

Living Streets Merton's response to LB Merton's LIP3 Consultation

April 2019

SUMMARY

Merton Living Streets is the local group of the Living Streets, working to encourage more people to use active and sustainable forms of transport. We work closely with Transport for All, Merton Centre for Independent Living, The Campaign for better Transport and Merton Cycling Campaign.

The foreword to the LIP includes encouraging statements about reducing vehicle journeys, discouraging people in cars from using them, support for Vision Zero, and claims the LIP "focuses on delivery of tangible improvements for walking and cycling".

The actions and targets set out in the LIP fall far short of delivering.

The LIP3 also proposes developing features that directly or indirectly promote cycling and walking, including the highly desirable Borough-wide 20 mph (albeit it is being "rolled out" without consultation or timetable, and in a piecemeal fashion in vastly the most expensive way.)

Other features promoted as formal 'Objectives' are Liveable Neighbourhoods and Vision Zero. A Healthy Streets Policy and Permeability are mentioned as desirable.

However LS is concerned that the LIP as drafted does not comply with TfL's requirements for this document. There is little in the LIP3 in terms of practical actions or programmes that demonstrate that Merton will reach the ambitious goals set out in the Mayor's Transport Strategy. What proposals there are lack ambition and demonstrate a failure to grasp the objectives stated.

The targets set fall significantly short of MTS requirements with just a 5% fall in vehicle km (against a mayoral target of 10-15%, with the largest reductions needed in outer London boroughs such as Merton). Likewise, just a 5.5% reduction in car ownership is forecast by 2041 – again this seems unambitious for a borough where car ownership is above the London average. Merton seems to be ignoring Climate Collapse and the need for Clean Air.

There is a particular lack of ambition in the list of "cycling-related infrastructure that could be developed". This includes a crossing that would require people on pedals to dismount and a series of shared use paths. Shared paths provide a poor experience both for those cycling and those walking. People on pedals dismounting are unable to do this if they have restricted movement; if they can dismount they present an unstable hazard to themselves and other people. On adapted tricycles and cargo bicycles it's just not going to happen. We know that Merton people have a poor falls experience.

Merton should not waste time, money and resources where it is ineffective for most people, especially if it is to encourage a significant shift away from car use.

Merton needs to encourage more people to travel healthily. And soon.

We acknowledge that funding is limited but additional funding for ambitious projects is available through TfL's Liveable Neighbourhoods programme.

The LIP needs to be revised to include:

- More ambitious targets for reduction in car ownership and driven km
- A commitment to segregated space for cycling on main roads within the borough
- Reprioritisation of funding to create low traffic neighbourhoods, focussing on areas with a high concentration of schools.
- Development of a larger high quality Liveable Neighbourhood bid.
- Abandoning cyclist dismount signs.
- Getting rid of mayoral cars and paying a standard expense rate per mile travelled in the Borough, regardless of transportation mode.
- A commitment to urging TfL to reduce waiting times at signal controlled crossings, as TfL are doing elsewhere. The old and infirm shivering in poor weather as they try and cross roads near Morden and Wimbledon Stations is a disgrace.

More detailed comments on the proposals within the draft LIP3:

20 MPH -The Borough-wide 20mph is to be delivered by 2022 for a budget of £530k; whether this budget is adequate seems doubtful. The Wimbledon Town Centre 20mph zone/limit is disgracefully understated and consequently ineffective.

TARGET SHORTFALL

Historically the Borough has insisted on spending money in ways which involve the least number of local residents or businesses. A story of spending most where the least number of people will benefit? Croydon Road? Green Lane – Lower Morden?

CIRCULAR TOURS

The Borough should concentrate on making it pleasant for people to walk (or pedal) around the Borough. It should improve things for residents and businesses if people could get around pleasantly from open space to open space, creating a Green Necklace and a year round Tourist effect, not just in Tennis Week in Wimbledon.

Getting to Vestry Hall, or any civic jewel, should be a delight, not a nightmare, whether you are on foot, pedal or mobility scooter. The population is ageing. The life expectancy differential East/West is shocking.

NO PROGRAMME

This LIP does not have a programme for delivering a safe and pleasant joined sustainable travel network.

It should demonstrate an argument that for a safe and pleasant cycle network across the Borough a programme of infrastructure improvement is needed in line with Merton's Air Quality Action Plan Action 25 & 26.

Without a programme, when the LIP claims 'it will be helping to open up places, historic sites and public transport to everyone', these are just empty, uninspirational words.

