

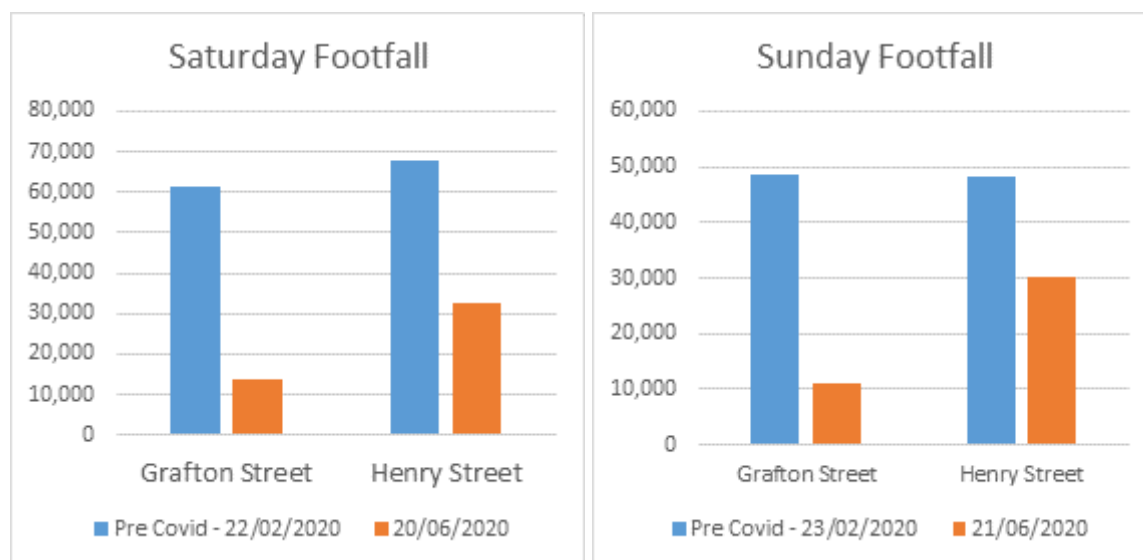
## Grafton Street Area – Report on the Trial Pedestrianisation

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## INTRODUCTION

The initial lockdown due to Covid 19 had a dramatic impact on footfall in the city centre as would be expected, as restrictions lifted it was clear from the graph below that recovery in footfall was unevenly spread across the city and while Henry Street was recovering well the Grafton Street area was not.



The City Development Plan 2016 -2022 has the following objective

*MT050: To introduce traffic-free areas on sections on Drury Street, South William Street, Exchequer Court, Dame Court and Dame Lane while ensuring that access to car parks and deliveries is still provided for.*

Accordingly the City Council decided to undertake some trials of pedestrianising these areas at the weekend to attempt to increase footfall in the Grafton Street area and to also allow us to assess the issues which removal of traffic would cause. It was clear that deliveries would have to be facilitated up to 11:00 and also that access to carparks in the area would need to be maintained.

The Grafton Street area weekend pedestrianisation trials commenced on the 25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup> July. The locations were:

- Anne Street South from the junction of Dawson Street
- Duke Street from the junction of Dawson Street
- South William Street from the Brown Thomas carpark exit to Chatham Row
- Drury Street from Fade Street to the Drury Street carpark
- Dame Court from Exchequer Street with Dame Lane also closed off to traffic.

Initially due to run from 11am to 7pm this was then extended until 11pm and the dates were extended from finishing on the 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> August to the 29<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> August, so six weekends in total had measures in place to provide traffic free areas. There was close consultation with An Garda Síochána and their cooperation in implementing the measures and their advice for creating safe space was a

key ingredient in allowing us to introduce these weekend trials and their assistance is very much acknowledged and appreciated.

During this time Dublin was in Phase 3 of the “Roadmap for reopening society and business”.

The measures were taken to support the economic recovery of the city by providing more space for pedestrians during weekends to encourage people to return for shopping and to make use of the many cafes and restaurants in the area and so enjoy the city centre.

Dublin City Council would like to thank everyone who visited, the business and retailers who supported the scheme, DublinTown and the Gardaí for their support throughout.

## NEXT STEPS

In this report we set out our findings and observation from the trials, feedback we have received from a number of different sources and what DCC should be proposing for each street.

There is a clear issue at present that with level 5 restrictions whether this is an appropriate time to undertake a public consultation process with so many affected businesses being closed.

However there is also an opportunity to have much improved pedestrian and traffic free areas implemented and ready for hopefully the easing of level 5 restrictions from the start of December.

We would therefore propose to undertake some of the improvement works set out in this document in November, including road resurfacing etc. but not the proposed traffic changes.

Instead we will undertake a period of consultation on the proposals contained in this document during November to ascertain if there is broad acceptance of the proposals and especially from the business community and retailers in the streets where proposals for changes are being made.

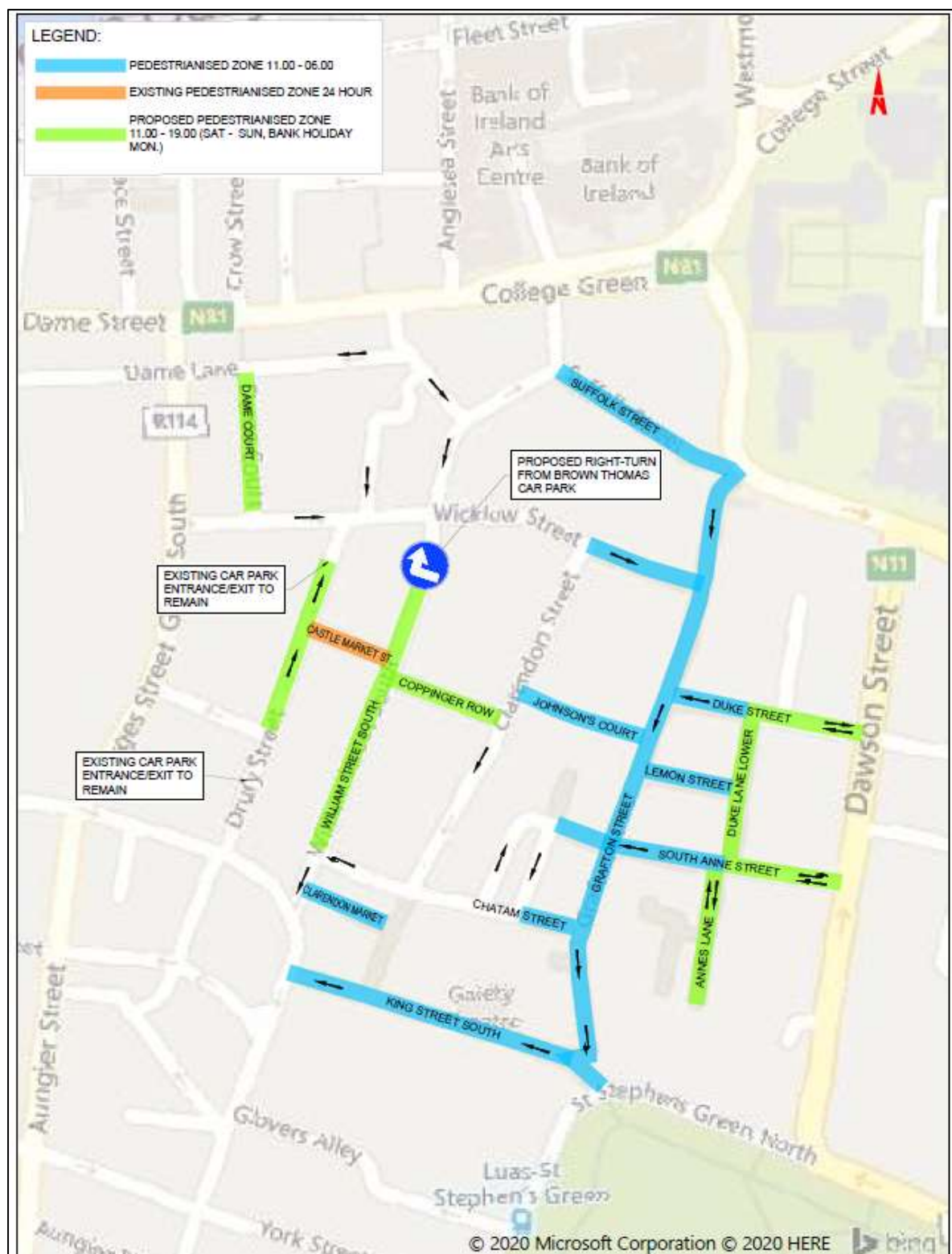


Figure 1 Pedestrian trial locations

## DATA COLLECTION

The main data collected during the trial was:

- Footfall figures on Grafton St
- Online public consultation survey
- Dublin Town retailer survey
- Dublin CAN be Heaven survey

## FOOTFALL FIGURES

The footfall counter on Grafton St recorded the following figures:

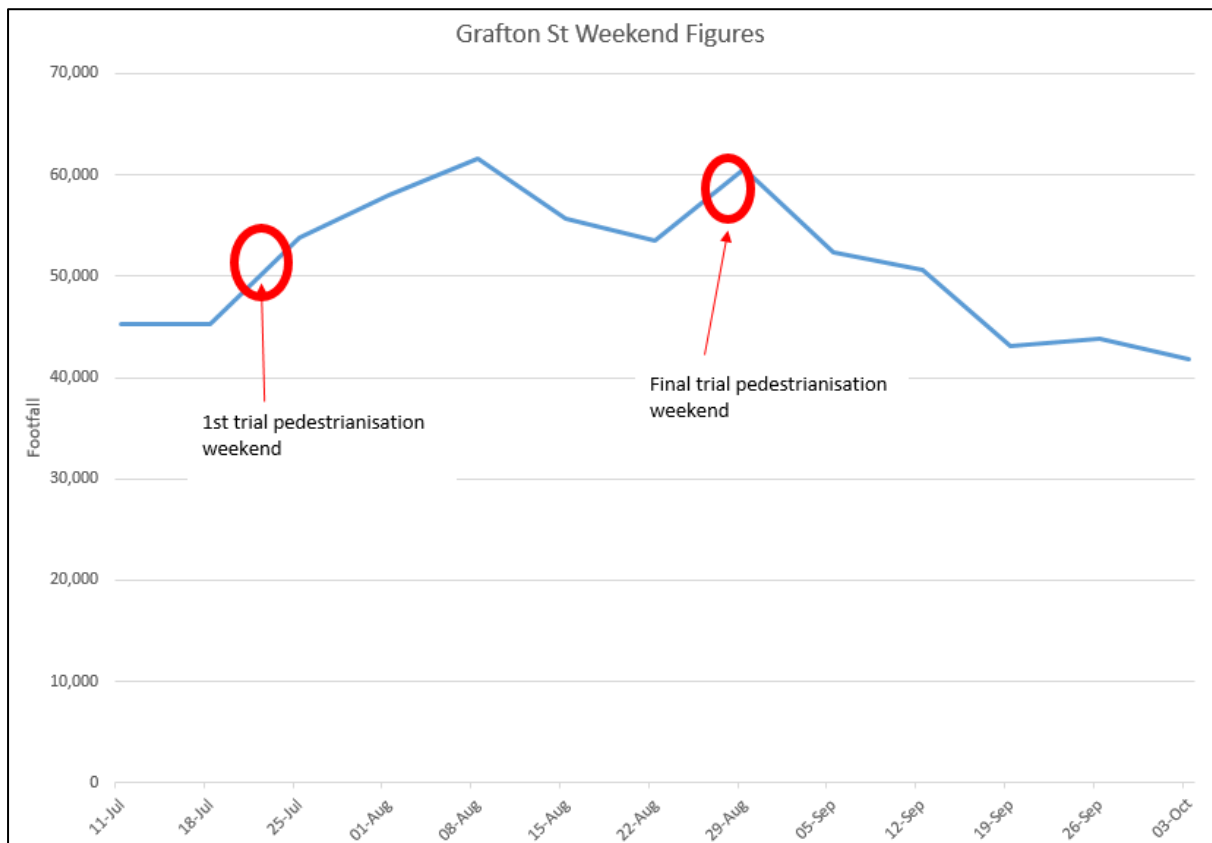


Figure 2 Grafton St footfall figures

The highest footfall figures on Grafton St since March and up to the middle of October occurred during the 6 weeks of the pedestrian trials. The counter is not on the streets that were pedestrianised for the trial but it gives an indication of footfall in the area. It should be noted that there are of course many different factors that would contribute to the footfall including weather and the level of restrictions.

## ONLINE PUBLIC CONSULTATION SURVEY

An online survey to gather feedback from the trial weekends was available on the Dublin City Council consultation hub <https://consultation.dublincity.ie/traffic-and-transport/feedback-on-grafton-street-area-pedestrianisation/>. 1,588 responses were received over the course of the trials.

Respondents were asked “How did the pedestrianisation of these streets affect your experience of the streets?” 96% felt the pedestrianisation improved their experience with just 3% having a negative experience.

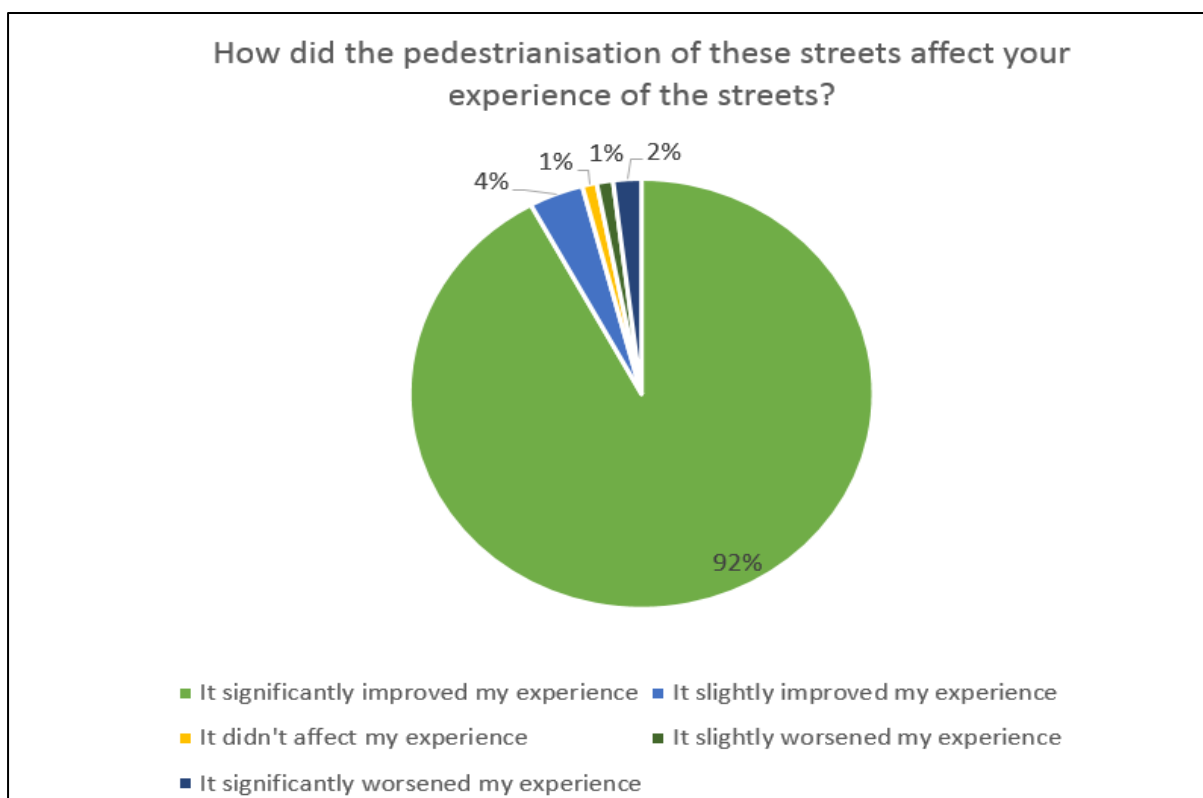


Figure 3 How did the pedestrianisation of these streets affect your experience of the streets?



