

Cabinet Member Report

17 March 2022

Wards: Village

Wimbledon Village High Street (West) Pedestrian and cycle zone (Farmers Market)

Lead officer: Chris Lee, Director for Environment & Regeneration

Lead member: Cllr Martin Whelton, Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency.

Contact officer: Paul McGarry, Head of Future Merton

Recommendations:

That the Cabinet Member considers the issues detailed in this report and

- A. Notes the results of the consultation feedback on the Experimental Traffic Management Order used to implement the part-time pedestrianisation of Wimbledon Village High Street (West) to support local business and facilitate an on-street Farmers Market.
 - B. To consider the representations received and agrees to proceed with making the restrictions (Sunday 9am-4pm) permanent by making the permanent Traffic Management Order.
 - C. Agrees to exercise their discretion not to hold a public inquiry on the consultation process.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The report presents the results of the consultation feedback of the Experimental Traffic Management Order used to implement a part-time pedestrianisation of Wimbledon Village High Street (West) to support local business and facilitate an on-street Farmers Market.
- 1.2. The report and its recommendations seek to make permanent, the changes that have been introduced via the Experimental Traffic Order made on 4th October 2020.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. In August 2020, during the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting restrictions on local business, Merton Council introduced a part time closure of Wimbledon Village High Street (West). The part time closure was introduced to support the local farmers market and to allow it to grow and thrive in an on-street setting and to create a better environment for the local community and visitors.
- 2.2. This is of particular relevance during the Covid-19 pandemic as the greater space afforded to the market in comparison to its previous location allows for less congestion and the opportunity for social distancing standards to be more readily complied with by both traders and the public.

- 2.3. This principle was also supported by national government during the lock-down restrictions whereby local authorities were actively encouraged to support businesses who wish to expand into the public realm and to actively promote local markets as foot fall drivers to invigorate local economies.
- 2.4. As a result of feedback on the original proposal in August 2020, Merton Council introduced a new Experimental Order on 4th October 2020, introducing changes to the scheme, reducing the time of restrictions to Sundays only between 9am-4pm
- 2.5. As the Council approached the end of the experimental period; it has a choice to either abandon the proposal, edit the proposal or make the changes permanent.
- 2.6. Following a review of the consultation feedback; Merton Council is recommending that the provisions of the experimental order are made permanent; to support the ongoing success of the farmers market and to support environmental enhancements planned for Wimbledon Village.

3 THE SCHEME

- 3.1. The scheme was introduced on 4th October 2020 under an Experimental Traffic Management Order (EMTO) which enables the implementation of a scheme during the statutory consultation stage. An Experimental Order allows the restrictions and the Order to be in place for a maximum of 18 months before a final decision is made. Anyone can make a representation within the first six months (the statutory/formal consultation period) of the Experimental Order coming into force.
- 3.2. The Council recognise that the use of ETMOs is not often normal practice whereby the Council would normally consult residents prior to introducing a scheme. However, these were not normal times. The EMTO process allowed the Council to respond to the emerging business needs during the pandemic but more importantly, it enabled the residents, visitors and other road users to experience the restrictions, thereby allowing people to make an informed decision prior to responding to the consultation.
- 3.3. Consultees had 6 months to respond to the consultation and residents were encouraged to allow sufficient time to experience the scheme before making representations.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

- 4.1. The consultation on the ETMO was open from 23rd September 2020 to April 2021. Newsletters were delivered to local residents and businesses in the immediate vicinity.
- 4.2. Full details of the Traffic Order, Statement of Reason and Notice were also made available online, as well as a link to provide comments at <https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/traffic-management/consultations/wimbledon-village-pavement-widening>
- 4.3. Street notices were erected on lamp columns and published in the local newspaper and the London Gazette.

