

Committee and date

Central Planning Committee

28 April 2016

PROPOSED TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF NEW COLLEGE ROAD AT LONDON ROAD

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1. Summary

During the consideration of the consented planning application ref 13/05044/FUL for the expansion of the Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology London Road campus, subsequently now built, concern was expressed at that time over a possible increase in vehicle movements along New College Road. In order to mitigate those concerns a Section 106 Legal Agreement (s106) was signed between the Council and the College to provide funding for the implementation of a closure of New College Road at its junction with London Road.

A decision however was taken following a report taken to the Central Planning Committee held in December 2014 to close New College Road at its junction with Wenlock Road. This was subsequently implemented as of the 12 March 2015 for an experimental period of 6 months and remains in place at present. The current Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) is affective up until September 2016

The purpose of this report is to both update Members of the success and/or otherwise of the scheme with a view to further action being taken.

2. Recommendations

The officer recommendation is to approve the implementation of a temporary TRO and closure of New College Road for access by all motor vehicles at its junction with London Road. Officers consider that a temporary closure of New College Road at it London Road end for a period of 6 months will enable a proper and reasoned assessment of the merits of the closure at London Road against the current temporary TRO closure of the Wenlock Road/New College Road junction. The junction of Wenlock Road/New College Road will therefore be reopened concurrently with the temporary closure at London Road.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

We consider that there are no known risks or equal opportunity issues arising for the council or our customers as a result of this proposal.

4. Financial Implications

Funding of £5,000.00 has been granted to the local planning authority under a s106 agreement as part of the planning consent for the expansion of Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology. The funding should be sufficient to construct the proposed scheme in its current form.

5. Background

To assist Members, the following background information sets out the context of the current TRO temporary closure of Wenlock Road and how Members therefore reached its previous decision.

In December 2013 Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology lodged a planning application to expand their London Road campus to relocate existing courses from their Radbrook Road campus and to provide capacity for new facilities. The application also included a substantial expansion of the on-site parking facilities and was accompanied by a transport statement. During the consideration of this application concern was raised by local residents, the local councillors and by the local highway authority over the possibility of intensified use of New College Road by people travelling to and from the campus by car.

New College Road is not considered to be suitable for through traffic movements due to its narrow width and 'Local Access' road status; a road of this type would normally form a cul-de-sac. Ebnal Road on the other hand is classed as a 'Secondary Distributor' road as it is suitably wide to safely carry traffic travelling between Wenlock Road and London Road (and vice versa), so this is the appropriate route for these movements.

The local highway authority considered that London Road is an appropriate site for the expansion of the existing campus, so no objection was raised to the planning application subject to a s106 agreement to provide funding to close off New College Road to through traffic movements between the two adjacent 'A' roads. At the time of negotiating the agreement it was proposed that the closure would be implemented at London Road by 'reclaiming' verge running along the main road, so this has been written in to the agreement. However following the signing of the agreement and the granting of planning permission the Council was approached by a group of local residents who requested that the closure be implemented at Wenlock Road instead, as this would remove the perceived risk of drivers by-passing the closure at New

College Road and instead using the service road access some 100m or so further along London Road. The map below sought to demonstrate this:



Following a site meeting with the local residents and ward members it was agreed that the proposed point of closure should be moved to Wenlock Road and the consultation has been carried out on this basis. Whilst this is strictly not fully in accordance with the s106 agreement, 'the spirit' of the agreement is to close New College Road to through traffic to mitigate against additional traffic movements arising from the expansion of the college. The college were satisfied with the proposed change and indicated that they have no interest in being involved in the detail of the closure. Only the signatories to the agreement (the college and Shropshire Council as the local planning authority) are able to appeal the agreement, so officers are content that this change does not pose any significant risks to the council.

Based upon the above a statutory 21-day public consultation on the proposal to close New College Road at its junction with Wenlock Road commenced on 24/7/14, where notices were erected on New College Road and an advert was placed in the Shrewsbury Chronicle on the consultation commencement date. Details of the proposals were published on the council 'Have your say' consultation web pages and the proposals were made available for inspection at the Shirehall and Guildhall.

A total of 18 responses were received to the consultation, which were made up of 4 objections, 2 responses with comments (neither supporting nor objecting) and 12 representations of support for the closure. Of the 4 objections made three were by the residents of Ebnal Road who object on the grounds of most of the traffic that is using New College Road will be directed on to Ebnal Road, if the closure is implemented. They have concerns that this will impact safety on Ebnal Road and its

junctions and request that a full review of traffic patterns should be carried out before a proposal is implemented.

