

Bath & North East
Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

Public Consultation, Autumn 2020

Liveable Neighbourhoods

Better health, environments and spaces for people and business

for Camden



MAKING LIFE BETTER FOR THOSE LIVING ON OR NEAR CAMDEN ROAD

Camden Residents' Association September Bulletin

www.camdenresidentsbath.org

A Liveable, Low Traffic Neighbourhood in Camden soon.

This is our goal. After the spring Covid lockdown the Council admirably has kick started its initiative again. It is now consulting on their strategy to introduce Liveable Neighbourhoods (LN, for short, and also known as Low Traffic Neighbourhoods) in Bath, as well as changes to parking and charging points for electric cars. There will be at least one LN and Camden needs to ensure it is on the list of candidate areas.

There are many benefits for our residents if Camden were selected including much quieter roads, clean air and increased safety. All these are things we've wanted for many years. No more 'a neighbourhood divided by a road'.

The Council needs to understand the strength of local opinion on the proposal and your views are being sought. The Council's consultation website can be found at <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/liveable-neighbourhoods-consultation>.

Please complete the survey as this is an opportunity to change the environmental and social wellbeing of our neighbourhood. The consultation is only open until the **14th October** – not long, because a trial might start in **early next year**.

What follows is a longer, more detailed version as it might look for Camden and its close neighbours.

Introduction

Traffic dominates Camden Road and, to a lesser extent, its neighbouring streets. Most of the public realm is given over to vehicles; the space that is left for pedestrians and cyclists is narrow, often obstructed, and uncomfortably close to speeding vehicles.

Residents are tired of all the through-traffic, congestion, noise, and pollution. They fear speeding drivers and mourn the degradation of the residential community environment. They want change.

Over the years several measures have been introduced in Camden Road to discourage and slow down

motor traffic: speed bumps, narrowing of the road with parking spaces, residents' parking, a 20mph limit (ignored by many drivers) and... that's about it. It has helped, but not nearly enough. We need a new approach - at last November's CRA AGM this was unanimously supported.

1. Reducing the traffic

The CRA has committed to campaign to reduce the amount of traffic on Camden Road. We are clear on this aim. We are also clear that we do not want to see neighbouring streets suffer any lasting increase in traffic as a result.

The CRA therefore supports the Council's proposal to introduce the concept of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTN's) to Bath, and is lobbying for Camden to become the first such neighbourhood in the city. We have secured 146 signatures thus far (nearing half the residences)

An LTN allows local residential traffic to move in, out and around the neighbourhood, but prevents through-traffic at a specific point. This is normally achieved by introducing a 'modal filter' on the primary through-road in the neighbourhood, with complementary control measures also being introduced on adjoining streets to ensure a coherent, joined up set of measures to deliver an overall reduction in traffic volumes across the whole neighbourhood.

A modal filter can take a number of forms but, in most successful UK examples of LTNs, it tends to take the form of what is popularly known as a 'bus gate' - of which we have two examples in Bath (partial at Podium, always at Pulteney Bridge). A bus gate allows buses (obviously, but importantly) to pass through it, also emergency vehicles, council service vehicles, pedestrians and cycles - sometimes taxis too. So it's not a hard stop, like a bollard. However, it does block some types of vehicles - cars, vans, coaches etc - the bulk of the traffic. When associated measures are included on adjoining streets, the result is a significant reduction in traffic volumes across the whole neighbourhood - not just on Camden Road, but across all streets within the LTN zone.

There's plenty to discuss in the details of how a bus gate solution might be implemented, of course, but we support the central idea - that Camden Road will be closed to most through-traffic, allowing it to function more as a safe, attractive, residential, community street - and that, in turn, the whole Camden neighbourhood will be less dominated by traffic.

2. Will it just displace the traffic to elsewhere?

We share the concern that any transformation of the Camden neighbourhood would make life worse for people in other neighbourhoods. Candidly, 'Will it mean more traffic in my neighbourhood?'. It's a good question. However, there is strong data-backed evidence from the increasing

number of LTNs in the UK and in western Europe that traffic is ultimately reduced in general, across the board. Initially, it is true that some traffic, particularly through-traffic, is pushed out of the LTN zone back onto main roads. But not all of it. A significant proportion of that traffic actually evaporates over time as a result of what is known as 'modal shift' - as people rethink their journeys and switch from cars to other forms of transport such as buses, walking and bikes. It is instructive to note that recent surveys show that around half of all car journeys in Bath are less than two miles in distance, some of which could be converted into active travel (walking, cycling, scooting, for example). And, of course, it becomes a virtuous circle; as traffic levels fall, other means of getting around become easier and more attractive.

3. Opportunities, beyond a bus gate

The bus gate is central to effecting a material traffic reduction in the Camden neighbourhood. And although it is the idea that tends to grab the headlines, it's far from the full story. We ultimately want to achieve three things for our community:

- reduce the overall amount of traffic (this is what the bus gate is all about - stopping the volume of through traffic from outside the neighbourhood)
- calm the traffic that is left (ensuring that traffic generated from within the neighbourhood is safe and courteous, making our streets safer)
- improve the social and environmental fabric of the streets (seeing our streets as just that - residential streets at the heart of our community, not roads just to get from A-B).

In achieving these aims, there are of course different tools for different jobs. Reducing traffic is the purpose of the bus gate. Calming might involve, for instance, more reminders about the 20mph speed limit, or raised areas at junctions to reduce speeds and cater better for pedestrians wanting to cross over. And improving the public realm might see more seating at key points, on-street cycle parking, more planting and growing areas (think parklets and raised beds perhaps).

We have the opportunity to transform our local environment. And it starts with reducing the traffic.

4. Is there a downside?

If there's a downside for Camden residents, it's simply that they too will be subject to the bus gate so, although they would still be able to drive around most of the neighbourhood as before, they would not be able to drive through the bus gate - so, depending on where they are and where they want to go, they may need to choose a

different route. But we think this is a small price to pay for the prize of a more attractive, safer local neighbourhood. We will, of course, still be able to walk, cycle and use the bus - as many local people already do. And with less traffic, it will be a more pleasant, safer experience.

5. Putting it all together; the CRA position

The CRA Committee believes Council's Liveable Neighbourhood strategy is very worthy of support. The CRA has made its support clear to its 229 subscribers and this leaflet will be pushed through every front door in Camden.

The challenge will be to work closely with the Council on the detail of its design and implementation. For it to work we need as many people as possible to understand and support its aims, and to contribute to the solutions. It is almost inevitable that there will be some issues; some may just be teething troubles and require us to adapt and adjust; others may be more substantial. The good news is that if we work closely with the Council we can make a start with an initial temporary experiment and, where necessary, adapt and evolve it later.

The CRA welcomes the opportunity to work with the Council towards implementing a Low Traffic, Liveable Neighbourhood for Camden.

CRA Committee, September 2020

Finally a comment from a fellow resident helping us with this work:

"Of course Camden area residents will have differing priorities and may feel more or less well off with an LTN; they will be affected in different ways by reduced traffic because of the way they lead their lives as well as where they live.

Much depends on how the basic idea is implemented – something all residents can influence. However, today we have an unequal situation - some residents (particularly those who cycle and walk a lot) bear more of the risks to their safety and other effects of traffic.

An LTN rebalances this inequality. Bluntly it takes some advantages from car users and gives some back to pedestrians and cyclists. But then, most of us fall into at least two of those categories!"

ML, motorist/pedestrian"