4.4. Residents were encouraged to submit their feedback on the Council's website using a specific on-line feedback link. A summary of the feedback is provided below:

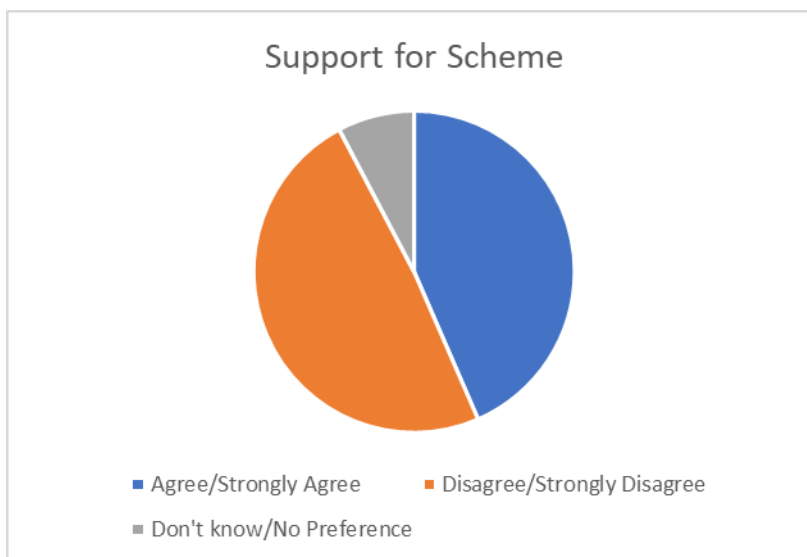
Consultation feedback and analysis

4.5. A total 207 responses were received during the consultation period.

All Responses

Support for Scheme	No.	%
Strongly Agree	79	38
Agree	11	5
Don't Know	5	2
Disagree	18	9
Strongly Disagree	83	40
No Preference Given	11	5
	207	100

4.6.



4.7. The chart above demonstrates about a 50:50 split in terms of support/opposition to the scheme. However, a large proportion of respondents were from outside the borough (over 1/3).

Location	No.	%
Inside Borough	124	60
Outside Borough	73	35
No Address	10	5
	207	100

4.8. Analysis of the data found 10 responses failed to give any location data and six responses were duplicates from the same responder. These were discounted from the data for further analysis, leaving 191 valid responses.

4.9. Further analysis was split between those inside and outside the borough. There were 117 responses from inside the borough and 74 responses from outside the borough

Support within the borough

4.10. Support was reasonably high within the borough; particularly when summarised (2:1 in favour)

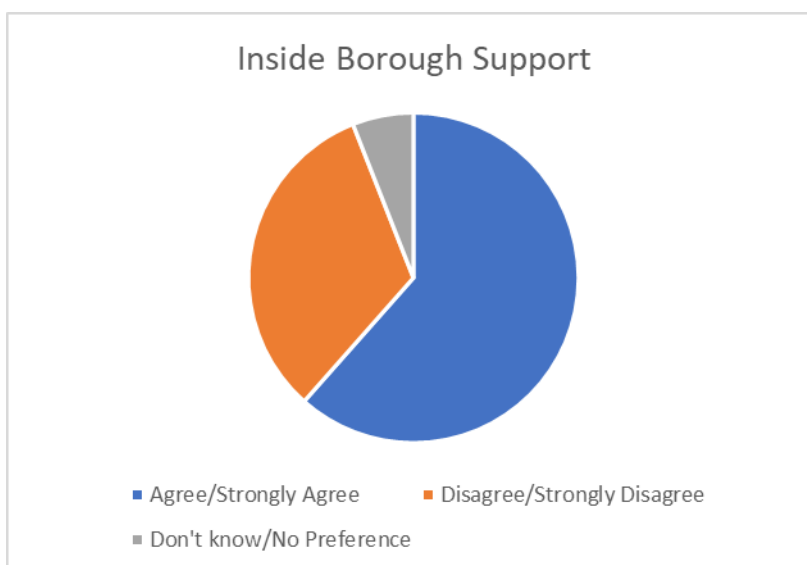
Inside Borough

Support for Scheme	No.	%
Strongly Agree	63	54
Agree	9	8
Don't Know	2	2
Disagree	8	7
Strongly Disagree	30	26
No Preference Given	5	4
	117	100

Summarised

	No.	%
Agree/Strongly Agree	72	62
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	38	32
Don't know/No Preference	7	6
	117	100

4.11.



