



*Image courtesy: All pictures come from social media*

## Managing Streets During Lockdown: London

Friday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020

The second in our series of sessions on this topic looked at the practicalities of changing streets. We heard about actions being taken in other parts of the UK, discussed the usefulness of a strategy – so everyone agreed on what was being done, why and how and looked at the powers highway authorities have to change their streets

### Speakers

Dinah Bornat, ZCD Architects

Phil Jones, PJA

John Dales, Urban Movement

Simon Phillips, LB Lambeth

### Main points:

- There are three main types of intervention – changes to local, residential streets to aid play, non-travel exercise and low-level socialising; changes to town centres and high streets to allow people to use their facilities whilst physically distancing; and improvements to cycling and bus routes to allow for increased, safe, use.
- There could be different timetables for these interventions. reallocating parking or carriageway space to allow for safe queuing outside shops can be done right now, while more dramatic, potentially longer-term changes would benefit from more time consuming, careful consideration.
- Tactical changes right now are one thing, but people are also interested in how to capture behaviour change for longer term priorities.
- As lockdown eases, streets may become the spaces where healing can occur – providing a neutral, equitable and calming place away from potentially stress filled school, work or home environments.
- Highway authorities already have all the official powers they need to change their streets. But they also need money, political will and a clear, agreed idea of what they are looking to achieve, to take action.

- Two suggestions to speed up processes where a Traffic Management Order (TMO) is needed. First, by using an experimental order, consultation can take place after instillation, not before. Second the DfT have said that consultations can be carried out on websites, not through notices printed in local papers.

### Notes from speaker presentations:

#### Dinah Bornat

Streets right outside homes is likely to become a place where healing can occur – especially for children who may find post lockdown school strained and their homes stressed.

Many people are too scared to go out at all now, not wanting to use lifts and common areas or interact at all with others. We need to help people move beyond their fear and start to interact and live outside their home again. Streets around homes are going to be important spaces for recovery and getting back to normal life.

#### Phil Jones

Value and opportunity – unlocking the benefit and behaviour change we are seeing now. cycling has been suppressed because of traffic. We are now seeing cycling increase – 300% seen in Kent. Maybe because the barrier to cycling created by traffic has been lifted?

Social distancing locally for pedestrians, for example around particular shops in a town centre, is quick and relatively easy to do. This type of intervention seems generally popular and uses fear of infection as the driver for action. Point closures on low traffic streets are also relatively easy. But taking space over a route to create cycle lanes, including junctions, is much harder.

Brighton seafront. The road is now closed totally. This was done very quickly, was it the first in UK? Brighton were looking at options of changing the transport plan – but realised this would take a couple of weeks. Instead Brighton looked for cheap, temporary and reversible change – easier to change, easier to get support for.

Nottingham City Council are considering changing their ring-road so it can be used for cycling. They are looking at conning off a lane, which can be done without a traffic order, as it is just changing the way the lane is being used.

The Scottish Government has announced funding for pop-up active travel infrastructure. Sustrans will produce guidance for this. Berlin and Netherlands have produced similar guidance (see links below). Wales looking at doing something similar to Scotland. Wales is also looking to change the law to create default 20mph limit, wherever there is street lighting. This will take couple of years, but they are interested to see if councils will start using traffic orders to make 20mph using any Covid rapid response fund available.

CIHT have produced a Blog post (see link below). In it Mark Strong (and others) suggest using experimental traffic orders (TMO in London). This would mean the consultation period takes place during implementation of scheme, not before.

## John Dales

Traffic Acts and Regulations can be hard to read and use. The language can be confusing and amendments makes following the documents even harder. John suggests looking at the CHIT article, which includes references to key legal documents. Also he suggested looking at:

- Road Traffic Regulation Act
  - Sec 14B explains temporary powers.
  - Sec 122 on what powers highway authorities have which allow them to do things on their roads.
- Highways Act 1960
  - Sec 65 sets out what can be done to take space for cycle tracks.
  - Sec 66 relates to taking space from the carriageway to widen footways, for example putting barriers up.
  - Sec 75 of the Act says Highway authorities can vary the width of the carriageway.

The Government has relaxed need to advertise traffic orders in local newspapers. Hasn't changed much else.

Road Traffic Regulation act 1984 sets out different regulations for UK and London, but idea of temporary, experimental, emergency actions are covered with details of how quickly things can be done. Authorities can take parking bays, lanes etc to create more space for peds right now – using water filled barriers authorities can do it right now, don't need to ask anyone's permission.