Concern was also raised that they were not directly consulted on the proposals. The consultation for the proposal was conducted in accordance with Shropshire Council's consultation procedures and statutory requirements. As this proposal was campaigned by the New College Road residents we understand that some of the other surrounding residents were under the impression that a letter drop had been carried out, however Shropshire Council does not normally directly canvass on TRO proposals which is the case for this proposal. However we understand that some residents of New College Road carried out some independent canvassing for this proposal.

The remaining objection was made by a resident who takes their access from the service road at the western end of New College Road, who has a Wenlock Road address. They were concerned that they may experience difficulties in receiving deliveries to their address, with some delivery vehicles choosing to park on Wenlock Road. They felt the original proposed point of closure at London Road is more appropriate and would cause less overall disruption to the residents; they suggest a trial closure here should be made. Another resident from this service road also responded with similar concerns, but did not raise an objection to the proposal. However both residents also raised concern over the proposed extension of the existing parking restrictions to cover the turning head that would be formed by the closure.

Prior to the expansion of the college New College Road carried approximately 600 vehicles per day (7-day 24hr average), it was anticipated that this figure would have increased as a result of the college expansion continuing. Whilst we didn't consider this figure to be overly excessive at present, this number of movements is greater than what would be normally expected for a local access road. We estimate that some 150-200 of these movements can be attributed to the local residents of New College Road, so the closure would result in around 400 movements being displaced, with this figure possibly rising by around 5-10% following the completion of the college. Some of these movements will be displaced to Thieves lane and London Rd and the remaining movements are likely to be displaced to Ebnal Road. Whilst no recent traffic figures are available for Ebnal Rd, we consider this route is currently under-utilised as a secondary distributor road and therefore has sufficient capacity for the displaced movements plus future growth as it has been constructed to a sufficient standard to deal with movements travelling between the adjacent A roads and local areas.

Given the potential number of vehicle movements affected is relatively low, we were of the opinion that traffic modelling would not be appropriate for a proposal of this scale.

Whilst we accepted that the closure would be an inconvenience to these residents, they aren't directly affected by the traffic on New College Road which has concerned the local residents here for some time. Most delivery companies now rely upon

satellite navigation systems for deliveries which use regularly updated digital maps, so the closure would eventually appear on these maps. Plus the required detour is short due to other available suitable routes. Due to the number of direct frontages onto Wenlock Road, delivery vehicles being parked on street during the day are commonplace and don't cause traffic issues and if anything contribute to speed management here. We have given further consideration to the proposed changes to parking restrictions and have decided not to proceed with this part of the proposal, as this was intended to prevent parking from the college occurring here but given the level of parking being provided at the college we do not expect this to become a problem.

West Mercia Police Constabulary responded with comments stating they would only support the closure if it's reinforced by physical barriers (I.E. bollards, planters or other street furniture) and signs are provided. The closure is proposed to include a full height kerb and we intended to place planters on site to prevent unauthorised movements. 'No through road' signs would be provided at London Road.

The remaining 12 responses were all notes of support from the residents of New College Road.



The image above shows the current point of closure at New College Road at its junction with Wenlock Road; if the proposals were to be made permanent the existing footway (with a full height kerb) would be extended across the full width of the junction. If required bollards or planters will be provided to prevent unauthorised access. A 'no through road' sign will be erected at the London Road junction. Some

minor amendments to the existing 'no waiting' parking restriction were also included in the advertised proposals.

Based upon the background set out above, the decision of Members following a report presented to the Central Planning Committee on the 11 December 2014 was that the Council pursue the temporary rather than permanent closure of New College Road at its junction with Wenlock Road.

The temporary TRO to close the New College Road/Wenlock Road came into effect on the 12 March 2015 for a temporary experimental period of 6 months i.e. to the 12 September 2015 although in practice the temporary TRO is affective for up to 18 months i.e. 12 September 2016.

6. Post Experimental Temporary TRO Closure of Wenlock Road

Following the end of the consultation period on the 12 September 2015 the comments/support and objections to the temporary TRO have been collated and are set out in Appendix B of this report.

As can be seen, there are 11 objections to the current closure, 15 in support of it being retained and 1 neutral comment. Of those representations from residential properties actually accessed from New College Road, 11 are supportive of the current closure and 4 against.

