

## **COUNCIL**

**16 MARCH 2022**

### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**I Question from Jeremy Phipps, SE10, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

The allowing of rat running between the bottom and top of Blackheath Hill (ie. via Hyde Vale and Crooms Hill) slows the ascent of the heavy diesels up the hill. There are many studies which show that slow, stop, start of these vehicles has a serious negative impact on the overall pollution in an area. Effectively they take longer to get up the hill and produce more pollution per metre travelled as they are slowed to a crawl.

Could the Council please explain why they believe reopening the rat runs is going to reduce the pollution on Blackheath Hill?

**Reply -**

I thank Jeremy Phipps for his question.

Air quality is only one factor in this decision. Monitoring data and feedback from local residents raised concerns about the impact of transferring local traffic to other areas and the issues identified in the EQIA including how it could affect people with disabilities.

We couldn't take this decision in isolation and we need to look at the impact any LTNs may have on the surrounding areas not just Blackheath Hill. Any future proposals will be subject to further consultation with local residents.

Alongside this we are developing our own Transport Strategy and associated policies to help us meet the targets within our Carbon Neutral Plan.

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### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**2 Question from John Robb and Jessica Ballantine, SE10, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

Why dismantle the West Greenwich LTN before you decide what you are going to replace it with? Isn't that irrational? What's the urgency? Particularly when your own independent consultants, Steer, found that the LTN did not increase pollution levels on Blackheath Hill and has contributed only trivially to traffic on Maze Hill? Aren't you creating a needless and serious safety hazard and risking a waste of council funds if the eventual "joint solution" involves reintroducing a traffic barrier on a street like Maidenstone Hill?

**Reply -**

I thank John Robb and Jessica Ballantine for their question.

I have committed to engaging properly on this and providing a more holistic approach to tackling these issues borough wide not just for West Greenwich.

We will work on developing proposed alternative schemes.

We are developing a Transport Strategy and officers have already started progressing this.

This will support the delivery of The Carbon Neutral Plan, which includes high-level actions to reduce emissions from transport.

We also have various transport-related policies which are in development for car parking, electric vehicle charging and kerbside uses including Road Safety and Active Travel, this will help us prioritise these issues to help all residents of this borough.

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### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**3 Question from Tim Anderson, SE10, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

How is the removal of the West Greenwich LTN compatible with RBG's 2030 Carbon neutral strategy and the stated need to reduce traffic by 40%?

Does the access of commuter traffic through our residential streets take priority over the safety of local residents?

**Reply -**

I thank Tim Anderson for his question.

**As per Question 2**

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## **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**4 Question from James Montgomery, SE10, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

Why did RGB disregard the evidence of the Steer consultants - specifically, that the LTN did not worsen pollution on Blackheath Hill and was only one factor in the congestion in East Greenwich - and instead relied on "public consultation" that was flawed in its design and implementation? (Because, for example, anyone was allowed to vote, no matter where they lived?)

**Reply -**

I thank James Montgomery for his question.

**As per Question 1**

## **COUNCIL**

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### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**5 Question from Shevaun Pearce, SE10, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Environment Sustainability and Transport**

Please could the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Sustainability and Transport advise what measures will be put in place in the short term to safeguard residents and visitors across West Greenwich?

Prior to the trial West Greenwich LTN, the previous Assistant Highways Director Graham Nash advised residents at the Engagement sessions that a 'do nothing' option was not an option and RBG had to act; residents subsequently received a letter in August 2020 advising the traffic was excessive and dangerous on the ill-equipped steep, narrow residential roads.

Please can the Cabinet Member advise the latest date a proposal on traffic reduction will be implemented for this area as we will once again be subjected to excessive and dangerous traffic? How is the Council comfortable with this?

**Reply -**

I thank Shevaun Pearce for her question.

The West Greenwich LTN was already in operation when I took charge of this portfolio. The council is committed to Road Safety of course.

It is so important that we tackle this issue holistically so that any changes we make remain in place for the long term.

We are going to engage properly on these issues and to ensure we provide a more holistic approach to tackle these issues borough wide not just for West Greenwich.

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### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**6 Question from Eibhleann Radford, SE10, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

Why were black cabs granted access through the experimental LTN and not blue badge holders?

**Reply -**

I thank Eibhleann Radford for her question.

Black Cab or Taxis form an important part of car-free living, increasing the range of public transport, walking and cycling trips. Giving taxis priority access would be in-line with the priority afforded to taxis and public transport in other locations, including Bus Lanes and some No Entry points.

Blue Badges 'however, are assigned to a person and not a vehicle, are not required to be displayed while the vehicle is moving and not a recognised exemption for other moving traffic restrictions.

There is no practical and reliable way for the cameras / a camera operator to know if the occupants of any particular car are, or are not, people with a disability, and disability in itself is not an exemption from any type of moving traffic regulation.

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### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**7 Question from Eibhleann Radford, SE10, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

Why is motorist convenience more important than reducing traffic, reducing air pollution, increasing health and safety of pedestrians and cyclists, the criteria set out in the consultation ?

**Reply -**

I thank Eibhleann Radford for her question.

The decision was made by weighing up the benefits of the scheme against the impacts. Throughout the process we have been clear that how well a scheme performs against the objectives of; creating better places to walk and cycle, improving road safety, reducing congestion, and improving air quality, must be considered within the context of the wider area to ensure the benefits of a scheme in one area do not unfairly impact residents in other parts of the borough.

