

Proposal to Replace Barrier on Ladysmith Road  
with a Camera Controlled Gap for Emergency Access

## Frequently Asked Questions

### BACKGROUND

#### 1) Who is making this proposal?

Enfield Council is making this proposal. The Council is the highway and traffic authority for the road in question. It is responsible for the maintenance of the current infrastructure and for the purchase and maintenance of any infrastructure that might be introduced to replace it.

#### 2) How has this come about?

In Autumn 2019 officers from the traffic and transportation department met with representatives of London Ambulance Service (LAS) by way of early stage engagement on its programme of Quieter Neighbourhood projects. LAS highlighted issues they face with negotiating locked barriers. LAS acknowledges that certain future schemes to tackle 'rat-running' will need to involve physical closure points. Their request was that access be retained at strategic points and that locked barriers be avoided at such sites. From subsequent discussions where LAS advised that locked barriers hindered access and responsiveness around the network a list of sites was identified by our main point of contact within LAS who has oversight on how their vehicles move around the network. Subsequently, the proposal to look at upgrading three pre-existing sites was agreed. These were thought to have the greatest impact on improving LAS responsiveness to emergencies across the borough, Ladysmith Road being one of the top priorities.

### CONSULTATION

#### 3) Who has been consulted? Why didn't every house get a letter?

The Council did not consult widely on the proposal as the replacement of the existing gate with an alternative restriction enforced by camera is viewed as an operational matter, unlikely to affect the local traffic levels. The change to the restriction requires the making of a traffic management order and the relevant regulations prescribe the placement of notices in the street, adverts in local papers and the London Gazette, and proposals being passed to the emergency services etc; all of which was done. In addition, although unlikely to be affected, letters were sent to the 43 households nearest the barrier, who might otherwise have seen changes taking place at a later date and not known if they were planned work or something else. This, along with the notification we sent to ward councillors, is likely to have boosted public awareness and it is apparent, as the period for comments closes, that the community has been actively engaged in the process in any event.

### FEARS ABOUT ROAD SAFETY AND RAT-RUNNING

#### 4) Won't the proposal lead to rat-running and poor road safety in Ladysmith Road?

The department is confident that the proposal will result in a negligible change to traffic levels and speeds in Ladysmith Road and that it will not affect the safety of people walking or cycling to access local facilities. Hence there is no good reason to associate the proposal with fears about road safety or rat-running; nor to undertake a particular risk assessment on the proposal; nor to undertake traffic counts ahead of the proposal being made.

Some respondents predict dramatic increases in through-traffic; others rather less, but enough to make the route unsuitable for emergency vehicles when also accounting for its limited width. The department believes that if the change were introduced it would be readily apparent from the opening days onwards that traffic levels had not materially increased in reality. If the scheme proceeds, monitoring will be carried out to measure its actual impact.

It is incorrect to think of the proposal as returning Ladysmith Road to the situation that existed the day before the barrier was originally introduced in the 1970s. Prior to its introduction, drivers – both the vast majority of responsible ones, and the few irresponsible ones – were in the habit of using Ladysmith Road as a through route; and knew they committed no offence by doing so. Today the habit of local drivers using Ladysmith Road as a through route does not exist. The presence of the restriction will prevent the habit re-establishing itself amongst responsible drivers; and the reality of receiving fines will quickly deter any of the irresponsible ones. To confirm, the camera would be in place permanently, from the start, and operate at all times.

Meanwhile, there is no reason to think that drivers unfamiliar with the area will be any more likely to turn into Ladysmith Road to seek a through route than they were before, as mapping and satnav devices will continue to show it as a no through route.

#### **5) Wasn't there a good reason for the barrier being introduced in the first place?**

The department understands that unconstrained use of Ladysmith Road as a through route for general traffic resulted in the barrier being introduced nearly fifty years ago to improve road safety and remove levels of traffic that were out of balance with the character and dimensions of the street. The department does not query the merits of its original placement. It is merely seeking to introduce a modern equivalent that improves ambulance access.

