

Public Document Pack

**Democratic Services Section
Legal and Civic Services Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**

REMOTE MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

In addition to those matters previously notified to you, the following item will also be considered at the meeting to be held at 9.30 am on Friday, 31st July, 2020.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

4. Strategic Issues/Belfast Agenda

- (b) Open Ormeau and Temporary City Centre Road Closure Proposals (Pages 1 - 32)

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Subject:	Open Ormeau and Temporary City Centre Road Closure Proposals
Date:	31st July 2020
Reporting Officer:	Alistair Reid, Strategic Director Place & Economy
Contact Officer:	John Greer, Director Economic Development Cathy Reynolds, Director City Regeneration & Development

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	<p>Belfast City Council have received a proposal entitled Open Ormeau. The aim of the proposal is to provide sufficient space for people to walk on the pavements whilst socially distancing, provide space for queues outside shops at peak times and to provide space for businesses/organisations, particularly restaurants, cafes and bars to expand outside so that it is viable for them to open on a table-service-only model whilst upholding social distancing requirements. In order for this proposal to be fulfilled, a number of temporary road closures will be required. A further revised proposal was received on 27th July (Appendix 1).</p> <p>At its meeting on 19th June this Committee and as ratified by Council on the 1st July:</p> <p>“agreed to write to the DfI seeking it to expedite the temporary closure of the following roads under the Road Traffic Legislation Order (3A):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Donegall Place; - Castle Place; - Church Lane; - Brunswick Street; and - James Street South. <p>And to also seek the weekend closure of Ormeau Road and to further explore the weekend closure of other arterial routes throughout the city to enable hospitality and assist retailers. It was agreed that the proposals on road closures would be subject to consultation with stakeholders including at the Stakeholders Group Meeting on Friday, 26th June. The correspondence would also include consideration of resident’s car parking permits; “</p>

	<p>Council further agreed that the list of temporary road closures be amended to also include Union Street.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to update members on Belfast City Council's financial and regulatory position in regard to the proposed road closure on Ormeau Road. The report will also provide information on the timelines and requirements associated with an application for an event road closure licence.</p> <p>The report also provides an update on the other temporary road closures as proposed by Committee and Council.</p>
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note receipt of the proposal for Ormeau Road with amendment submitted on 27th July • Note the time implications for applying for a licence for the required road closures and the consequent resource implications of the current proposals. • Agree that officers continue to work with Open Ormeau promoters to aid the design and facilitation of a singular future trial recognising the significant lead time and consultation demanded by the legislation, subject to council approval and budgets constraints and consideration of a satisfactory approach to road closure. • To note concerns expressed by business community representatives around further temporary pedestrianisation in the city centre and to note that officers will continue to work with DfI and stakeholders to seek to bring forward satisfactory proposals in a future report. • Note the status and stakeholder feedback on the temporary city centre road closure and pedestrianisation proposals as ratified by Council on the 1st July 2020 and to note that officers will continue to work with DfI and stakeholders on these, with a future report to be brought back to Committee. • On the basis of the concerns expressed by stakeholders including the business community representatives in respect of the temporary closure of Donegall Place, agree that this is not progressed in the immediate short-term but that the proposal is instead considered through an accelerated Phase 2 of the Bolder Vision Connectivity Study;
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Open Ormeau Proposal</u></p> <p>Belfast City Council have received a proposal entitled Open Ormeau. The aim of the proposal is to provide sufficient space for people to walk on the pavements whilst socially distancing, provide space for queues outside shops at peak times and to provide space for</p>

	businesses/organisations, particularly restaurants, cafes and bars to expand outside so that it is viable for them to open on a table-service-only model whilst upholding social distancing requirements. In order for this proposal to be fulfilled, a number of temporary road closures will be required.
3.2	This Committee agreed to write to the DfI seeking it to expedite the temporary closure of a number of roads at roads under the Road Traffic Legislation Order (3A). Subsequent to this, officers have been liaising with representatives from the Ormeau to determine the exact nature of the proposal and with DfI to seek to work out a way to close Ormeau road to traffic to facilitate the proposal
3.3	To this juncture through engagement with the Department for Infrastructure there has been no indication that the department will seek a road closure order under article 7 of the Road Traffic Regulations Order. It is our understanding that the Department can use Article 7 Temporary Traffic Regulations to manage the safety of the public attending significant large off-road events if requested to do so and if it is satisfied that there is a potential risk to the public and some form of traffic control is needed to manage traffic entering and leaving the event.
3.4	<p>The original proposal involved the closure of inner lanes to expand the walkways along this section of the road, but still permitted some traffic through at reduced speeds during certain times over a number of weekends (17th July – end of September). The proposal received significant attention in local press and social media outlets. As a result the promoters and Belfast City Council received a number objections from local business, elected representatives and city stakeholders. As a result the promoters adjusted their proposal with the salient detail of a new revised proposal provided below and the complete proposal contained within Appendix 1.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced to three August weekends in a row trialling different time slots to test out the impacts (positive and negative) in a controlled manner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sunday 16th August 1pm to 10pm - Saturday 22nd 9am to 11pm - Saturday 29th 4pm to 11pm and Sunday 30th all day until 11pm - Possible bonus evening on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday in August to help restaurants take advantage of the ‘Eat Out to Help Out’ scheme
3.5	<p>Legislative & Regulatory Context</p> <p>The proposal in its current format will require a road closure application, as under current guidance any activity that will prohibit or restrict traffic on a public road, would necessitate a road closure order. There are currently two routes to secure a road closure order.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Event Road Closure Order – managed by Belfast City Council