The decision was not to prioritise the convenience of motorists and we recognise the need to reduce the volume of vehicles on our roads to achieve strategic objectives in terms of transport and climate change. The council will publish a Transport Strategy detailing the holistic approach to be taken to achieve these objectives while ensuring the impacts of individual schemes are considered along each other to avoid disproportionately impacting certain areas.

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## PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**8 Question from Fiona Moore, SE3, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

I applaud the council's target to reduce traffic 45% by 2030 - what's your plan to achieve that, and when will we see it?

**Reply -**

I thank Fiona Moore for her question.

We are developing a Transport Strategy and officers have already started progressing this.

This will support the delivery of The Carbon Neutral Plan, which includes high-level actions to reduce emissions from transport.

We will also have various transport-related policies which are in development for car parking, electric vehicle charging and kerbside uses including Road Safety and Active Travel, this will help us prioritise these issues to help all residents of this borough, providing overall traffic reduction.

We also will need assistance from the Government as the car is still dominant, with the shift to electric vehicles we will see better air quality but congestion will still be an issue.

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### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**9 Question from Fiona Moore, SE3, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Environment Sustainability and Transport**

Local authorities, as you said in an answer to a question from the public last month, "have a responsibility for improving and protecting the health and wellbeing of residents"; and "for planning and commissioning public health services and activities, to prevent avoidable ill health and premature death". How is Greenwich Council planning to protect us against (a) the huge recent increase in air pollution from queues of idling rush-hour traffic in residential streets in Greenwich, and (b) the risk that Silvertown Tunnel brings yet more traffic (especially HGVs) and congestion, causing yet more air pollution?

**Reply -**

I thank Fiona Moore for her question.

**As per Question 8**

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### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**10 Question from Stella Bye, SE10, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Environment Sustainability and Transport**

With regards to the recent decision to remove the West Greenwich LTN, please explain why the overall responses which included consultation responses from outside Greenwich borough and across the UK were used. Please confirm how RBG scrutinised the responses to remove out of borough responses as well as any duplications.

**Reply -**

I thank Stella Bye for her question.

The analysis of the public consultation was provided as appendices to the report (found [here](#)) and the addendum report (found [here](#)). Responses were analysed and where a postcode was given, responses were broken down according to the following three areas; from within the LTN, from the nearby Westcombe Park and Maze Hill area, any other postcodes.

Responses were analysed and duplicates were removed.

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## PUBLIC QUESTIONS

### **11 Question from Stella Bye, SE10, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Environment Sustainability and Transport**

Petitions against Formal Consultation Process - RBG claimed 52% of overall respondents objected to the LTN and this included petitions submitted outside of the official consultation process. Please confirm how Change.org and other petitions can be legally used against this formal consultation. Also how did RBG remove duplications against the formal public consultation responses and discount those from out of borough.

#### **Reply -**

I thank Stella Bye for her question.

The 53% figure comes from responses to the official consultation process and does not include petitions. The petitions were considered alongside the official consultation process, and it is acknowledged that it is likely people would have both responded to the consultation and signed one of the petitions.

Petitions were received both for and against the scheme and the analysis did not seek to remove duplications in terms of people responding both via the official consultation and a petition.

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### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**12 Question from Simon Radford, SE10, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

Why did the council give equal weight to the local residents and external respondents to the [LTN] consultation?

**Reply -**

I thank Simon Radford for his question.

Throughout the process we have been clear that how well a scheme performs against the objectives of; creating better places to walk and cycle, improving road safety, reducing congestion, and improving air quality must be considered within the context of the wider area to ensure the benefits of a scheme in one area do not unfairly impact residents in other parts of the borough.

The impacts of the scheme extend beyond the immediate area, and this was reflected in the consultation responses, with a large number of responses coming from the Westcombe Park/ Maze Hill area. It was appropriate to give weighting to responses from other areas as they were affected by the scheme.

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## **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**13 Question from Simon Radford, SE10, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Environment Sustainability and Transport**

Please confirm which specific 'protected characteristic' as identified in the Equality Act 2010 and set out in the equality impact report by steer, led the council to conclude the current LTN is non compliant?

**Reply -**

I thank Simon Radford for his question.

The EQIA identified that the scheme may affect older and/or disabled people.

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### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**14 Question from Sarah Phipps, SE10, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Environment Sustainability and Transport**

Why was the consultation on the West Greenwich LTN put out to the wider area and other consultations were not? ie Gloucester Circus, Circus Street, Park Vista, Woodland Crescent etc.

**Reply -**

I thank Sarah Phipps for her question.

As part of the Streetspace Programme, it was essential that we consulted on these measures with residents of this borough.

The size and potential impacts of the scheme were extensive compared to the isolated highway amendments referred to in the question.

The methodology of these consultations previously were undertaken without electronic platforms such as Commonplace, and were manually undertaken.

An electronic facility makes it far easier to conduct these types of consultations. They are open to the public but the letter distribution zone was isolated to the surrounding area.

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## PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**15 Question from Sarah Phipps, SE10, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Environment Sustainability and Transport**

Would the Council reopen Gloucester Circus to help alleviate the high rat running in Crooms Hill?

**Reply -**

I thank Sarah Phipps for her question.

The modal filter at the junction with Gloucester Circus and Crooms Hill has been in-place for over 6 years.

The Borough has no plans to open or remove this filter, as the streets will return to their state pre introduction of the LTN.