

THE ISLINGTON SOCIETY

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Response to Islington's Draft Transport Strategy

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Summary

Much of this document is in line with the views of the Society, although we differ in the extent to which some of the more specific ideas meet the stated aims. There is however a serious error. The writer has clearly not fully understood the Mayor's Transport Strategy and as a result the proposals fall short of the goals set by the Mayor.

The document needs to be clear what action the Council can take directly to achieve its aims, and what requires legislation or the support of the Mayor/GLA. It also needs to be sharpened up: unsupported assertions need to be backed up with hard facts. The policies do not adequately address transport future trends.

Introduction

The statement that at 81% (down from a peak of 84%, though the Strategy does not mention this) of journeys by sustainable mode, Islington already meets the Mayor's target for 2041 is at best misleading. It is true that the headline figure in the MTS is 80% but that is broken down to 95% in central London, 90% in Inner London, and 75% in outer London. As very little of Islington is in outer London (if defined as zones 3-6) the MTS target for Islington should exceed 90%. [Camden is aiming for 93%]. Consequently, this plan with its target of 87% by 2041 fails to meet the MTS.

The changes at Archway and Highbury Corner have been disastrous for public transport users, particularly those living or working in Haringey or Hackney. The scheme for Clerkenwell Green is also flawed, partly because consultation has been inadequate. Later in the document an ignorance of the state of bus services is displayed.

We strongly support the Healthy Streets improvements to pedestrian routes along "desire lines" (the phrase should be reinstated), and cycle lane provision where it can be introduced without compromising bus services.

Fans of Barnard Park might take issue with the statement that Highbury Fields is the only significant open space in the Borough. It is not the only assertion that has a high degree of subjectivity. "Significant" needs to be defined.

The focus on Islington overlooks the fact that most transport in the Borough is made to and from places outside it. We recommend that the Council has a policy to reduce the amount of traffic entering and transiting the borough in co-ordination with adjacent and outer London boroughs

The reference to 60 bus routes is also misleading, since it includes night buses. When we lost the valuable 277 we gained the N277: under this measure they are treated as equal. There were more 277s in an hour than N277s in a day.

We support the direction of travel of the Vision & Aims, provided that it truly addresses the MTS targets.

It is not helpful that bus reliability is measured in terms of average speed. Although there is some limited evidence in the public domain of bus speeds following the introduction of the CGZ in 2003, all the data published by TfL, LTUC etc. over the last twenty-five years measure reliability in terms of excess waiting time for high frequency routes and percentage on time for less frequent services. The plan hopes to recover from just over 8 mph to 9.2, but there is nothing in the document to suggest what action the Council will

take to achieve this.

59% of people walking or cycling 20 minutes a day by 2041 seems a rather soft target.

The 1994 Islington UDP established a road hierarchy (policy T1). Although the last Mayor subsequently axed this from the MTS, we believe it should be retained in Islington, as the City of London has done successfully. It provides clear guidelines for action to prevent rat running and other inappropriate road uses.

Walking principles

As noted above, these should refer to the ability to follow desire lines. Green man time should be extended at signalised pedestrian crossings, particularly where it has been reduced (e.g. Highbury Corner). The requirement to provide alternative pedestrian routes where the footway is closed for construction work should be rigorously enforced. The Council should follow its stated policy of reducing pavement clutter, as well as seeking opportunities to increase the space available to pedestrians.

Cycling principles

These should make clear that walking has greater priority and that infrastructure changes should incorporate improved access to and for buses. There should be a strategic review of the effectiveness and impact on streets of bicycle hangers. Control is needed of the growing proliferation of freely located and abandoned cycles for hire, including e-cycles.

Freight

Control should be exercised over the proliferation of domestic small individual retail package deliveries that are damaging to the environment and to air quality and cause congestion. This is not 'Freight' as covered by the section of the Draft Strategy (p.22)

Objective 3: efficient (policy 3A)

We support this policy but the detail is important. As elsewhere, if Newington Green is to incorporate two way traffic and closure of one arm, it should be the eastern arm, being the best for buses. We are wary of the Old Street scheme. It could result in delay to southbound buses as has happened on the approaches to Highbury Corner, although there is more scope to address such issues if they arise and the interchange time is unaltered.

We strongly support managing the need to travel (policy 3B), and reducing car ownership (3C). We support the idea of a cargo transfer centre (policy 3D)

4. Green & Clean

Similarly we support objective 4 policies, "Green & Clean". There should be a commitment to clean air walking routes, as in the Camden Transport Strategy.

5 Meeting demand

This section needs to be strengthened. Islington should be pressing the Mayor (i) to restructure fares to encourage use of spare capacity rather than severely overcrowded tubes & trains; (ii) to give priority to good interchange; (iii) to tackle congestion. Bus lanes should be restored and their hours of operation extended.

In supporting policy 5A, reopening Maiden Lane station, the plan should make clear this is not at the expense of Caledonian Road & Barnsbury but an additional station.

5C.. A Crossrail2 station at Angel but no mention of Essex Road, yet the document acknowledges that the Victoria line is severely overcrowded between Highbury and King's

Cross. The only scheme advanced to address this was the Hackney-Chelsea station at Essex Road. Given the experience of Crossrail and the widespread view that towns and cities outside the south-east have been starved of major infrastructure projects, the Council should be lobbying for more modest schemes which target serious overcrowding or which would facilitate housing growth close to places of work. It should not be supportive of HS2. The folly of trying to drive a new railway into Euston has resulted in the realignment of Crossrail2 away from Essex Road.

6 Accessible

Policy 6A is motherhood and apple pie, but what is needed most is a restoration of bus stops closer to the point at which the majority of passengers arrive. The document refers to the need to reduce street clutter, but does not promise that the council will cease to be proactive in adding to street clutter whenever advertising revenue is on offer.

We strongly support the move away from petrol and diesel cars, and the provision of charging points for electric vehicles. But they must be sited on the carriageway (or a new build-out into the carriageway), not adding to the clutter the Strategy says is unacceptable. The Strategy needs to set out what action the Council will take to reduce clutter.

7 High Quality

The document claims that bus reliability has improved but offers no evidence. There are more diversions, more temporarily closed bus stops and far more instances of the driver being instructed to wait to even out the profits. Highbury Corner has added five minutes to bus journeys – the junctions around the arboretum are so close together that traffic backs up beyond Highbury Grove, rendering the traffic lights there impotent.

8 Sustainable development

We strongly welcome policy 8A- car free developments.

9 Vibrant and 10 Fair

No-one could argue with these concepts, but why encourage car clubs. Cars might carry 4 people, buses can take 90 and at the peak of Mayoral support for them their average occupancy was 15.1.

11 Smart

This is fine as long as ownership of an electronic device does not become a necessity to use a bicycle or public transport. The Council should resist the loss of any Countdown data at bus stops: bus passengers are entitled to information in the same way as those using the tube, where *every* station has information about the next trains.

What else is not addressed

There is no mention of how the council will tackle autonomous drive cars and vans (or buses, even).

Taxis produce a disproportionate volume of traffic for the 2.9% of journey reported on p.13, but there is no policy for taxi provision/reduction.

Nor is there a policy to limit Uber and any other personal use chauffeured vehicle transport.

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