	<p>2. Emergency Road Closure Order – managed by Dept. for Infrastructure</p> <p>This process and requirements for an Event Road Closure Order managed by Belfast City Council is summarised below.</p>
3.6	<p>The Roads (Miscellaneous Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2010 defines special events as any sporting event, social event or entertainment which is held on a public road or the making of a film on a public road.</p>
3.7	<p>The Council can make an Order to restrict or prohibit temporarily the use of the road, or any part of it, by vehicles or by pedestrians.</p>
3.8	<p>To close a public road for a special event, the event organiser must apply to the Council's Building Control division and is required to provide a traffic management plan and depending on the nature of the proposal, also provide a full management plan, stewarding plan, etc.</p>
3.9	<p>The Council must publicly advertise the proposed road closure and place a 21-day Notice in the newspaper for public notification</p> <p>The notice must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) identify the promoter of the special event; (b) identify any affected road; (c) specify any restrictions or prohibitions which the relevant authority proposes to include in the order; (d) specify the dates on which and times between which the restrictions or prohibitions would apply; (e) specify any alternative routes for traffic or pedestrians; (f) state where the application may be inspected; (g) state that representations are sent to the council within 21 days from the date of the notice
3.10	<p>A 21 day period must be allowed for representations, objections or comments of support to be submitted. The Council must also consult with statutory bodies – DfI Roads, PSNI, NIAS and NIFRS and the Council also consults with Translink. After receiving the consent of the DfI, the Council can determine if a Road Closure Order is to be made</p>
3.11	<p>An application must include a Traffic Management Plan, and possibly depending on the nature, an event management plan. Therefore there will most certainly be a requirement to engage a traffic management company.</p>
3.12	<p>The proposers of Open Ormeau do not feel that they have the resources to apply for the Road Closure Order and so have asked BCC to take this responsibility on.</p>

3.13	<p>The project promoters include the Ballynafeigh Community Development Association and Ciaran Fox from the RSUA. The promoters state they have engaged in substantial consultation with residents and businesses and the response has been largely positive with a few objections. However as already referenced Belfast City Council officers have received submissions from other parties opposing the proposal, including Victoria Square who have described the proposal as a ‘major concern’. Concerns have been voiced via politicians, and correspondence from businesses in the area indicate that the proposals will significantly affect passing trade and access.</p>
3.14	<p>Given the objections already received to the road closure Belfast City Council is obliged to discuss and attempt to resolve before any notice can be published. Thereafter, in all likelihood a decision to grant the order would need to be placed before Licensing Committee for a decision on whether to grant the Order.</p>
3.15	<p><u>Ministerial Communiques</u></p> <p>On June 12th 2020 Infrastructure Minister Mallon sent a communique to all councils suggesting that as planning authorities, councils take a flexible and pragmatic planning approach to the use of on-street seating for cafes and bars, beer gardens and similar outdoor areas to accommodate physical/social distancing. To date Belfast City Council Building Control have waived all fees related to Pavement Café Licensing and have received 40 applications as of 24th July 2020.</p>
3.16	<p>On the 23rd July 2020 further correspondence was received from Nicola Mallon confirming that officials will work closely with Councils regarding any closure applications being taken forward by or through councils.</p>
3.17	<p>As members may be aware on the 27th July the Infrastructure Minister announced that a review of the special events legislation is live. However the closing date for consultation on this review of the legislation is not until 24th September 2020.</p>
3.18	<p>In considering the support agreed by this council in July and the time constraints implied by the legislation and the objections received it is proposed that officers to continue to work with Open Ormeau promoters to aid the design and facilitation of a singular future trial recognising the significant lead time and consultation demanded by the legislation. This is subject to council approval and budgets constraints and consideration of a satisfactory approach to road closure.</p>
3.19	<p><u>Other City Centre Road Closures</u></p> <p>Council Officers, in collaboration with the DfI, have engaged with various stakeholders in relation to the proposed city centre temporary road closures as proposed via Council. A City</p>

