FAQs

What are 'play streets'?

The term 'play street' originally referred to inner-city streets, which, from the 1930s onwards, were designated by the authorities to serve as informal playgrounds during certain hours. See London Play website for more history on free play on streets and what they are doing now to redevelop play streets in the capital.

Westminster are re-introducing play streets which designates a street as a playground during certain times of the day from April to September every year.

Why was Northumberland Place chosen as a Play Street?

This location was selected as a result of a resident submitting a request to the City Council to pilot the location as a play street. This request was also supported by one of the then elected Ward Councillors for Bayswater, along with the then Head of Sports, Leisure & Active Communities, Eugene Minogue, the latter of who completed the pre and post Covid-19 engagement of the play street.

In response to the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, the Department for Transport (DfT) amended statutory legislation allowing local authorities to implement temporary social distancing and pedestrian-friendly measures under a simplified Traffic Order process. The City Council utilised this legislation to quickly roll out a number of play streets and school streets to support residents during the pandemic.

Consultation was subsequently instigated by the Westminster City Council Highways Team taking the form initially of a pre-consultation exercise which was then followed by the statutory Traffic Order consultation.

The location is also near two local primary schools and supports a continuation of access to public space in line with Westminster's ActiveWestminster Strategy, in addition to the Open Spaces and Biodiversity Strategy.

What are the proposed restrictions in place?

The play street scheme proposes to prohibit through vehicles from Northumberland Place between 3.00pm and sunset Monday to Friday and between 10.00am and sunset on Saturdays and Sundays. This would apply between April and September, except for access. During the Autumn and Winter, the traffic would have priority.

Access to properties, off-street parking and any available parking bay on Northumberland Place would be retained for all road users, regardless of residency. The play street restricts through-traffic during its restricted hours.

Will vehicles be able to leave the street during the restricted hours?

Yes, however, all vehicles will need to observe the speed limit and drive with care and attention as there may be children playing in the area.

Why is Northumberland Place suggested as a one-way in the second proposal?

The resulting reduction in traffic would make the play street safer for children and families. The City Council would monitor the scheme once implemented and may consider further traffic calming measures if required.

How will the one-way be enforced?

Residents can report illegal driving, such as driving the wrong way down a one-way street, by using the following form on the City Council's website: https://www.westminster.gov.uk/traffic-contraventions-and-illegal-driving.

How will speeding be enforced?

At present, the police are the only body which has powers to enforce speeding. This can be reported by following this link: https://www.met.police.uk/ro/report/rti/rti-beta-2.1/report-a-road-traffic-incident/

Will this increase traffic in surrounding roads?

The City Council considers the number of vehicles displaced into neighbouring roads during the hours of operation would be relatively small. The City Council would continue to monitor the area.

Can neighbouring streets use the play street?

Yes, the play street will be accessible for all families and children who wish to benefit from an environment in which facilitates free play.

Is it safe for children to be playing in the street?

Any children should be accompanied and supervised by an adult whilst on the public highway.

Can loading and unloading take place during controlled hours?

Drivers can wait in any pay-by-phone, residents' or shared-use parking place (including an electric vehicle residents' parking place) without the requirement to display a permit, pay the parking charge or be connected to a charging facility for up to 20 minutes. This is allowed for the purposes of loading and unloading goods or items to / from a property adjacent to that parking bay, provided the goods are too heavy or bulky to be carried from a parking bay for which the driver has a valid permit or has paid the relevant charge.

Vehicles are also permitted to load and unload on both single and double yellow lines during their controlled hours for up to 20 minutes during the controlled hours (40 minutes for HGVs) and for an unlimited duration outside of those times, provided that there are no additional kerb markings and sign plates in place (where relevant) indicating that loading restrictions also apply. In all cases the loading / unloading activity should be apparent.

If there is no suitable kerbside space for a tradesperson to park, such as in a pay-by-phone bay during controlled hours or in a residents' parking place outside of its controlled hours, they are also permitted to stop to load and unload in any pay-by-phone, residents' or shared-use parking place (including an electric vehicle residents' parking place) or on yellow lines. After unloading, they would then be required to move their vehicle to the nearest appropriate available parking place.

In addition, tradespeople can also purchase a trade parking permit. This permit allows the tradesperson to park in a residents' parking place between 8.00am and 5.30pm or in a pay-by-phone parking place or shared-use parking place between 8.30am and 6.30pm anywhere in the Controlled Parking Zone. Further details are available on the City Council's web site at: https://www.westminster.gov.uk/trade-parking-permits.

Are cyclists allowed in the play street during its restricted hours?
The proposed restrictions are to prohibit all through vehicles, **including bicycles**, from Northumberland Place between 3.00pm and sunset on Mondays to Fridays and between 10.00am and sunset on Saturdays and Sundays, between April and September, except for access. During the Autumn and Winter, the traffic would have priority.

Access to properties, off-street parking and any available parking bay on Northumberland Place is still retained for all road users, regardless of residency. The restriction of bicycles is to keep all access to a minimum to make it safer for children and families to play.

What if I need to use my car?

It is only 'through traffic' which is banned. Residents or visitors can drive in or out of the street during the sessions – provided they drive at walking pace. Residents can leave their cars parked outside their properties during the sessions, if they choose.

Will it be noisy?

Play streets are not the same as a street party and do not normally entail amplified noise. The sound of cars will be replaced by the music of laughter and chattering. Most people will find this a pleasant change. But if they don't, you could gently remind them that it is only for a few hours and again, it is children making the compromises in favour of the traffic for the rest of the time.

How do I know when 'sunset' is?

Sunset is defined as when the sun has disappeared over the horizon and relies on residents to use their judgement.

I live here and I am disabled, will there be an exception?

Access to properties, off-street parking and any available parking bay on Northumberland Place is still retained for all road users, during the hours of operation. The road is only closed to 'through traffic'.

What are Street Makers?

Street Makers are initially deployed by Westminster City Council to marshal the play street activities as well as highlight the newly defined play street and continued compliance, This is so the community can continue to run sessions and have ownership of the play street after the initial activation period.

How do I find out more about Westminster City Council ActiveStreets Programme?

The Active Streets Programme is a key strategy commitment of our ActiveWestminster strategy – "Activate Your City, Lives and Neighbourhoods".

This strategy is in addition to our Open Spaces and Biodiversity strategy and consists of three types of Active Street which as a Westminster resident or local school, you can apply to host.

The programme is designed to open up residential streets across Westminster for play, creating space for physical activity right on your doorstep and increasing the number of people who know their neighbours. Play Streets, regular Street Play and School Streets sessions enable active travel and improve air quality. Further details can be found in:
https://active.westminster.gov.uk/activestreets/

I want to nominate a street for a play street, how do I do that?
Please submit your expression of interest to nominate a street via https://active.westminster.gov.uk/activestreets/ and find out more about what the process and consultation involves.