

## STANDING ORDER NO. 83(A)      Wandsworth Borough Council

(Action on behalf of the Executive in relation to  
the Strategic Planning & Transportation remit)

REF NO. SPT 133

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**SUBJECT: Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) Scheme Review**

### **ACTION PROPOSED:**

To approve:

- The suspension of all 7 experimental LTNs with immediate effect subject to the physical works below;
- That officers commence the physical works for removal of the schemes for the suspension period with immediate effect;
- That officers continue to monitor the network and gather data at and around the suspended LTN areas, including along the A24, in order to help the Council better understand the impact of the TfL measures on our entire road network and to support the provision to TfL of accurate and timely feedback in that respect;
- That officers continue to monitor the network generally and to gather relevant data to better understand the continuing impact of Covid-19 on transport behaviours, including any movement or otherwise from the current high propensity for the use of the car relative to public transport and including cycling statistics; and
- That officers bring a full review report to the November meeting of the Strategic Planning and Transportation OSC and Executive.

*The Chairman of the relevant OSC has agreed that the decision is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred and this document fulfills the requirement of a published notice to that effect (Regulation 11(2) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 refers)*

*(see back)*

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Officer acting under delegated authority

Name:

Paul Chadwick

*(Chief Executive, Director or appointed officer)*

Designation:

Director of Environment

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Certificate of the Director of Resources that the expenditure involved (if any) can be met from approved estimates or from adjustment within approved estimates and that any procurement involved is in compliance with the Council's Procurement Regulations.

for Director of Resources

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Certificate of the Chief Executive that the proposed action in relation to any matter of Executive business either does not admit of delay (and is consistent with Council policy, programmes and budgets) or is routine under the provisions of Standing Order No. 83(A).

for Chief Executive

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Certificate that the Cabinet Member has been consulted upon the action proposed:

(Cabinet Member)  
(Leader)  
(Deputy Leader)

----- Signature

----- Date

<p>Initials of Committee Secretary:</p> <p><b>TS: 11/09/20</b></p>	<p>Received from Cabinet Member:</p> <p>Cllr Locker</p>	<p>Copies sent to relevant OSC Chairman and Opposition Speaker on:</p> <p>Cllr McDermott Cllr Loveland Cllr Rigby</p>	<p>Copies sent to the following officers:</p> <p>ECS Business Support Sharon McGuinness Marcus Green Tim Pulham Nick O'Donnell Alex Moylan Henry Cheung</p>
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## BACKGROUND

### Introduction

Following the mounting concerns and feedback from emergency services, residents, key Councillors and our own traffic engineers, the Director of Environment, Paul Chadwick has undertaken an urgent review of the pilot LTNs. This review and its recommendations are set out in this SO83(A)

The review has evaluated the impact of the pilot LTNS to date. This review is based on evidence collated during the pilots. It is recognised that as the pilots have only been in place for a short number of weeks (further detail below) weeks there is limited data available, however a review has been necessary at this stage because of the:

- Significant concerns that have been raised by the NHS, the Metropolitan Police and the Fire Brigade related to extended response times as well access more generally to the hospitals within the LTN areas.
- Serious and continuing traffic problems witnessed on the ground at and around most of the LTN sites, including very early estimates of extra traffic volumes for the high roads at Tooting of at least 25% more than pre Covid-19 period with likely serious impact on the economies that are local to the schemes.
- Unprecedented large numbers of concerns raised so far and so quickly – including significant petitions in Tooting and West Putney, high numbers of resident and business correspondence.
- Anecdotal evidence from multiple site visits by our traffic engineers that includes repeated concerns with driver behaviour (e.g. driving on pavements) as well as cases of vandalism/damage including to Waste and Refuse service vehicles.
- Continuing Covid-19 based concerns about the use of public transport with a resulting high use of the motor vehicle, a situation that seems unlikely to change in the short-term and that may even be exacerbated over the coming weeks as the Government generally seems to be encouraging a return to the office base.

### **Overview of the LTN Schemes**

There are seven LTNs. Four adjacent LTNs in Tooting (called Graveney, Fishponds, Tooting Common and Beechcroft), one in West Putney (focussed on Dover House Road and Genoa Avenue) and one each in Twilley Street and Oakmead Road. The Beechcroft/Fishponds /Graveney LTNs were established on 17<sup>th</sup> August (apart from the north section of Graveney LTN), Tooting Common was established on 10<sup>th</sup> August, West Putney started 31<sup>st</sup> August, Twilley Street started on 6<sup>th</sup> July and Oakmead Road on 29<sup>th</sup> June.

