

**QLDC Council
29 October 2015**

Report for Agenda Item: 3

Department: Infrastructure

Beach Street Pedestrianisation

Purpose

- 1 The purpose of this report is to obtain Council approval to consult over options for the pedestrianisation of Beach Street.

Executive Summary

- 2 This report proposes that Council undertake consultation over options for pedestrianisation of Beach Street, between Camp Street and Cow Lane. The proposal has emerged from the DowntownQT commercial strategy, and is supported by the draft Queenstown town centre transport strategy.
- 3 If the Council agrees with the process set out in this report, results of consultation on the pedestrianisation options would be reported back to Council's December meeting and a decision made on whether or not to proceed with a trial. It is possible that a trial would commence in January 2016.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. **Note** the contents of this report;
2. **Approve** public consultation commencing on pedestrianisation options for Upper Beach Street (between Camp Street and Cow Lane).
3. **Appoint** a panel of 3 Councillors [to be named] to hear public feedback on the pedestrianisation options.

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13/10/2015

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14/10/2015

Background

- 4 DowntownQT has completed its Downtown Commercial Strategy (August 2015). The strategy is broadly in alignment with the draft Transport Strategy that is reported back to Council in October.
- 5 DowntownQT's is now seeking to work with Council to get implementation of the strategy underway and has highlighted the pedestrianisation of Beach Street, between Camp Street and Cow Lane as one particular project to progress.
- 6 This report outlines what the proposal entails, its business cases and the risks.

Comment

The Proposal

- 7 The proposal is for the trial pedestrianisation of Beach Street in 2015/16. The purpose of the trial is to test the feasibility of the permanent pedestrianisation of Upper Beach Street.
 
- 8 Upper Beach Street has an average daily traffic count of approximately 2000 vehicles, although this will include traffic from Cow Lane.
- 9 The trial, if it was to go ahead, would last for around nine months, starting in mid-January 2016 and finishing at the end of September 2016. It would thus take in two peak visitor seasons.
- 10 The length of Beach Street proposed to be affected is shown in the diagram above (red line). Within this area there is presently a loading zone and four carparks.
- 11 In terms of physical changes to the street, these would initially be low cost, relying on the installation of bollards and signage at either end of the pedestrianised section of Beach Street. No changes are proposed to the existing bollards that presently line each side of the carriageway. We would need to consider the practicality of sandblasting the road markings at what would be a busy time of year.
- 12 The following measures to mitigate the loss of loading zones and carparking spaces would be proposed

- a. Five P15 parking spaces on Cow Lane adjacent to the Beach Street intersection (yellow line) would be converted to loading zone.¹ This replaces the loading zone presently in Upper Beach Street.
- b. Loading zone in lower Beach Street (between Rees Street and Shotover Street) would be converted to carparking to provide a minimum 5 new general parking spaces (a net loss of 4 spaces associated with the pedestrianisation proposal). This area presently has an oversupply of kerb-space given over to loading zone.

13 If the trial goes ahead there will be a need for good before trial / during trial monitoring of traffic (pedestrian and vehicular), business vitality and public/business sentiment.

Timeline for Council decision

14 This report proposes the following timeline leading to Council decision in December on whether or not to proceed with the trial pedestrianisation of Upper Beach Street.

Date	Action
29 October 2015	Council decision on approval to consult over pedestrianisation options
30 October 2015	Public consultation commences
20 November 2015	Deadline for written feedback
27 November 2015	Hearings of submissions
17 December 2015	Council decision
Sunday, 10 January	Pedestrianisation option goes live (if this is approved)

Downtown QT Commercial Strategy

15 The concept of pedestrianisation has been put forward by the DowntownQT strategy to address issues where pedestrian flow is being constrained. In this instance, pedestrianisation would help 'pedestrian flow' along the western side of Camp Street (where Beach Street meets Camp Street), as well as along Beach Street itself.

Potential Issues

16 Closure of the Beach Street to vehicles would redistribute Beach Street traffic to other parts of the network – most likely Shotover Street. This is unlikely to have any significant effect.

¹ These parking spaces would be 'replaced by the conversion of loading zone in lower Beach Street to P30 parking.

