

Proposed Road Closures – Citizens Deputation

Introduction

Thank you, Chair, for hearing our citizens' deputation this evening concerning the proposed Low Traffic Neighbourhoods for Green Lane and Dennis Lane.

We are representing the residents of the Green Lane and the Dennis Lane areas and are speaking on behalf of thousands of Harrow residents and stakeholders who are seriously concerned about the effect of these proposed road closures in Stanmore for two main reasons:

1. It is unclear if the Health & Safety and Equalities impacts have properly been thought through
2. The demography and topography of this area means that a Low Traffic Neighbourhood will provide very limited benefit

The council state that road closures are "divisive". In fact, these proposals have united all ages and sections of our community because of the negative impacts they will have. 94% of feedback to the commonplace website on the Green Lane and Dennis Lane proposals is against it. In addition a petition has already reached over 2,000 signatures and will therefore trigger a full council debate on this matter in due course.

Many of us already walk and cycle, and our issue with the proposed closures of Green Lane and Dennis Lane is that there is no identifiable problem that requires this "low traffic neighbourhood" solution.

Health & Safety and Equality issues

The council's own report to this Panel acknowledges that there were only 1 – 2 weeks in which to prepare these proposals. That report covers those issues inadequately and confirms that no risk assessment has been performed and the safety implications need further consideration.

The Harrow Transport LIP notes The Broadway, Uxbridge Road and Church Road as a strategic E-W route to the M1, A1, A41 and M25 which are not roads for cycling or walking. It further identifies The Broadway having emissions exceeding the EU annual mean limit value for NO₂, and also for having high human exposure. Closing Green Lane and Dennis Lane would funnel more traffic through The Broadway, exacerbating the pollution problem.

The Green Lane / Uxbridge Road junction is already over capacity with a dangerous right turn. It is made worse by many driving on the wrong side of Uxbridge Road to get into Old Church Lane. Diverting additional traffic onto this junction will cause more accidents and additional risk to the very cyclists and pedestrians this proposal is seeking to help.

Access for large vehicles including delivery lorries, refuse trucks and emergency vehicles will become difficult. There is nowhere for these vehicles to turn should these roads be closed which will cause safety issues for passing cyclists and pedestrians whilst they manoeuvre.

The proposed road closures will risk gridlock across key junctions on a major N-S / E-W route and also have serious implications for the emergency services, in particular response times for the Ambulance Service and Fire Brigade, both of which are already under pressure.

The Harrow Transport Bus is the council's own service to carry children with high needs as used by the daughter of one of our deputees. These children can suffer from claustrophobia if trapped in standing traffic; they cannot sit still on a bus for prolonged periods. The proposals will significantly increase their time on the bus, worsening their experience and health, and placing a greater strain on the borough's staff looking after them.

A number of religious and other institutions will be negatively impacted by the proposed road closures. These are:

St John's Church of England Primary School, a faith based school. It has a wide catchment and children travel long distances to it from across the borough.

The mosque and temple in Wood Lane have large and active communities drawn from the North-West London area and beyond that rely on access via Green Lane and Dennis Lane.

The temple has written a letter to the council setting out their concerns in which they state "this will very much inconvenience community members who attend our temple and the mosque next door and we cannot begin to imagine the chaos it will bring during our festive seasons".

The Orthopaedic Hospital's own transport service will be negatively impacted as it uses Dennis Lane as its preferred route for hospital staff and patients to get to it from Stanmore Tube station.

Demography and topography of the area

TfL's definition of an area suitable for a Low Traffic Neighbourhood fails when applied to Green Lane and Dennis Lane. In addition, the Implementation Plan does not list Stanmore as an area with high potential for switching from using cars. This is because the geography, average journey distances and demographics are too great a barrier to encourage journeys to be undertaken by bike or on foot.

Green Lane and Dennis Lane are both incredibly long and steep hills. Cycling up these hills is extremely challenging and many people especially the elderly find it difficult to walk up these roads. The proportion of older people in Stanmore is a third higher than the national average, which means many residents rely on their cars for access to amenities.

Both these roads are already very safe for walkers and cyclists who do use them. They benefit from traffic calming measures including speed bumps, width restrictions and Green Lane being a 20 mph zone. TfL's Strategic Neighbourhood Analysis lists the area in the safest category across the whole of London.

There are plenty of open green spaces such as Stanmore Country Park and Bentley Priory in close proximity to these roads. This is where people walk for exercise rather than on the street!

The proposed closures would also impact the Little Common and Stanmore Hill conservation areas.

Conclusion

We can only conclude that the council chose not to do a formal consultation into proposed road closures since they were concerned they might not get a positive response. Most residents have only found out about these proposals by chance. The Department for Transport's statutory guidance

says, "Authorities should seek input from stakeholders during the design phase." Residents are stakeholders! We should have been consulted.

The council's own report from 2006 that led to the traffic calming measures on Green Lane clearly states that a full road closure would require a turning area at the top of Green Lane, that it would impact emergency response times, cause inconvenience to residents, overload the junctions on the Uxbridge Road and would be unacceptable, and Dennis Lane is subject to similar considerations. What has changed between then and now?

If the council is looking for problems to solve to encourage Stanmore residents to be more active we would suggest fixing the broken play equipment in our local park and the broken zebra crossing on Stanmore Hill for starters.

All of the data available from Harrow and TfL shows that the proposals, which are deeply unpopular, will actually cause problems for numerous people with protected characteristics while producing no material benefit.

We thank you for your time this evening and would be grateful if the council would take on board the views represented here this evening and agree not to proceed with the proposed LTNs for Green Lane and Dennis Lane.