

## **Merton transport inequalities**

### **Introduction**

The roads we live on, or use to get about, need to be usable for all ages and abilities. Currently, most roads in Merton are not safe and usable for large numbers of residents: most notably children, older people, disabled, and anyone wishing to walk or cycle.

As part of the Equality Act 2010, which applies to all local authorities, a legal duty was placed on public bodies and others carrying out public functions to ensure that they consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work - known as the Public Sector Equality Duty. It covers a number of protected characteristics, such as age, race and disability. The Public Sector Equality Duty and The Equality Act require councils not to discriminate on the basis of age and ability.

- “The Equality Act (2010) requires authorities to make reasonable adjustments to remove barriers for disabled people. This ... covers disabled cyclists as well as pedestrians. . .”
- “. . .Cycles are often used as mobility aids...some disabled cyclists use non-standard cycles, some do not, but are not able to walk or carry their cycle...”

Increasing population levels of walking and cycling for transport is not a “campaign” issue, but related to legal duties placed on local authorities through the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to promote public health through transport.

Much more needs to be done by the Council to not only make the roads safe, prioritise those on foot or travelling by bicycle or scooter, but also to reduce air pollution which is harming our children.

## Unequal transport, casualties and low active travel rates

Mode share of trips originating in the LB Merton

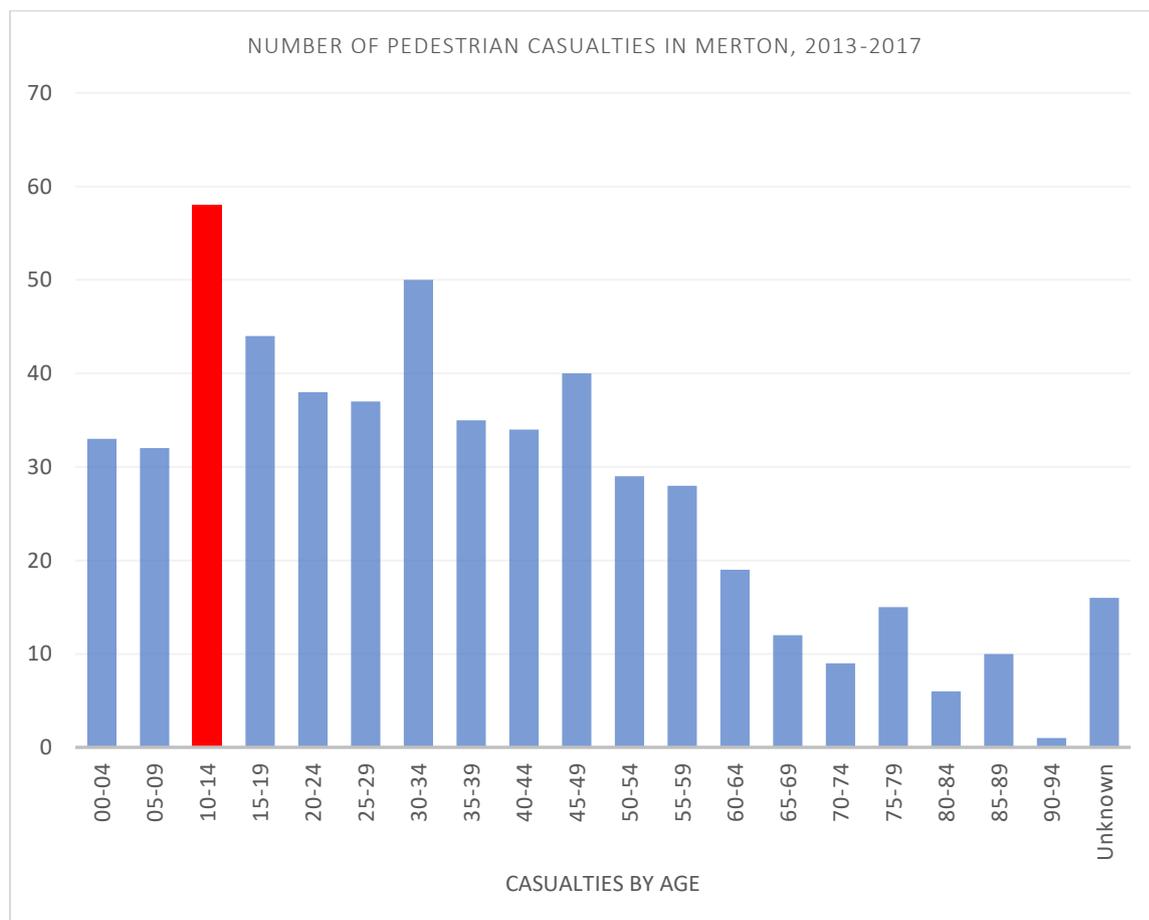
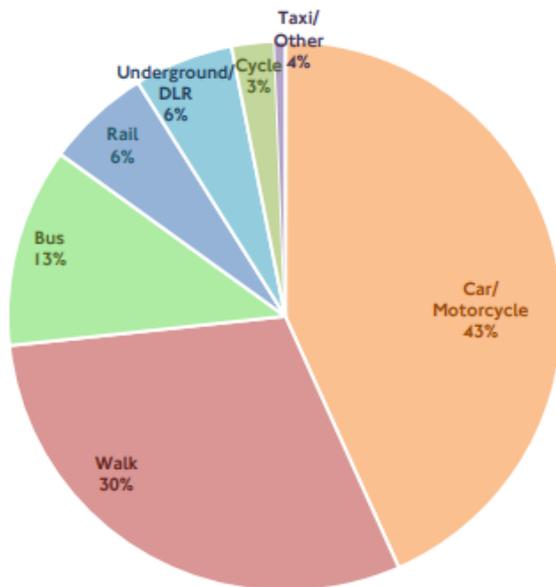