- 17 The proposals are unlikely to be met with universal approval from town centre businesses. As noted in the DowntownQT strategy,

“Queenstown stakeholders are divided on the need and benefit from pedestrianisation. Traditional perspectives associate vehicles and parking proximity with commercial success. In some sectors this remains relevant – such as bulky goods, services and takeaway foods, however changing consumer habits are challenging these legacy views.” (Page 67, DowntownQT commercial strategy, August 2015)

- 18 The building presently occupied by Vudu Café and an adjacent building (marked with an X in the preceding map) are expected to be refurbished in 2016. This will necessitate the presence of construction vehicles on the street during the trial. An option for consideration in the consultation process would be the deferral of the trial until after this work has been done.
- 19 As mentioned earlier the proposal would result in a net loss of carparking (4 spaces). The draft town centre strategy introduces the principle of seeking to retain carparking spaces at 2015 levels. A proposal for permanent pedestrianisation would need to address this loss.

Options

- 20 This report identifies and assesses the following reasonably practicable options for assessing the matter as required by section 77 of the Local Government Act 2002:

Permanent Pedestrianisation

- 21 The option of going straight to a permanent pedestrianisation (with material changes to the Beach Street layout) is not put forward because there is a lack of evidence of the benefits (and the scale of disbenefits) that would result from pedestrianisation. A purpose of the trial is to gather information that could be used by Council when it considers the future form of Beach Street (while being in a position to terminate the trial quickly if it has unintended effects).

Trial Options

- 22 An assessment of the options is presented below. It is stressed that this report does not recommend an option at this stage. It is proposed that Council undertake public consultation on the options and consider making a decision at its December 2015 meeting.
- 23 An advantage of all the options except Option 1 ‘Do Nothing’ is the testing of a possible permanent pedestrianisation format at low cost.
- 24 A further option revolves around timing. As mentioned earlier, refurbishment of the building occupied by the Vudu Café and its neighbours is planned for 2016. Rather than pursue pedestrianisation now, Council could choose to commence the trial once the construction work is completed.

25 Option 1 Do nothing. This option would retain Upper Beach Street in its current form, where it is a slow traffic environment and relatively 'pedestrian friendly.'

Advantages:

26 There is no disadvantage experienced by businesses that would stand to be inconvenienced Beach Street pedestrianisation.

27 Council doesn't incur trial costs

Disadvantages:

28 An opportunity to investigate improvements for pedestrians and business vitality in the town centre is not taken up.

29 Option 2 Full Pedestrianisation. Under this option Upper Beach Street would be closed at all times to all vehicles except emergency and maintenance vehicles. The full closure would be 'supported' by removable bollards at either end of the pedestrianised section of road.

Advantages:

30 Physical barriers (bollards) would ensure compliance with vehicle restrictions.

Disadvantages:

31 The removal of the loading zone in Upper Beach Street (replaced by new loading zone in Cow Lane) may make servicing of businesses more difficult.

32 Loss of two car parking spaces would marginally affect customer access to Beach Street businesses

33 Option 3 Partial Pedestrianisation (A). Under this option Upper Beach Street would be closed to all vehicles except emergency and maintenance vehicles 18 hours a day (i.e. from 10:00am to 4:00am) and 7 days a week. At other times the street would be open to goods delivery vehicles. The closure would be 'supported' by signage (the daily task of taking down / putting up bollards at either end of the street is regarded as impractical)

Advantages:

34 Would provide a (limited) opportunity for goods service vehicles to access the street and deliver goods.

Disadvantages:

35 Lack of physical barriers to vehicles may reduce compliance with the vehicle restriction, with a consequent increase in pedestrian/vehicle crashes.

36 Option 4 Partial Pedestrianisation (B). Under this option Upper Beach Street would be closed to all vehicles except goods service, emergency and maintenance vehicles at all times. This traffic management option would be supported by signage, but no physical barriers

Advantages:

- 37 Would offer the least inconvenience to businesses by still allowing goods deliveries at all times.

Disadvantages:

- 38 A watered down version of pedestrianisation that would be difficult to enforce. Responsibility for the enforcement of moving vehicle offences lies with the Police who are likely to have other priorities.