95% of people were in favour of permanently pedestrianising these streets.

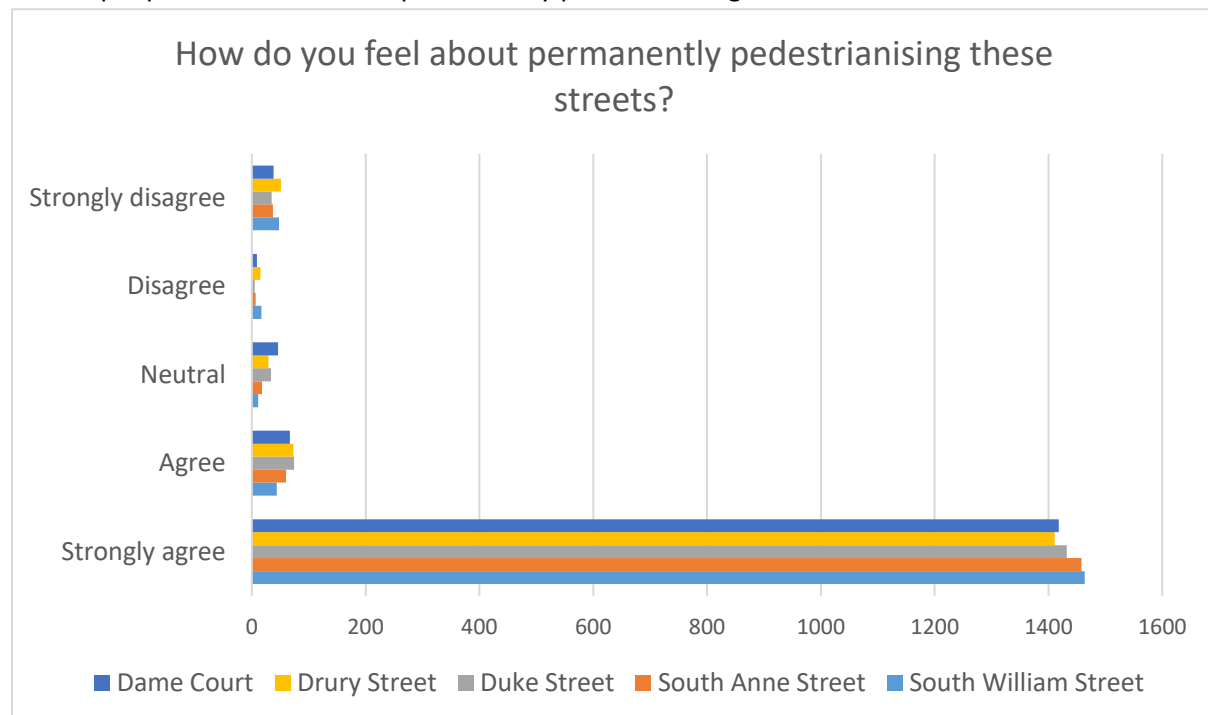


Figure 4 How do you feel about permanently pedestrianising these streets

The main impressions of the trial were positive with people citing the calmer atmosphere, the extra space to move around and spend more time in the area.

*Much more attractive prospect to browsing in the city. Normally I go straight to the store were I need something and go home as I don't normally enjoy walking around Dublin. The foot paths are cramped and cars everywhere. I browsed, discovered new shops and types of restaurants I hadn't noticed before because I wasn't squashing and jumping about other pedestrians*

*Relaxed people friendly atmosphere*

*The pedestrianisation trials made it much more pleasant to linger, and spend more time (and money) in the city centre.*

*It was wonderful to be able to explore this area without the constant rush of traffic. It provided a nice environment to spend time and explore*

*Great, felt much more welcoming*

*Worked very well and made the inner city much more accessible*

*Really fantastic addition to the city centre, space to enjoy the city freely on foot, enough space to social distance (rather than narrow footpaths), more space for people with mobility issues.*

*Very welcome change. It felt very safe especially with the issues with Coronavirus and seemed like a great way to keep distance and still enjoy the city. It would encourage me to use the city centre more.*

Figure 5 Quotes from the feedback



Just 3% of respondents had a negative impression of the trial with the removal of vehicles from the streets the main issue although the extensive traffic management (cones, signs) that was in place was also raised by people.

The majority of respondents who travelled into the city during the trial travelled by sustainable modes:

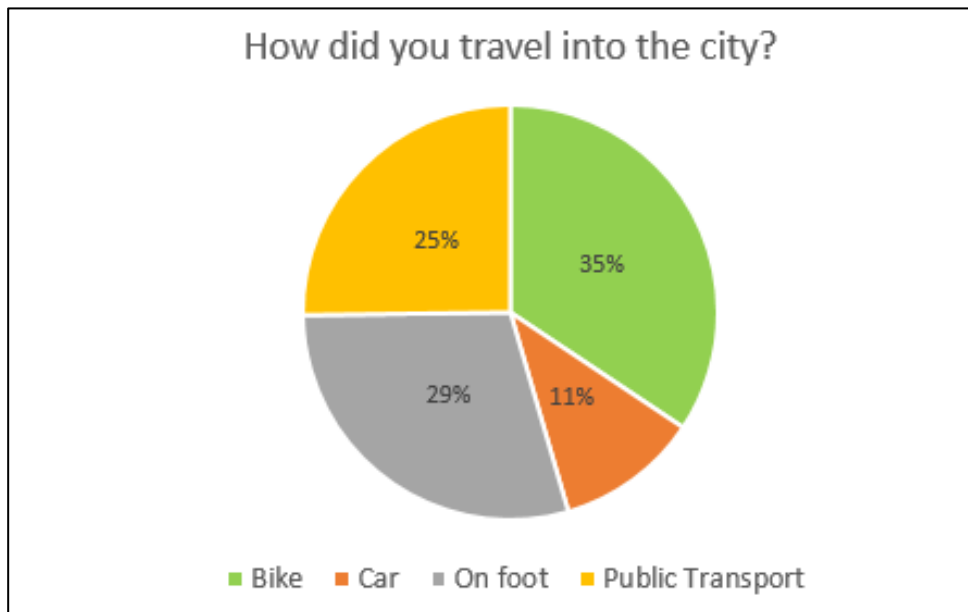


Figure 6 How did you travel into the city

Respondents were also asked what changes should be made to make the pedestrianisation of these streets a success. The most common responses were:

- Pedestrianise the street permanently
- More seating areas for cafes and restaurants
- More public seating areas
- More greenery
- Improve the road surface

One business shared with us the comparative weekly sales figures from the week they re-opened after lockdown. The impact of pedestrianisation was both obvious and significant with a 10% increase in performance from Week 29 to 30 which coincided with the first weekend of the pedestrianisation trial. Following the footpath extension in Week 33 - along with permission to use every day – there was an additional 10% lift in revenue with South Anne Street now performing at just 10.48% below the same week last year (versus over 30% down on weeks with no pedestrianisation or outdoor seating).



Figure 7 Weekly sales comparison from business

## DUBLINTOWN RETAILER SURVEY

DublinTown issued four separate surveys to members in the affected area during the trial. These surveys were issued electronically to their extensive mailing list, as collected by staff who visited business premises in the area after each of the trials and also specific feedback by email, phone and WhatsApp from member businesses. In total, this equates to over 300 individual responses over the period of the trial.