Views from outside the borough

4.12. Views of those outside of the borough the was almost the opposite, with the majority (3/4) opposing the proposals

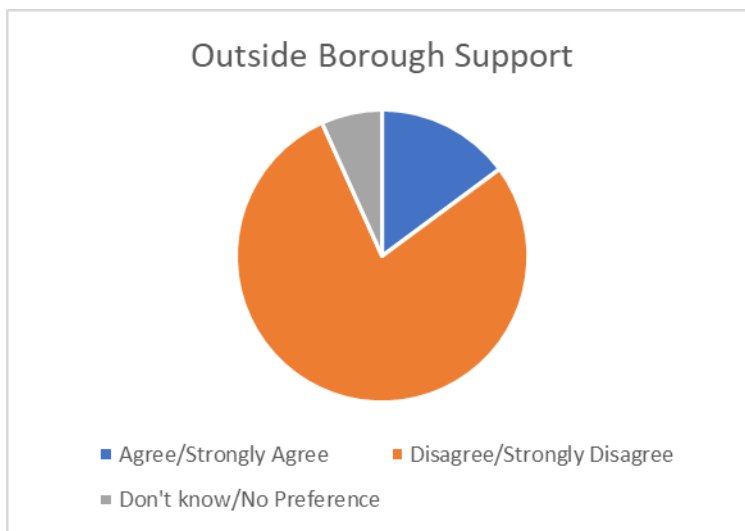
Outside Borough

Support for Scheme	No.	%
Strongly Agree	10	14
Agree	1	1
Don't Know	1	1

Disagree	8	11
Strongly Disagree	50	68
No Preference Given	4	5
	74	100

Summarised	No.	%
Agree/Strongly Agree	11	15
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	58	78
Don't know/No Preference	5	7
	74	100

4.13.



4.14.

Location of respondents – inside Merton

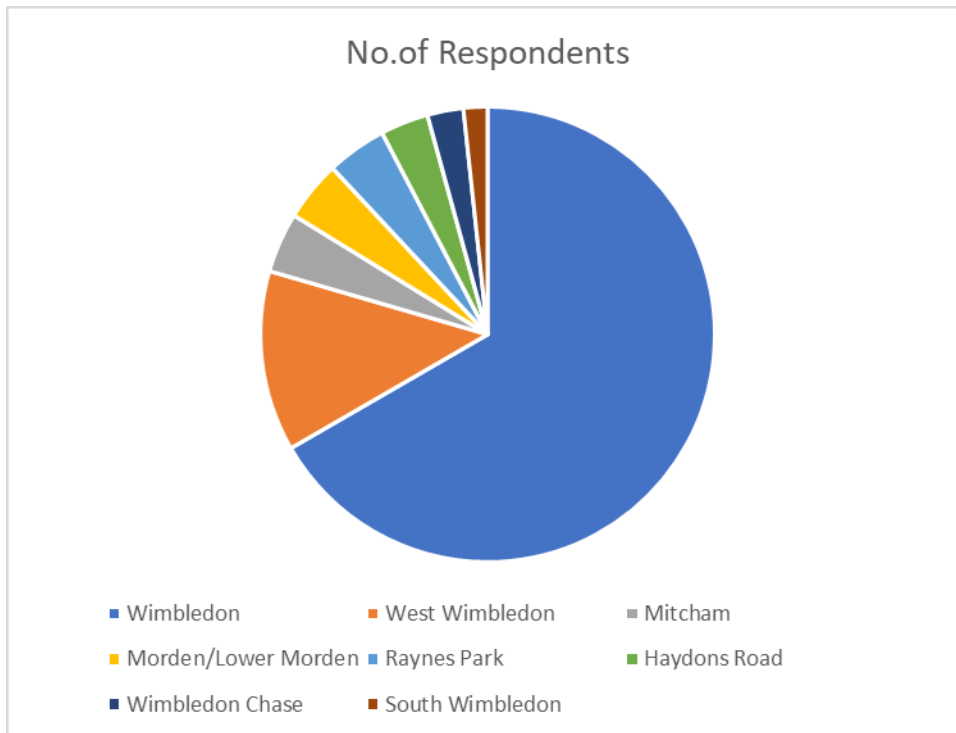
4.15. Following the numeric analysis the location of respondents was analysed. For in-borough respondents this was analysed by street and area. By street there was no particular area that stood out, though the most responses (for and against) came from the High Street. For areas, the emphasis was predictably concentrated on Wimbledon, though with some respondents from further afield. For GDPR reasons, the full list is not included in this report, but a summary is provided below:

Inside Borough - Areas

Area	No.of Respondents
Wimbledon	78
West Wimbledon	15
Mitcham	5
Morden/Lower	
Morden	5

Raynes Park	5
Haydons Road	4
Wimbledon Chase	3
South Wimbledon	2
	117

4.16.



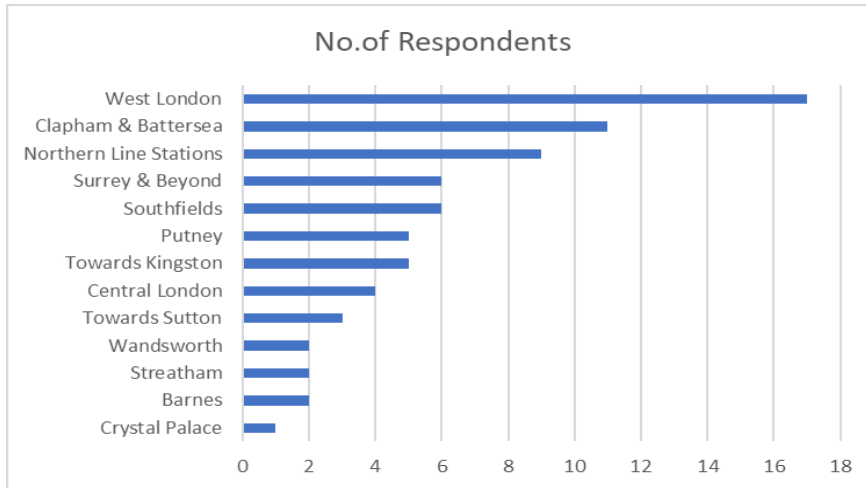
Location of respondents – outside Merton

4.17. For outside the borough responses came mainly from SW London and Surrey, though including respondents from Hampstead & Kilburn, Slough and Guildford