	<p>Re-Opening Stakeholder Group, led by the Council, includes representatives from Belfast Chamber, the three BID areas (BID One, Linen Quarter and Cathedral Quarter), BCCM, PSNI, Translink, local traders, Victoria Square and Castle Court, Retail NI and Hospitality Ulster.</p>
3.20	<p>Donegall Place</p> <p>Stakeholders collectively raised a number of concerns on the proposal for immediate temporary closure of Donegall Place. Concerns related to the disruption that this proposal would have to the city centre trade at a time when businesses are focusing on survival, and the potential negative impacts to the public transportation system should these services be removed and relocated without detailed consultation, and without a planned alternative transportation network and provision of adequate associated infrastructure and timetable scheduling. A strong view was expressed that this proposal should not be progressed in the immediate short-term but that the proposal is instead considered through an accelerated Phase 2 of the Bolder Vision Connectivity Study</p>
3.21	<p>The stakeholders did however acknowledge, and support, the need to have a holistic and informed discussion regarding the future infrastructure provision for the Primary Retail Core and arterial routes connecting the city centre to the local communities, and that these discussions would be best served through the next stages of the Connectivity Study.</p>
3.22	<p>Castle Place</p> <p>The Stakeholder Group acknowledged that the temporary measures introduced to Castle Place during the road closures of the Bank Buildings fire had a positive impact on the area, and brought forward the discussion of how we use the city centre going forward. The Stakeholder Group were supportive of incorporating temporary meanwhile use within the Castle Place area, noting that the access requirements of local businesses and blue badge users would need to be considered and addressed. Stakeholders within this Group were however of the view that a joint closure now of Donegall Place and Castle Place together could not be supported due to the collective impact that both closures would have for diversion routes and, in particular, the potential impact on the public transportation network.</p>
3.23	<p>Council officers are continuing to engage with the BIDOne team and local traders to identify potential proposals that could be delivered in Castle Place although Members should note that concerns have being raised by local traders and city stakeholders, including the PSNI and Extern. These concerns, in particular, relate to the increasing levels of anti-social behavior within the area, and the potential for this issue to escalate should any meanwhile use provision become a focal point for ASB. Officers continue to work through the issues with city stakeholders and will report back to subsequent committee meetings.</p>

3.24	<p>Brunswick St from Franklin St to James St South & Union St</p> <p>The Linen Quarter Bid and Cathedral Quarter BID, in collaboration with council officers and DfI, are bringing forward proposals for a social distancing hub on Brunswick Street from Franklin St to James St South, and at the Union Street area to enable local hospitality traders to utilise the space for pavement cafes and enhanced outdoor social distancing measures and details of the scheme will be brought to subsequent committee meetings when finalised.</p>
3.25	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>For Belfast City Council to apply for an event road closure license at Ormeau it would imply the following requirements and associated approximate resource implications per closure. These are analogous estimates based on other similar road closures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Production/event management - £2,000 - First aid - £2,000 - Waste Management - £2,000 - Insurance - £3,000- £5,000 - Stewarding Costs to manage ingress/egress - £3,000 - £4,000 - Approximate total per closure - £15,000 <p>Currently there is no budget provision within Place & Economy Departmental annual budget.</p>
3.26	<p>Given the complex nature of the proposed road closure at Ormeau and the significant concerns realised by a number of parties it is reasonable to expect that a considerable amount of officer resource would be required to deal with engagement, consider that feedback and possibly amend designs and ultimately organise and manage the road closures.</p>
3.27	<p><u>Equality & Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>All applications for Road Closure must show that the applicant has carried out neighbourhood notification along with consultations with all residents, businesses, bus and taxi companies which may be affected by the proposal. The proposers of Open Ormeau indicate that they have carried out some initial engagement and consultation with residents and businesses, however, if BCC decide to act as the applicant for this Road Closure it would need to satisfy itself that all possible engagement that should be done, has been done. This could result in a significant time and staff resource implication.</p>

4.0	Appendices –
	Appendix 1 – Revised Open Ormeau Proposal

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#OpenOrmeau

24 July 2020

The Beginning...

What is now called Open Ormeau started as a personal response to the #OurChangedPlaceNI initiative – a way of gathering ideas through social media from as many people as possible about the changes they would like to see to their neighbourhood during this COVID-19 period using the hashtag #OurChangedPlaceNI.

On 5 June 2020 Ciarán Fox, a local resident, posted a series of tweets exploring an idea for the weekend closure of a part of the Ormeau Road that would allow the high density of bars, restaurants and cafes to expand out into the road.

Following an enormously positive response to the idea online Ciarán posted a 4 page proposal (see Appendix 1) on 16 June 2020 which considered some of the practicalities, sought to confirm support or otherwise from the community/businesses and proposed some next steps.

This generated an even larger response and resulted in a wide range of people in the Ormeau community coming forward to support the initiative and volunteer their time to progress the plan. The Ballynafeigh Community Development Association, the Ormeau churches and a range of other local charities expressed their support soon after.

A very significant wave of community activism started – with over 240 local residents offering to volunteer their time and skills.