Figure 1: Merton pedestrian casualties 2013 – 2017

Children aged 10 to 11 years old are the age group most likely to be injured while walking in Merton.

Children should not have to pay for a mistake with their lives or injuries. Speeds and traffic volumes on roads where children live or might live need to be substantially reduced through design, legislation and enforcement. Speeds should be no more than 20 mph for all residential streets (and ideally much less) and priority should be with pedestrians, cyclists or children playing out. The nature of children will not change; the road environment must.

Children will, by nature, make unpredictable and spontaneous movements, run out unexpectedly and wobble as they learn to ride a bicycle. Children are also less able to judge speeds and negotiate with drivers. Merton’s road environments need to be radically changed to ensure that they are usable for children of all ages. In order to be safe for all, road environments must not require behaviours and skills which are outside the cognitive, developmental, behavioural, physical or sensory development of the youngest in our society.<sup>1</sup>

#### Danger posed by respective vehicles in Merton

	0	No. of Casualties			
		Casualty Severity	1 Fatal	2 Serious	3 Slight
Vehicle Type (Banded)					
1 Pedal cycle		0	2	12	14
2 Powered 2 wheeler		0	5	54	59
3 Car		2	53	318	373
4 Taxi		0	3	16	19
6 Bus/coach excluding minibus		1	1	24	26
7 Goods vehicles		2	8	37	47
8 Other		0	0	8	8
Sum		5	72	469	546

Figure 2: Pedestrian casualties Merton 2013-17 showing vehicle in conflict with pedestrian

In the last five years in Merton, 541 people have been injured while walking, and 5 people have been killed.

<sup>1</sup> Schieber, R.A. and Thompson, N.J., 1996. Developmental risk factors for childhood pedestrian injuries. *Injury Prevention*, 2(3), p.228.

432 people have been injured while cycling, and 2 people have been killed. These high cycling casualty rates are combined with low cycle mode share of 3%<sup>2</sup>.

This level of casualty rate is unacceptable. It could be significantly lowered by reducing traffic and giving greater priority to people crossing roads.