The key findings were as follows:

- The business community in the wider Grafton Street area (South Great George's Street to Dawson Street) are broadly supportive of increased pedestrianisation.
- When asked about their preferences as to whether the pedestrianisation scheme should be made permanent, the businesses replied in the fourth week's survey to the affirmative, with only 15.2% of respondents saying that they were firmly in the belief that the pedestrianisation should **be discontinued**. 49.4% wanted the pedestrianisation to **continue 7 days a week**, while 35.4% wanted the pedestrianisation to continue **weekends only**.
- There was especially good feedback and cooperation among businesses in and around South Anne Street, with special mention to the speed with which the footpaths were widened and the support given to businesses.
- Good work done by Dublin City Council in relation to streets like Suffolk Street was highlighted.

While this clearly demonstrates the positive attitudes towards the pedestrian trials, there were several specific issues identified as problematic by multiple businesses over several weeks. It was felt that addressing these issues would garner great support for future schemes and improve the trading environment.

The following points are from the DublinTown survey.

- **Traffic management** at the junction of Wicklow Street/Andrew Street/Exchequer Street/South William Street created some issues, specifically with backlogs due to vehicles leaving the Brown Thomas car park and turning right. There were questions as to how this would be managed long-term, e.g., will traffic lights be installed at the junction? Will a traffic

control box have to be installed on already narrow pavements as a result? There were also specific complaints about the presentation of the junction with the stop-go system and the appearance that the area was under construction.

- **Signage, information and aesthetics** – entry and exit points to the area were judged to be poorly signposted, the presence of flat-bed trucks and vans at key points as traffic control measures, stop-go traffic controls, dirty traffic and construction signage did not provide a suitable welcome to the area, nor did it explain the purpose of pedestrianisation or communicate that this was being done to make the area more attractive. Specifically, the South William Street junction with Exchequer Street and the area at Drury Street (Fade Street end) were mentioned.

If the pedestrianisation were to be made permanent, significant improvements and investment would need to be made for proper signage and aesthetically pleasing road closure infrastructure - such as the planter pots used on Wicklow Street or Suffolk Street. It is also crucial that signage is clear and understandable, for example, during the trials it was believed that it was not effectively communicated that car parks were still accessible or what the best route to access them was.

- **Loading bays and bollards** – Loading was cited as a significant concern by several businesses. It was not made clear where loading was expected to take place, with several loading bays cordoned off. Also, loading bays that were not allocated for outdoor seating were on occasion cordoned off from early morning or were occupied for large portions of the day by contractor vehicles working for the City Council. The general issue of lack of enforcement in relation to loading (vehicles, especially contractor's vans staying for several hours at a time on double yellow lines or in loading bays) was highlighted as an ongoing issue that needed to be addressed. It was suggested that areas given over to seating should be available for loading up until 11am each day, as these spaces tend not to be used for seating prior to this time. Also, it was suggested that the loss of some loading bays did increase congestion of loading in certain areas and lead to an increase in delivery vehicles double parking etc.
- **Car parks** – there were specific issues raised by a small number of businesses about the lack of clarity in messaging and signage for the car parks in the area. It was not made clear that these remained open and were accessible and what the preferred access routes were. Messaging made it appear that entire streets were closed permanently.
- **Outdoor seating** – there was feedback from individual businesses about a level of confusion about which businesses could have outdoor seating and where. There are anecdotal reports that businesses were told that certain businesses were not allowed seating or that other agencies had objected to certain areas having seating. Clarity on these issues going forward is required.
- **Bins on South William Street** – there were requests for more litter bins in the South William Street area, specifically the "Big Belly" or segregated waste bins.

- ***Dishing on footpaths on Drury Street*** – businesses asked for better footpath dishing on Drury Street to allow for better wheelchair and buggy access.
- ***General condition of road and footpath surfaces*** – the poor quality of the road and footpath surfaces in several streets was cited by numerous businesses across all areas where there were pedestrian trials as well as the footpaths on Wicklow Street. There was, however, strongly positive feedback in relation to the widened footpaths on South Anne Street and positivity about the reception that the collaborative business approach received from Dublin City Council.
- ***Additional, permanent, public seating*** such as more public benches was requested in the wider Grafton Street area.
- There was also interest from businesses from the north side of the city asking for similar trials to be carried out there. DublinTown has suggested Lower Mary Street as one such possible location.

#### DUBLIN CAN BE HEAVEN SURVEY

‘Dublin CAN be Heaven’ was created in July 2020. It represents approximately 65 businesses in the Dublin 2 area. The purpose of the group is to gather opinions from its members and communicate the demands of the group to DCC. A survey was carried out among these businesses and had 46 responses. The key findings from that survey as provided to Dublin City Council were:

- 29% felt the trial had a negative effect on business, 58% felt the trials made no difference and 18% reported that it had improved their business.
- The businesses surveyed estimated that 72% of their customers came by car, 22% by public transport and 13% by bike or on foot. They believed that that younger people, possibly travelling into the city on foot or by bike improved the turnover of the cafés and bars in the area, but didn’t make any difference to other retailers.
- 54% of the respondents to that survey believed that pedestrianisation should be reconsidered after DCC’s in-depth effective consultation with local businesses takes place, 17% believed it should be made permanent, 11% discontinued and 17% suspended until the end of the pandemic.
- 91% of respondents felt that they had not been properly consulted on the trials.

‘Dublin CAN be Heaven’ demand of DCC that:

- DCC consults all of its ratepayers in a manner that is fair and verifiable on any decisions that will have consequences for their businesses.
- That the Drive In Dublin scheme, initiated by one of our members be subsidised by DCC so it can be expanded.

They also suggest that:

- DCC offers 2 hours free on-street parking on Saturday and Sunday afternoons.
- DCC offers 2 hours free on-street parking from 11am to 4pm on weekdays.
- DCC gives serious consideration to making some of the thousands of civil and public service car parking spaces, many now unused due to remote working, available to the public (for instance between 11 am and 4 pm) at an attractive rate.

According to their submission “Dublin CAN be Heaven is a small group, it is representative of the types of businesses that make Dublin unique, mostly small, specialised, owner run enterprises. We are not motivated by any political objective other than our desire to have a say in decisions that have an enormous bearing on our businesses.

*In order for DCC to get majority support for pedestrianisation, meaningful consultation will have to take place. We believe that discouraging car borne shoppers will sound the death knell for many of our businesses. Facilitating cars should not rule out well planned pedestrianisation. Imposing a plan for pedestrianisation that results in the collateral damage of business closures is just not acceptable.”*

## ANNE STREET SOUTH

### DESCRIPTION

Anne Street South was pedestrianised from the junction of Dawson Street to Grafton Street from 11am each weekend during the trials. Prior to the start of the trial and following consultation with local businesses the on street parking was removed and the area blocked off with bollards.



Figure 8 South Anne St at the start of the pedestrian trails

### FINDINGS

- From the first weekend of the trials the street and the areas for seating were well used.



- Steady pedestrian flow through the street during the day.
- Use of outdoor seating after 8pm especially on a Sunday was low.
- Some deliveries and owners of carpark spaces on Anne's Lane looked to gain access during the trial.



Figure 9 South Anne St during the first trial weekend

During the trial the businesses on the street came together and requested a temporary footpath extension, similar to the bus stop footpath extensions that had been carried out, so that they could provide outdoor seating seven days a week. The location was assessed and deemed suitable and a temporary footpath extension was completed within 3 days.



Figure 10 Completed build out on South Anne St

This has allowed outdoor seating to be used all week. Feedback from the retailers on the street has been extremely positive.



