

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Call-In Meeting – 30 April 2024

Call-In of Decision – Non-Key-List No.61/23/24 (published on 05/04/2024) Approve the Introduction of Bowes Road Bus Lane

Call-In Lead: Councillor Adrian Grumi

Officer Response:

Reasons for the “Call in” are detailed below:

Reason for call-in:
Dismissive of residents’ objections. As one of the Councillors for Arnos Grove Ward we were copied into over 70 objections to the proposed bus lane.
Officer Response:
<p>The report goes into extensive detail around the degree of opposition encountered and the points of objection that were put forward by residents, setting out how some concerns were to be mitigated where this was viable and reasonable, and giving full explanations for why the Council disagreed with certain other points of opposition.</p> <p>Sections 2 to 7 of the report set out the strategic case for bus lanes being placed on the borough network. These sections use contextual information and relevant examples to address, but also challenge, the key assertion put forward by those opposing the Bowes Road bus lane that Bowes Road is inherently ‘residential’ in nature or dissimilar to other local streets with bus lanes.</p> <p>The part of the report summarising community feedback is substantial, running between sections 13 and 21 and amounting to 1.5 pages of text. It provides a faithful record of how many direct responses the project team received; it seeks to separate different interests and avenues of response, where this offers more precise insight into local feelings; and refers to the input of Arnos Grove ward councillors in the reinforcement of their constituents’ concerns. The part of the report directly addressing points of objection is also substantial, covering 13 topics across a full 7 pages of text.</p> <p>The report identifies that 27 households on the northern side of the street are deemed to be directly affected by the proposed changes and records faithfully that 10 of these submitted objections to the Council, including the 2 that lack frontage parking. The report also acknowledges the opposition from further afield. The level of detail offered in addressing these concerns is commensurate to their scope and degree of impact; and would have met that threshold even had it been all 27 households who had objected.</p>

Reason for call-in:
<p>The duplicity and self serving nature of the decision is demonstrated through historic inconsistent decision making.</p> <p>a) One home on the northern side of the street has a disabled member of the household,</p>

for whom a blue badge is used, but no formal off-street parking options exist at the home. This (see below) merits further consideration.

b) Mitigation is made as follows:

It is understood that the household has previously had an application for a crossover rejected due to the Council's policy against providing new crossovers on principal roads. The presence of a tree and utility equipment on the highway in front of the home is another complication to a formal crossover being provided. However, in light of the wider benefits associated with the bus lane, there is merit in reconsidering the Council's previous position. The report recommends the addition of dropped kerbs at the home be viewed favourably and facilitated to enable use of the existing hardstanding, providing it is technically feasible, subject to necessary approvals, to unlock the clear benefits of the overall scheme. The formalisation of an off-street parking area may also provide space for car-based medical visits.

c) Provision should be made to reimburse planning application fees, professional advisors fees and compensation for loss of amenity.

Officer Response:

The report refers to bus journey time data to conclude that time savings of up to 2.5 minutes could be gained for each bus that passes in the busiest periods, when the bus lane is operational. Due to the high number of buses using the street, the following is true: "If each peak hour bus carried 30 passengers, it can be calculated that each hour of operation during high congestion periods offers an improvement to 600 journeys. If operational for a total of, say, six hours on a weekday, this would equate to a betterment to 3,600 journeys by Londoners each day."

Hence clear short-term benefits to the proposal are identified, which feed into the Council's wider longer-term attempt to make better use of the road network by encouraging more active and public transport. This shift offers better space-efficiency, less congestion, more space for essential journeys by car, and fewer other negative impacts (poor road safety, noise, etc). While the Council, as custodian of the network, is an interested party in this outcome, the key group that is served by the benefits being realised is, in reality, the wider community.

Making use of the scheme-specific funding offered by TfL enables the bus lane to be added but also provides the opportunity to add the refuge island crossing point where residents commented that crossing the street was difficult, and to install the crossover from the scheme funding to resolve the objection from the household that would have particular need of one under the new arrangements.

The Council's policy on new applications for vehicle crossovers is set out in DMD 46 of its Development Management Document. This makes it clear that planning permission for new accesses onto A roads and other busy classified roads (such as Bowes Road) will not normally be granted. The policy seeks to avoid the detrimental impacts to road safety and traffic flow likely to apply, when considered network wide, if crossovers on such streets were allowed to proliferate. In the prior circumstances when the crossover was rejected, this was the correct decision because it adhered to the policy and thus ensured fairness and consistency with regard to the advice and rulings given to other households. The report explains that the proposed bus lane changes the circumstances, now creating a strong argument to make an exception in this specific case to help capture the wider network benefits.

Given that the original refusal of the crossover was the correct decision at the time it was made, the scenario does not oblige the Council to refund application fees or similar.

Reason for call-in:

Local sentiment is the net effect of the bus lane is likely to be +3 minutes journey time due to traffic queuing further up Bowes Road, towards Betstyle Circus, Frien Barnet Road and Waterfall Road. These are the roads which all bus's need to travel along prior to entering the bus land and will need to que with all traffic.

Officer Response:

The suggestion that the measure will increase congestion is addressed within the report under section 22 (Objection 3). Fundamentally the proposal reallocates to moving traffic, i.e. the 20 hourly eastbound buses, the equivalent space of one traffic lane that is presently given over to parked vehicles and hence offers zero capacity for moving vehicles. Accordingly, the measure is not expected to exacerbate congestion.

Reason for call-in:

Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School have a playground which runs parallel to Bowes, denser, idling and standing traffic will dramatically increase pollutants and the carbon emissions which children are exposed to. Directly contradicting They Mayor of London's and TfL's position on clean air.

Officer Response:

See the response to Part 3 above.

Proposal: Councillor Grumi has asked that the decision is referred back to the decision maker.