

QLDC Council  
24 August 2016

Report for Agenda Item: 3

Department: Property & Infrastructure

Approval to consult: Declaration of Upper Beach Street as a Pedestrian Mall

**Purpose**

- 1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to begin the special consultative procedure as part of the process to enable Council to declare upper Beach Street (between Camp Street and Cow Lane) as a pedestrian mall with exceptions.

**Executive Summary**

- 2 Council has been trialling the pedestrianisation of upper Beach Street, between Camp Street and Cow Lane, since 1 February 2016 after a request from DowntownQT. The most recent monitoring report has shown no significant adverse effects from the pedestrianisation of upper Beach Street.
- 3 This report is now requesting Council to initiate the formal special consultative procedure required for Council to decide whether to declare upper Beach Street as a pedestrian mall using section 336 of the Local Government Act 1974.

**Recommendation**

That Council:

1. **Note** the contents of this report and in particular the results of the upper Beach Street pedestrianisation trial that show that there are no significant adverse effects.
2. **Agree** to proceed with the pedestrianisation of upper Beach Street long term based on the results of the trial to date.
3. **Approve** the use of the attached Statement of Proposal and to start the special consultative procedure required to declare Beach Street between Camp Street and Cow Lane as a pedestrian mall using section 336 of the Local Government Act 1974.
4. **Recommend** to the incoming Council that a hearings panel be appointed.
5. **Approve** the extension of the temporary pedestrianisation of upper Beach Street in accordance with section 342 and schedule 10, clause 11(d) of the Local Government Act 1974, between Camp Street and Cow Lane with the following conditions:
  - a) The temporary pedestrianisation will continue from 25 September 2016 to 24 February 2017 or until such time a declaration of upper Beach Street as a pedestrian mall comes into effect;

- b) From 10:00am to 5:00am on each following day the street will be closed to all vehicles apart from emergency vehicles and other vehicles specifically authorised by Council's Road Corridor Engineer.
- c) Between 5:00am and 10:00am daily, only vehicles that are goods service vehicles, as defined by the Queenstown Lakes District Council Traffic and Parking Bylaw 2012, emergency vehicles and other vehicles specifically authorised by Council's Road Corridor Engineer may travel along and stop on the street.

Prepared by:



Andrew Edgar  
Senior Engineer

9/08/2016

Reviewed and Authorised by:



Peter Hansby  
General Manager Property &  
Infrastructure

9/08/2016

## Background

- 4 The proposal for a pedestrian mall on Beach Street between Camp Street and Cow Lane arose from DowntownQT's Downtown Commercial Strategy (August 2015) which was also broadly in line with the Council's Queenstown Town Centre Strategy. The reasons for pedestrianising the mall are discussed in the 'Comments' section.
- 5 Council approved consultation and appointment of a hearings panel at its 29 October 2015 meeting to determine the support or otherwise for pedestrianisation. The consultation was held between 30 October and 20 November 2016 plus the NZTA, NZ Police, St Johns Ambulance and the NZ Fire Service were specifically consulted. The consultation resulted in 107 submissions, along with feedback from the specific organisations. A hearing was held on 25 November and the panel's recommendations were reported back to the next Council meeting.
- 6 At the 17 December 2015 meeting, Council approved the temporary pedestrianisation of Beach Street between Camp Street and Cow Lane as a trial that would allow emergency vehicle access at all times, and goods service vehicles between 5am and 10am daily. The trial started on 1 February 2016.
- 7 Regular monitoring reports on the trial have been developed with the most recent report attached (Attachment B) and the results discussed below.

## Comment

- 8 DowntownQT, in its Queenstown: Downtown Commercial Strategy (August 2015), suggests that pedestrianisation of some roads in the Queenstown town centre area will improve the pedestrian experience for visitors.

- 9 In relation to the “business community feedback” the strategy provides this insight:
- In the Chamber of Commerce’s 2014 survey a number of respondents have suggested the need to consider creating pedestrian only, or ‘shared spaces’ in areas such as Upper Beach Street.
  - Upper Beach Street is recognised as a key portal into the town centre and faces the greatest challenges around peak period pedestrian congestion – and competition from vehicles.
  - Demand for pedestrianisation was countered by other businesses, predominantly in the service and hotel sector that have traditionally relied on vehicle access. Some stakeholder’s view removing vehicles and parking from streets as potentially detrimental to commercial performance and goodwill.
  - Pedestrianisation can be an agile and temporary solution to congestion issues, with results determining further actions as and when needed.
- 10 Hence, upper Beach Street (between Camp Street and Cow Lane) was seen as the best place to trial additional pedestrianisation in the Queenstown town centre.
- 11 DowntownQT has continued to support the trial, including conducting further surveys of businesses during the trial. More than 80% of businesses supported making the pedestrianisation of Beach Street permanent, but most also recommended keeping the morning deliveries. The major concern of those who didn’t want the street to be permanently pedestrianised was increased traffic on surrounding streets, especially Shotover Street. However, these comments also indicated an element of using upper Beach Street as a “rat run” rather than using the arterial network of Stanley Street and Shotover Street.
- 12 There was a lot of other conflicting feedback: more foot traffic versus less foot traffic; aesthetically better versus looking worse (or even “dead”); and confusing versus easier to walk along. The reported customer comments indicated that locals didn’t seem to like it or want it made permanent but tourists couldn’t really comment, but seemed to like it.
- 13 Similar feedback was received through the survey on Council’s website. An important observation was the interaction between pedestrians and vehicles at the intersection between Cow Lane and Beach Street, particularly pedestrians not looking out for vehicles. However, it is a low speed area and the removal of the hoardings around the worksite at 23-27 Beach Street will direct more pedestrians away from the roadway. The issue can also be addressed through permanent warning and directional signage if the pedestrianisation is made permanent.
- 14 A Council officer has also completed site visits over the monitoring period and has noticed issues with the use of the loading zone in Cow Lane, such as longer than 15 – 20 minute delivery times. The top of upper Beach Street was also being used as a loading zone when the bollards are in place. Although it is a logical place for a loading zone, allowing access for emergency vehicles at all times will

