.

Options, timescales and measuring success

a) What other options were considered?

9 The key alternatives are

- A Temporary TRO, but these can only be implemented for a maximum of 18 months, and it has already been implemented, so we need to move to a permanent solution.
- An Anti Terror TRO (ATTRO), but these can only be implemented with a specific request from the Police, which is not the case, and is not necessary, here.

b) How will success be measured?

- 10 The medium and long term continued success of Merrion Street East as one of the city's key night time destinations, as a consequence of the safety improvements (and possible canopy) enabled as a result of this report.

c) What is the timetable for implementation?

- 11 It is anticipated that the TRO can be advertised in January 2022 and sealed in mid-February 2022.

Appendices

12 EDCI Screening

13 TRO Drawing

Background papers

14 None