Extensive community engagement

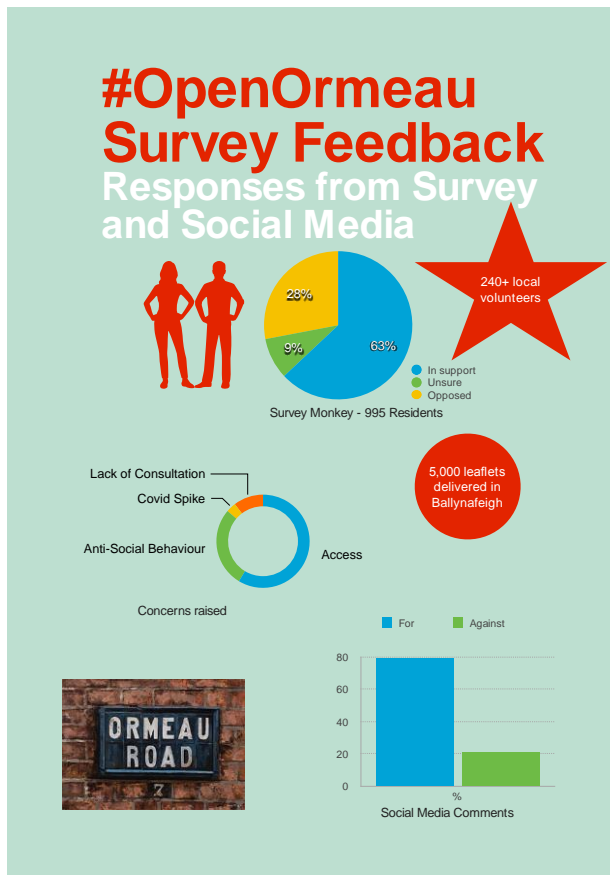
As a result, there has been an unprecedented level of engagement with the original Open Ormeau proposal across the local community. Understanding, listening and responding to the views of local residents and businesses has been the central task over the last few weeks.

There was a lot of feedback online via Twitter, Nextdoor and a newly established Open Ormeau Facebook page but we were conscious that many residents and businesses might not find out about the idea if it only existed online. By the 6 July, the dedicated team of volunteers had already designed, produced and delivered leaflets about Open Ormeau to over 5000 households and business in the area. The leaflet gave a range of ways for people to share their views on the proposal, both online and offline.

Given the Covid restrictions, large public meetings were out of the question, so we held three public Zoom meetings for residents and businesses. We also met with a number of residents in small groups to discuss the idea and their concerns in detail. Businesses were emailed and direct personal contact was made where possible.

The final element of community engagement was through an online survey which was promoted widely.

We have also engaged with local politicians, Belfast City Council, the Department for Infrastructure, Translink, the Police Service and the Department for Communities to discuss some of the practicalities and to understand what might be possible.



What we heard

Survey: There were 995 response to the survey, 78% of which were from Ballynaveigh residents. 63% are in favour, 8% unsure, and 28% opposed to the initiative as they understand it in its current form.

We also took note of all comments via Facebook and Nextdoor. The social media analysis was slightly more favourable than the survey results. With a majority supporting but an active minority expressing opposition on multiple points.

The greatest concern was around access (including parking outside businesses and worries about parking in residential streets), followed by worries about antisocial behaviour including the potential for noise, drunkenness, litter, and lack of toilet provisions. Concerns about a Covid-19 spike due to increased visitors to the area were expressed by 1% of respondents and lack of consultation expressed by 3%.

Business

The feedback from businesses was more mixed. In general, bars and restaurants were supportive, take-away businesses were concerned about delivery/pick-up access, some retailers were against due to concerns about loss of trade from people in cars. Some concerns (for example anti-social behaviour) overlapped with those of neighbours. However, businesses were also worried about interruption to their normal routines and access in terms of deliveries, customers parking nearby, take-away drivers and the critical nature for many of their weekend trade. Some believed their businesses are highly dependent on customers who drive to/through the area.

Why not just do nothing?...

Because...



At a number of points along the road there isn't sufficient space, particularly at busy times, to socially distance whilst walking. This is likely to get worse as more businesses become active again.

Photo: Squeeze on walking space from car parking bays, lampposts and outdoor seating areas.

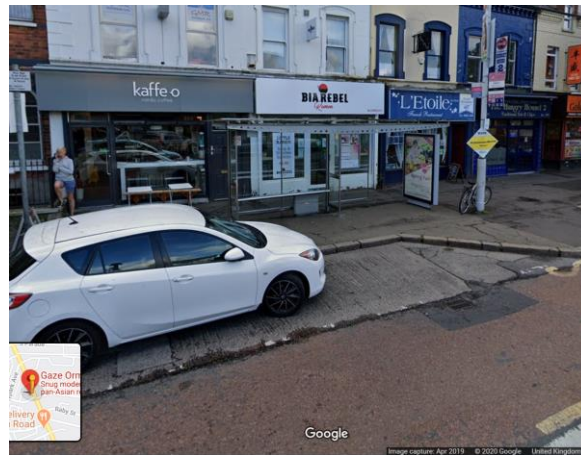


Photo: Squeeze on space from presence of parking bay which forces bus shelter back into the pavement



Photo: Squeeze on pedestrian space from car parking bays and outdoor trading.