Figure 11 Seven day outdoor seating on South Anne St





Figure 12 South Anne St with planting and covers late September 2020

## RECOMMENDATION

The footpath extension has provided space for businesses for outdoor seating seven days a week. Feedback from the street has been very positive and there have been a number of requests for pedestrianising it permanently. DCC would support the pedestrianisation of this street.

Next steps:

- A short public consultation will be set up to give businesses of South Anne St and Anne's Lane the opportunity to raise concerns or make suggestions on the proposal to pedestrianise South Anne St daily from 11am with deliveries allowed between 6am – 11am. A disabled parking space to be relocated to Molesworth St.

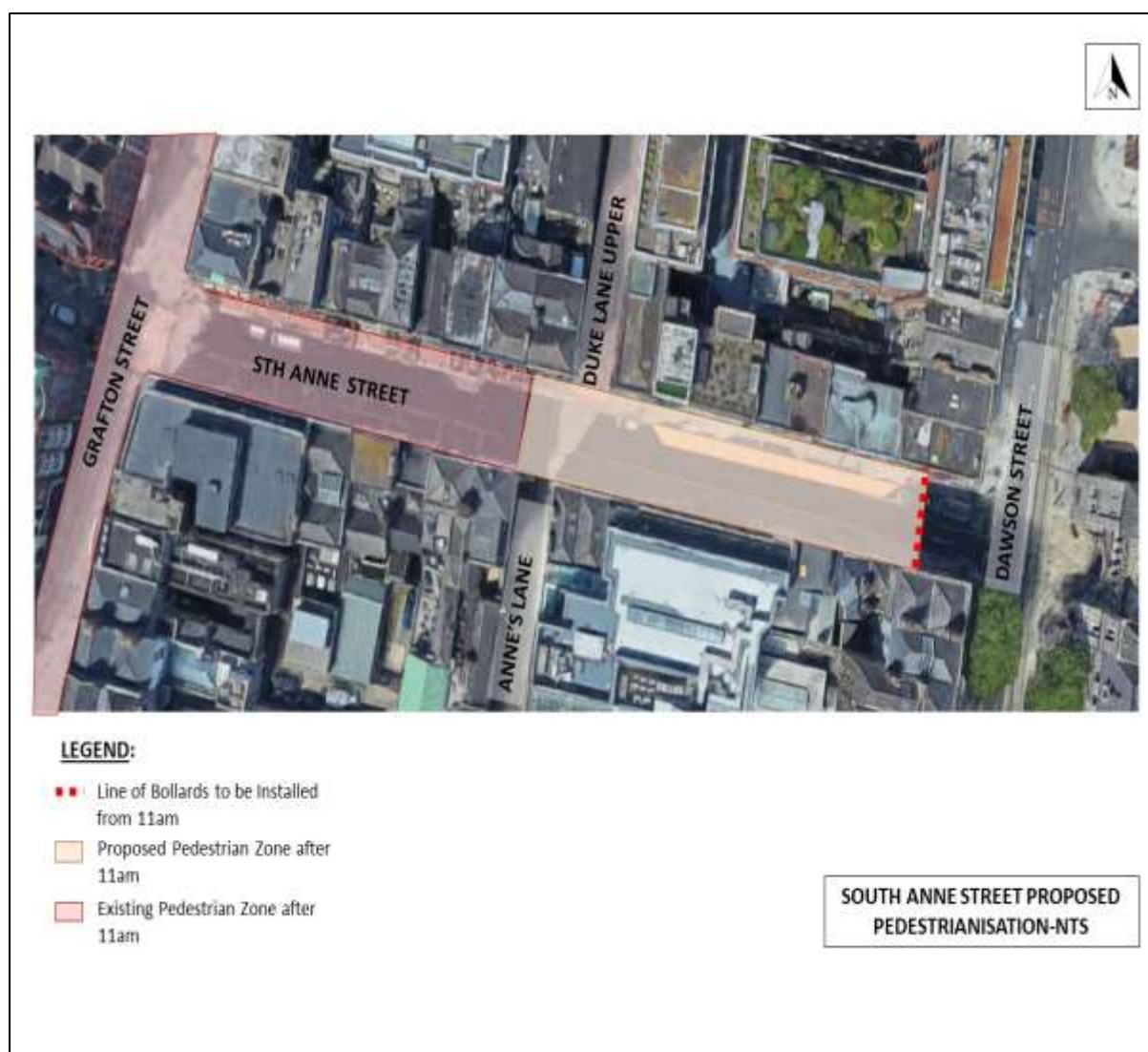


Figure 13 South Anne St proposed layout

## DUKE ST

### DESCRIPTION

Duke St was pedestrianised from the junction of Dawson St to Grafton St from 11am each weekend. At present it is already pedestrianised daily after 11pm from Duke Lane Lower to Grafton St.

### FINDINGS

- The usage of Duke St was much lower than the other pedestrianised streets with just one business using the street for outdoor seating. However since the time of the trials other businesses that were not open during the trials had reopened prior to Level 5 being introduced.
- Street was very quiet after 6pm and the allocated seating for the trial was not in use after 6pm. Again this may have changed since due to the reopening of other businesses.
- Multiple requests for access to a private carpark on Duke St during the trial as well as deliveries.



Figure 14 Duke St pedestrianisation

### RECOMMENDATION

It is not intended to proceed with pedestrianisation of the street at this time as during the week there is a private carpark in operation, a delivery yard that requires access and it is also the access for a large site currently under construction. At the time of trial there were a number of premises that were not open and so the trial did not reflect the full usage of the street. It is proposed to engage with businesses on the street to determine if a temporary footpath extension to allow for space for outdoor dining, similar to South Anne St layout is something that businesses would like to see and use.

As an immediate measure the road will be resurfaced.



## SOUTH WILLIAM ST

### DESCRIPTION

South William St was pedestrianised from the Brown Thomas carpark exit to Chatham Row. The vehicles exiting from the carpark were directed left towards the junction with Exchequer St which was under traffic management control using multiple Stop/Go operators. There are two private carparks on South William St which also had to be facilitated. Outdoor street furniture licences were granted to Sole Seafood & Grill and Platform 61. Figure 15 shows the locations of carparks in the South William and Drury St areas where access needed to be maintained.

