

LB Hounslow third Traffic Local Implementation Plan

Public Consultation Response by FORCE

January 2019

Introduction

Friends of the River Crane Environment (FORCE) is a local charity founded in 2003 and with 568 members (as of December 2018). Our key interests are in the community and environmental value of the River Crane catchment corridors. In LB Hounslow these include:

- the main Crane corridor for around 5km between Crane Park and Little Park/Cranford Park
- The Lower Duke's River – that links the River Crane in Twickenham with the River Thames in Isleworth
- The Upper Duke's River – that links the River Crane at Donkey Wood with the River Colne to the west
- The Longford River – that links Feltham and the Upper Duke's corridor with the Royal parks and the Thames in and around Hampton

These corridors are already of considerable value as walking and cycling routes through LB Hounslow, linking residents with major open spaces and urban hubs both within and outside the borough.

There is also though considerable scope for them to be improved and for key blockages to be removed, with their public profile increased to deliver a step change in the public use and appreciation of these corridors and their associated open spaces. We have identified in this document where and how these works might be delivered with key partners.

Observations from LIP Data

The LIP brings together some very interesting and enlightening information about the current status of transport and health in LB Hounslow. There are some disheartening data on existing transport use and associated public health issues in LB Hounslow – with the worst conditions being in the west of the Borough where FORCE's interests lie. We have picked out the following from the data presented:

- Heathrow is recognised as being a major travel destination for the west of the Borough. Heathrow employs 76,000 people and at present only 0.9 per cent cycle to work and over 60 per cent travel by car. This is before the numbers of passengers are even considered (73 million passed through Heathrow in 2014). These figures are damning of Heathrow's green travel credentials and, having tried to cycle/walk to Heathrow ourselves, they do not surprise us. It is a relatively short journey and could be a favoured option for many people – instead it is unpleasant, difficult and dangerous
- 34 per cent of the borough's population are inactive and do less than 30 minutes of moderate exercise per week. Only 25 per cent do 2 x 10 minutes of active travel (walking or cycling) per day; 40 per cent of year 6 pupils are overweight and 23 per cent are obese. Only 5 per cent of cycle-able trips are made by bike and 80 per cent of cyclists are male. All these data are worse or more skewed in the west than the east of the borough.

- There are major concerns about travel times on the road network and the impact of transport on the Borough's air quality. Transport noise is also recognised as a key issue
- There is a high negative correlation recognised between the amount of active travel by residents and the degree of severance of the active travel network. In other words walking and cycle network severance is a major issue in deterring people from using active travel

It is clear from these data and observations that there are major systemic issues with transport in the borough, that these issues are more acute in the west of the borough, and that Heathrow is already a major factor in them. These issues would only be made significantly worse by the Heathrow plans for a third runway (followed by associated development plans in the vicinity of the Heathrow site, such as the Hounslow West of Borough and Feltham Plans) without clear and well-funded plans to protect and enhance the public open space and green travel network.

We note that although cycling does feature in the LIP there is little actual investment proposed. Of more concern, there are little or no data or consideration regarding walking in the Borough.

The strategy sets out ambitious targets for delivering a modal shift in transport use including:

- Movements by public transport, bicycle and walking increase from 56% to 59% (by 2021) and 71% (by 2041)
- 2 x 10 minutes of active travel per day increase from 25% of the population to 34% (2021) and 70% (2041)

These targets are useful. However, there appears to be a lack of strategic planning and investment necessary to see (a) the short term shift in usage over the next two years or (b) a major longer term modal shift.

General Recommendations for Inclusion in the LIP

On the basis of these data and our own experiences we would make the following general points about the transport strategy in the borough:

1. Transport is closely linked to health and well being. Motorised transport causes air quality and noise issues; active (walking and cycling) transport helps with road congestion and pollution as well as public health and well-being.
2. It is therefore a key desire of the LIP to see a modal shift away from motorised transport (particularly private vehicles) and towards more active transport and this is to be commended. However, we are concerned that there is not sufficient investment or consideration of the requirements for achieving this modal shift – and the focus of the plan remains with the existing road and rail based network. The lack of a focus on walking is one indicator of this. **FORCE would like to see a separate detailed strategy to encourage walking and cycling across the borough, linked to wider planning and health agendas, and with funding to support this**
3. The borough strategy is mostly focussed within the borough. Transport clearly though is a cross borough boundary issue – and this is just as much for cycling and walking as it is for other transport options. FORCE would like to see the strategy noted above consider how cycling and walking routes link up with the wider walking and cycling network outside of the borough and thereby encourage longer journeys by residents using active

