

**OPEN LETTER to
Council Steve Curran – Leader of Hounslow Council**



**Copy to: Councillor Hanif Khan – Cabinet Member for Traffic
and Transport**

Chiswick Riverside
Conservative Councillors

Transforming South Chiswick into an Unliveable Neighbourhood

Dear Cllr Curran,

As councillors for Chiswick Riverside ward we write to express our concerns about the adverse impact that the measures announced on Monday 8th June, and confirmed in a letter to residents dated 14th July, will have on the lives of the residents of Chiswick Riverside. We append to this letter our detailed comments and suggestions that take into account the views expressed by the many residents who have contacted us. We hope that you will consider and act upon them.

We fully support measures designed to reduce the scourge of commuter rat-running and speeding, and which will encourage those residents (who are able), to make short journeys on foot or by bike rather than by car.

The imposition of far reaching and complex measures that have not been the subject of a full public consultation goes against all this Council's public declarations that it listens to and gives due attention to residents' views. It is deeply cynical to hide behind Covid-19 legislation to impose wide-ranging and arbitrary measures that do not have wide public support and which largely predate the pandemic.

It is illogical to implement measures that will force residents leaving or returning to the area by car to make unnecessary detours along quiet residential streets or indeed along already congested major roads. In responses to residents' complaints officers are unable to explain the benefits of specific measures and are reduced to arguing that the detours are not long in terms of distance or journey time. This is infuriating to residents who know that these detours are avoidable and largely unnecessary.

There are alternatives to the proposed measures and the lack of a proper public consultation has left many residents angry and confused. The council has not bothered to explain the reasons behind the specific measures and how they interlink. Most residents understand and support measures to suppress rat running and the long overdue creation of school streets. However, few believe that there is any justification for measures that will operate 24/7 and which will adversely affect so many people's lives depending on where they live in the Ward.

None of the proposed measures addresses excessive vehicle speeds - a key issue for pedestrians and cyclists. In addition, whilst the measures address north-south traffic movements across the area they do little or nothing to counter the south-north movements of the evening rush hour. The measures proposed are arbitrary and unfair in nature with significant downsides for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. The elderly and disabled will be particularly badly affected.

No traffic modelling has been carried out to assess how this complex package of measures will affect traffic flows. This possibly explains why there are no measures to deal with the evening rush-hour (see above) that accounts for 40% of the volume of traffic on some of the busiest roads. Without traffic modelling how is it possible to decide that it is essential for any of these measures to be applied 24 hours a day 7 days a week? It is unacceptable, even in such unusual times, that such far-reaching measures should be introduced without detailed modelling of their likely impact.

It should also go without saying that public money must not be wasted because ill-conceived measures have to be reversed. However, officers argue that the measures are experimental and will be subject to review (after three and six months). Surely it is better that we get things right-first-time and that residents' lives are not disrupted unnecessarily? Has any financial provision been made for the cost of reversing these measures? You will forgive us for being sceptical about the offer of interim reviews of the scheme's success.

How will the success or failure of the schemes be measured? The council has not published any information about the performance measures to be used. For example, will inconvenience to local residents be taken into account? Nor has any target been set for the increase in journeys undertaken on foot or by bike. This basic research has not been undertaken.

The base line vehicle metrics used to inform the design of the proposed measures were collected in November 2019 i.e. pre-Covid 19 and before people had adopted new attitudes to commuting, working from home, cycling and walking. As a bare minimum, new data is needed before the measures are implemented. How else can their success be measured? Would it not be sensible to introduce most of these measures when we have a better idea of how driving behaviour has adapted to the "new normal" and pupils have returned to school? The school streets should obviously be implemented, along with rush hour controls over traffic entering Hartington Road from the A316.

There has been no assessment of the current risks to road users and pedestrians and no estimate of by how much these risks are expected to be reduced by the proposed measures. In the past this has been the yard stick used to assess all proposed road improvements. Indeed, the Council has in the past justified its refusal to introduce additional traffic calming measures on Staveley Road because the road was not dangerous enough to warrant additional expenditure.

Schemes that have long been recognised as important for all residents such as the redesign of the Sutton Court Road / A4 junction have been put on the back burner. Substantial sums can be found for the pedestrian walkway under Barnes Bridge but not for the Grove Park Piazza or the redesign of the Grove Park Gardens/Grove Park Bridge/Grove Park Road junction. In addition, it appears that more controversial ideas raised by councillors such as one-way streets and play streets have simply been ignored. In the context of the latest proposals this collective amnesia on the part of Hounslow Council is quite extraordinary.

Councillors representing Chiswick Riverside Ward have long championed the need for significant changes to the road network in order to discourage rat running, reduce vehicle speeds and encourage cycling and walking. Last year we met with the Deputy Mayor of London to discuss the impact of the Hammersmith Bridge on road traffic in the area but we received little or no support from the London Borough of Hounslow until TfL funding was forthcoming.

Please do not hesitate to contact us to discuss these matters. We would welcome such a dialogue. To that end we would be more than happy to organise a private visit to the ward so that you can gain a better idea of how the proposed measures would affect residents' lives.

Cllrs Mike Denniss, Gabriella Giles and Sam Hearn

12 August 2020