



Councillor Claudia Webbe

Executive Member for Environment and Transport

Labour Member for Bunhill



Tabitha Tanqueray
Cycle Islington
By email

1st December 2017

Town Hall
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Dear Tabitha,

Re: Islington's delivery of cycle infrastructure

Thank you for your letter on behalf of Cycle Islington dated 2 November 2017, and for your further email dated 6 November. I have already provided a holding response to your 2 November letter, which is attached for ease of reference.

I share your concerns regarding the recent fatalities resulting from incidents at Camden Road and Pentonville Road, and indeed all cycle fatalities. No one's life should be endangered as a result of their commute to work or a leisurely journey, and every casualty is a tragedy that we must investigate and prevent from repeating.

I am also concerned that you feel Islington Council is doing less than it can to improve conditions for cyclists on streets within the borough, whether managed by the Council itself or by Transport for London (TfL). I can assure you that Islington is a cycling friendly borough, and that the Council takes its road safety responsibilities extremely seriously. Despite the council having had almost 70 per cent of its Central Government funding cut since 2010, we have delivered many significant cycling improvements and remain committed to doing more. In order to demonstrate this, I have addressed each of your points below.

Vigil, 8 November 2017

I share the frustration of cycle campaigners that cyclists continue to be injured and killed on London streets. My comments in advance of the vigil were published by the Islington Gazette on 31 October:

<http://www.islingtongazette.co.uk/news/cycle-protesters-to-hold-die-in-outside-town-hall-over-death-of-jerome-roussel-in-pentonville-road-1-5259575>

In summary, I agreed that more needs to be done, and I have repeatedly challenged the Mayor of London to tackle safety concerns on TfL's roads, such as Pentonville Road, where the council does not have the authority to make changes. I committed to making cycling as safe and easy as possible in Islington and I have made clear that we will not rest until every road is safe, and that we stand with those who are also working hard for change.

Strong, proactive cycling agenda

Islington Council has an extremely strong and proactive agenda for traffic reduction, cycling and walking. As you know, Islington was the first borough to introduce a borough wide 20mph limit, and we are working with TfL to extend this significant road safety measure to the TfL road network, to help prevent fatalities and serious injuries like the one that occurred earlier this year. We have worked closely with the Mayor of London and TfL to improve conditions on the TfL Road Network (TLRN) and major roads, and to deliver safer cycle routes on quieter roads, and we will continue to do so.

In addition, in my recent response to the draft Mayor's Transport Strategy, you will see that I have urged the Mayor of London to go even further in promoting walking and cycling and reducing car use and pollution, and I have stated that Islington Council is committed to making its next transport strategy a traffic reduction strategy. I have also incorporated many suggestions that were put forward by both the London Cycling Campaign and Cycle Islington. The response can be found here:

<https://www.islington.gov.uk/roads/highway-services/transport-strategy>

Main road tracks / TfL and cross-borough roads / removal of gyratories

Islington Council has played a central role in putting the revolutionary transformation of Archway, Old Street Roundabout and Highbury Corner onto Transport for London's agenda. We campaigned for a decade and took the lead on developing a feasible design for Archway. This recently completed scheme has delivered segregated cycle tracks and far better conditions for both cyclists and pedestrians, a brand new public space and an overall revitalisation of the town centre. We are committed to enabling the scheme to be reviewed and where there are improvements to be made the Council will work closely with TfL to do so.

Old Street Roundabout is due to follow soon, also with segregated cycle tracks and an exciting new public space. Highbury Corner is deep into development and is likely to also get the go-ahead very soon.

Transformational schemes such as these are difficult to achieve, but we have not backed down from the challenge because we know that no matter how safe every side street might be, cyclists and pedestrians will still die if we ignore major junctions and gyratories within the borough.

Quietways / modal filtering / segregation

Quietways are an important part of making cycling safer. We are pursuing a range of quietways, and have secured support from TfL on a number of these. We will therefore be developing a number of routes soon and turning in-principle support into committed funding, and actual physical improvements.