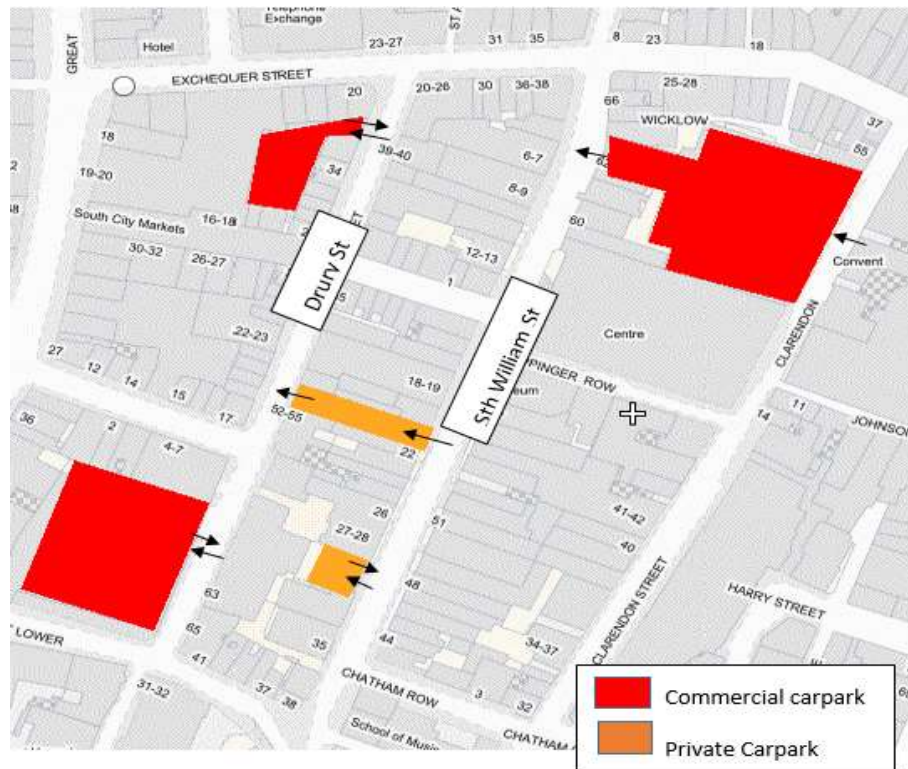


Figure 15 Carparks in the South William St and Drury St areas

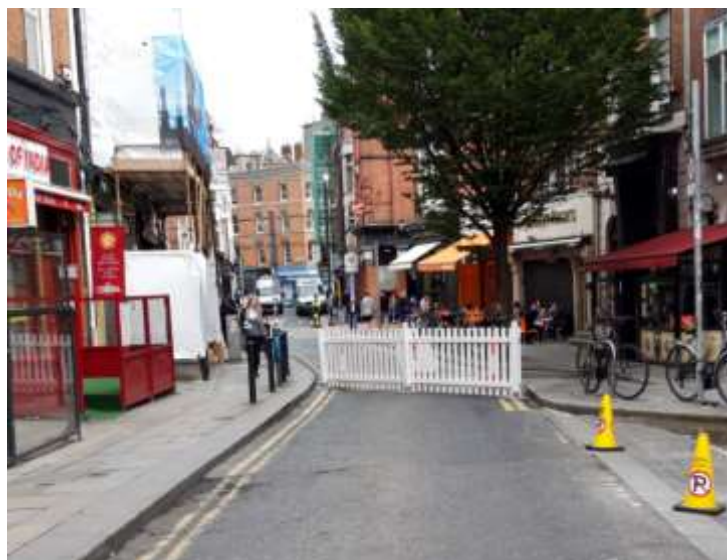


Figure 16 South William St start of pedestrian area



Figure 17 South William St pedestrianised during the trial

## FINDINGS

- Steady flow of pedestrians throughout the day and evening.
- Outdoor seating areas generally well used throughout the day and evening.
- Reversal of existing carpark traffic required 3 – 4 traffic management operatives to manage the Exchequer St junction.

The main issue on South William Street and what causes problems with trying to pedestrianise it on a more permanent basis are the current carpark arrangements and the necessity for allowing car park traffic to exit via South William Street.

DCC have made met with the owners of the Brown Thomas carpark to enter discussions on a number of options including if it is possible to reverse the flow of traffic so that traffic enters from South William St and exits via Clarendon Street as well as entry and exit on Clarendon Street only. This would then allow for the majority of the street to be pedestrianised. Discussions would also be required with the owners and users of the two private car parks.

Following discussions with the Brown Thomas carpark they have stated that they cannot alter their entry and exits as proposed as this would present “*insurmountable structural difficulties that cannot be overcome.*” In addition they have pointed out that the trials caused considerable congestion internally to the car park and that traffic to the car park dropped by 30% from the first week of the trial.

As the change in exit arrangements at the Brown Thomas Car park appears not to be an option at present the options therefore would be:-

1. Works on the Exchequer St junction to facilitate carpark traffic without the need for traffic management operatives. However these options will take some time to implement even if a feasible proposal can be arrived at.
2. Close South William Street at the junction with Exchequer Street from 11:00 and leave the Brown Thomas carpark exit as it is at present which would substantially reduce traffic in South William Street to only exiting car park traffic after 11:00.

## RECOMMENDATION

DCC believe providing a traffic free South William St is an objective which needs to be worked towards but are also cognizant of the issues which need to be addressed before this objective can be fully met.

Therefore the recommendation is to change the access to the street from the Exchequer Street/Wicklow Street junction to be from between 6am and 11am for deliveries only and after 11:00 to close South William Street at its junction with Exchequer Street to through traffic. Post 11am the only vehicles using the street will be those exiting from the Brown Thomas carpark and the section from Brown Thomas Car park to Exchequer Street will be traffic free. This will remove through traffic from the street, so reducing the number of and type of vehicles using South William Street.

We will continue to investigate if any more suitable automatic traffic management measure can be introduced at the Exchequer Street / South William Street junction to allow the traffic from Brown Thomas car park to exit in this manner.

Next steps:

- The roadway is to be resurfaced mid-November by Road Maintenance.
- The line of bollards that provide additional pedestrian space and the area currently being used for outdoor seating is to be replaced by a temporary footpath extension, similar to South Anne St.
- Removal of any redundant street clutter (poles, signs etc.)
- Consultation on the above proposal will be commenced.



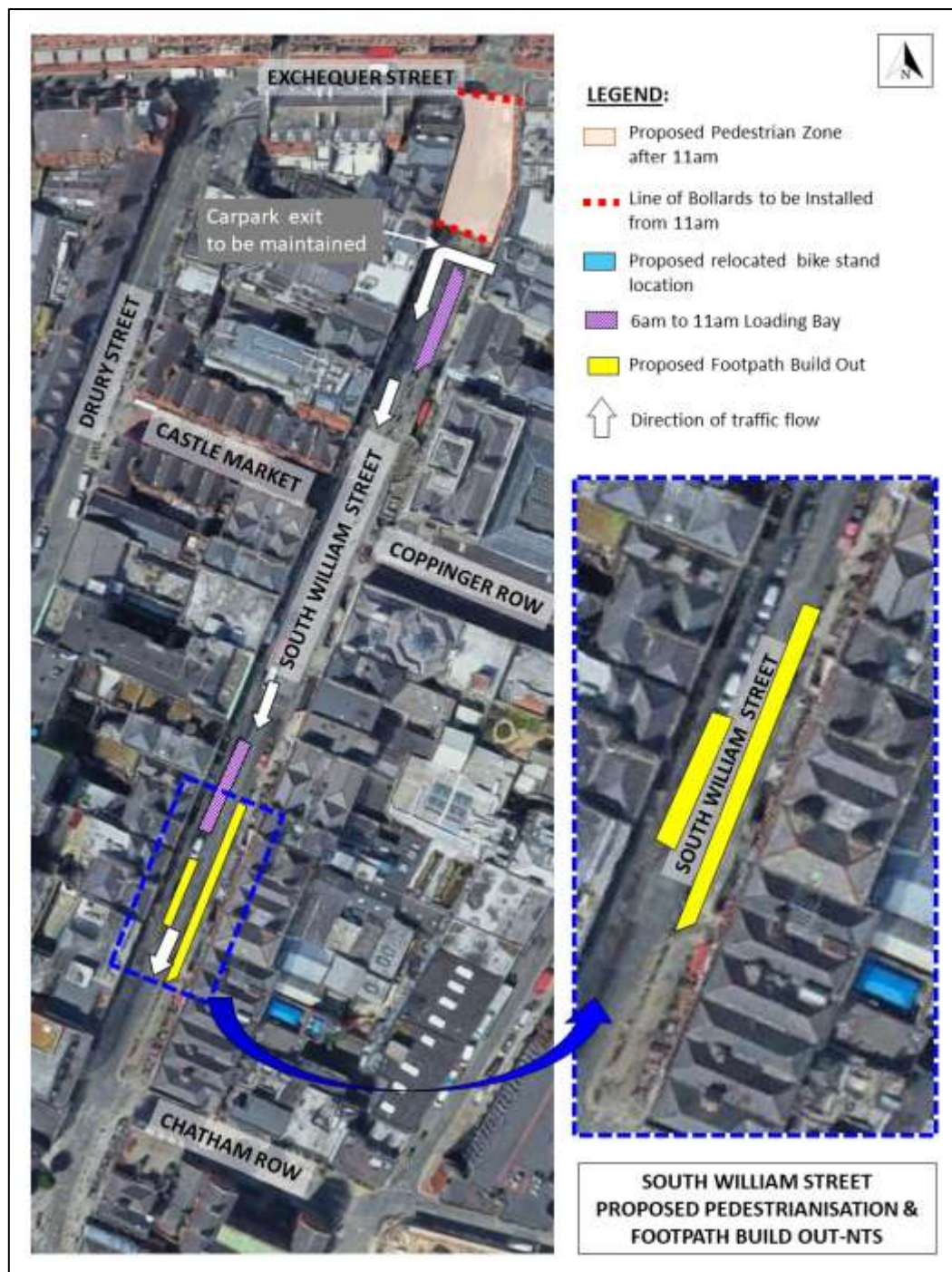


Figure 18 South William St proposed layout

## DRURY ST

### DESCRIPTION

Drury St was pedestrianised from the Drury St underground carpark exit to Fade St. Two way traffic between Exchequer St and the carpark was facilitated and the junction was controlled by traffic management operatives. There was also a private carpark which exited onto Drury St which had to be facilitated.