People are queuing which increases pressure on walking space. This is likely to get worse as more businesses become active again. This is a particular problem for people with visual impairments, wheelchair users or anyone with reduced mobility as well as families with buggies.

Photo: Queues for businesses squeeze space and this is before all businesses are back operating



It is not particularly safe or welcoming for people to cycle on this stretch of road. It is particularly difficult at busy times when the shared cycle/bus lane is blocked by double-parked cars which forces cyclists into the car lane.

Photo: Double parking forces people cycling into the car lane

- The risk of transmission of COVID-19 is lower outdoors than it is indoors and therefore people have an increased desire for outdoor socialising
- It is difficult for the cafes, restaurants, and bars on the road to re-open in a sustainable way when they are required to operate at significantly reduced capacity (about 50%). People want to see all the bars, cafes and restaurants open and make it through this difficult economic period.
- People like to be able to shop and socialise without always having the noise and fumes in the air from lots of vehicles. People prefer to breathe clean air. This desire is heightened when people want to reduce transmission risk by staying outdoors in places which are more public.
- Regardless of any reallocation of road space, the cafes, bars and restaurants will still want to re-open and apply for pavement licenses to meet the needs of their customers who want to sit outside. This will place an additional squeeze on pedestrian space especially at weekends.

Now that we have listened...

The engagement with the local community is unprecedented in our experience as neighbours. We don't remember a time when the community was so animated around an idea. Having listened to a range of feedback from a number of sources including businesses, residents, elected representatives and other officials, we are now proposing a new way forward that we believe balances the needs, concerns, hopes and fears of the vast majority of people in the area. The response directly addresses concerns and scales back the scope and duration of any pilot initiative and the risk of any (unintended) negative consequences.

1. Significantly curtail the number of weekends and take trial approach to time slots

- No longer running from 6pm on Friday evening to 11pm on Sunday evening for three months solid. Reduced to three August weekends in a row trialling different time slots to test out the impacts (positive and negative) in a controlled manner:
 - o Sunday 16th 1pm to 10pm
 - o Saturday 22nd 9am to 11pm
 - o Saturday 29th 4pm to 11pm and Sunday 30th all day until 11pm
 - o Possible bonus evening on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday in August to help restaurants take advantage of the 'Eat Out to Help Out' scheme

2. Maintain car access and short-term shop-front parking provision

- Provide vehicle access to the full Ormeau road from either end for anyone who needs it during the three trials periods
- Provide parking right beside business premises for delivery drivers and people calling in for collections or making quick purchases. Achieved by allocating one lane to parking outside those business that require it.

3. Use trial to help inform one weekend in September

- In parallel with the August trial slots we propose the start of a formal consultation, led by the Council with the support of the Department for Infrastructure, on how best to address the spatial challenges on this stretch of the Ormeau Road on one full weekend in September (Saturday and Sunday only). The trial slots in August would be an important part of the consultation.

4. Other key points:

- Side streets. Signage road closed resident access only
- As well as parking within the area with increased space for pedestrians there will be no decrease in parking provision for businesses outside this area.
- The area with increased space for pedestrians has been slightly reduced from what was originally envisaged. It is now proposed to run from Bread and Banjo to the Parador. However, if businesses would like it to be extended for the trial slots this could be easily accommodated. This will make moving on the road safer for visually impaired residents, wheelchair users or anyone with reduced mobility as well as families with children and buggies or prams.

- Parades will be unaffected. Clashes between days/times of parading and Open Ormeau will be avoided. We are not aware of any current applications for parades that would clash with the proposed August trial slots.
- All communications in relation to the trial periods of extended space for pedestrians will stress that this is not a street party or festival. There will be no stalls, no drinking in the street, no organised performers etc.
- All food and beverage businesses will be operating table service only.
- Whilst no increase in rubbish is anticipated during the trial slots Council will be asked to increase monitoring of bins to ensure there is no litter problem.

Outline Traffic Arrangements

During the trial periods traffic would be free to access the Ormeau Road coming from the bridge or from the roundabout. However, motorists would be advised that the road was not open for through-traffic.

One lane of traffic would flow in each direction from approximately Fitzwilliam Avenue to halfway between North and South Parade. This would be marked out with cones.

All side streets on the left-hand side going into town from Florenceville Avenue to Deramore Avenue would be closed. This is to allow an uninterrupted walking corridor down the left-hand side of the road and protect visually impaired pedestrians. Access to these streets can be made from Sunnyside Street (residents only).

All other side streets on the left-hand side going into town between the roundabout and the bridge would be resident access only.

All side streets on the right-hand side going into town from Fitzwilliam Avenue to North Parade would be resident access only. Residents of these streets will be encouraged, where possible, to access their street via the Ravenhill Road.

Here are some of the specifics but a formal traffic management plan will need to be put in place by the Department for Infrastructure and Belfast City Council.

- **Annadale Embankment**

City bound motorists approaching the Annadale Avenue junction would be informed that the Ormeau Road is access-only from the roundabout. City bound traffic. Suggested diversion down Annadale Avenue.



