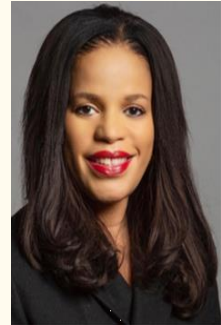




Claudia Webbe MP

Member of Parliament for Leicester East
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 07973816885

Sir Peter Soulsby
City Mayor
Leicester City Council
City Hall
115 Charles Street
Leicester, LE1 1FZ



16/07/2021

Dear Peter,

RE: Safer Streets: Healthier Neighbourhoods

I hope you are keeping safe and well. I write regarding Leicester City Council's (LCC's) plan to introduce Low Traffic Neighbourhoods to areas of Leicester East, specifically in Evington and Rushey Mead, which I broadly welcome.

I support the principle of Safer Streets, Healthier Neighbourhoods, particularly with regards to making the 'school run' safer and healthier for the children of the constituency. I look forward to working with Leicester City Council to ensure the success of this scheme, which I hope will encourage parents and children in residential areas close to schools to travel on foot or by bicycle more regularly and lead to fewer concerns over parking, congestion and pollution.

If they are to be successful, Low Traffic Neighbourhood schemes should demonstrate benefit for all residents and businesses alike. They should provide opportunities for rebalancing roads in favour of the most vulnerable users and consequently, I look forward to such measures as new cycleways, wider pavements and twenty mile per hour speed limits for all roads and particularly for those roads in close proximity to schools. I note some of these measures are proposed within the Draft Local Plan for Leicester. The local plan promises to "develop an infrastructure network of high quality, continuous cycle tracks along main road routes" and to "prioritise walking and cycling by providing routes that are safe, well connected, convenient and accessible for all including those with limited mobility", so I am disappointed to see no references to these measures in the initial Safer Streets: Healthier Neighbourhoods proposals.

I fully accept that, in addition to the likely positive outcomes for many people living on the residential roads surrounding our schools served by the schemes, there are potentially negative implications for others.

I have outlined several concerns below, particularly in relation to the lack of a proposed 'park and walk' scheme, and the absence of any parking restriction measures to serve the area surrounding St Paul's Catholic School and Krishna Avanti Primary School along Spencefield Lane. I think these issues, as well as the apparent absence of new cycleways and improved footpaths, need to be addressed if the schemes are to be successful. I hope Leicester City Council will consider them as it moves forward with the consultation process.

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Evington and Spencefield Lane

With regards to the plans for Evington, I am concerned about the absence of proposals for increased parking restrictions to address concerns raised by residents of Spencefield Lane, who have complained of parents parking across and on driveways, damaging grass verges, and behaving 'aggressively' while collecting and dropping off their children. Spencefield Lane residents have proposed several solutions to this issue. These include the implementation of parking control measures to direct parking away from areas close to the school, and 'a park and walk' scheme. Given that these issues have already been raised with Leicester City Council, I am surprised and concerned that they appear not to have been included in the Safer Streets: Healthier Neighbourhoods scheme. I believe that any proposal for safer neighbourhoods should prioritise this significant issue, which resulted in an accident involving a child last year. I fear that without these extra measures, the present proposal may lead to additional problems for residents of Spencefield Lane, as traffic is directed onto their road. I know the schools themselves would be supportive of measures to encourage more walking and cycling and including a designated 'park and walk' scheme. I have also spoken to the school about the potential to create a School Street, in other words closing the road for a short while at the start and close of each school day. I appreciate the nature of Spencefield Lane may make this seem difficult, but a solution must be established.

According to current plans, people travelling southwards to school by car along Goodwood Road will no longer be able to cut through Davenport Road, which will potentially create more congestion on Goodwood and Whitehall Roads due to the increase in diverted traffic. In these circumstances, I am concerned that the Low Traffic Neighbourhood proposal could lead to more engine idling along these roads and thus lead to increased emissions of poisonous car exhaust gasses, including carbon dioxide and unacceptable levels of nitrogen oxide, which could damage the health of people living and working along Goodwood and Whitehall Roads. Increased congestion on these roads may also slow down travel by bus – such as the 22A, which runs down Goodwood Road – disincentivising the use of this form of comparatively clean public transport.

I am also concerned as to how the traffic restrictions may affect local businesses along or just off Davenport Road, where there are cafés who will no doubt wrongly believe that that they need the passing trade of drivers travelling from Goodwood Road to Spencefield Lane and vice versa. What awareness and support will be provided to local businesses to appreciate the benefits of the scheme?