require this space to be kept free. These issues occur throughout the town centre and can only be addressed through increased enforcement.

- 15 Transactional data does not appear to show any significant changes due to the pedestrianisation. There are significant decreases in hospitality transactions and spending, however the majority of that reduction is likely to be associated with the closing of hospitality shops to allow for construction at 23-27 Beach Street. Apparel spending has decreased although transactions over the last year have increased more than the rest of the town. Spending in “other store types” has matched the rest of the town even though the number of transactions has not increased as much, indication that these transactions are increasing in value. Of course, the change in even one store type could also explain these differences.
- 16 It is unclear whether any traffic changes are associated with the trial or changing traffic management including traffic signals on Stanley Street. However, there is anecdotal evidence of increase traffic on Cow Lane. Illegal stopping and unloading of goods vehicles is occurring in Cow Lane, although this was also occurring before the trial. The pre-trial consultation indicated that morning deliveries were needed and so the trial has allowed goods vehicle into upper Beach Street between 5am and 10am to enable deliveries while pedestrian numbers are still low. Overall there appears to be no significant impact on traffic due to the pedestrianisation.
- 17 Businesses along upper Beach Street have taken advantage of the closed road by expanding more into the street area. Downtown QT has also made use of the extra space by encouraging market stalls that can not only attract more pedestrians, but can keep them in the area for longer.
- 18 Given that the trial has not created any significant adverse effects, and the continuing support from DowntownQT, it is reasonable for the next step to consider declaring Beach Street between Camp Street and Cow Lane a pedestrian mall with exception for emergency vehicles and morning goods deliveries. The process needed to do this is set out in section 336 of the Local Government Act 1974 and requires following the special consultative procedure and allowing a 1 month period after the declaration to allow for appeals to be made to the Environment Court.
- 19 Approval is also sought to extend the temporary pedestrianisation of the street until the consultation and hearings process is resolved, a final determination can be made by Council, and if declared as a pedestrian mall, the 1 month appeal period is completed. This will allow any decisions to be made to include any issues that may arise during this process.

## **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.
- 21 Option 1 Status Quo: Do not continue with the pedestrianisation of upper Beach Street.

*Advantages:*

- 22 Access for all vehicles.
- 23 Parking levels will be returned to the pre-trial levels including in Cow Lane.
- 24 All commercial activities along upper Beach Street will have deliveries almost to the front door at all times.

*Disadvantages:*

- 25 Full benefit of installed bollards not realised, although they will still be useful for temporary closures of upper Beach Street for events.
- 26 Lost opportunity to continue to realise the gains from pedestrianising upper Beach Street.
- 27 Option 2 Continue the temporary pedestrianisation of upper Beach Street by extending the current trial for a further 6 months

*Advantages:*

- 28 Construction in upper Beach Street will be completed making the street look more open and active with new shop fronts so the full benefits of the pedestrianisation can be determined.
- 29 Loading zones will be completely free of construction vehicles making it easier to determine the effects on deliveries.
- 30 The operation of the street as a pedestrian mall during the summer months can be determined.

*Disadvantages:*

- 31 The new shops may affect foot traffic on their own so it still won't be clear whether the pedestrianisation changes the number of pedestrians using the street.
- 32 Businesses on the street will be unwilling to invest more to improve the experience of using the street as a mall while it is still only a trial.
- 33 Option 3 Consider making the pedestrianisation of upper Beach Street permanent by:
- 34 Option 3A Consulting on the declaration of upper Beach Street between Camp Street and Cow Lane as a pedestrian mall, excepting emergency vehicles at all times and goods service vehicles between 5am and 10am (existing trial)

*Advantages:*

- 35 Vehicle movements will be reduced to only those loading or unloading during low pedestrian times.