### **SIGNS, FINES, CAMERAS and LAWLESS DRIVERS**

#### **6) Which vehicles will be allowed through the restriction point? Will there be camera signs?**

Emergency service vehicles will be allowed through. Delivery vehicles and domestic cars and vans, including those registered at homes in the street, will not be allowed past the signs and their owners would receive a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) if passing through the restriction point, whether northbound or southbound. The camera enforcement sign will be mounted on each approach at the restriction point and accompanying the No Motor Vehicles signs. Placing advance warning signs of a camera-controlled restriction ahead – say, for drivers turning into Ladysmith Road – is not essential. Given that the status quo is that drivers do not turn into Ladysmith Road seeking a through route, there seems little reason to add such signs ahead of any such need becoming apparent. Existing no through road signs will remain. The facility for drivers needing to turn around at the restriction point is already suitable and will remain as found at present.

#### **7) What about motorbikes and mopeds?**

The department acknowledges reports of misuse of the existing gaps - intended for pedestrians and cycles - by those on mopeds. Curtailing unwanted access for mopeds is difficult without also hindering the passage of prams, mobility carriages and similar. The department does not claim a resolution to this issue by this proposal, as the gap for pedestrians is to remain open. However, moped riders opting to pass through the motor vehicle restriction point would be liable to receive a PCN, providing an additional deterrent.

#### **8) Would the camera capture every offence? What is the penalty? What if fines go unpaid?**

The camera would capture every offence in each direction, day or night. The system requires 'manual' review of the footage of interest before issuing a PCN but this work is already undertaken for various other sites and it is not anticipated that additional staff resources would be required

arising from this proposal. Rather it is anticipated that the system will be largely self-enforcing with very few contraventions each day. The penalty is £130 for each offence, discounted to £65 if paid within 14 days. Unpaid fines would be pursued as a debt, possibly resulting in seizure of property.

**9) Could a lawless driver routinely avoid PCNs by obscuring their registration plates?**

Should the camera record such activity the footage would be passed to the police. Someone using this tactic routinely is likely to be locally based as well as a frequent user of the street and hence should not expect to go undetected for long.

**10) Fast-car enthusiasts are not always deterred by speed cameras on the A10; won't they start using Ladysmith Road if the barrier is removed?**

The appeal of the A10 for this nuisance activity is likely to be in the scope for drivers to achieve high speeds, remain well-separated from pedestrians, and 'race' using two or more adjacent lanes; none of which applies to Ladysmith Road. Operation of the speed cameras and the monitoring of the A10 in general lies with Transport for London. There are several long, straight roads on Enfield's surrounding network that do not have barriers but none of these attract the sort of reports received about the A10. The department views the risk of such activity extending to Ladysmith Road as very low.

**11) Won't the gap prove too great a temptation for parents on the school run?**

A parent opting to misuse the gap to drive their child to school in the morning would be liable to a £130 PCN on the way there, and another on the way back home, repeated if using the same route to pick up the child in the afternoon. Even assuming half-price discounts for early payment, that equates to £260 of fines per day, or £1,300 per week. Successfully avoiding being identified will be particularly unlikely if it is obvious which school the trip applies to. Hence, the department believes infringements of this type will be exceptional, not routine.

**12) Has this type of proposal worked well at other sites?**

This would be the first site of this type on Enfield's network where a physical barrier was replaced with a camera. Permanent cameras are in use in other scenarios to monitor yellow boxes and bus lanes and the equipment is found to be robust and effective. Those sites do not offer an insight into how many transgressions are likely to occur at this site.

**13) What if the level of misuse proves far higher than the department anticipates?**

Were the proposal to go forward and any of the issues above found to be a problem the barrier could be replaced at relatively little cost. The major component of the installation costs is the purchase cost of the camera itself, which could easily be de-mounted and reused at another site.

## **BENEFITS TO AMBULANCE CREWS**

**14) Who is this supposed to help?**

Switching the barrier for a camera could help fire crews in occasional circumstances in reaching a fire within the estate more quickly. Ambulances are smaller than fire trucks, of course, and paramedics' vehicles smaller still. Following discussions with the LAS, they advised that, if a number of these gates were removed it could save critical minutes when responding to emergency calls which, they say, could save lives. Therefore it is anticipated that the main beneficiary would be ambulance crews and their patients; i.e. the residents of Enfield.

**15) How many emergency vehicles will use the street?**

Our contact at LAS anticipates some use for access to the estate itself and some for a more direct access towards Southbury Road from the north, but in both cases only occasional levels of usage and only for emergency events. Vehicles would continue to be driven at speeds appropriate to the context and would continue to default to the wider main roads where these offer equally direct routes.