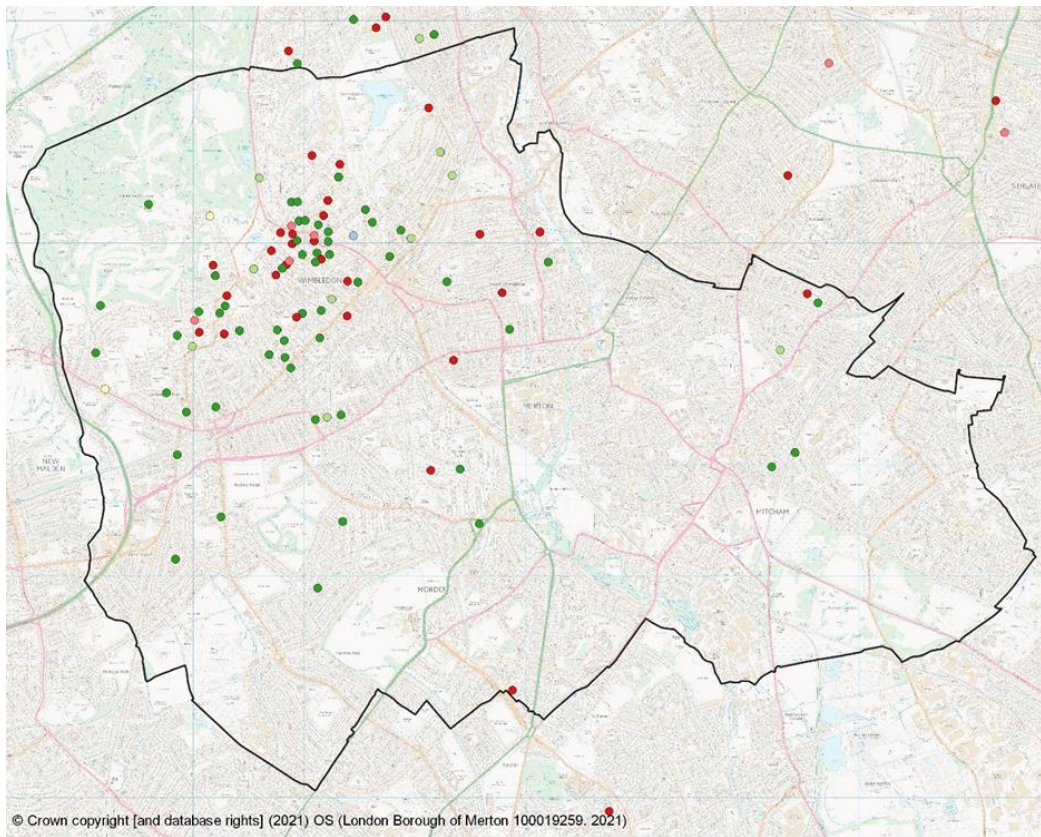
Outside Borough - Areas

Area	No. of Respondents
Crystal Palace	1
Barnes	2
Streatham	2
Wandsworth	2
Towards Sutton	3
Central London	4
Towards Kingston	5
Putney	5
Southfields	6
Surrey & Beyond	6
Northern Line	9

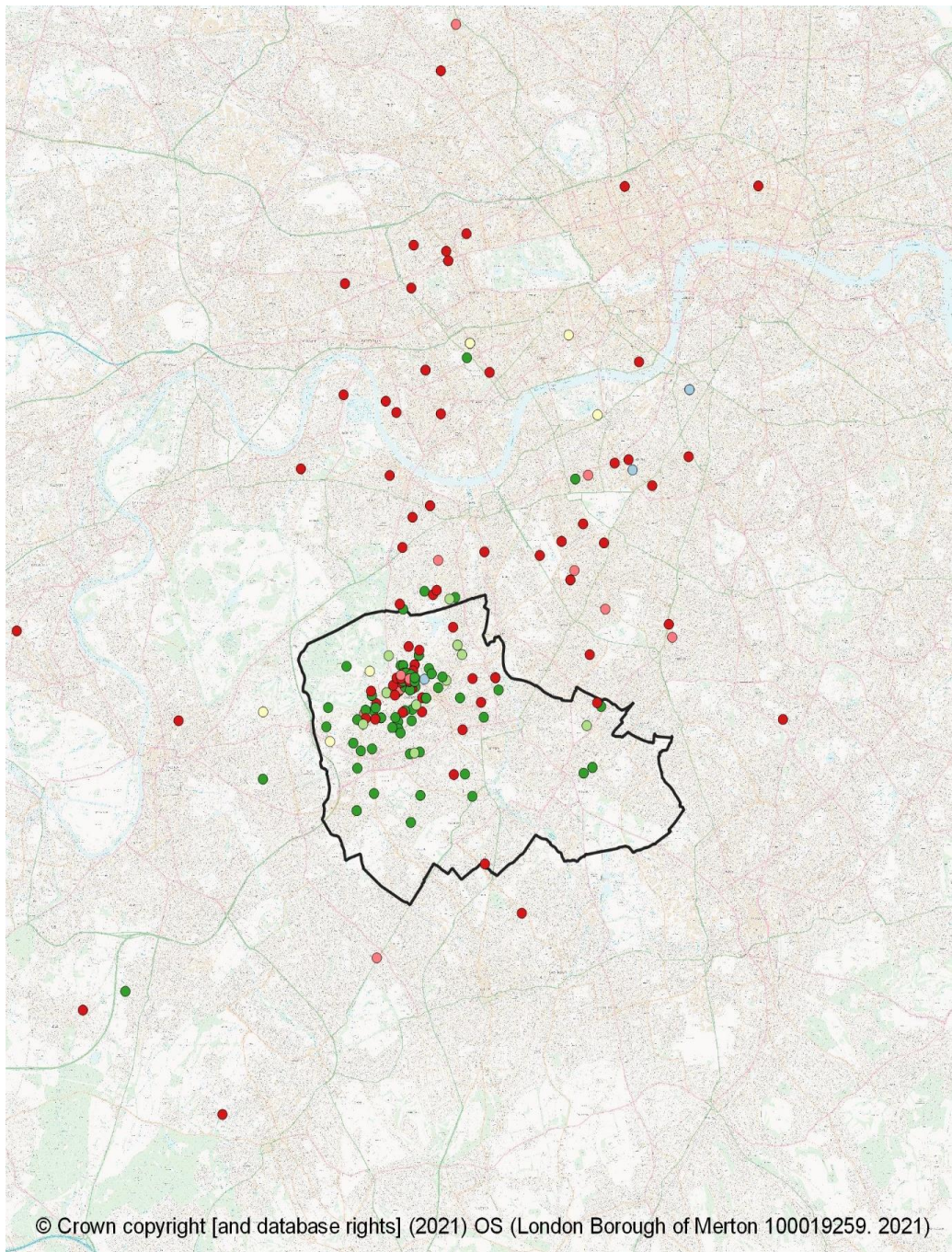
Stations	
Clapham & Battersea	11
West London	17
	73