Figure 19 Drury St pedestrianisation

### FINDINGS

- Outdoor seating busy all day and the street busy with people.
- Lower part of the street from Castle Market to the underground carpark was better used.
- Vehicles exiting from a private carpark onto Drury St were facilitated.
- Negative feedback on the vehicle parked across the top of the street (AGS security requirement).

## RECOMMENDATION

DCC recommends pedestrianising Drury St from the Drury St underground carpark to Castle Market and allowing for 2 way traffic between Exchequer St and the Drury St underground carpark. Deliveries will be facilitated between 6am and 11am and all on street car parking is proposed to be removed. A period of consultation on this proposal will commence in November.

Next steps:

- The roadway is to be resurfaced mid-November.
- The line of bollards that provide additional pedestrian space is to be replaced by a temporary footpath extension, similar to South Anne St.
- Removal of any redundant street clutter (poles, signs etc.)
- The existing cycle stands will be relocated to where the current on street parking is. This is to allow for the temporary footpath buildout to be extended to allow for more outdoor dining space.
- The existing disabled bays will be relocated on Drury St opposite the Drury St carpark



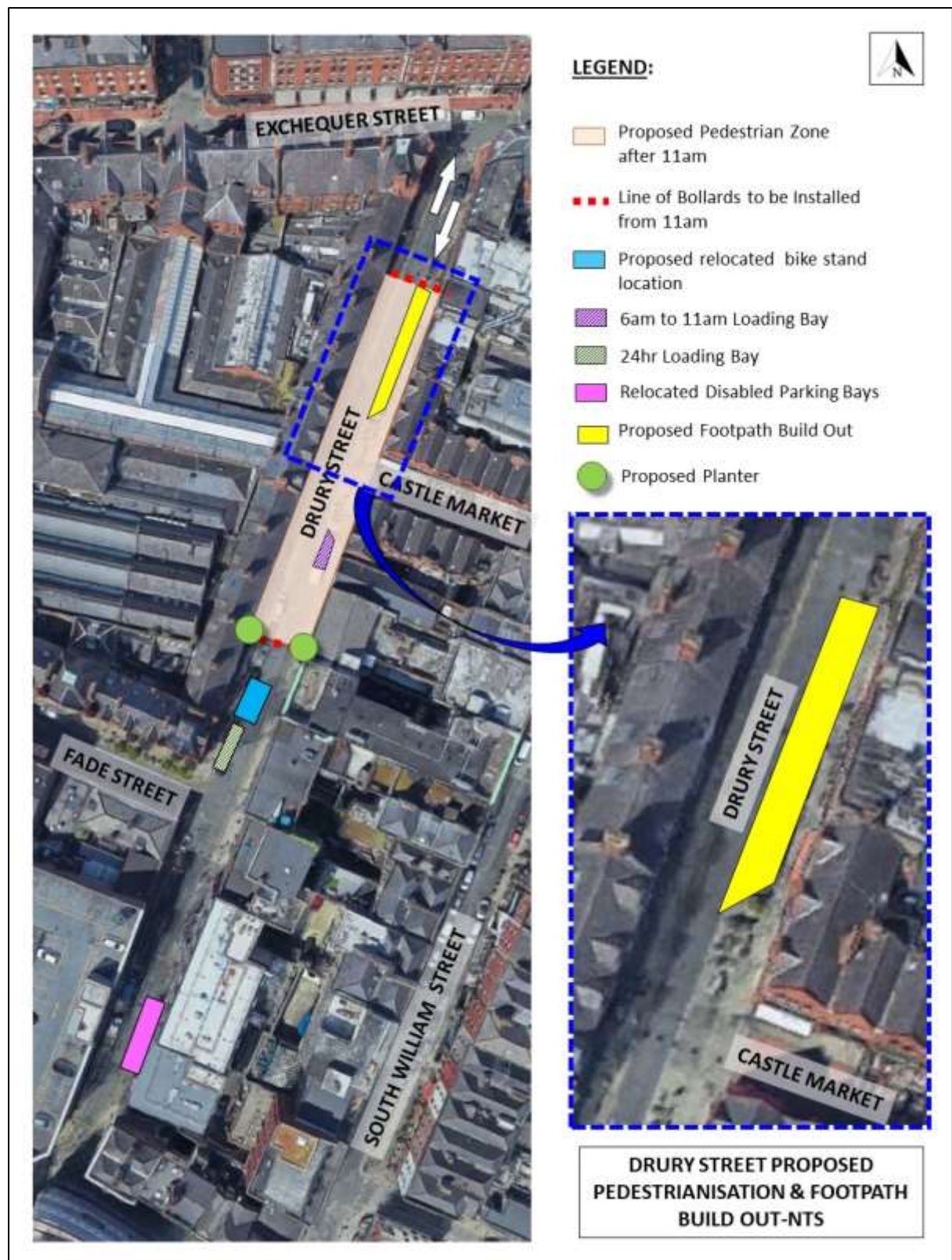


Figure 20 Drury St layout

## DAME COURT

### DESCRIPTION

Dame Court was pedestrianised from the junction with Exchequer St.

### FINDINGS

- Dame Court is dominated by vehicles normally and is not too pedestrian friendly



Figure 21 Dame Court early Jul 20

- During the weekends of the trials there was a much calmer and more pleasant use of the space



Figure 22 Dame Court during the trial



- Due to the success of the outdoor seating area all parking on the eastern side of the street was removed mid trial and a 7 day outdoor street furniture licences was granted.
- The lower half of the street is already pedestrianised from 7pm. However pre Covid there was an issue with vehicles entering that zone and then exiting via Dame Lane which would often have had a large number of people.

## RECOMMENDATION

DCC recommend pedestrianising Dame Court after 11am daily and a period of consultation on this proposal will commence in November.