**16) Why does the ambulance service need this kind of help? And why now? What has changed? Why can ambulance drivers not simply use keys to open barriers?**

At a meeting last Autumn LAS officers were able to set out some of the problems their service faces, particularly with regard to lockable barriers. Further London-wide guidance from LAS has been issued to boroughs since, reinforcing their strong preference for councils to avoid placing locking barriers at key access points.

Normal practice by local authorities, historically, has been to provide a lockable barrier where there is need to delete through-traffic but retain emergency access, with the assumption that this serves all emergency services well enough. However, LAS points out that their vehicles do not carry the same surplus crew-members as fire crews and may be less able to improvise with physical measures such as cutting off a jammed padlock or lifting away a gate, if finding the infrastructure damaged. Their crews also make far more trips around the network than fire crews. LAS receives 5700 calls per day, which is 300 or 400 times more calls than London Fire Brigade.

The local and regional population level continues to rise while levels of physical activity are lower than in previous generations to the detriment of public health, meaning demand on the ambulance service is higher now than in the past. The increased population tends to bring increased road congestion, but not more available lanes of road to allow ambulances to pass traffic. Under modern levels of scrutiny, LAS is set challenging response targets to respond to emergency calls. Their target deadline to reach a patient who is critically ill or injured is 7 minutes less 90 seconds for operator/dispatch time. They typically find that encountering a barrier adds 60 seconds of delay, which is a significant amount of time relative to that deadline and when every passing second may increase the likelihood of death or of a permanent brain injury etc. to the patient. Replacing a barrier with a camera at key access points avoids an ambulance driver remaining on less direct routes for fear of not finding a barrier accessible or of facing delays while fumbling for keys.

The department's conclusion is that ambulance crews do face a different set of issues to fire crews; and that there is a clear benefit to the health outcomes of Enfield residents in trying to remove barriers at key sites to shorten response times.

Improvements in camera technology mean that they can now be mounted on existing lamp-posts, rather than on large bespoke masts, reducing costs. So there exists today an opportunity to allow easier access for ambulances - whilst providing low-cost camera enforcement against misuse - that did not exist in previous years.

**17) Can the Council provide logs detailing all the times an ambulance has been delayed at the barrier in Ladysmith Road?**

No, the Council holds no such information, nor for fire crews. We understand, under the new locking system and the previous one, that LAS crews have tended to take routes that avoid the feature.

**18) Why is this needed when several people in the street have spoken to fire and ambulance crew workers who all say it would make little difference?**

The department's information comes from the officer at LAS with specific oversight on how their vehicles get around the local network. The department does not believe there is any good reason to query the veracity of the advice provided. However, this point has been put to the officer at LAS who said that he does speak to colleagues on such matters but that no colleagues holding the view that the change will be pointless have come forward, as of 20 July, to share it with him.

### **19) Why is this needed when residents have seen emergency vehicle crews using the barrier quickly and easily?**

The experience of negotiating the barrier on one occasion could be different to the next; say a sunny day compared to a wet, dark evening. Also, the significance of the number of additional seconds taken may vary from the viewpoint of a casual onlooker and that of someone awaiting treatment for a critical injury. A number of responses from those objecting to the proposal have provided anecdotal evidence that undermines this point of objection, indicating instead that negotiating the barrier can sometimes prove difficult.

One correspondent writes: "in once instance, it took an emergency vehicle several minutes to pass through the gate." Another writes: "emergency vehicles should have the correct training to know how to pass these with no problem, last year we had two fire trucks passing through with very bright lights and sirens, late at night having problems accessing the gate." Further, one caller recounted being told an ambulance was 1 minute away when it had been called for a loved one taken seriously ill near the junction of Southbury Road and Ladysmith Road, but that the ambulance ended up coming the long way around from Carterhatch Lane and taking 5 minutes to arrive. Hence observing the barrier to allow easy passage on one occasion does not translate to crews having confidence this will apply for all instances. The occasional bad experience could prompt drivers to take longer routes around thereafter and it is certain that none of those delays described above would have occurred had there been a camera instead of a barrier.

### **20) Why was the lock on the barrier changed recently?**

A further problem with the original style lock was the ease with which the general public could obtain keys, allowing misuse of barriers and sometimes barriers being left to swing open, which poses a hazard to other road users. A programme to upgrade the locks at various sites across the borough with ones less vulnerable to tampering or misuse was started. Even if the present proposal was known at the time this wider exercise was being agreed upon, it was right to proceed with updating the locks given that the camera proposal has not yet reached the decision-making stage and a suitable locking system is needed in the intervening period.