On the face of it therefore there is a majority of New College Road residents in support of the temporary closure of Wenlock Road being formalised of 11 to 4. Of those other non-New College Road residents either for or against, these raise differing issues including the fact that it shows previous users of New College Road who do not have a legitimate need to use this road other than as a convenient link between London Road and Wenlock Road. The traffic count previously carried out on New College Road clearly showed a level of traffic using this road link between London Road and Wenlock Road that was not attributable to the local residents and clearly has since resulted in those traffic movements being displaced potentially onto Ebnal Road and Kingston Drive or other routes. We have no empirical evidence in this regard other than local representations and anecdotal information that suggest both these alternative routes between Wenlock Road and Wenlock Road have increased in traffic flow since the closure of New College Road.

Further information has been submitted following the 6 months experimental period including a resident's log between March 2015 and January 2016 of issues surrounding the closure. The log indicates that vehicles have crossed the verge area to access New College Road from Wenlock Road together. Tyre wear marks have been seen within the verge area. There have been a number of other traffic issues identified in the resident's log. Whilst we have no way of corroborating the contents of the log carried doubt by an individual resident we have no reason to doubt its veracity.

An incident has also been cited which occurred on the 27 December 2015 where an Ambulance got stuck on the verge trying to get access from Wenlock Road to New

College Road. This is clearly of concern but the temporary nature of the road closure may have been a factor in the Ambulance driver's knowledge of the road system rather than it being a permanent arrangement, where emergency services would be more aware of the situation. It nevertheless highlights that whilst the current arrangement of forming New College Road into a cul-de-sac have advantages to some local residents; it is an impediment to provide through access by refuse, delivery and emergency vehicles.

Some of the traffic issues that have arisen may be due to the fact of the closure being temporary and without a more formalised arrangement of full height kerbing across the junction bellmouth being implemented.

7. Conclusions

It is clear at the outset that the issues surrounding New College Road are not straightforward. The current arrangement to close Wenlock Road has divided opinion from New College Road residents albeit that there is a small majority in favour of the closure being made permanent.

Notwithstanding the views of non-New College Road residents, officers' view is that this residential street should principally function for the benefit of residents. It should not be perceived as a through route to traffic between Wenlock Road and London Road. That function rests primarily via Ebnal Road and although this assertion may not be supportive of those residents fronting onto Ebnal Road, officers' view is that this is appropriate route.

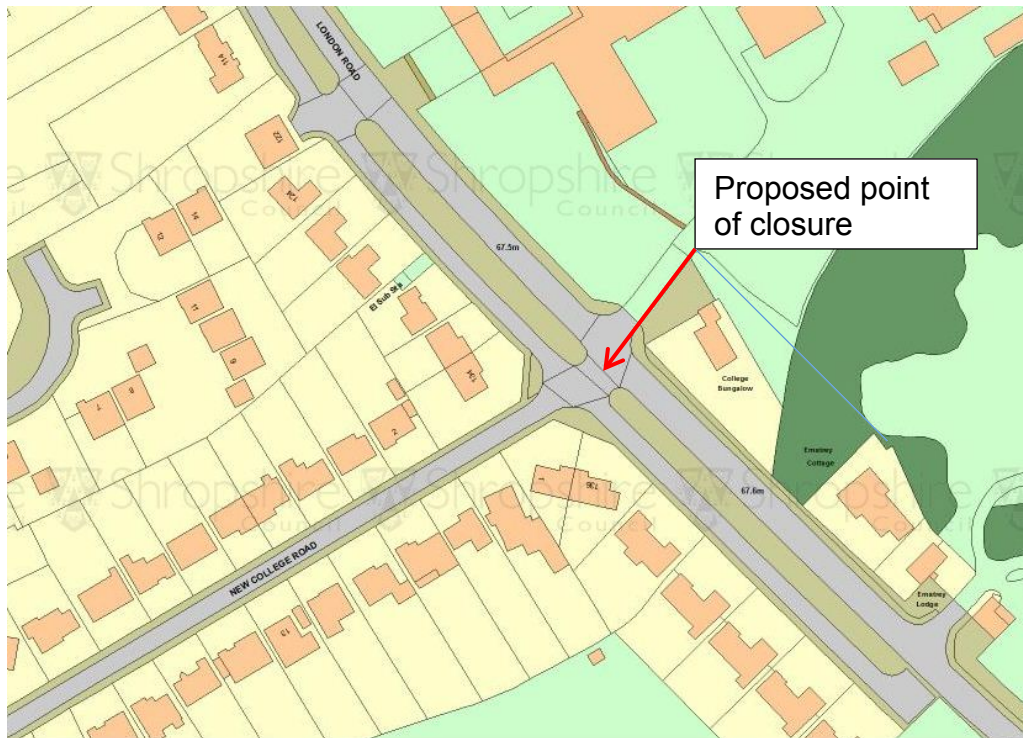
In moving this matter forward it is important to understand what the rationale was in seeking a closure of New College Road, setting aside at which end should or shouldn't be closed. This section road has for many years provided an attractive and direct route between the College car park access and Wenlock Road. Traffic travelling along this route show that actual traffic levels are greater than would be expected from those likely to be generated by residents' properties alone. At the same time however New College Road and its parallel road with London Road provide those residents with a convenient link between London Road and Wenlock Road.