Penton Street / Pentonville Road / Amwell Road and Old Street / Clerkenwell Road are two schemes currently in development where modal filtering is likely to be an important part of the proposed solutions. Clerkenwell Green and Central Street are further ambitious schemes currently being designed and delivered to improve conditions for cycling and walking, and I believe Cycle Islington has welcomed schemes of this nature.

There are sections of cycle friendly and/or fully segregated cycle lanes in a number of roads in Islington, including Hornsey Road, Skinner Street, Margery Street, Owen Street, and Bunhill Row. As stated earlier there are also segregated cycle lanes at Archway and also a more creative segregation with lighting along a stretch of Stroud Green Road (underneath the railway bridges). Work has also

begun on the last section of the North-South Cycle Superhighway, which runs through Islington and includes segregated cycling. Full cycle segregation is also planned for Old Street and Highbury Corner as part of the gyratory removal work, and we are also planning for segregation and/or substantial traffic reduction on the Old Street to Clerkenwell cycle route.

I am sorry to hear that despite our regular meetings you feel that the Council is not listening to concerns raised by Cycle Islington. Where funding has been made available by TfL for the delivery of the Mayor's Vision for Cycling, this has been limited to the measures required to deliver the Cycle Level of Service, as prescribed by the London Cycle Design Guidance. However, I am confident that the current Mayor of London's new Healthy Streets approach set forward in his ambitious new Mayor's Transport Strategy, will help us to deliver wider-reaching improvements in Islington. The Quietway and Central London Cycle Grid schemes currently under development are evidence that this approach is already unlocking more dynamic proposals for Islington's key cycle routes.

Balls Pond Road / Cycle Superhighway 1

You have specifically mentioned Balls Pond Rd on Cycle Superhighway 1. This is a boundary road, and we are working closely with our neighbours Hackney Council (who manage the road on behalf of the two boroughs), and with TfL to reach a solution here. It is not correct that the Council has caused delays to finding a solution at Balls Pond Road. The Council has provided constructive feedback to its partners, and has proposed alternative designs for the route. We are actively working with London's Commissioner for Walking and Cycling, Hackney and TfL to find a technically feasible design solution for this link. TfL is currently undertaking further options assessment and traffic modelling, which I am confident will lead to a solution that meets the aspirations and standards of a high quality Cycle Superhighway link.

This location highlights that it is not always best to opt for segregation regardless of local circumstances. Together, with Hackney and TfL we have had to consider the limited width of the road and the safety of cyclists travelling east or west on Balls Pond Road (if they cannot use the segregated facility). In fact, these are the same kinds of barriers experienced in some of the different proposals put forward by Cycle Islington. In a dense place like Islington, adequate space and funding rarely exist for segregated solutions. In terms of the outcome of the CS1 link at Balls Pond Road, we will together with TfL and Hackney develop a design solution that is safe for cyclists.

Nags Head Gyratory

You have also mentioned the Nags Head one-way system, probably the most complex traffic system in the borough. The Council continues to work closely with TfL to secure a solution here for pedestrians, bus passengers and cyclists and which also supports local businesses. As was successful in Archway, we have tried to help TfL to identify a solution that would allow them to install two-way working and significantly safer facilities for cyclists. In the Nag's Head this has been proven extremely difficult considering the high volume of traffic along these key arterial roads.

To achieve real change in this area, a certain level of compromise is likely to be required, but we remain committed to achieving substantial improvements in the Nag's Head for pedestrians, cyclists and bus passengers.

Quick wins and minor schemes

In your additional information you provided a list of 'quick wins' that had previously been submitted by Cycle Islington. I want to reassure you that the Council remains committed to incorporating many of

these into our cycle improvement plans for the borough. If Cycle Islington's list of quick wins are not part of the monthly meetings with Council staff then I will take this up and ensure that it is. I am also happy to review the progress of these when we next meet.

Bike hangars

I discussed the Council's proposed model for the delivery of a borough-wide programme of bike hangars at my quarterly meeting with Cycle Islington on 11 September 2017. At this meeting I explained the reasons for the charge for space within bike hangars. I also understand that Cycle Islington were consulted as part of the regular monthly meetings it holds with the Council's transport staff. All things considered £2 a week can be deemed good value for an in-house service and will not create a barrier for the uptake by residents who would wish to use the facilities to obtain convenient, secure, covered storage for a bike that will be in regular use.

