

Annex 3

Response to London Ambulance Service submission to Bowes QN report – December 2021

Thank you for your comments in respect of the Bowes Quieter Neighbourhood (Bowes QN) Project.

The scheme in Bowes was implemented under the Emergency Active Travel Fund guidelines issued by the DfT and was part of a series of measures designed to mitigate significant increases in private car use during the Covid Pandemic.

The scheme was implemented under the Experimental provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act, which allow for the implementation of a scheme and formal consultation to be conducted whilst the scheme is in place. This approach enables feedback in light of experience of the trial. The scheme contained a number of interventions to deal with primary issues of complaint in the Bowes area relating to traffic volume and motor vehicles cutting through the area. Low Traffic Neighbourhoods are increasingly being implemented to combat the rises of traffic volume in residential areas – an outcome of persistent year on year increases in motor car traffic competing for the same area of road space.

The experimental scheme was considered appropriate in this instance to allow for the project to be monitored and to enable recommendations to be made based on the overall data collected throughout the trial period.

Prior to the design being implemented, the Programme Director, Programme Manager and Project Manager had discussions with the local Ambulance Senior Staff as a result of forming relationships with them in October 2019 as a result of other schemes being developed. Following this, a number of conversations were held with LAS staff prior to implementation of the Bowes QN to discuss the design. These discussions included agreement on adjusting the Warwick Road width restriction, which was preventing ambulances from passing through this point. It was agreed that this would be amended to a camera controlled filter, which would enable the unhindered passage of LAS vehicles. With no objections in place on the final design, the project was implemented, with local LAS staff kept informed of progress during the implementation phase.

Since then, our meetings have evolved into a helpful and collaborative forum, as they have with partners in Fire and Police Services. We understand that camera enforced filters are the preference for the London Ambulance service; but the challenge is that these may not be suitable in all cases and they can be viewed as punitive and ineffective in achieving the objectives. Having the London Ambulance service as a critical friend has been very helpful in understanding the importance of certain routes and access points. We have in several cases responded to feedback by amending the design or supplementing measures to make the scheme more effective and mitigate any negative impacts. We will continue to review and monitor the measures to understand how we can best amend and adapt the network to changing travel patterns post Covid and are keen to continue working with the LAS to develop schemes for the future.

We understand that navigation has become challenging for those driving ambulances owing to the changing environment during the pandemic and so we have invested in commercial technological solutions to ensure changes are made in as live a way as possible to commercial navigation providers such as TomTom, Google and Bing. This means that where mapping is streamed to a device such as an iPhone, the most up to date information is available. As the road network increasingly becomes congested through the growth in motor vehicle use, dynamic calculation of routing will become increasingly important to all drivers. However we understand that mapping in the LAS fleet does not dynamically update and is reliant on periodic updates. Our understanding is that all vehicles receive this update on a 6 monthly basis, which would suggest that at this point in the trial all vehicles should have received that update. We understand that changes are being made to the in-vehicle solution and we remain keen to work with the supplier of the system to ensure that navigation data is updated as regularly as possible to optimise the response to any incident.

We have also continued to improve signage and provide information on the layout of the schemes, to improve the ability of drivers to get to a destination inside the area. Our recommendation will be to consider further improvements to the Bowes scheme in 2022, to include an amendment of the Maidstone Road filter, removing the bollard and installing camera enforcement that will enable the LAS a further entry / exit point.

We share common objectives around the health and wellbeing of our residents. The positive effects of increased physical activity on health and wellbeing are well documented; it can help prevent and/or ameliorate a range of lifestyle related conditions, e.g. obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, some cancers, musculoskeletal issues, and poor cognitive and mental health. Prevention of lifestyle related conditions can also lead to significant cost savings within health and social care services.

Achieving a modal shift towards active travel can also help reduce the health-damaging effects of motorised transport e.g. road traffic injuries, air pollution, community segregation, noise and other crime or antisocial behaviour. We will therefore continue to seek ways to improve how we support emergency service navigation and access whilst simultaneously delivering against these outcomes.