LTNs are primarily aimed at reducing the volume of through traffic in a local neighbourhood which in turn should improve road safety and encourage people to switch to walking and cycling. The Council's usual processes on such schemes would be to launch a formal consultation in advance. However, Local Authorities were directed through Transport for London to deliver immediate and temporary measures through experimental traffic orders which curtailed the time available for the usual levels of consultation.

There was a competitive bidding process (arranged by TfL) for Boroughs to bid for schemes under three categories – Town Centre, Strategic Cycling Corridors and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods. With Local Implementation Plan funding suspended, these were the only funding sources available from TfL. In a fast changing and fast moving environment, the main decisions to proceed on the schemes were taken following scrutiny at June's Strategic Planning and Transportation Overview and Scrutiny Committee. At the time, the Council was at the bid stage on schemes so full scheme details were not available to share. Subsequent SO83(A)s were approved to authorise the schemes.

In advance of the schemes going in, emergency services were notified, and information letters were sent to all areas and ward members were consulted.

### **The TfL Measures**

TfL have at a similar time introduced wider "traffic calming" measures in the borough for the red route network. These have made the workings of the LTNs more challenging and have exacerbated increases in traffic and delays on the main roads.

These TfL works include significant interventions on the A24 (Balham High Road to Tooting High Street and beyond) including moving bus stops, installing cycle lane segregation, banning turns at a number of junctions and removing parking. These TfL delivered changes are primarily to encourage a safer route for cyclists to central London. However, the scale of A24 changes coinciding with the council's efforts to establish LTNs on residential streets has caused confusion and congestion.

Council officers made various representations on the TfL schemes raising concerns over a range of aspects of them and the restrictions and challenges they would cause. However, most of these representations were not acted on at the implementation point.

The Council has continued to press for relaxations on some of the measures to ease access. The Council now understand that what TfL call a *Rapid Engineering Design Review* has been done for the Tooting/Balham area– focussed on spacing and positions of cycle wands – especially linked to emergency services and that some changes were made in recent days. Whilst that is good news the Council will continue to press for more and in other areas.

### **Impact of LTNs implemented by other London Boroughs**

24 out of 32 London Boroughs have, or are planning to, implement LTNs as part of their Covid-19 response. Camden, Hounslow, Lambeth and Lewisham were the first to begin

introducing measures from June, with four boroughs beginning to introduce measures in July, eleven in August, and three in September.

It is fair to say that almost all schemes introduced so far have provoked a strong and vocal local debate, including articles in local press, petitions for and against proposals, and heated twitter conversations. Across these schemes there are a common set of objections including:

- The possibility of increased response times for emergency services.
- Lack of access for refuse vehicles
- Reduced traffic volumes encourage speeding for remaining drivers.
- LTNs displace traffic and air pollution to bordering roads
- Lack of consultation ahead of introduction.

More notable instances of opposition have been seen to the Ealing LTN introduced in July, where planters have been repeatedly vandalised (as has happened at some of the Wandsworth LTNs) and an online petition there has reached 7,500 signatures.

In Lambeth, there has been extensive debate, and an anti-LTN protest is planned for the 12<sup>th</sup> September.

In Kingston, one planned scheme has been cancelled before implementation due to the strength of local opposition and in Harrow some schemes were halted after being opposed by Councillors on the Traffic and Road Safety Advisory Panel. Kingston has also decided to remove some of the temporary street-space measures it introduced in May on Kingston Bridge due to the increase in car and bus traffic. Bromley Council has threatened legal action against Croydon after they introduced an LTN on roads bordering the Borough which Bromley believes has displaced traffic into the Borough.

It is therefore clear that LTNs implemented during the past few months across London are facing challenges and that other Councils have suspended plans due to resident and emergency services feedback.

This is different from the experiences of LTNs implemented prior to June 2020. Where Schemes usually settled down in terms of volumes of traffic and disruption, usually following a period of behaviour change that can often include a shift to other forms of transport including the cycle and public transport.