- 4.18. The groupings were informed by the spread of data and patterns that emerged. The areas of Putney and Southfields (totalling 12 respondents) included some that were only just outside the borough to the north and east.
- 4.19. The geographical spread of respondents is shown on the two maps below, for in-borough and out of borough respondents:
- 4.20. **In Merton responses mapped**



4.21. **Out-of-Merton responses mapped**



- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know
- No Pref. Given
- Strongly agree
- Strongly disagree

Consultation: Comments and Representations

In-Borough – Against the Proposals

- 4.22. The objections can be grouped into the following categories: Traffic & Parking, Pedestrians & Cycles, Horses, Public Realm, Business & General.
- 4.23. Most of the objections relate to Traffic & Parking and Horses.
- 4.24. The traffic issues related primarily to dealing with traffic approaching the village along Southside Common and how there is no through route and no proper means of turning around. This required long detours which some respondents felt were not adequately signed and would lead to increased traffic, notably in streets between Southside Common and Ridgway.
- 4.25. The objections relating to horses centred on the requirement for horses to travel along a longer distance of the High Street, to access the common, with associated perceptions of increased danger and a right turn at a busy bend. The timing of the closure coincided with the busiest time for using the stables on a Sunday.
- 4.26. Loss of parking was cited as discouraging non-residents from visiting the village.
- 4.27. The public realm issues centred around the view that there was plenty of space for a market without removing vehicle/horse access as long as it was better designed and fears that it would encourage antisocial behaviour and street drinking.
- 4.28. The business comments centred on the view that it would not benefit existing businesses, who would lose custom to the market and that only charity shops would be attracted to the area.
- 4.29. General objections related to the way the consultation was carried out, that the market unsuitable to covid social distancing, other streets should have priority for improvement and other wider social/education/housing issues were more worthy of funding and attention.
- 4.30. Although there were no particular suggestions for changes or improvements beyond a variety of opinions on the best hours of operation, there was suggestions for alternative locations for a market, including it's original location in the GP surgery car park, on the common itself or roads within the common and in the grounds of St. Mary's Church. A number of respondents stated they supported the idea in principle, but objected due to the details of the implemented scheme.

4.31. Out-of-Borough – Against the Proposals

- 4.32. 58 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposals. 51 of these gave reasons. Of these, all but three (48 or 94%) cited their objection as solely due to the banning of horses being able to use the closed part of the High Street.
- 4.33. None of these cited an objection to the market being here, and some even stated support. The majority of respondents came from a reasonable distance away and could reasonably be considered to drive to the stables. However, none of them objected on grounds of traffic or loss of parking.