As you are aware other boroughs were able to roll out large numbers of bike hangars using funding from the TfL cycle parking fund. Despite our repeated requests, we were provided only a fraction of this level of funding. We have used our limited resources to continue to enhance the provision of secure on-street cycle stands and as you know we implemented a trial, which was hugely successful.

In the past we prioritised our efforts, limited funding and staffing resources to Council estates providing covered, lockable, secure bike storage to the many residents on our estates and we have worked with other social housing providers to encourage them to do the same, as a result, we have a range of bespoke designs based on the available space and nature of many of our Council estates. In total we have provided over 600 secure, covered, lockable bike spaces on our Council estates.

In order to advance and make greater progress on the roll-out of Bike Hangers in significant numbers on our public streets and highways we have announced our own scheme (managed and maintained in-house), and a business model that takes into account the long-term management and maintenance as well as sustained growth. Simply put, we have decided not to wait for funding to become available to provide a subsidised scheme. We recognise with government cuts and the current funding climate that waiting will not be realistic to meet demand.

I do not believe that the relative cost of car parking permits to bike hangars is an appropriate comparison. Islington Council was the first local authority to introduce parking charges based on the emissions from vehicles, a policy that supports my ambition to reduce dependence on private cars and to reduce the negative impact these cars have on air quality. Still, the Council cannot charge so little for use of bike hangars that the continued provision and expansion of the service is threatened, and the reality is that it is much cheaper for a local authority to provide and maintain an empty car parking space than a secure cycle parking facility.

Islington lagging behind the Mayor of London

As outlined earlier, I do not believe it is an accurate reflection of the efforts or the successes that have been achieved in improving cycling in Islington to suggest that Islington Council is in any way lagging behind the Mayor of London and TfL.

On the contrary, I have urged the Mayor of London to go further than his already ambitious draft Mayor's Transport Strategy has set out to do, and working together Islington Council and TfL have begun the mammoth challenge of transforming Islington's most difficult gyratories and junctions.

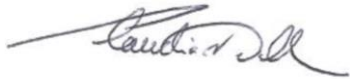
I have taken leadership of not only Islington's own programme of cycle improvements, but have worked side-by-side with the Mayor of London to take responsibility for challenges that are strictly speaking outside of the Council's scope. I meet personally with representatives of Cycle Islington to ensure that we are responding to issues you've raised.

Conclusion

I hope that the information above is helpful in demonstrating the substantial effort that the Council is making to increase the number of cyclists and to make it much safer for all. In terms of cycling and cycle safety, there are many achievements that the Council has worked hard for but equally there is more that can be done.

I look forward to continued positive engagement with Cycle Islington.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Claudia Webbe', is positioned to the left of a vertical line. The signature is fluid and cursive.

CLlr Claudia Webbe
Executive Member for Environment and Transport
Islington Council

Cc Cllr Richard Watts, Leader Islington Council

Appendix: Holding response from Cllr Webbe to Tabitha Tanqueray, sent Friday 3 November

Hi Tabitha,

Many thanks for your email and letter on behalf of Cycle Islington.

I acknowledge its contents and will provide a much fuller response shortly.

In the meantime it would be helpful if you could clarify which Cycle Islington suggestions have not been progressed or put forward by Islington Council, you refer, for example to the Local Implementation Plan programme but do not mention the initiative or scheme put forward.

As you know I meet regularly with Cycle Islington, which is something I introduced to enable Cycle Islington to liaise directly with the Leadership of Islington Council.

To be clear Islington is fully committed to Cycle Superhighway One (CS1) and to schemes involving Balls Pond Road. We have also asked the Mayor of London and TfL to secure cycle and walking improvements and safety on its roads that pass through the borough. Our deepest condolences go out to those pedestrians and cyclist whose lives have been lost on dangerous TfL roads like City Road, Pentonville Road and Camden Road.