Many solutions are cheap and effective or could be done as part of maintenance or other schemes. Some solutions are discussed below:

- 1. Crossings at roundabouts**
- 2. More crossings generally to enable walking and cycling.**
- 3. Side road junctions**
- 4. Contraflows/Allow two way cycling on one-way roads.**
- 5. Protected cycle routes on main roads**
- 6. Modal filters on residential roads to create liveable neighbourhoods**
- 7. Pedestrianise and remove Wimbledon Gyratory**

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<sup>2</sup> <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/merton-june-2017.pdf>

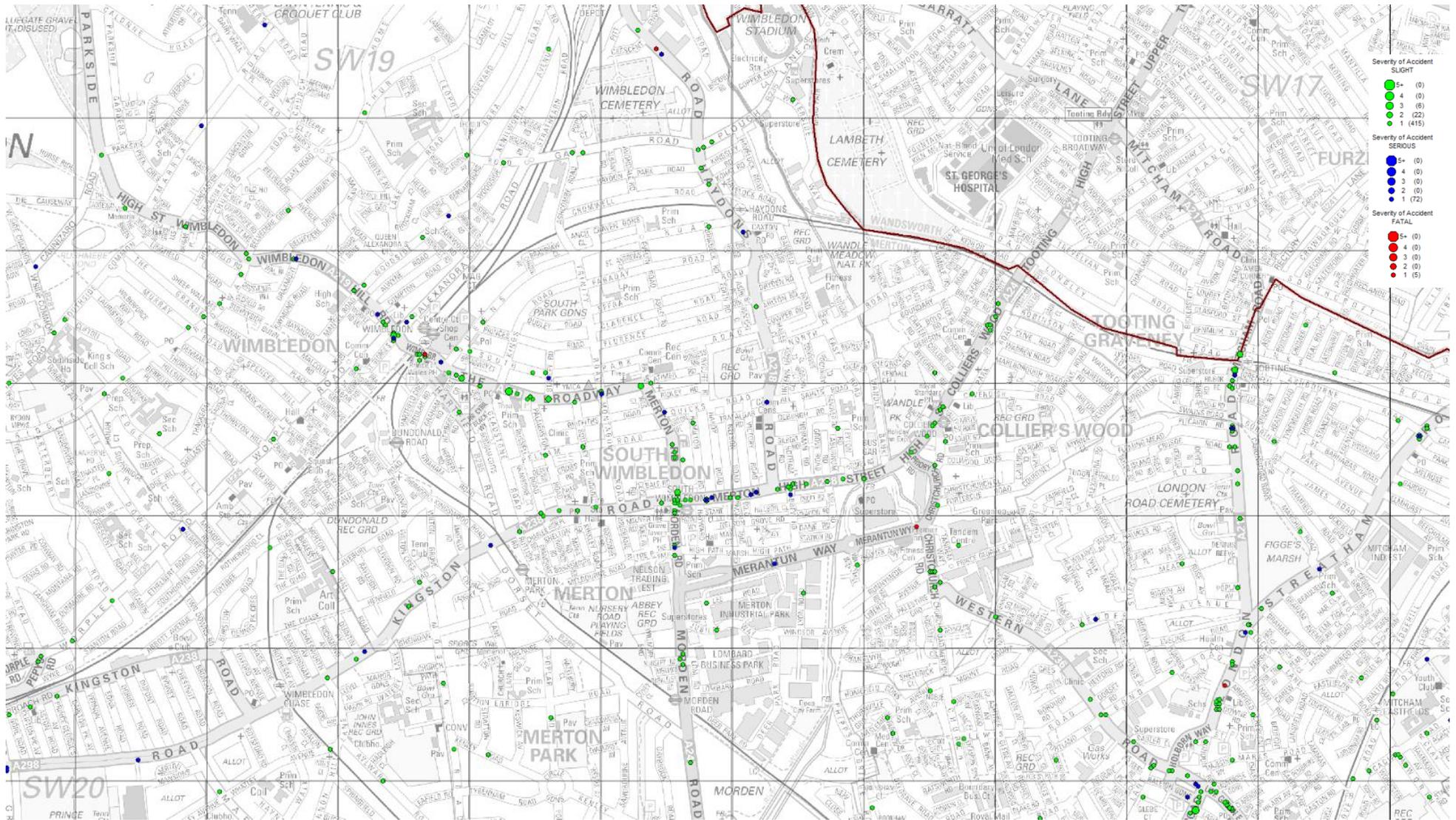


Figure 3: Pedestrian casualties, area of Merton. 2013-2017. Key not to scale. Note the number of deaths in red