- 36 During high pedestrian times, people will be free to walk across the roadway without having to worry about vehicles to take advantage of shopping opportunities on both sides of the road.
- 37 More road corridor space will be freed up for adjoining businesses to use, and for other attractions – although anything in the roadway will need to be removable.
- 38 Retaining some vehicle movements will mean any future beautifications will have to consider these vehicles. Therefore there is flexibility to change the road's use in the future.
- 39 Will generally increase the walkability of the Queenstown town centre.

*Disadvantages:*

- 40 Loss of some short term parking and a loading zone.
- 41 Goods deliveries between 10am and 5am will have to be carted further from loading zones on the periphery of upper Beach Street.
- 42 Option 3B Consulting on the declaration of upper Beach Street between Camp Street and Cow Lane as a pedestrian mall, excepting emergency vehicles at all times.

*Advantages:*

- 43 Pedestrians will be free to walk across the roadway without concerns for vehicles at all times of the day to take advantage of shopping opportunities on both sides of the road.
- 44 More road corridor space will be freed up for adjoining businesses to take advantage, and for other attractions. These will be able to be more permanent, or set out early to take advantage of the breakfast trade.
- 45 Will generally increase the walkability of the Queenstown town centre.

*Disadvantages:*

- 46 Loss of some short term parking and a loading zone.
- 47 Goods deliveries will have to be carted further from loading zones on the periphery of upper Beach Street.
- 48 This report recommends **Option 3A** for addressing the matter. It enables formal consultation to determine whether declaring upper Beach St as a pedestrian mall, with access for good and service vehicles between 5am and 10am, is acceptable to the community given that it is already a low volume road with high pedestrian usage and DowntownQT supports increasing the walkability of the Queenstown Town Centre. The consultation may also raise other disadvantages to take into account before a final decision is made.

## ***Significance and Engagement***

49 The factors to be considered in assessing the significance of the matters addressed by this report are fourfold.

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
Importance to the Queenstown Lakes District	<b>Low:</b> the proposed changes are of low impact in terms of physical changes.
Community Interest	<b>Medium-High:</b> the matters of high importance to sectors of the community, in particular the Beach Street businesses and their customers
Inconsistency with existing policy and strategy	<b>Low:</b> the pedestrianisation proposals are consistent with the DowntownQT commercial strategy and the Queenstown town centre strategy
The impact on the Council's capability and capacity	<b>Low:</b> the low cost nature of the proposal is well within Council's capability to operate.

50 Overall, this matter is of low-medium significance, as determined by reference to the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.

### ***Risk***

51 This matter relates to the strategic risk SR1: Current and future development needs of the community (including environmental protection), as documented in the Council's risk register. The risk is classed as high. This matter relates to this risk because this proposal relates to the future function of town centre roads (with specific regard in this instance to upper Beach Street).

52 The recommended option considered above mitigates the risk by: 'Treating the risk - putting measures in place which directly impact the risk.' In this case the risk is mitigated in the recommended option by still allowing some vehicles along upper Beach Street so any beautification of the street will have to take vehicle movements into consideration. If the pedestrianisation needs to be reversed it is easier to achieve.

### **Financial Implications**

53 As the bollards needed to restrict vehicle movements are already in place there are no additional capital costs. Town custodians will still have to drop and raise the bollards each day.

### **Council Policies, Strategies and Bylaws**

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

- a. Queenstown town centre transport strategy.
- b. Significance and engagement policy.

55 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**

56 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 increasing the walkability of Queenstown town centre;
- 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**

57 The persons who are affected by or interested in this matter are the Queenstown town centre businesses and both residents and visitors travelling to and within the town centre.

58 Council has undertaken several tiers of consultation:

- a. Consultation required by Section 342 and Schedule 10 of the Local Government Act 1974. Schedule 10 requires that we consult with the NZ Police and the NZ Transport Agency. Letters outlining the options being considered were sent to NZ Transport Agency's Southern Business Unit Manager and the Police's Otago Lakes Area Commander.
- b. To ensure all three arms of the emergency services were aware of the pedestrianisation proposal, the proposal was discussed with the NZ Fire Service Fire Risk Management Officer and St Johns Team Manager.
- c. Public consultation. An invitation to provide feedback was provided through
  - i. a leaflet drop to businesses in the core of the town centre
  - ii. letters to owners of Beach Street properties affected by the proposals.
- d. The consultation leaflet was also 'distributed' by DowntownQT to DowntownQT and Chamber of Commerce members.
- e. The consultation was given publicity through articles in local media and through a public notice in the Otago Daily Times.



59 DowntownQT has also conducted surveys of its members. Its May 2016 survey had 119 responses from member businesses.

60 This paper is requesting approval to undertake the formal consultation required to be able to declare upper Beach Street as a pedestrian mall.

### **Legal Considerations and Statutory Responsibilities**

61 In order to implement a pedestrianisation option the Council needs to make a declaration in accordance with section 336 of the Local Government Act 1974.

### **Attachments**

- A Statement of Proposal: Pedestrian Mall Declaration, Beach Street between Camp Street and Cow Lane, Queenstown
- B Beach Street Trial – Monitoring Actions Report 5 August 2016