But it is also important to think about corridors, focus on buses and cycling – enabling people to travel sustainably and actively. In town centres and high streets greater Authorities should focus on enabling distancing for pedestrians to safely 'use' facilities within the place. (complex in high streets with bus lanes).

Timing of changes in high streets is important. Grabbing space now for peds outside shops might seem simple and easy to do. But if bus stops are involved would this have to move too? And would that need the bus shelter etc having to move at some point? This type of situation is harder, and needs time and money to do.

We tend to manage our highways based on peaks – we are unlikely to get back to historic peaks anytime soon. So in many places even when traffic starts to build again, there may be opportunities to reallocate space from traffic more permanently, for example where 2 lanes given up to a junctions – this may not be needed for a long time.

John suggested that the needing to use Traffic Management Orders is not necessarily the time main restriction to quick action. Money, and the need to take time to properly think through longer term changes and get political agreement, may be harder barriers to overcome.

## Simon Phillips

We have the powers we need, but we need money to make changes. And there is an element of risk in what we are doing. Lambeth getting clear steer from politicians that it is ok to take some risk.

Lambeth needed a strategy, so everyone knows what they are doing and why. Simon says preparing a strategy has been very helpful, and now people understand what they are trying to do. Writing the strategy only took a few hours to right, but been very beneficial to get everyone clear on what they are doing and getting everyone to sign up.

Lambeth are being careful about the language they are using. For example, they are talking about public health and road danger reduction, not specifically about cycling.

Lambeth's first interventions are footway widening. These can be done easily, but not necessarily cheaply as have to hire kit and have it regularly check it.

Public transport not going to get back to capacity soon. So 'opportunity' to see more cycling and make streets accommodate this better.

They are also speeding up plans for low traffic neighbourhoods in Oval and Brixton. These will be permanent, they are using traffic orders, but brought forward much quicker than expected.

Lastly, Lambeth are setting up local delivery systems to help small businesses, e.g. using cargo bikes to help economy recover longer term

They are doing things in stages e.g.– right now they are creating more pedestrian space, medium term they will move forward with low traffic neighbourhoods. Longer term they are looking at cycling infrastructure and helping businesses recover.

### **Robert Nicholas**

Robert posed a number of questions – looking for advice on how he and other Highway Authority officers might take action. He would like to see some guidance, or answers to his questions, from an official source. He feels this will help give confidence to officers, councillors and communities alike and help all involved work together better.

Here are some of the questions Robert suggested would be useful to answer:

- How can we help councillors and politicians work together on this, coordinating and not giving out mixed messages?
- How should they deal with resistance from local residents and businesses? For example Hackney would like to create no traffic neighbourhoods, preventing rat running. But find even temporary changes receive complaints.
- How should the relevant Acts and Regs be summarised and presented so everyone (public, councillors, officers) understand them and agree on what they say?
- How can delays in implementation be reduced, particularly when schemes reach construction? Will the furloughing of TfL staff make delays longer?
- Where is the money coming from to make changes in response to the Covid-19 pandemic?
- Can clarity be given on TfL processes, priorities and decision making?
- Can clarity be given on who is responsible for what?
- Lastly, can clarity be given on what it is, or is not, ok to do?

## Resources mentioned:

Ipsos Mori poll on how people are feeling:

- <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/majority-britons-uncomfortable-sport-music-bars-coronavirus>

Playing Out has a webinar on next week:

- <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/webinar-making-streets-safer-now-and-for-the-future-tickets-103230996690>

The CHIT blog:

- <https://www.ciht.org.uk/blogs/local-active-transport-helping-address-impact-of-coronavirus/>

The Berlin Guide: (Two links)

- <https://mobycon.com/updates/a-guide-to-temporary-bike-lanes-from-berlin/>
- [https://philjonesassociates-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/phil\\_pja\\_co\\_uk/EUeDMRq8iGxIjazw952yMXoBbQUAICpmQBensw6Dy4ygQ?e=i1kDKh](https://philjonesassociates-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/phil_pja_co_uk/EUeDMRq8iGxIjazw952yMXoBbQUAICpmQBensw6Dy4ygQ?e=i1kDKh)

Lambeth Committee Report:

- <https://moderngov.lambeth.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=6585>

Highway Act and Regulations mentioned by John Dales

- Highways Act 1980 Sections 65(1), 66(2), 75(1)  
Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 Sections 14b and 122

Information on how people are behaving, for example how often people are traveling

- <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/196793/open-data-launches-track-global-responses/>