INADEQUATE PROPOSALS FOR 'INFRASTRUCTURE SCHEMES' -Item 5.40 of the LIP lists 'Cycling related infrastructure schemes' and suggests that there are others, but these (listed below) are the total included in the LIP. Merton Living Streets has arranged them in an order that might prove logical if a Borough cycling infrastructure delivery plan existed.

But this limited list, although welcome, reflects a LIP that is not backed by a conscious programme of installing bicycle infrastructure. So the LIP3 list displays a markedly inefficient way of meeting delivery targets.

- *The pedestrian phase at Windmill Road/Croydon Road junction.* This is claimed to complete a 'cross-borough route' but it is purely a disconnected section that crosses the Borough boundary with Sutton.
- *Commonside West – shared-use path on town green.* [LIP Fig.10 Potential Cycle Paths]. This is an important link in creating the real 'cross-borough route' of the previous item. If programmed as such it would then be benefitted by Merton's Liveable Neighbourhood scheme if the Western Road Corridor option is chosen.
- *Lavender Park (Western side) path upgrade and potential widening* [LIP Fig.10 Potential Cycle Paths]. This also relates to the two items above being potentially part of the same cross-borough route, if programmed for interconnection as such. There is no mention of it being converted to shared-use.
- *Figges Marsh-Widening of existing path and conversion to shared-use* [LIP Fig.10 Potential Cycle Paths]. This in isolation appears not to be part of any wider connectivity strategy.
- *Path Improvements between Whatley Avenue and Grand Drive* [LIP Fig.10 Potential Cycle Paths]. (Note that Coppice Close and beyond is not mentioned!) This could be part of useful extension of the Colliers Wood to Wimbledon Chase Quietway.
- *Bushey Road (just west of junction with Martin Way) Convert footway to shared-use path.* This is necessary to complete the Bushey Road shared-use path, and may have some justification in relation to the Quietway of the item above. Is it emblematic that the cycling provisions along Bushey Road pour people on pedals back into the busy road? No wonder people think cycling is dangerous! It's not cycling or walking that's dangerous its the motor vehicles.
- *Bushey Road Toucan crossing.* This could be beneficial if programmed as part of a Raynes Park/Morden connectivity strategy. And the crossing timings for pedestrians should always be noted locally.
- *Extend the path from New Malden to Raynes Park via West Barnes Lane.* This completes Kingston's 'Mini-Holland' link to Raynes Park, although to continue cycling through Raynes Park requires engineering works.
- *Cannon Hill Common – Introduce a shared-use path across the common.* We have highlighted the inadequacy of LIP Fig.10 'Potential Cycle Paths', but as a green space connection this might be expected to be on it.
- *Introduce wheeling ramps across various footbridges.* This is of benefit to standard bicycles, but not to non-standard bicycles, cargo bikes, shopping trolleys, mobility aids, mobility scooters, pushchairs or wheelchairs.

SHALLOW THOUGHT?

To get more people active, to reduce air pollution and to promote healthier lifestyles, the council intends to prioritise the delivery of improved walking and cycling facilities.

To this could be added that walking improves productivity and gives freedom to travel cheaply. However LIP3 seems to favour interventions which it says 'discreetly nudge people's behaviour ... indirectly promoting' the benefits of walking and cycling.

The Objectives for Car clubs and Electric vehicle charging points come into this category. There is no provision for, or encouragement to people on/in mobility scooters, wheelchair tricycles, wheelchairs, e-bicycles, electric assisted delivery cycles and tricycles to recharge their vehicles, when there are clear Public Health gains to be made by encouraging more

activity. There is no technical reason that these important and growing users and uses are ignored in the charging points programme.

LIP3 lacks a formal Objective of providing a safe and pleasant Borough walkable/pedalable network backed by a current and longer-term delivery plan.

87% of people owning a car also own a bicycle; 100% of people have access to at least one pair of shoes.

All of Merton would win socially, healthily, and economically if Merton were somewhat more emphatic with its proposals.

NETWORK QUALITY IN USE

Merton's LIP3 not only needs to define a Network Infrastructure to meet its targets but also needs to sign up to the recognised quality expected, i.e. a safe and pleasant Borough cycle network to Continental standards, which:

- is safe and pleasant end to end (borough boundary to borough boundary); (one criterion for 'pleasant' is to have a good well-maintained surface without puddling and without chicane barriers)
- conforms to the latest London Cycling Design Standards.
- conforms to the Cycle Action Plan's Six New Quality criteria for cycle routes.

Adopting LS and MCC suggestions will long term reduce the chronic cost of highway maintenance, and improve life for all.