Without the campaigning efforts of Islington Labour improvements at Archway would not have been realised. Equally without Islington's sustained efforts, planned improvements would not have been realised or prioritised in relation to Highbury Corner, Old Street and Kings Cross. The funding for all these schemes are held with the Mayor of London/TfL but they have been led and designed in partnership with Islington. For example, we fought hard for full segregation at Old Street. The only Gyratory Removal scheme that we have not yet won support for is the one at Nags Head. Our success on securing Gyratory improvements far exceeds all other boroughs. We are campaigning hard for cycle, waking and safety improvements at other major dangerous hotspots like Holloway Road, Pentonville Road, Camden Road and City Road.

Equally, as you know I am fully committed to the removal of traffic on Old Street covering my own ward of Bunhill leading through to Clerkenwell Road.

Islington is fully committed to enabling more space for walking and cycling and we work closely alongside our neighbouring boroughs, which like ourselves are Labour run. Equally we also work closely with the Labour Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan and meet regularly with the Mayor of London's Commissioner, Will Norman and with the Deputy Mayor for Transport, Val Shawcross.

Islington helped shape the Mayor's draft Transport Strategy to date and is fully committed alongside the Mayor of London to active travel, healthy streets and reduction in motor traffic and tacking pollution across Islington. I do not accept that Islington Labour have shown little desire or ambition to address cycling and walking improvements across the borough. As and when the Mayor's Transport Strategy is approved and the new London Plan agreed we will detail a new Islington Transport Strategy which will more readily define, our strategy in respect of walking, public transport and cycling and update all of our existing strategies. It is precisely because of our actions, strategies and policies why Islington has the lowest car ownership as compared to the whole of London and indeed nationally. When car ownership has gone up elsewhere Islington continues to go down. Equally, Islington has called on the Mayor to implement a diesel-free London by 2025 and Islington was the first borough to implement a 20mph on all borough roads and remains the only borough to have this enforced by the police. Islington has introduced a significant number of HGV/Lorry bans. There is always more that we can do.

Whilst I acknowledge the vigil and demonstration being held by the London-wide campaign group called 'Stop Killing Cyclists' being held outside Islington Town Hall to coincide with the inquest into the death of Jerome Roussel on Pentonville Road, it is not true to claim that Islington has control of Pentonville, it does not. The road is entirely controlled by the Mayor of London/TfL.

There has never been any suggestion by either the Mayor of London, Will Norman or colleagues in neighbouring boroughs that Islington is not doing its part to contribute to improvements in walking and cycling. Indeed in recognition of Islington's work and progress and forward vision in terms of such initiatives like healthy streets and help in shaping the Mayor's draft Transport Strategy, Islington's Archway Improvement was featured on the front cover of the Mayor's draft Transport Strategy and also it's summary documents.

As you know the funding for cycle improvement is not held with boroughs and instead is held by the Mayor of London. The funding formulae introduced by the previous Conservative Mayor significantly disadvantaged Islington as it was based on road size/length, we are working hard to get this overturned so that Islington can access its proper share of funding to secure the necessary improvements for cycling and walking. Under the existing funding formulae, Islington is the smallest borough and consequently receives the smallest pot of funding.

In the meantime, we are delivering what we can within our limited budgets and constraints. In terms of bike hangars we prioritised our delivery of secure, covered, lockable cycle storage to Council Estates to meet those who are more vulnerable and in greatest need of support. Following a sustained campaign by Cycle Islington and others we agreed the delivery of Bike Hangars on our highways, roads and streets, removing where necessary car parking places and to be implemented as and when funding became available. Due to the slow supply of external funding we recently consulted with Cycle Islington about running an in-house 'Bike Hangar' self-funded system allowing the Council to more quickly roll out Bike Hangars to meet demand. We made clear that in order to do so we would not be able to subsidise the scheme in the way other boroughs were able to do so.

I will arrange a fuller response but hope the above is helpful in the interim.

I have also copied Amanda Russell who looks after my diary so that we can organise an extra and additional meeting with me to discuss the very important issues raised in your email and letter.

Many thanks

Cllr. Claudia Webbe
Executive Member for Environment & Transport

London Borough of Islington
Labour Councillor for Bunhill Ward