However as highlighted above the LTNs being implemented now cannot be compared with those implemented during different times. This is particularly the case in Wandsworth given:

- The impact of the introduction of the LTNs coinciding with a range of new TfL measures for the major road network across the Borough;
- Continuing Covid-19 based concerns about the use of public transport with a resulting very high use of the motor vehicle; and
- The waning to some extent of the Spring/Summer levels of enthusiasm for the use of the bicycle as we now head into Autumn

### **Concerns raised by emergency services**

The Council has received a range of adverse comments from the emergency services. The Metropolitan Police have commented also on behalf of their colleagues at the Fire Brigade and the London Ambulance Service. Many of the comments cannot be included in a public report for operational reasons but a good, brief example extract of the primary concerns raised at Superintendent level is *“Most concerning is that any urgent assistance or other threat to life could not be responded to effectively by any 999 vehicle.”*

From the NHS perspective, the Council has received a range of negative comments, including this example from Springfield Hospital. *“We appreciate the intention of this pilot scheme is to promote alternative forms of travel, support social distancing and create quieter and safer neighbourhoods. Whilst we support these aims, the measure to introduce modal filters has created a number of issues for our staff and patients. These filters have effectively blocked roads near the Glenburnie Road and Hebdon Road entrances to our site, placing additional pressure on patients and ambulance drivers in gaining access to the Hospital.”* The feedback that the Council has received highlights the concerns that the emergency services have. Whilst the impact the emergency services refer to is due to a combination of traffic changes, not all of which are under the Council’s control, the Council takes the safety of its residents seriously and as such places great weight on the concerns of the Metropolitan Police, the Fire Brigade and the London Ambulance Service.

### Resident feedback

There has been a significant amount of concerns raised by residents. A petition has been received on the Tooting LTNs with over **12,000** signatories. A separate petition has also been submitted on West Putney with over 600 signatories. Both petitions call for the removal of the LTN restrictions.

The Council has also received over 5,000 emails and representations including via the social distancing mailbox that we use for such schemes and via the consultation pages on our web pages. As set out in the table below 83.7% of these responses are not in favour of the LTNs.

In favour	Not in favour	Don't know	Not Answered	Grand Total
815	4541	64	7	5427
15.0%	83.7%	1.2%	0.1%	100.0%

### Data

Given the majority of schemes have only been in place for a few weeks, there is very limited hard data available data either from the Council or TfL. It is recognised that there are risks attached to making decisions of the type proposed without that hard evidence. However, as outlined in this SO83(A) there is an urgency to this review.

Direct and indirect experience shows that there are serious and continuing traffic problems witnessed on the ground at and around most of the LTN sites. Discussions with TfL included their reference to very early estimates of extra traffic volumes for the high roads at Tooting of at least 25% more than the pre Covid-19 period.

### Risks of suspending LTNs

Councils who have not yet announced plans to introduce LTNs have received criticism from active travel campaigners and residents for not acting. There is therefore a risk that if the Council do suspend the schemes as proposed then there will be an adverse reaction from those who support them and have benefitted from them, especially those within any genuinely, newly traffic claimed side roads.

It is usual also for those that are supporting an action to stay quieter than those against so the Council could see a rise in those who are vocal in their support for the LTNs over the coming weeks.

On balance however the Director's view is that the proposal to suspend is justifiable given reasons set out above and that it gives the best opportunity to help the Council better understand the impact of TfL measures on the road network and the continuing impact of Covid-19 on transport behaviours.

There is also a wider risk to the reputation of the LTNs in the Director's view if the Council does not suspend and regather its thinking on the approach at this point. The perception would likely otherwise be that we are ill-prepared to adapt and adjust thinking to suit the true circumstances on the ground such that it might tarnish the approach forever more. Whereas the reality is that if delivered well and at the right time LTNs can likely still be an important component in our approach to modal shift, climate change, improvements in air quality and therefore the delivery of the WESS.

### **Scope for adjustments rather than full suspension?**

These have been considered and for example in Tooting Commons a simplified version of the Beechcroft LTN could be to remove the planters on Beechcroft Road and Franciscan Road. If done along with the removal of some TfL banned turns, this could ease a considerable amount of movements. Furthermore, an option in West Putney would be to change the scheme's operation to peak hours only.

Consideration has also been given to whether the Council might also defer decisions on the Twilley Street and Oakmead Road LTNs pending the receipt of more data given these seem relatively better supported and are more tightly contained measures.

However on balance and for the reasons already covered the Director's view is that it is more sensible and straightforward, for a combination of all the reasons stated above, to suspend all of the LTNs completely at this stage and check and test and review the issues in the coming weeks with a report to the OSC in due course.

### **Resources**

The costs for suspension will predominantly be those for labour for the removal of planters and covering or removal of signs and their transport to storage at the Frogmore Depot through the suspension period. The costs will be in the range £14-17,000 and will be handled within existing revenue resources and with a payment to the DSO who will undertake the works.

The LTN's installation costs have funding allocations from TfL. There is a risk that TfL will withdraw their allocations (payment are received in arrears) if we suspend but I judge that risk as low in these circumstances and especially given that these are experimental measures and that TfL acknowledge the considerable and genuine concerns that the introduction of these schemes alongside their own proposals have caused.