- travel – as well as active travel journeys into the borough from the surrounding communities with consequential benefits to the local economy
4. FORCE has been working to improve local outdoor spaces, and the active travel routes through them, over the last 15 years. Over the last seven years we have been carrying out regular use surveys for the spaces we have been working on. These show step changes in public use of open spaces and the pathways through them following improvements to the paths themselves, the surrounding landscape and the sense of public safety. Increases in public use by an order of magnitude or more (from 20 or so people – mostly single males – to between several hundred to 1000+ of all ages and equal genders) are recorded. **FORCE recommends that these findings are considered in relation to walking and cycling policy and used to target investment and engagement with travel routes and associated open spaces.**
 5. In our experience the changes necessary to achieve orders of magnitude increases in the public use of active transport through open spaces can be achieved by medium term cumulative improvements in these spaces linked to strategic investments in the networks themselves. Improvements are best made working with local community friends groups and associated third sector organisations that can best engage and motivate local people. The larger investments are often available through third party grants and support – particularly where delivering cross borough initiatives that have wider benefits
 6. The LIP rightly recognises that blockages to walking and cycling routes are a key impediment to their use. The strategy noted above needs to identify these blockages along with options to remove them. Later in this document we identify some that we are aware of.
 7. The use of active transport options can be greatly enhanced by more public information on the availability of these options. In practice there is little information available and many local people are simply not aware that these options exist. This can be overcome in part by improved mapping and signage – both on site and on line – combined by walking and exploration events, social media coverage and other publicity. FORCE has considerable experience of delivering these activities alongside partners. Any strategy for creating a modal shift in transport use needs to allocate an appropriate level of resource to these issues.
 8. FORCE is working with other land owners, developers and strategic partners on green space issues within and local to LB Hounslow – both in our own capacity and as a part of the Crane Valley Partnership. These partners include: Heathrow Airport Ltd; SEGRO; Berkeley Homes; GLA; Thames Water; London National Park City; Colne Valley Partnership; Thames Landscape Strategy; Brent Valley Partnership; Cranford Park Friends and LB Hillingdon; Headstone Manor Friends and LB Harrow; various developers in LB Richmond alongside council officers and members there. In each case a key objective is to deliver better open spaces and open space linkages that can be used by the communities of west London including LB Hounslow.
 9. Over the next five to ten years there are unprecedented opportunities and threats to these open spaces and links. There are also unprecedented opportunities for third party investment - but it will require active engagement by local authorities armed with a well-considered strategy for active transport. **In our view it is essential that LB Hounslow engages more actively with these opportunities and threats if it is to have any chance of achieving the ambitious modal shifts it sets out in the LIP – set within a broader objective of protecting and enhancing the quality of life for LB Hounslow residents.**
 10. The LIP allocates £228k to 2022 to the upkeep of strategic walking routes through the borough – including the London LOOP, Capital Ring and Thames Path. This investment is welcome, particularly following the demise of Walk London and the apparent refusal of TfL and the GLA to fund these strategic routes. **However FORCE also requests that**

LB Hounslow continues to lobby TfL and the GLA (along with other influential partners) for funding to be restored to these routes at a regional level – where the responsibility and benefits more properly reside. FORCE and other bodies would be willing to support this approach.

11. The LIP does not address or specifically support other strategic walking and cycling routes. FORCE is engaged with a number of strategic and circular walking and cycling routes and has raised a considerable amount of funding from third parties and S106 for example to enhance the value of these routes and promote them through leaflets, guided walks etc. **FORCE requests that the value of these routes, including routes that cross the borough boundary, are acknowledged in the LIP – with funding allocated and/or support for S106 and third party funding.** More details on specific routes are provided below
12. The report addresses air pollution from the transport network but not water pollution. The impact of road run-off in particular on the water quality and environmental value of the urban river network is a major issue. FORCE are engaged with ZSL, Thames 21, TfL and the GLA at a London level to develop an approach to dealing with this problem – including the identification of appropriate interception and treatment systems. The frequency and effectiveness of gully pot maintenance for example is another key control on this issue. **FORCE would appreciate if this issue were referenced in the report and the council were to engage with the issues as they are developed with TfL and other parties.**
13. The local road drainage network feeds into the river system. A major pollution problem in this network is the number of properties that are misconnected, sending foul water into the river rather than the sewerage system (estimated to be around 3% of all properties across London). Thames Water has an active Surface Water Outfall Programme to try and combat this problem and in the last few years has identified over 500 misconnected properties in the River Crane catchment. Around 90 per cent of the property owners resolve the problem when they are notified by TW but – if they do not – then the water company has no enforcement power and passes the issue to the local Environmental Health Office (EHO) for follow up with eventual prosecution if necessary. We are very sorry to say that LB Hounslow EHO have, for the last 18 months or so, been refusing to proceed with any of these cases and as result there are around 20 properties in the borough (and counting) that have been identified by TW and yet continue to use the road drainage network to pollute the River Crane. **This is a major concern for FORCE as significant and preventable pollution through the road drainage network is continuing as a result of council inaction.** It may not be a direct responsibility of the LIP and the transport team but we are using this opportunity to bring the issue to your attention.
14. As well as improving and developing the active travel network there is the major issue of maintenance of the existing network. Over the last ten years we have seen significant improvements in the cycle and walking network along the LB Hounslow river corridors. However, we have not yet seen any maintenance carried out of this network; parts of it are starting to deteriorate through both natural wear and tear and the use of motorcycles. When we have raised this issue with the council we have been told there is no budget available for cycle path maintenance. This is clearly not compatible with the aims of the LIP to maintain and enhance the numbers using active travel and it needs to be resolved. **FORCE requests that the issue of path maintenance – including signage and vegetation control – is addressed through the LIP.**
15. There are clear mutual benefits for the transport and the health sectors from better and more well used active travel routes through the borough. FORCE has worked closely with TCV and others to develop volunteer activities that enhance local open spaces, encourage more people to use them and also directly aim to provide health benefits to

participants. It has though been difficult to engage with the health sector over the use and support of these initiatives. **FORCE proposes that the council's transport department engages more closely with the health sector in order to develop joint initiatives and investments for mutual benefit.**