The development of the College Campus site therefore provided the opportunity and funding to resolve and mitigate the issues of New College Road. That planning consent and Section 106 payment sought initially to close the London Road end i.e. opposite the Campus College car park access and therefore remove that vehicle desire line to and from Wenlock Road. Subsequently this option was of course changed due to local representation and supported previously by the Central Planning Committee.

Officers however question the current of New College Road/Wenlock Road as the preferred and permanent option. It is in effect a fait accompli, resulting in New College Road becoming a cul-de-sac. Officers consider that the closure of London Road opposite the College Campus car park entrance should now be tested over a 6 month experimental period, as in the case of the current Wenlock Road closure

option. This would therefore inform Members in a final report of the most appropriate action based upon a properly evidenced assessment.

It is officers' recommendation therefore that New College Road is closed for a temporary period in a similar manner as is currently laid out at Wenlock Road. Again this would be subject to the imposition of a temporary TRO. The plan below shows the point of closure and further below the Google Street View image of the New College Road/London Road junction and its relationship with the access serving the College Campus car park.





One of the concerns previously expressed by residents in relation to the London Road closure, and set out earlier in the report, is that drivers would simply travel a distance of some 100 metres to where there is an access to the service road running parallel with London Road. It is not however immediately apparent that drivers would take this choice when Ebnal Road provides the easier traffic route.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

N/A

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Cllr Simon Jones

Local Members

Cllr Jane Mackenzie

Cllr Jon Tandy

Cllr Ted Clarke

Appendices

Appendix A – Summary of Consultation Responses (Pre-implementation Temporary TRO Closure)

Appendix B - Summary of Consultation Responses (Post-implementation Temporary TRO Closure)

Appendix A – Summary of Consultation Responses (Pre-implementation Temporary TRO Closure)

ref no	Objection, Support, Comment?	Summary of Response
1	Objection	Objects to closure on the grounds of having a Wenlock Rd address and would have no direct access to W-R as this would be an inconvenience for deliveries and would lead to delivery vehicles being parked on WR. Would prefer to have the closure at the original position at London Rd, with this being implemented on a trial basis. Also objects to extension of parking restrictions. Also suggested 'signed only' closure. Believes there should have been an informal consultation involving letter drops to all affected residents.
2	Support	Expresses support for closure.
3	Objection	Asks why Ebnal Rd residents haven't been consulted before. Objects to extra traffic on Ebnal Rd and this may make the road less safe, asks if a one way system has been considered. Feels the work should be postponed until the college closure is complete so the impacts can be assessed.
4	Comment	Feels the closure should be implemented at London Rd as they believe it will be difficult/hazardous to emerge from London Rd if closed at Wenlock Rd. Do not see the need for the parking restrictions due to the extra college parking and ask for residents permits if this is implemented.
5	Objection	Feel the proposal is seriously flawed, will just add extra traffic to Ebnal Rd causing a safety concern. Questions why there is no data or traffic modelling to back up this proposal. Extra traffic will be redirected to the Ebnal Rd/London Rd junction where there are lots of pedestrians. Proposal will lead to extra traffic using the service road due to congestion, this will cause a safety problem on the service road and at the crossing point so the zebra will need to be extended. Will lead to extra traffic travelling past Mereside School. Will cause difficulty for residents at the Wenlock Rd service Rd with a W-R address. No consideration has been given to where the traffic will go if the closure is made, should not be dealt with as a stand-alone proposal. Residents surrounding the college deserve a full review that considers all of the local issues, traffic surveys should be taken and a model produced. Suggests closing both Ebnal Rd and New College Rd at London Rd and provide traffic calming on the service Rd. Consider traffic calming for both roads instead, or a signed only closure with camera enforcement. Both streets need to become residential streets only, not rat-runs. If implemented the council should consider back-up measures should further issues arise.
6	Support	Very much in favour of proposal as volume and speed of traffic disproportionate to its size.
7	Support	Support proposal, as parents have been concerned over traffic here.
8	Comment	Requests vertical features such as bollards to support the closure, also requests it should be sufficiently signed. Assume that consideration has been given to the displacement of traffic.
9	Support	Fully support the closure.
10	Support	Offers support of closure to stop inappropriate through traffic. This will be an inconvenience to them but should be worth it.
11	Support	Registers their support and feels this is the most practical and economic solution.
12	Support	Expresses support for proposals.
13	Support	Fully support the closure and feel it will improve safety for residents.
14	Support	Very much support the closure, fed up with the traffic issues.
15	Support	Support the proposal.
16	Support	Registers their support for the proposal as NCR was built as a service Rd and not a distributor Rd.
17	Support	Registers their support.
18	Objection	Objects to the closure as this will have a direct impact on Ebnal Rd, which has increasing numbers of children so the outcome would be extremely undesirable. Feels the consultation should have included Ebnal Rd also as they're directly affected, so is fundamentally flawed.