### **21) If the current lock is problematic, why not replace it with an electronic system?**

A key benefit of a camera mounted high on a lamp-post in comparison with a barrier at road level is that the position of the camera leaves it well protected from accidental damage or vandalism. By contrast, a barrier is vulnerable to tampering or to sustaining damage by deliberate attack or by accident. Barriers that need to move under electronic prompting have the same vulnerability with regard to the moving parts sustaining damage but are generally considered more prone to failure and more expensive to maintain. This is the main reason that the Council does not currently have any rising bollards or electronic gates on its public highway network. So if ambulance crews currently avoid a barrier due to being wary that it may be difficult to open, replacing with an electronic version could exacerbate, rather than remedy, the effect. There is a key difference between a camera and any form of physical barrier. When an ambulance crew finds a barrier faulty or damaged they would need to turn around and seek a different route. Should a camera fail, the ambulance still has clear passage, but in most cases prospective abusers will remain cautious of breaching the restriction point, not knowing if the camera is operating or not.

### **22) Why is this needed if a right turn for buses from Carterhatch Lane into Willow Road is introduced?**

A right turn for buses from Carterhatch Lane into Willow Road would allow Enfield-bound buses approaching from Clay Hill to follow the extended route (to be renumbered route 456) south towards the town. Ambulances on Carterhatch Lane can, along with other traffic, already turn left into Willow Road if approaching from the east. They can use Baker Street to head south if starting further west. Or even improvise a turn southbound if seeking to use Willow Road. A key benefit to removing the barrier is to allow an uninterrupted route for ambulances from the ambulance station on Carterhatch Lane and surrounding starting positions south into the estate and onto Southbury Road without

needing to take a longer route via either the A10 or Willow Road. Hence the proposal for the bus turn makes little difference and does not replace the benefits for ambulances of the proposal at Ladysmith Road.

**23) Ladysmith Road is quite narrow and heavily parked and sometimes congested; its intersection with Southbury Road is quite narrow. Delivery vehicles and bin lorries sometimes further reduce passing space and it has few side roads. Alternative routes using the A10 or Willow Road are wider. Why would ambulance drivers want to use it?**

The physical characteristics of Ladysmith Road are acknowledged, but emergency calls can occur at periods when it is not congested and the presence of crossovers does, at other times, retain natural passing space for vehicles. And the speed of progress along a narrow street in an ambulance displaying blue lights is likely to be quicker than in a domestic vehicle, where one must expect to yield priority at intervals. The department believes ambulance drivers are best given a free choice of what route they choose based on the circumstances of the trip.

This point has also been put to the officer at LAS. He confirms that he is familiar with Ladysmith Road and had factored its limitations into his request. He adds that the experience of driving ambulances down such roads is very common to anyone driving ambulances in London and use of such a street is not exceptional. While the A10 is wider, congestion on its approaches remains a factor across extended parts of the day and turning on and off the road, even with blue lights and sirens, does require ambulance drivers to exercise a degree of caution and patience.

## **COSTS AND REVENUES**

**24) How much will the changes cost?**

The cost of purchasing the camera is roughly £25k. Its installation on a lamp-post costs roughly £200. The remaining work in removing the gate and adding signs brings the full total to roughly £30k.

**25) How can the installation be afforded?**

Revenue from parking and traffic operations can legally only be spent on limited areas, including measures such as this. The further benefit of a camera over a barrier is that the barrier tends to be an ongoing maintenance burden given the need to make repairs etc. as set out above. By contrast the camera has a small maintenance cost attached and over time the costs are likely to be offset by the monies claimed from the occasional bad driver breaching the restriction point.

**26) How much does the Council predict it will make in PCN revenue?**

The Council did not make any such calculation in advance of making the proposal. It is merely seeking the opportunity to use the affordable technology now available to ease the passage of ambulances around the network.

## **NEXT STEPS**

**27) What happens next?**

The Council will review the comments submitted and is likely to have made a decision by the end of August as to whether the proposal will go forward or otherwise.

**28) How can I challenge the process?**

Should it be decided to proceed with the scheme, anyone feeling that the Council has not followed the correct legal procedure could apply to seek a judicial review within six weeks of the traffic order being made.