Next steps:

- The roadway is to be resurfaced mid-November

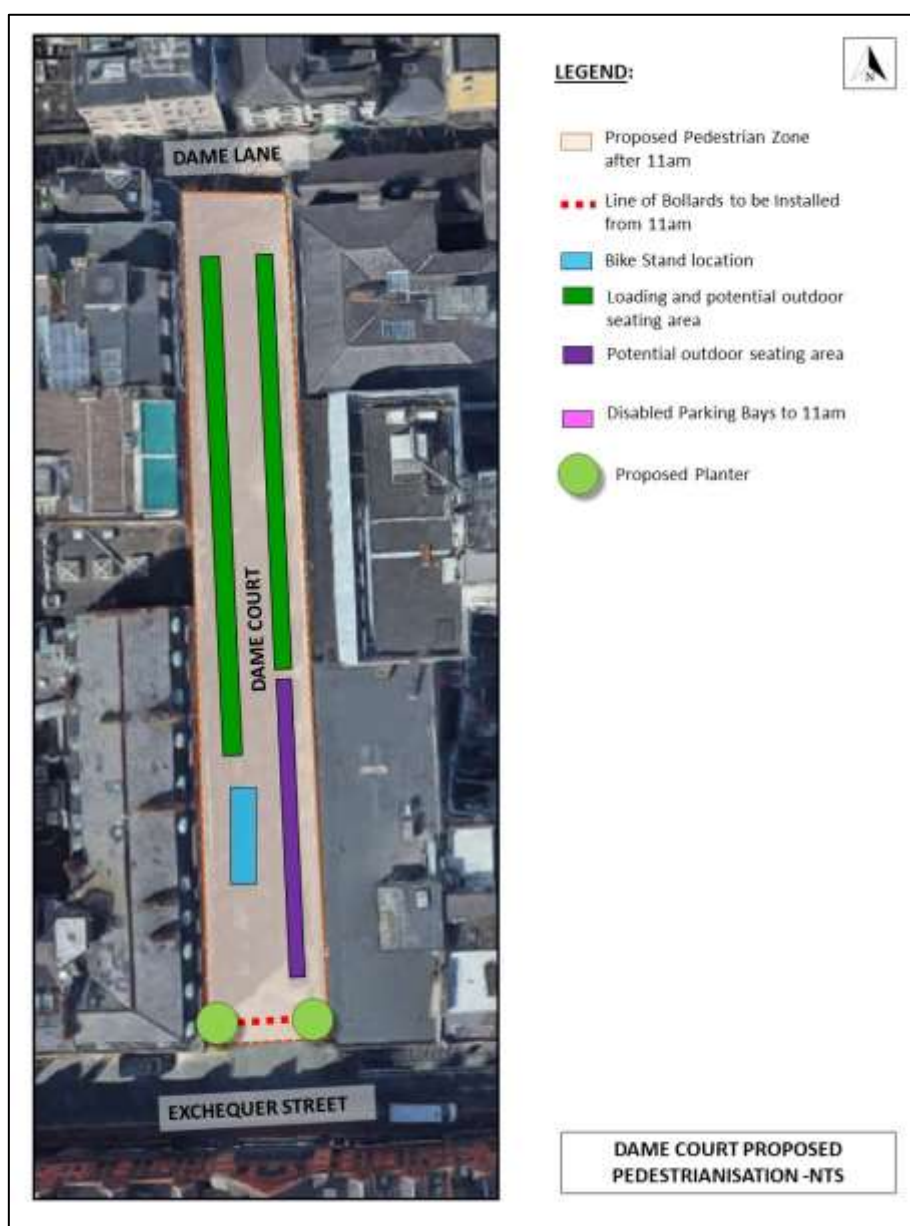


Figure 23 Dame Court proposed layout

## ON STREET CAR PARKING

Pre Covid, in March 2020 there were 34 on street car parking spaces on these streets and this has now been reduced to 9 spaces left of these streets, in order to allow for an increase in outdoor areas and space for pedestrians.

Access to the existing car parks will remain which provide 2,328 spaces in that area.

There were 4 disabled bays on these streets. The three spaces on Drury St will remain but be relocated. The disabled bay on South Anne St will be relocated to Molesworth St.

## SUMMARY OF PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

The proposed next steps are summarised as following:

Street	Recommended for Pedestrianisation?	Measures	Timeline
<b>Anne St South</b>	Yes	Pedestrianise  Relocate Disabled bay to Molesworth St	Following consultation period
<b>Duke St</b>	No	Resurface  Undertake consultation with businesses	16th - 19th Nov  November
<b>Dame Court</b>	Yes	Resurface  Provide build out on eastern side  Pedestrianise from Exchequer St junction	8th - 10th Nov  Late November  Following consultation period
<b>Drury St</b>	Yes	Resurface  Provide footpath buildout on eastern side  Pedestrianisation from underground carpark to Castle St	10th/11th and 15th /16th Nov  Late November  Following consultation period
<b>South William St</b>	Yes	Resurface  Buildouts to replace current line of bollards on both sides	16th - 19th Nov  Late November



		<p>Pedestrianise from Exchequer St to Carpark exit, carpark traffic only from 11am</p>	<p>Following consultation period</p>
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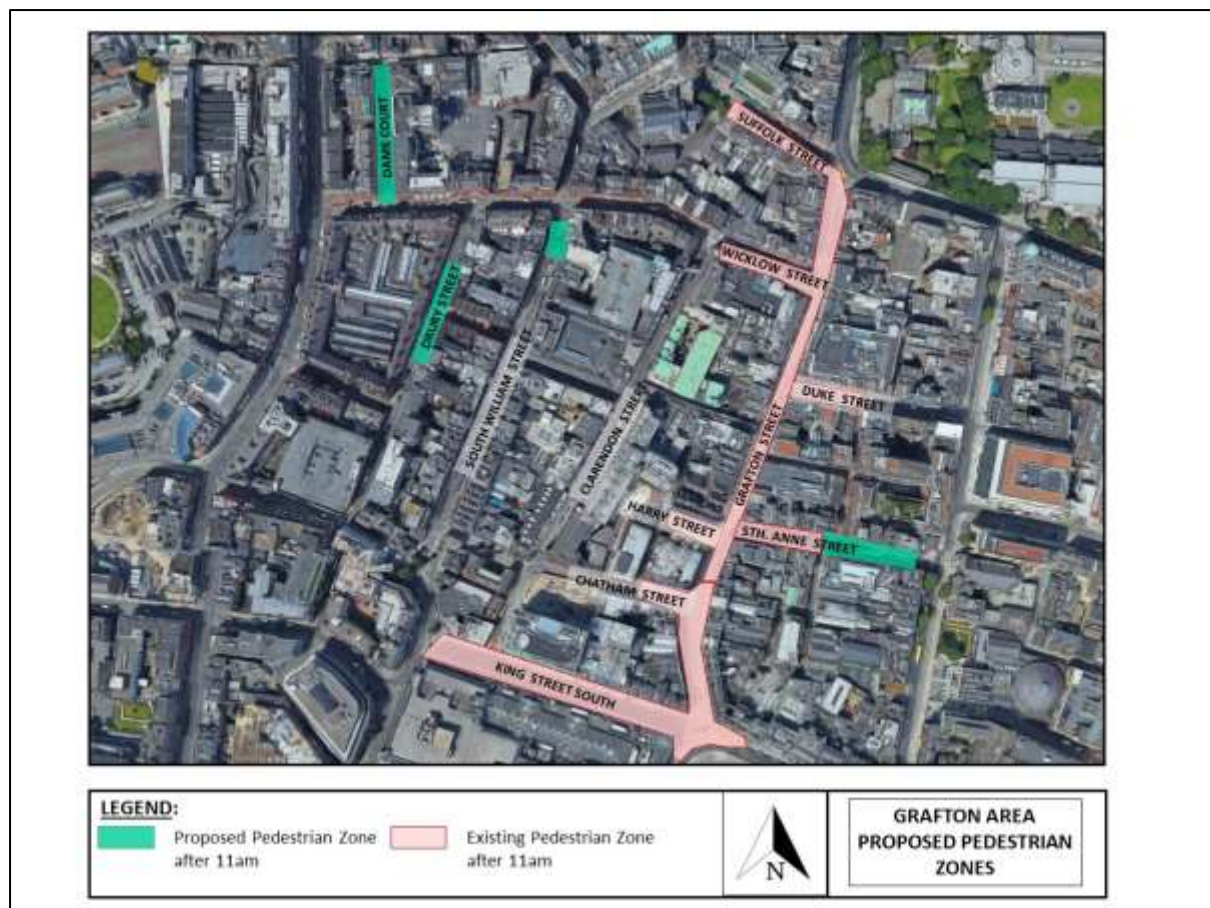


Figure 24 Current and proposed pedestrian areas