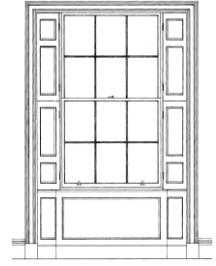


The Canonbury Society

C O N S E R V I N G C A N O N B U R Y



C/O 1 Alwyne Place
London N1 2NL

16th May 2022

Councillor Rowena Champion
London Borough of Islington
PO Box 3333,
222 Upper Street,
London N1 1YA

Dear Councillor Champion,

Canonbury West LTN. Further Comments by the Canonbury Society

1. I am writing in response to your belated and highly unsatisfactory reply of 4th April to the Canonbury Society's representations of 28 January and 4 February on the Canonbury West Low Traffic Neighbourhood.
2. Most of your reply is taken up by an explanation of the purpose of the LTN which we were not querying, although we think it has a number of flaws. Our main criticism was about the unfortunate impact of the LTN as constituted on old and sick people who cannot be expected to cycle or walk long distances and therefore rely on taxis to take them to medical and other appointments and to receive visits from friends and relations. You say that your study showed no significant impact on such persons although we sent you comments from twenty households who most certainly are experiencing difficulties.
3. You make the point that although the LTN makes journeys less convenient and more circuitous it does not remove access by taxis and other vehicles to homes in the area. This overlooks the fact that taxis and many other services are provided by the private sector; and if drivers are faced with a longer and more time-consuming journey, they frequently decide to choose a different client and decline or cancel the booking. This was the experience of the residents whose comments we sent you on February 4th.
4. In the report by the responsible official on the St Mary's Church LTN you say that the exemption for blue badge holders cannot be extended to cover vehicles coming to pick them up from outside the area because the ANPR cameras would not be able to identify them. But it should not be beyond the wit of man to adopt the same system used by the central London congestion scheme to cater for blue badge holders. That allows drivers until the evening to pay the charge or claim exemption. The LTN regime could similarly defer issuing the fixed penalty notice, giving time for a blue badge holder (or another person such as an elderly resident receiving a medical visit or calling a taxi) to let the Council know the vehicle registration number. As we pointed out in our previous letter, the Council's visitor parking permit computer system knows which individuals are entitled to an old person's discount.

5. We have two further criticisms of the report on which you based the decision to extend the LTN for a further 6 months.
- First, the figures for air pollution are barely credible; they vary very widely from huge increases (eg 18% in Arran Walk) to a fall or a minor change. Taking the average of these is no basis for deciding the overall effect. In particular you say that the increase at the junction of Grange Grove and St Paul's Road is small. In fact, it is as high as 8.0%, which is not negligible and could well be the result of increased traffic in St Paul's Road.
 - Second, your analysis of flows and journey times in St Paul's Road is very unsatisfactory. You take averages and fail to distinguish between eastbound traffic which is largely unaffected by the congestion at Highbury Corner and westbound traffic which obviously is. Any further report needs to distinguish between direction of flow and peak/off peak times.
 - There is also an implication in your conclusions that a drop in traffic flow is always a sign of success. But in congested conditions less traffic can pass a given point than when traffic is free-flowing. This is a basic characteristic of speed-flow curves that your experts or traffic engineering advisers should be aware of. To identify the benefits and disbenefits of the scheme your study should be looking at journey times not traffic levels. We are particularly concerned about the increase in journey times for buses and their passengers.
6. Central government's requirements for the evaluation of traffic schemes funded by public money, (set out in the DfT's webtag rules mentioned by your consultants Steer in their report on disabled drivers) require a full cost-benefit analysis to be carried out identifying and where possible quantifying the benefits and disbenefits. It may well be that the benefits of LTNs to health and reductions in global warming justify the additional socio-economic costs imposed on road traffic but this needs to be publicly demonstrated. We assume that such an evaluation will need to be carried out into the cumulative effect of all the LTNs before they are made permanent.
7. As we hope you are aware from our earlier letter (which Councillor Wayne commended for being very reasonable) the Canonbury Society is not completely opposed to the LTN which has benefits for streets otherwise affected by rat runs. But our survey of our members shows that most members are not in favour of the scheme in its present form. We assume that the 15% drop in the Labour vote in Canonbury in the recent elections suggests that this view is widespread.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Philip Walker – Chair of The Canonbury Society

Copies: Cllr. Jeapes, Cllr. Wayne and Cllr. Woolf. Ayanda Collins and Martijn Cooijmans