Appendix B – Summary of Consultation Responses (Post-implementation Temporary

ref14 no	Objection, Support, Comment?	Summary of Response
1	Objection	The closure denies him access to Wenlock Road. Causes additional on-street parking which increases the safety risk to pedestrians.
15	Objection	I see no reason for this closure. Whenever I have used the road it has been very quiet. This seems to be a "not in my back yard" scheme. My worry would be that a successful permanent closure would lead to a rise in New College Road parking for the same
2	Comment	Request that monitoring be undertaken during the duration of the order.
3	Support	Due to closure vehicles are using Huxley Close to turn around.
4	Objection	Having experienced the trial period of closure I now find the inconvenience of having one end of the road closed far outweighs the hazard created by the students speeding when using this road. The irrational driving will now just take place on Ebnal Road instead.
5	Support	Has to travel southwards on Wenlock Road onto the A458 normally half a dozen times a week. Having had a positive effect the recent road closure has had in improving safety in the area. As parents of primary school aged children we had been concerned for some time about its narrowness and suitability as a through road with vehicles mounting pavements when confronted with oncoming traffic. These concerns have been completely eradicated during the trial.
6	Objection	No comment made.
7	Support	Uses the road regularly to commute between Wenlock Road and London Road. It is inconvenient this road being closed.
17	Support	For some time the traffic was at an unbearable level. Have to use either Kingston Drive or Ebnal Road, both putting more traffic on these roads.
18	Objection	For some time the road from Ebnal Road onto the service road of London Road is dangerous, and I await an accident happening.
19	Support	Closure has been a total success. Both from the point of view of safety in the road itself, and in that there doesn't seem to have been any adverse effects to the traffic situation on the surrounding roads.
20	Support	Very inconvenient.
21	Support	Volume of traffic using the road has reduced, which has significantly lessened the number and length of queues onto London Road - particularly at peak times. Safety on New College Road has significantly improved as motorists do not use the pavement to overtake service vehicles so often and instances of speeding have been largely eliminated.
22	Support	Improve safety for traffic and local householders.
23	Support	Since the closure of the road we have eliminated significant numbers of potholes from Shrewsbury College speeding up the road with no regard for safety.
24	Support	Makes New College Road a safer place to live.
25	Support	Makes New College Road a safer place to live.
26	Objection	A road closure is not the answer. Traffic calming measures like those on Sutton Road would solve the problem on New College Road. This proposal would place increased pressure on other interconnecting routes in the area as it really should. Provided huge environmental and safety benefits for residents and from my peak times observations the relocation of this traffic does not seem to have significantly impacted on the Distributor Network which, in fact, previously appeared to be under-utilised.
27	Objection	Negative environmental impact due to increased travel distances. Barrier unsightly. Street bollards are a hazard to the disabled. Large vehicles need to reverse. Increased dog walkers and kids playing. Increased crime (break-ins).
12	Support	These last few months have seen a vast improvement in safety on this road. We have been able to access our drive without having to worry about vehicles speeding along New College using it as a "rat run" through to the College and London Road.
13	Support	Trial closure has been absolutely great.

TRO Closure)