16. There are similar potential benefits for other sectors from better active travel linked to improved open spaces and green corridors. **FORCE recommends that the council engages more closely and develops joint working initiatives with the public, private and third sectors – and around issues such as social cohesion, education and training for example.** This type of initiative is often best developed through existing partnerships such as the Crane Valley Partnership – as well other catchment partnerships like Thames landscape Strategy and comparable groups –eg South West London Environment Network. This approach can unlock considerable additional funding resources as well as new opportunities that are not identified solely within the transport sector

Specific Issues

1. The River Crane through the borough is identified as an off highway leisure route. The Staines Road is identified as a major barrier to cycling. Both of these are welcomed by FORCE. However we would also note that there are several other major barriers along this route – as listed below:

- Feltham Marshalling Yards
- Regularly flooded section at the end of Donkey Wood towards Causeway
- Causeway Road crossing
- A30 crossing

FORCE requests that these are also identified as barriers along this route. Further consideration of each of these barriers is provided below.

2. Feltham Marshalling Yards. This is one of the longest and most complex blockages along the River Crane. We will not set out the story here – only to say that it needs to be resolved in order to better link the less well used parts of the Hounslow Crane corridor with the much better used parts in both LB Hounslow and LB Richmond to the southeast.
3. Donkey Wood. The northern part of this route has a particular flooding problem and FORCE is in contact with Heathrow as the landowner with a view to resolving it. There is a need for improving the whole of the pathway through Donkey Wood and Brazil Mill Woods however, using the same Cotswold gravel self-sealing pathways which has worked well lower down the corridor and (in concert with improvements to the management of the open spaces) resulted in an order of magnitude increase in public usage.
4. Staines Road. This is a difficult and dangerous crossing and would benefit from safety measures. FORCE is also in discussion with the Kids Space group proposing to re-develop the Hounslow Heath GC site, with a view to putting a new pathway on the east side of the river and utilising the existing underpass beneath the Staines Road.
5. Causeway Road. This is also a difficult crossing. The Causeway site itself is currently fairly run down and little used. However, we are hoping that the site and associated pathway will be improved in the near future due to proposals being developed with the adjacent site developer SEGRO and TCV.

6. A30 crossing. This is the most difficult and frustrating crossing on this part of the Crane. It requires a detour for around 400 metres both up and down a busy dual carriageway with no clear signs as to the route. FORCE has identified this with Heathrow as a priority for a new bridge crossing, also spanning the Piccadilly line. A new crossing and associated pathway in this area could open up the Crane corridor to the north including Crane Bank Meadow, Avenue Park and Cranford Park. The latter is in LB Hillingdon and is at the start of a major HLF (£3m+) investment

7. Circular routes. This type of route is ideal for walkers and cyclists, those looking for exercise or exploring their local area or seeking an escape from the stresses of urban living. They can also link local communities in new ways with open spaces as well as local businesses. FORCE has produced two circular routes in the last few years, both of around 12km in length – the Three Rivers Walk and the Hanworth Loop Walk. Both use the river corridors and are largely away from roads and traffic. There is great potential to develop and publicise other such circular routes throughout the borough and linking to adjacent borough areas. **FORCE would welcome council support for these and other circular routes through the LIP**

8. Upper Duke's River. This river links the Crane at Donkey Wood in Feltham with the River Colne in Harmondsworth around 12 km to the north west. There is real potential for improving the walking and cycling route along much of this river and using it to create a westward link from the borough into the rural and high value areas of the River Colne valley and Chiltern Hills. This work would follow on from the Lower Duke's River project which saw around £600k investment in improving the linkage along the 4km of lower Duke's between the Crane in Twickenham and the Thames in Isleworth. There is scope for this to be delivered as part of wider changes to the Upper Duke's and Longford Rivers as part of the Heathrow third runway project. **It would be very helpful for the aspirations of this project to be included in the LIP**

9. Longford River. This river links the Upper Duke's River corridor with Bushy Park and Hampton Court (and thereby to the River Thames) through Feltham and Teddington. LB Hounslow has already done some work to enhance the footpath and cycle way along the river. Further improvements would allow additional strategic walking and cycle routes to open up. **It would be very helpful for the aspirations of this project to be included in the LIP**

FORCE would welcome the opportunity to discuss the suggestions and proposals included in this document with the LB Hounslow Transport team.