- 4.34. It should be noted that whilst horses were not banned from the market area, the stables and riders felt that it was safer to use the High Street for an additional distance than to ride horses through the pedestrianised area.
- 4.35. It is clear from reading these objections that they come from people who ride at the stables, which gives a good indication of how far, and where people come, to ride at Wimbledon. It may also be reasonable to assume, that Wimbledon is one of the nearest places to central and west London people can come to ride horses in a relatively rural and open setting.

Supporting the Proposals (in and out of the borough)

- 4.36. Reading the supportive comments there are a few themes that emerge that explain why people are supporting the proposals:
- 4.37. Community Spirit: people think that the expanded market in this position is creating a better community spirit for Wimbledon Village.
- 4.38. Size and Position: People are very supportive that the market is out in the open and able to enlarge and expand, rather than being restricted and out of sight in a car park.
- 4.39. Footfall: People feel that it has increased footfall and that this good for the market and local businesses and brings activity to the village centre. This has been backed up by footfall data gathered by the Council.
- 4.40. Atmosphere: people think that the market in this position has contributed to there being a great atmosphere and vibrancy in the area – making the Village more attractive to visitors and locals alike.
- 4.41. Petition: In addition to the feedback provided via the ETMO consultation; the Council was also presented with a petition demonstrating overwhelming support for the village farmers market and the Council's actions via the ETMO to enable the on-street market. Local ward councillors and the local MP have been engaged throughout the experimental road closure. The petition, led by local councillors included over 3000 signatures in support.

Suggestions

- 4.42. Objectors did not generally make suggestions for improvements. A number of suggestions were made, mainly by those supporting the proposals. These are summarised below:
- Extend/simplify the hours of operation
 - Extend the scheme/pedestrianisation to other side roads
 - Make the scheme permanent
 - Pedestrianise the High Street at weekends (like Northcote Road)
 - Change The Green to two-way traffic and remove the parking
 - Make the end of Southside Common westbound only, with u-turning vehicles accommodated on the two arms of Murray Road
 - Properly mark the northbound cycle lane on The Green

- The south end of Lancaster Road should allow northbound cycles
- Better signage on Southside Common is needed to warn of the no-through-route into the Village. Suggestions for signs as far back as Kings College School.
- The scheme creates a 'village square' for Wimbledon Village

4.43. **Conclusions**

- 4.44. Inside the borough there is 2/3 support for the proposals. Outside the borough, there is 3/4 opposition to the proposals. However, this is almost completely from horse riders associated with, or users of the Wimbledon Village Stables. If this issue can be successfully addressed, it is reasonable to say there would be unprecedented support for the scheme and its future expansion.
- 4.45. There are many concerns about the effect on traffic, particularly on Southside Common, where some felt that additional signage is needed to warn of the new no-through-road status. The Council has since installed further signage. However, there are a range of suggestions of how to deal with this. An important point to note here is that whilst there are a lot of concerns on this point, and the effect on side streets, there appears to be no real opposition in principle to the closure and the loss of the through route.
- 4.46. A second point of note is the responses regarding horse riders. There is a clear and strong sense of ownership of this street by riders, and that it exists primarily for their purpose and use, even though it is a historic route. Also, many of those agreeing with the proposals raise the issue of horse safety, and caveat their support with a view that this issue must be resolved in a better way than the current arrangement. The Council has undertaken a site visit with the stables and British horse-riding association and added additional horse warning signage and is in dialogue with the stables to agree further improvements; something the Council is able to address via planned investment in the village public realm.

5 OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1. When considering the outcome of the statutory consultation consideration must be given to the nature and validity of the comments / representations and the Council's overarching objectives.
- 5.2. Given the positive response locally within the borough, and overwhelming support demonstrated via a petition during the statutory consultation, it is recommended that the scheme is made permanent.
- 5.3. It is considered that the benefits to the village environment and economy via enhanced footfall outweigh some of the inconvenience some residents may experience.
- 5.4. This scheme is in line with other policies and initiatives across the borough and London, which is believed to be the right step forward in changing road user behaviour as well as the general economic, social and environmental benefits.