Significance and Engagement

- 39 The factors to be considered in assessing the significance of the matters addressed by this report are fourfold. These, and the assessment are outlined in the following table

Factor	Assessment
Importance to the Queenstown Lakes District	Low. The proposed changes are of low impact in terms of physical changes.
Community Interest	Medium-High. The matters are of high importance to town centre businesses and their customers, either directly affected by the pedestrianisation proposal or aware that other streets may also be treated in a similar way in the future.
Inconsistency with existing policy and strategy	Low-Medium. The proposal is broadly consistent with the draft Queenstown town centre transport strategy.
The impact on the Council's capability and capacity	Low. The implementation of the trial is a low cost exercise.

- 40 Accordingly this matter is of medium significance, as determined by reference to the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy when taking into account the potentially high level of community interest against the 'low' assessments against the other factors.

Risk

- 41 The matters addressed by this report do not relate to risks identified by the Council's risk register.
- 42 A project risk table will be finalised following consultation and included in the December report to Council.

Financial Implications

- 43 There would be set-up (consultation, business case development, reporting) and monitoring costs that in terms of staff time will compete with other projects on our

work programme. These costs are unknown but monitoring does have the potential to be time consuming.

Council Policies, Strategies and Bylaws

44 The following Council policies, strategies and bylaws were considered:

- Draft Queenstown town centre transport strategy.
- Significance and engagement policy

45 The recommended option is consistent with the principles set out in the named policy/policies.

46 This matter is included in the 10-Year Plan/Annual Plan through the provision that has been made to the Queenstown town centre transport strategy implementation.

Local Government Act 2002 Purpose Provisions

47 The recommended option:

- Will help meet the current and future needs of communities for good-quality local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions in a way that is most cost-effective for households and businesses by enabling consideration of changes to street form in line with Council and community strategies;
- Can be implemented through current funding under the 10-Year Plan and Annual Plan;
- Is consistent with the Council's plans and policies; and
- Would not alter significantly the intended level of service provision for any significant activity undertaken by or on behalf of the Council, or transfer the ownership or control of a strategic asset to or from the Council.

Consultation: Community Views and Preferences

48 The persons who are affected by or interested in this matter are

- a. Queenstown town centre businesses and property owners (and more particularly Beach Street businesses and property owners
- b. Customers of Queenstown town centre businesses
- c. Users of Beach Street

49 No consultation has taken place specifically on the Beach Street proposal. Feedback on the town centre transport strategy, which broached the idea of great provision for pedestrians in town centre streets indicated that there is support for greater pedestrianisation generally.

50 The DowntownQT commercial strategy which specifically proposes Beach Street pedestrianisation was approved by the DowntownQT board, but has not gone through a public consultation process.

51 It is proposed that, with Council approval, a short consultation exercise be carried out in November. This would seek feedback on the different options and the impacts of each, to enable Council to make a decision in December as to whether to proceed with a trial.

52 We propose that the consultation comprise the following elements

- a. Distribution of material explaining the options through mail drops to businesses
- b. A process for receiving feedback, with an opportunity to be heard before Council makes a decision+

Legal Considerations and Statutory Responsibilities

53 In order to close a road on a temporary basis Council must follow procedures set by the Local Government Act 1974. Section 342 of that Act states

(1)The Council may, in the manner provided in Schedule 10,—

(b) close any road to traffic or any specified type of traffic (including pedestrian traffic) on a temporary basis in accordance with that schedule and impose or permit the imposition of charges as provided for in that schedule.

54 The first part of Schedule 10, below, summarises the instances where temporary stopping of roads can be done. Sub-clause (d) is highlighted as provided the basis for the Beach Street temporary closure.

The Council may, subject to such conditions as it thinks fit (including the imposition of a reasonable bond), and after consultation with the Police and the New Zealand Transport Agency, close any road or part of a road to all traffic or any specified type of traffic (including pedestrian traffic)—

(a) while the road, or any drain, water race, pipe, or apparatus under, upon, or over the road is being constructed or repaired; or

(b) where, in order to resolve problems associated with traffic operations on a road network, experimental diversions of traffic are required; or

(c) during a period when public disorder exists or is anticipated; or

(d) when for any reason it is considered desirable that traffic should be temporarily diverted to other roads; or

(e) for a period or periods not exceeding in the aggregate 31 days in any year for any exhibition, fair, show, market, concert, film-making, race or other sporting event, or public function:

provided that no road may be closed for any purpose specified in paragraph (e) if that closure would, in the opinion of the Council, be likely to impede traffic unreasonably.