

“The PFS programme has attracted a large amount of correspondence... The majority of correspondence has contained negative feedback ...”

OPEN LETTER, ISLINGTON COMMUNITY TO ISLINGTON COUNCIL: PFS PROGRAMME (LTN TRIALS)

13th October 2021

Dear Islington Council Executive Committee Members

On the evening of Wednesday 6th October Islington Council announced on Twitter (solely) that it is reaffirming its commitment to the PFS programme whilst making some changes to “*make it easier for Blue Badge holders to travel in Islington*”.

A link attached to the Twitter announcement reveals that a PFS Update Paper dated 6th October 2021 will be placed before the Council Executive meeting on Thursday 14th October. The Update Paper includes PFS programme recommendations for approval, including as above.

The Update Paper is **28 pages** long. It also has 2 appendices:

- a **34-page** *Residents Impact Statement* dated 6th October 2021, and
- a **47-page** report from Steer dated June 2021, called *People Friendly Streets Journey Lengths and Times Analysis*.

These appendices were not attached to Islington Council’s tweet. They are not easy to find on Islington Council’s website by residents unfamiliar with navigating their way around it.

Together these three documents now produced by Islington Council comprise **109 pages**. They are being submitted by one small Council team, to the Council Executive, with the pre-determined intention of approval.

OBJECTIONS:

1. We reject the crudely biased surveys and slanted data presentations that Islington Council has churned out once again in this Update Paper as its fundamental justification for the Low Traffic Neighbourhood Trials. Where are the checks and balances from within the Council on this data? Is no-one there interested in unbiased representation?
2. We are angered that thanks to its publication so close in time to the Executive meeting (at which it will no doubt be unanimously waved through) no opportunity has been provided to the Islington community to properly interrogate, challenge and counter the content of the Update Report and its appendices. This timing looks to be at best unfortunate and at worst deliberate.
3. We are appalled at the Update Paper’s begrudging approach to a disability exemption. The proposed exemption (i) has not been consulted on with disabled people (the Council has still not held a single disability focus group, in direct contravention of its own RIA) (ii) is shamefully limited to single LTN, and single vehicle (iii) makes no provision for carers, therapists, health workers and taxi drivers etc supporting disabled residents in their own homes and (iv) won’t apply for most of Islington’s disabled residents in existing LTNs, as no disability exemption is proposed where an LTN Trial has already been in place 12 months (3.3.68). Where is the input from Islington Council’s Equalities Champion, Council Leader Kaya Comer-Schwarz, on the Council inflicting 18 months of suffering on impacted disabled Islington residents?
4. We place no trust or confidence in the Council’s reporting on the 6-month residents’ objection process and will be referring this for independent review and sanction.

5. We are fed up with a Council that despite not having carried out any prior economic impact assessment of LTNs on our local businesses is still not listening to their concerns (including as voiced in 290 jointly collated business objections from in and around Highbury, and in a locally filmed business impact video). This at a time when many of our local businesspeople are still reeling from the impact on their livelihoods of the Covid Pandemic.
6. We are sick and tired of a Council that preaches at us, adopts hard-line positions where compromise options are available, listens only to what it wants to hear when we try to discuss with it what matters to us, and has consequently generated so much anger, division and hurt within the Islington community.
7. We are frustrated by a Council that responds to community objections and concerns with cut and paste wording that does not address those objections and concerns.
8. We object to the hypocrisy of a Council that has failed to lead by example.
9. We have lost confidence in a Council where there is no visible debate from within, and which listens to local and national lobbyists rather than to voting, council tax paying Islington residents and local businesses.
10. We are ashamed of this Council as an elected body, and we place no trust in its approach to these LTN Trials being fair, balanced, or transparent.

If this Labour council continues to fail to apply proper checks and balances openly and fairly to the blinkered (at best) and deliberately misleading (at worst) actions and approach (under the direction of the Executive Member for Transport and Environment, Councillor Rowena Champion) of its PFS team regarding the Islington LTN Trials, then it cannot expect and does not deserve to be re-elected by Islington residents.

At page 13 of the Update Paper (3.3.41) the PFS team acknowledges that:

“The PFS programme has attracted a large amount of correspondence... The majority of correspondence has contained negative feedback ...”.

Given this clear message from the Islington community we strongly urge the Executive Committee to:

- pause and broaden its direct engagement with the Islington community before making any reaffirmation of its commitment to the LTN component of its PFS programme, and
- insist that the proposed limited Blue Badge exemption is introduced as only a very temporary measure while a broader and more humane disability exemption trial adjustment is urgently drawn up in proper consultation and implemented.

UNITING ACROSS ISLINGTON in opposition to the LTN Trials until democracy, balance, fairness, accountability and above all real consultation are restored as a bedrock for any processes of change THIS LETTER IS JOINTLY FROM:



We are Islington



One Islington



Ludicrous Road Closures



Keep Highbury Moving



LBI Residents ('United against cruel road closures')

Islington Against Road Closures Group

Keep Highbury Moving Businesses Steering Group

SUPPORTING DEMOCRACY NOT DICTATORSHIP

TO:

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