- **Ormeau Road/Ravenhill Road roundabout**

City bound motorists approaching the Ormeau Road/Ravenhill Road roundabout would be informed that the Ormeau Road is access-only from the roundabout. City bound traffic diverted down Ravenhill Road.



- **Ormeau bridge**

Country bound motorists approaching the Ormeau bridge would be informed that the Ormeau Road is access-only from the bridge to the roundabout. Country bound traffic diverted down Annadale Embankment and Ormeau Embankment.



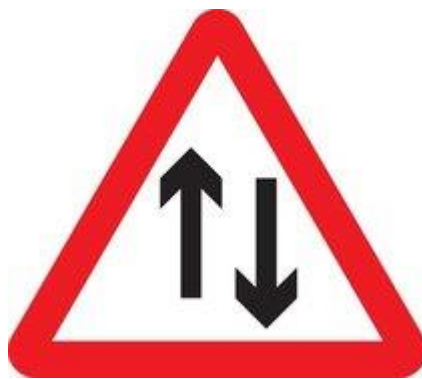
- **Approaching the Parador Lodge**

City bound motorists on the Ormeau Road approaching the Parador Lodge would be informed that city bound lanes are closed and the next section of road is:

- Cycle priority
- 10mph
- Two way single-lane traffic
- Access only



<https://www.alamy.com/cyclists-have-priority-safe-cycling-sign-directing-cars-to-give-way-image156840669.html>



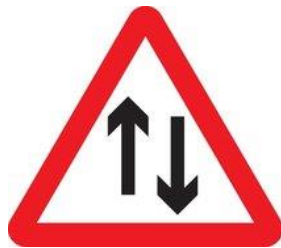
- **Approaching Bread and Banjo**

Country bound motorists on the Ormeau Road approaching the Bread and Banjo would be informed that county bound lanes are being reduced to a single lane and the next section of road is:

- Cycle priority
- 10mph
- Two way single-lane traffic
- Access only



<https://www.alamy.com/cyclists-have-priority-safe-cycling-sign-directing-cars-to-give-way-image156840669.html>



- **All side streets on the left-hand side going into town from Florenceville Avenue to Deramore Avenue**

All side streets on the left-hand side going into town from Florenceville Avenue to Deramore Avenue would be closed. This is to allow an uninterrupted walking corridor down the left-hand side of the road and protects visually impaired pedestrians.



- **All side streets on the right-hand side going into town from Fitzwilliam Avenue to North Parade and the remaining streets on the left-hand side**

All side streets on the right-hand side going into town from Fitzwilliam Avenue to North Parade would be resident access only. Residents of these streets will be encouraged, where possible, to access their street via the Ravenhill Road.

Other than the stretch identified in the previous bullet point, all other side streets on the left-hand side going into town between the roundabout and the bridge would be resident access only.



<https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-street-sign-road-closed-resident-access-only-130792491.html>

- **Somerset Street, Parkmore Street and Raby Street**

Somerset Street, Parkmore Street and Raby Street are one-way streets or cul-de-sacs so residential traffic will be emerging into the two-way traffic. Drivers will be notified of the two-way flow with signage.

- **Rushfield Avenue**

A turning circle at the bottom of Rushfield Avenue will be marked out to allow these residents to turn so that they do not have to reverse back up the street.



- **Sunnyside Street at Annadale Embankment**

Drivers approaching Sunnyside Street at Annadale Embankment/Kings Bridge will be informed that there is no through road but access is open.



Sally Abernethy, Martin Carter, Benji Connell, Aaron Dickson, Christopher Ferry, Ciarán Fox, Brenda Heaney, Janet Johnston, Christine Kelly, Joe Kenny, Suzanne Lagan, Colette Leeson, Kerry Lynn, Anne McCambridge, Siobhán McCrystal, Lucy McCutcheon, Kerry Marie Plante, Maggie Smith, Paul Smyth, Christina Taylor, Michelle Warner

#OpenOrmeau

Appendices

Appendix 1

Open Ormeau

16 June 2020

In response to the [#OurChangedPlaceNI](#) initiative which is calling on everyone to post on social media ideas for the changes they would like to see to their area, I posted an idea on twitter for the weekend closure of a part of the Ormeau Road that would allow the high density of bars, restaurants, cafes to expand out into the road.