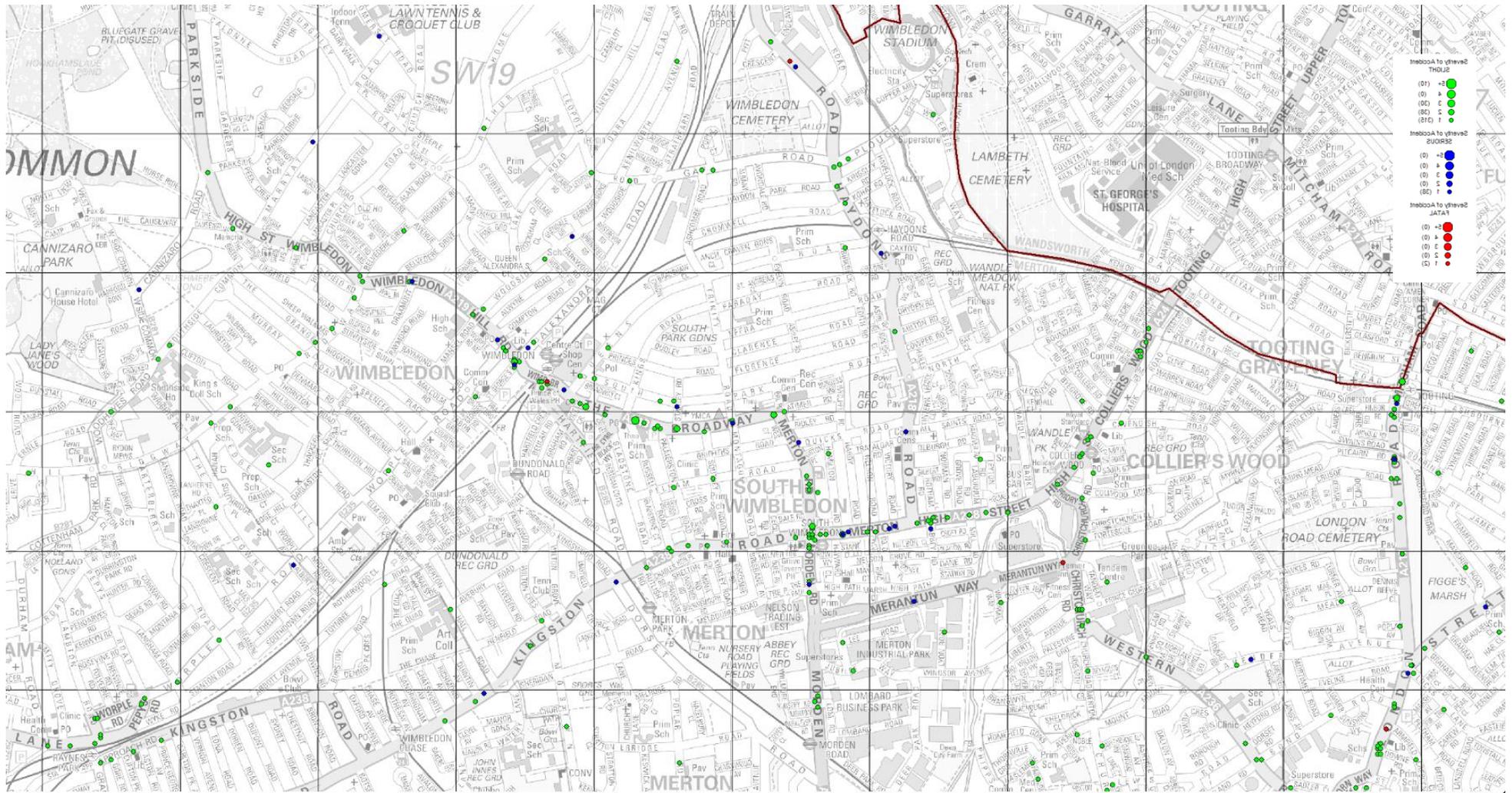


Figure 4: Cycle casualties, area of Merton. 2013-2017. Key not to scale. Note the number of deaths in red

## Issues and solutions

### 1. Crossings at roundabouts



Figure 5: Mother and child stranded between two streams of polluting traffic. Priority is with turning motorists making walking unpleasant, scary and inconvenient. Wimbledon Hill.



