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Sent via email

16 February 2023

Dear Mr [REDACTED],

## **Liveable Streets Stage 2 Consultation**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the consultations on the London Borough of Tower Hamlets' Liveable Streets schemes. We acknowledge and appreciate the email you sent on 10 February 2023, which confirms that Tower Hamlets Council will accept a full response from Transport for London (TfL) by 22 February, after the consultations close on 12 February and 19 February for the Old Bethnal Green/Weavers and Brick Lane areas respectively.

Although we welcome the use of data and options presented in your Stage 2 consultations, we were not sufficiently notified of these consultations. We would also like to draw your attention to the misrepresentation of TfL's position, which occurred through the publication on your online consultation page of an officer statement which did not reflect proper consultation of TfL and did not represent the views of our organisation.

Our data shows residents in Tower Hamlets prefer active travel options. The borough has the third lowest rate of car ownership across London boroughs with 71 per cent of residents not owning a car.

Tower Hamlets has an above average proportion of people choosing to use active travel modes with 81 per cent walking, cycling, or using public transport on average on a daily basis as observed in 2017/18 to 2019/20. We expected this number to reach 84 per cent by 2021. This was not achieved due to the impact of the pandemic, but is expected to reach that level by 2024/25. The next target is 89 per cent by 2041. The removal of active travel infrastructure

and encouragement of private vehicle use in the borough could prevent this target from being met.

Recent studies undertaken of similar Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) in London demonstrate their success in reducing traffic on roads within the LTN, with little impact on traffic on boundary roads<sup>1</sup>. Reducing vehicle usage provides long-term benefits, including reducing road danger, one of the main barriers to active travel, and improving air quality. More walking, cycling and public transport use supports wider health benefits for all residents.

Since the schemes you are proposing to remove had not been in place for at least 36-months we could not draw any meaningful conclusions as to their impact on road collisions. Your consultation material also states that air quality data is inconclusive as to whether the schemes have improved it. Our view is that the schemes should remain in place for longer to have a conclusive view of their impacts.

Tower Hamlets' Transport Strategy, published in 2019, talks about poor air quality and the resulting low average life expectancy, as well as high levels of obesity in children living in the borough. It states that much of this is related to motor vehicle use - and many of those vehicles are passing through the borough. LTNs are designed to avoid through traffic, and in turn reduce overall vehicle use.

Considering all the above, we oppose your proposals to remove LTNs in Tower Hamlets.

We have provided a consultation response, below, on each individual scheme.

### Bethnal Green Road

The cycling infrastructure on Old Bethnal Green Road provides a high-quality alternative route for cyclists that is safer than the nearby, much busier A roads. Removing this infrastructure (as set out in Option 1) would therefore increase road danger, putting greater numbers of vulnerable road users at risk of serious collisions. The benefits of the LTNs (branded as 'Liveable Streets' in Tower Hamlets) - such as improved safety for vulnerable road users, particularly younger residents who live and play on local streets - are significant and should not be disregarded.

We believe the benefits of the LTN, particularly the improvements made to safety through the delivery of good quality walking and cycling infrastructure,

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas, A. and Aldred, R. (2023). Changes in motor traffic inside London's LTNs and on boundary roads. Available at: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/13Nsm\\_GFdH6CplPpOZ7hbhLZScgqCAP7ZGI0xi4qDqA/edit#heading=h.e9amstptpyy/](https://docs.google.com/document/d/13Nsm_GFdH6CplPpOZ7hbhLZScgqCAP7ZGI0xi4qDqA/edit#heading=h.e9amstptpyy/)

are complementary to our bus network. While we acknowledge the concerns raised about potential negative impacts on bus journey times, in line with our Vision Zero approach to road danger we firmly support retention of the LTN on Old Bethnal Green Road (Option 2) to promote active travel and reduce road danger, traffic congestion and air pollution in the area.

We have offered both funding and resources to progress further bus priority measures on Hackney Road, to address any impacts caused by the LTN. These measures would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the bus network, especially for bus passengers who may not have access to, or the ability to use, other modes of transport. We support an integrated approach that delivers improvements for both the bus network and for active travel. With more people walking, cycling and using the bus, the less congested local roads will be for residents whose journeys necessitate the use of private or commercial motorised vehicles.

#### Weavers including Arnold Circus

The removal of the Columbia Road/Gosset Street LTN would have a significant negative impact on safety and beneficial active travel by allowing through traffic and by removing the high-quality, pedestrian-friendly urban realm area created outside the Birdcage pub. This LTN is particularly beneficial during the hours that Columbia Road market is in operation, when the area sees significant numbers of pedestrians – many of them families with young children. The road closures in this LTN have created a safer route for cyclists, including those using the signposted cycle route known as Quietway 12. For these reasons, we strongly oppose the removal of this LTN.

The use of low-cost planters on Arnold Circus has successfully reduced traffic levels and prioritised safety for walking and cycling, while creating some operational issues for buses. We note the positive impact of the restrictions on both local crime and antisocial behaviour, creating a more pleasant environment for local residents, particularly women and girls. If transport officers conclude the planters are not a long-term solution, we would like to offer further funding and engineering support to create urban realm enhancements that retain the traffic restrictions, work better for buses and emergency vehicles, and are acceptable to local stakeholders. Removing the current traffic restrictions is not supported by TfL.

#### Brick Lane

Brick Lane is a vibrant cultural hub with high footfall, that attracts visitors from all over the world. Tower Hamlets Council has already responded to feedback from some local businesses about reducing the camera-enforced closures from five to two. The remaining timebound closures are essential for pedestrian safety and enhance the attractiveness of the area for visitors and residents alike

– creating potential economic benefits. The consultation materials present a weak rationale for removing the remaining two cameras, with a heavy focus on car reliance – which is neither supportive of resident and visitor safety or the economic interests of Brick Lane. Removing the remaining traffic restrictions is therefore not supported by TfL.

For further information, please contact my colleagues Jasmit Jabbal in the Local Communities and Partnerships team [REDACTED] [\[REDACTED\]@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@tfl.gov.uk)) and Stylianos Rigakis in the Investment Delivery Planning team [REDACTED] [\[REDACTED\]@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@tfl.gov.uk)).

Yours sincerely,

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