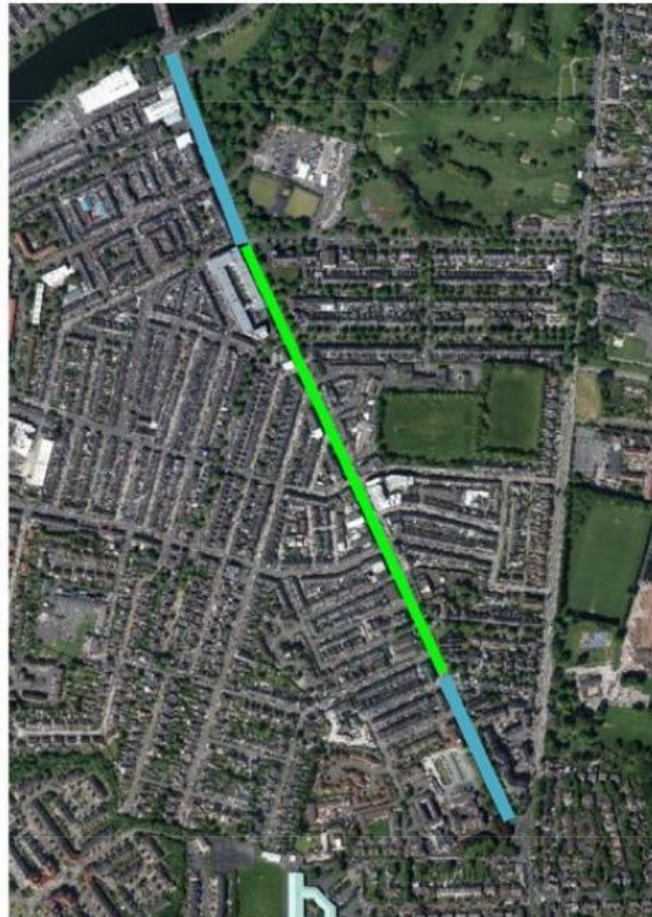
The idea has generated lots of positive reaction with support from the community and local businesses. Representatives from [all of the main political parties](#) in the area have supported the further exploration of the idea. Some very valid concerns have been raised by residents about access, diverted traffic, parking and buses.

Following news yesterday that restaurants, bars and cafes will be allowed to open for table service from 3rd July it feels like the right time to expand the proposal, consider some practicalities, confirm support or otherwise from the community/businesses and set out next steps.

From now to 3rd July is 18 days. [That's](#) a big day challenge. But extraordinary times require extraordinary measures at an extraordinary pace.

I hope this process can help encourage people to bring ideas forward for other areas of Belfast and in towns and villages across Northern Ireland. Change is needed. [Let's](#) make the best of it.

[#OpenOrmeau](#)



- Traffic coming into the city down the Ormeau Road could be redirected at the Ormeau/Annadale junction and at the Ormeau/Ravenhill roundabout.
 - Create buffer zones from Ormeau bridge to Park Road and Parador to Ormeau/Ravenhill Roundabout for taxi drop off/pick up, take-a-way pick up etc.
 - Continued vehicle access to Park Road recycling centre
 - Zebra crossing added at Ravenhill for crossing at Cherryvale Park (maybe not ready from outset)
3. Vehicle access to open zone
- Emergency vehicle access to be maintained at all times
 - Access for blue badge holders to be maintained at all times (but not for through travel)
 - Access for residents of streets that have no other access point to be maintained at all times (NB. One-way streets)
 - Access for deliveries/essential business services to be agreed with the businesses
 - Access for buses to be agreed with Translink
4. Buses
- Options to be discussed and agreed with Translink
 - Current thinking – allow metro buses to travel through the open zone but co-ordinate timetable or make arrangement to ensure inward/outward buses are never passing through the open zone at the same time. Ulsterbus services could be redirected.
 - Consideration needs to be given to bus access to the raised kerbs at bus stops
 - Important to note that public transport usage is currently suppressed
 - 5 or 10 mph speed limit
5. Weather
- Agree a protocol with businesses/community for dealing with bad weather. Perhaps call off if persistent bad weather is forecast for a particular weekend.
6. Protecting residents from unwanted traffic/parking
- During Open Ormeau periods all streets off Ormeau Road from Ormeau/Ravenhill roundabout to Ormeau Bridge to be designated as resident access only (includes visitors, deliveries etc to residents) from all entrances. This would avoid traffic attempting to cut through and reduce risk of a surge of on street parking. Sunnyside Street to be designated as resident access only from embankment/kings bridge entry point.
7. Parking
- People should be encouraged not to drive to the area but to walk/cycle
 - Cycle parking needs considered. Could form part of two ends of the open zone.
 - If no driving message wasn't working or if resident concerns were high, park and walk provisions could be explored at Cherryvale, O-Zone, Queen's PEC, Holy Rosary etc.
-

- Designated parking for blue badge holders (should be much more space available than normal)
 - All Ormeau streets accessible from Ravenhill, Embankment or Sunnyside designated as resident parking only (includes guests of residents).
8. Take Away businesses
- Buffer zones at either end of the Open Zone could be used for people picking up take aways. Short walk to a number of existing take away businesses and businesses offering take away during lockdown.
 - Encourage use of delivery (especially by bike)
9. Try, listen, learn, improve
- Natural to have some concerns about possible noise, nuisance, parking issues, access issues etc.
 - Lots of measures can be put in place in advance to address concerns but important that a try, listen, learn and improve approach is taken each weekend.
 - Perhaps more formal review after 4 weekends.
 - Seek feedback from traders (especially those who currently get business from the passing traffic) on impact on trade. Up%. Down%.