Figure 6: Older pedestrian waits to cross on desire line. No priority to those most in need. Vast tarmac space for drivers. In urban settings local authorities should be designing 'compact' or 'continental' style roundabouts. Wimbledon Hill.



Figure 7: Prioritising pedestrians and cyclists. Parallel crossing on each arm of this roundabout to enable people to cross safely. Road safety scheme. Tuckton Roundabout, Bournemouth



Figure 8: Horseferry Rd/Lambeth Bridge Roundabout, London. Zebra crossing on each arm.

## 2. More crossings generally to enable walking and cycling.



Figure 9: Parents and children unable to cross, Ridgeway where several children have been injured



Figure 10: Even the common is dominated by traffic and pollution in places with roads cutting across it causing severance.

### 3. Side road junctions

The most common conflicts resulting in serious injury to cyclists occur at side road or staggered junctions<sup>3</sup>.

A conventional side road configuration seen in Figures 11 and 12 which has recently been reinstated on Lake Road as a school safety scheme, at great cost to the tax payer, does nothing to prioritise the path taken by those walking along the footway. It contravenes Highway Code Rule 170; “watch out for pedestrians crossing a road into which you are turning. **If they have started to cross they have priority, so give way**”

Even with tight turning radii, the visual priority remains firmly with the turning traffic because the line of the kerb follows the direction of travel of turning motorists, rather than the direction of travel of those continuing their journey along the footway. By making pedestrians cede to motorists through design, highways convention puts children (and other footway users) at a disadvantage at every turn.



Figure 11: Newly configured side road junction, Lake Rd, Wimbledon. Driver assumes priority on turning into the newly reconfigured junction – a “safe route” school children? Kerb line follows path of motorist to ensure visual priority for driver not the pedestrian (in contravention with Highway Code Rule 170)

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<sup>3</sup> Transport for London, Surface Transport, Pedal cyclist collisions and casualties in Greater London, September 2011



Figure 12: Driver assumes priority on turning into the newly reconfigured junction, school route, Lake Road

Given the established effectiveness in terms of comfort and safety of pedestrians of continuous footways<sup>456</sup> continuous footways shown in Figure 13 this should be used widely in Merton to reduce casualties and promote walking.

Due to the clear visual priority, continuous footways are inherently 'inclusive' giving better physical protection, priority, safety and comfort to children, disabled people and the elderly in line with the Equality Act. In addition, continuous footways mean pedestrian journeys are not repeatedly interrupted by having to cede to turning traffic at side roads, so they improve journey times for footway-users.

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<sup>4</sup> Garder, P., Leden, L. And Pulkkinen, U. et al, 1998 'Measuring the Safety Effect of Raised Bicycle Crossings Using a New Research Methodology, Paper No. 98-1360, Transportation Research Record 1636; reviewed in Pratt 2012

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.vehicularcyclist.com/copenhagen1.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Steer Davies Gleave. 'Public Realm Scheme Evaluation: Clapham Old Town, Van Gogh Walk, Final Report', 2011

As noted by a disability group they “have the effect of making drivers think they are crossing a pavement (rather than pedestrians crossing a road) resulting in drivers giving way to pedestrians. . . This is excellent and could be extended to other future schemes.”<sup>7</sup>

Good design – continuous footways or side road zebras – which give legal and/or design



Figure 13: Recent design, Walthamstow, London: The kerb line follows the path of the pedestrian to provide visual priority to pedestrians (in line with Highway Code Rule 170) and reduced vehicle turning speeds so also assisting people cycling as well as walking.

priority to those crossing and as shown in Figure 13 is no more costly than car-prioritising design; certainly not in the long run when one considers the cost of casualties and inactivity, than car-prioritising design seen in Figures 11 and 12 .