Rushey Mead

Regarding the proposals for Rushey Mead, there are potentially similar issues to those presented by the Evington schemes, which could be exacerbated by closing off (to vehicles) the through roads between Melton Road and Troon Way, and Troon way and Gipsy Lane/Barkby Road. It is possible that there will be congestion and bottlenecks in the narrow roads surrounding Gleneagles Avenue and Hardy's Avenue as drivers stop to drop off children and then are seemingly left with no choice but to drive back through residential streets. In contrast to the measures planned for Evington, I am concerned that this design could increase traffic in residential streets surrounding Herrick Primary School in particular, to the detriment of residents' health and wellbeing.



Supporting greener modes of travel

To be successful and to encourage residents to use greener forms of transport instead of their cars, it is essential that alternative modes of transport are safe and easy to use, and the local infrastructure is adapted to accommodate them. I therefore hope in time to see concrete proposals for cycle hubs, cycle parking and cycle sharing to support people who choose to switch from travel by car to bicycle.

I would also like to see an evaluation of the local streets, to ensure they can provide clear and enjoyable walking routes to local schools and to assess if pavements need to be widened for families in the designated areas to accommodate this, as well as if there is sufficient funding available for these essential measures. Additionally, if the streets are to become truly safer for children travelling to school, on foot or by bicycle, it will be necessary to ensure that speed limits in the areas included in the scheme remain at twenty miles per hour. I hope to see one day the whole of Leicester become a twenty mile per hour City. Whilst I believe you and the Council are supportive, I am concerned that none of these options are explicitly included in the initial proposals.

Risk of social division

I am also acutely aware that schemes elsewhere in the country have divided communities. Similar schemes in London and Birmingham have, for instance, been perceived by some as displacing congestion rather than decreasing it, with no positive outcome for the environment, while also damaging community cohesion.ⁱ As noted by the Local Government Association (LGA) report "Stakeholder Engagement in an Emergency: Lessons from Low-Traffic Neighbourhoods", some of these negative perceptions are a result of the poor implementation of consultations, rather than the principle of the Low Traffic Neighbourhood scheme itself, particularly the tendency by Councils to use practical trials in place of, rather than in addition to, traditional consultations; this has often increased opposition to Low Traffic Neighbourhood schemes by giving critics the impression that they are being imposed from above without the consent of residents.ⁱⁱ When accompanied by poor communication from councils, this has generated considerable opposition and social division.

The need for proper consultation

I believe this is a real opportunity to engage support. I am therefore worried about the type and extent of consultation used for this pilot. I would like to see consultation based on real engagement so that more people can realise the benefits, which could hopefully lead to a potential reduction in car use. I urge Leicester City Council to listen to the advice from the LGA, which argues that "good schemes take time and, "pandemic emergency or not, rushed designs will be weaker and may ultimately fail in time if they do not secure broad public support". Thankfully, the timetable for the implementation of the Council's Low Traffic Neighbourhood pilots should be less constrained now that the Government has adjusted its guidance to address the issue of public support for these schemes; it has affirmed that measures to relocate road space "should be taken as swiftly as possible, but not at the expense of engaging local communities."ⁱⁱⁱ I will be doing all that I can to support the rebalancing of roads in favour of people.

I would therefore be grateful if you would consider implementing a full and engaging consultation exercise, which will allow basic problems to be identified before the practical



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trial is introduced, and mitigations put in place to ensure that the pilot schemes do not cause discord within our community. Moreover, I would expect a full and proper consultation to be used as an opportunity to include proposals for the following:

- Parking control measures around Spencefield Lane and a possible park and walk scheme, to address concerns already raised with the Council by residents and indeed the schools themselves.
- Cycle hubs, cycle parking and cycle sharing.
- Streets design that ensures clear, enjoyable, healthy walking routes to and from local schools widening pavements to support this as necessary.
- Transforming most if not all streets in the designated Evington and Rushey Mead area to 20mph.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this matter. I look forward to discussing this with you further in the coming weeks.

Yours sincerely,

Claudia Webbe MP

Member of Parliament for Leicester East

ⁱ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-56927371>; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-54180647>; <https://www.kingsheathltn.co.uk/the-ltn-one-month-on-the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/stakeholder-engagement-emergency-lessons-low-traffic-neighbourhoods>.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reallocating-road-space-in-response-to-covid-19-statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities/traffic-management-act-2004-network-management-in-response-to-covid-19>.

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