Next steps

- Check interest from majority of businesses and other organisations on this section of the Ormeau Road.
- Check support from the majority of residents and wider community
- Request approval in principle from Department for Infrastructure to facilitate the road closure for the Open Ormeau proposal. This would pave the way for discussions on the precise details.
- Request Belfast City Council to:
 - provide flexibility around licensing to allow businesses to serve alcohol within their designated on-street area
 - confirm if there will be any support available to help businesses quickly gear up for opening in an extended outdoor area
 - to confirm if there will be any grant assistance to establish an Ormeau road business forum
- Request support from the Department for Communities from an urban regeneration and neighbourhood renewal perspective.
- Request approval in principle from Translink to amend routes and/or timetables to facilitate the Open Ormeau proposal. This would pave the way for discussions on the precise details.
- Following approvals above, agree and co-ordinate detailed plans with the community and businesses.

Aim of proposal

The aim of this proposal is to overcome the multiple challenges of:

- providing sufficient space for people to walk whilst socially distancing
- providing space for queues outside shops at peak times
- providing space for businesses/organisations, particularly restaurants, cafes and bars to expand outside at weekends from 3rd July so that it is viable for them to open on a table-service-only model whilst upholding social distancing requirements
- providing safe space for local cycling
- ensuring access for all

Core Proposal

Close the Ormeau Road from the Parador to the Park Road junction (the open zone) to most through traffic at the weekends from 3rd July.

Maintain a minimum of two lanes width (5.4m) of open road space along the open zone for walking, cycling and limited vehicle use with a 5 or 10mph speed limit. It would be clearly designated a pedestrian/cycle priority zone.

Bring the businesses/organisations out onto the pavement and road with each participating business/organisation allocated a defined outdoor space to operate by agreement.

Detail

1. Agreed protocol for bars, restaurants, cafes etc
 - Propose bar closure at 11pm
 - Social distancing of tables and table-service-only will naturally limit numbers and noise.
 - Encourage table reservations to reduce queueing
 - Boundary for each business area to be agreed in advance. Address pinch points with businesses operating on both sides of the road.
 - Timings to be agreed
 - Start of weekend road closure and set-up start time
 - Evening overnight clear away time
 - End of weekend full clear away time
 - End of weekend road reopening time
 2. Redirection of general vehicle traffic
 - Traffic coming from city centre up Ormeau Road could be redirected at the Ormeau Bridge to go along the embankment to emerge at Ormeau/Annadale junction or along the embankment toward the Ravenhill Road. This would reduce pressure on Park Road.
-

Appendix 2

Dealing with residents' concerns

Resident concern	How concern has been addressed
Access to parking outside businesses	Allowance now made for short-term parking for purchases
Unwanted parking outside residents' homes	Signage to say side streets are closed - for resident access only
Noise	In all "Open Ormeau" communications it will be stressed that "this is not a street party or festival". There will be no stalls or street performers. Bars and restaurants capacity is reduced to around 50%
Drunkenness	There will be no drinking in the street. Bars and restaurants will be providing table service only. Bars and restaurants capacity is reduced to around 50%. PSNI have confirmed they foresee no issues in policing Open Ormeau adequately.
Litter	There is no anticipated increase in rubbish, but BCC will be asked to monitor
Lack of consultation	Over 5000 leaflets delivered, facebook page with 1000 followers, information on Nextdoor, three zoom consultations for businesses (2) and residents (1)
Toilet provision	Businesses will be responsible for providing toilets for customers. There will be no increased capacity for visitors to sit for food or drinks beyond this. Bars and restaurants capacity is reduced to around 50%
Covid spike	By allowing better pedestrianisation of footways, social distancing outside business premises should be improved
Diversion of traffic through other main routes	The reduction in frequency and duration of Open Ormeau will reduce any impact of this, along with reduced traffic at weekends particularly post-covid.

Appendix 3

Dealing with businesses' concerns

Business Concern	How concern has been addressed
Concerns about deliveries/collection from take-aways	Parking accommodated outside take-away businesses to allow for deliveries/collection
Loss of trade from car customers	Access permitted for those who need it. Parking outside premises provided for those business who need it for short term parking for customer collections.
Critical nature of weekend trade	Three shorter trial periods rather than full weekend for three months.
Anti-social behaviour	Some overlap with residents concerns, see table above.

Visualising re-purposed space

EXAMPLE 4: Space allocation outside food/beverage businesses that wish to participate in the trial periods on both sides of road

	Buildings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Buildings	Lane descriptors	
CURRENT	Al Gelato			↑	↑					Pavilion	1 pavement	
	Wine Mark										District	2 pavement or car parking bay
	Site										Abbey	3 inside lane city-bound
	Old bank										Bank of Ireland	4 outside lane city-bound
	Oasis											5 inside lane country-bound
											6 outside lane country-bound	
											7 pavement or car parking bay	
											8 pavement	
OPEN ORMEAU	Al Gelato			↑					Pavilion			
	Wine Mark									District		
	Site									Abbey		
	Old bank									Bank of Ireland		
	Oasis											

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