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<sup>7</sup> DOTS Disability Community Interest Company ‘Christchurch Road Improvement Scheme Consultation – Phase 2’, 6th October 2015

4. Contraflows/Allow two way cycling on one-way roads. Cheap and effective. Add “Except cycles” sign



Figure 14: People having to cycle on footway because Council has not permitted two-way cycling and/or fear of motor traffic. Lingfield Rd, Wimbledon



Figure 15: Two-way cycling prohibited. Lack of crossing at key desire line. Lingfield Rd/Common/Village



Figure 16: Allowing two-way cycling on one-way streets. Tooting

## 5. Protected cycle routes on main roads



Figure 17: Light segregation or simply pushing out the parking is a cheap effective way to protect people cycling

## 6. Modal filters on residential roads to create liveable neighbourhoods



Figure 18: Modal filter. Cheap and effective. Can easily be trialled on a 12-month basis to see how residents take to it. Sheffield example

## 7. Pedestrianise and remove Wimbledon Gyrotory

The area around Wimbledon station area is polluted and unpleasant. It's currently the kind of place you want to get out of as quickly as possible. Pedestrianising some of the route to South Wimbledon and removing the gyratory so Wimbledon can be accessed by bicycle should be considered.



Figure 19: Space is cluttered with signals and polluting vehicles. Note the number of pedestrians crossing on red because timings are so favourable for motor traffic leaving people waiting too long



Figure 20: Vienna pedestrianised to enhance the economy and create a pleasant place

Maria Vassilakou spoke recently at the TfL Healthy Streets Conference recently. She was talking about how they are pedestrianizing Vienna. “The city should be a place you want to live. Creative, talented people were fleeing because of air pollution and congestion. A city has to be good for children to move freely and play. You need to give people something to see, water fountains, pleasant spaces, otherwise it’s a transitory non-place. A place to leave.”

## **Electric vehicles**

A number of electric vehicle points are being installed in the area. While they may be part of the mix, installing them on the footway can make life more difficult for those walking by reducing footway width, or obstructing the footway.

Evidence suggests levels of Particulate Matter (PM), which is extremely harmful to human health, is not reduced by using electric vehicles. Due to their increased weight (electric vehicles are on average 24% heavier than their conventional counterparts), electric cars produce about the same particle emissions as gas and diesel cars.<sup>[1]</sup> Electric vehicles are not a panacea to car-use but also need to be recognised as a contributing source of PM.

In addition to being a source of PM, EVs share other downsides with conventional motorised vehicles:

- EV occupants are sedentary so the electric vehicle promotes inactivity and, as with all sedentary motorised modes, is associated ill-health.
- EVs are space inefficient and contribute to congestion.
- Widespread transition to EVs will place greater demands on electricity generation.
- When parked, as with all motor vehicles, they are taking up space which could otherwise be more usefully and efficiently used for the benefit of the whole community e.g.: for cycle tracks, parklets, widened footways or play areas
- Due to their speed and weight, EVs can cause harm to others on the road.
- EVs can undermine efforts to encourage active travel; they contribute to a hostile environment, and can act as a deterrent for those walking or cycling.
- They require charging points – these should be located on the carriageway and not on the footway reducing space for pedestrians but also potentially causing obstruction particularly for those with pushchairs or using mobility aids.

Nevertheless, some motor vehicles will continue to be required. TfL’s ‘Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Location Guidance for London July 2017 identifies London’s key EV user groups as:

1. Residents and visitors without off-street parking
2. Services and deliveries
3. Local businesses
4. Car club EV fleets

EVs should not be seen as a mechanism for continuing car-dependence; they do not constitute an acceptable alternative to increasing walking, cycling and public transport use.

The main focus for to improving equality and health of Merton residents will reside in the Council enabling children and others to walk and cycle.