6 CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1. As with any experimental traffic scheme, there is the option to revert back to the original street. The Council feels that given the strong local support for the market and pedestrian space that has been created by the scheme; that the alternative of removing the scheme completely would undermine what has been a success in Wimbledon Village.
- 6.2. This would be a step backwards for the village which has for years lacked a safe, pedestrian space to host a village market. Removal of the scheme may also undermine the sustainability of the farmers market going forward and the associated footfall increase and visitor spend that the market attracts to the village.
- 6.3. During the consultation period, the Council was presented with an alternative option from a small group of residents; suggesting that the farmers market be moved onto Wimbledon Common and specifically, Merton Council roads within Wimbledon Common (The Causeway)
- 6.4. Council officers have met with the residents and as part of compiling this report; officers have considered the proposal. Whilst the Council understands the desire to relocate the farmers market away from some residential properties on the High Street; we believe that moving the farmers market to The Causeway would undermine the essence of what a local market is and its associated benefits to the Village business community.
- 6.5. Locating the market to The Causeway would mean that the market would be some distance from the commercial area of the village High Street. This would be 'off-pitch' in terms of footfall and would not be commercially available for the market operators who rely on a village centre setting to maximise trade.
- 6.6. Markets are an intrinsic part of urban life (from market towns to major cities). Markets are traditionally located in the commercial centre of towns; complimenting other commercial offers and focussing footfall, vibrancy and activity in the heart of local town or village centres.
- 6.7. The Causeway location would also have a detrimental impact on Wimbledon Common which is a relaxing space; not a space for commercial activity. Whilst the Causeway is a public highway; the grass verges and footpaths to this location are Common Land and both the Council and Common Conservators consider that there would be a detrimental impact on the quality of the open space if the market were moved to The Causeway.

7 TIMETABLE

- 7.1. The current ETMO is in place from 2th October 2020 to 4th April 2022.

- 7.2. Subject to the Cabinet Member's decision in this report, the Council proposed to formalise the scheme by making a permanent traffic order on 24th March 2022.
- 7.3. A newsletter detailing the results of this consultation and the permanent traffic management order will be published following the Cabinet Member's decision.

8 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. Associated costs of making the traffic order and making improvements to permanent road signage are covered by existing highways budgets.
- 8.2. Merton Council has also allocated £800,000 investment from Community Infrastructure Levy to invest in the quality of the streetscape and public space in Wimbledon Village High Street. This funding will be available in financial year 2022/3. Led by the Council's urban design team, the planned improvements will include heritage led upgrades to footways, streetscape and street lighting.
- 8.3. The creation of a new horse crossing point near Wimbledon War Memorial is also part of the planned CIL investments. The Council will engage the local community and key stakeholders on the proposed design details in June 2022 following the local elections.

9 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Traffic Management Orders would be made under Section 6 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended). The Council is required by the Local Authorities Traffic Order (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 to give notice of its intention to make a Traffic Order (by publishing a draft traffic order). These regulations also require the Council to consider any representations received as a result of publishing the draft order.
- 9.2. The Council has discretion as to whether or not to hold a public inquiry before deciding whether or not to make a traffic management order or to modify the published draft order. A public inquiry should be held where it would provide further information, which would assist the Council in reaching a decision.
- 9.3. The Council's powers to make Traffic Management Orders arise mainly under sections 6, 45, 46, 122 and 124 and schedules 1 and 9 of the RTRA 1984.

10 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The Council carries out careful consultation to ensure that all road users are given a fair opportunity to air their views and express their needs.
- 10.2. Bodies representing motorists, including commuters are included in the statutory consultation required for draft traffic management and similar orders published in the local paper and London Gazette.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

11.1. None for the purpose of this report.

12 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

12.1. The risk of removing the scheme and not acting in line with the views of the majority of respondents would not only lead to dissatisfaction amongst the majority who support the scheme; it would also undermine the market, which has become a successful and much loved addition to Wimbledon Village.

12.2. The consultation process and feedback has highlighted some safety improvements that the Council will take on board; namely, formalising and making permanent the advance warning signage around Southside Common as well as additional horse warning signage and the creation of a new horse crossing as part of other planned investments.

13 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Relevant appendices are available online at:

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/traffic-management/consultations/wimbledon-village-pavement-widening>

14 BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1. N/A