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Time to show ambition

'Have your party leaders pledged to create a Liveable London?'. We are delighted to announce that the leader of Sutton Council, Ruth Dombey, is amongst the 55% of newly elected borough leaders across London who has said "yes" to a more Liveable London!

In addition to the Liberal Democrats, the Green Party and the Labour Party in Sutton also committed to the **My Liveable London** pledge. Our thanks to them for showing aspiration and our thanks to the residents of Sutton who sent an email to the four main parties in support of the My Liveable London campaign. Although Tim Crowley for the Sutton Conservatives, Leader of the Opposition, did not commit to a high-quality Liveable Neighbourhoods bid, Tim did show support for the **Sustrans Streets for People** pledge.

This means that in Sutton there is cross-party consensus to take a big, bold step towards transforming our streets into places where families, friends and communities are put first; where motor traffic, pollution and congestion don't dominate; and where everyone can live well, breathe easily, walk and cycle safely and happily. This is very good news, because **the Mayor has set aside around £86 million for Liveable Neighbourhoods funding** to be shared by boroughs that are willing to rise to the challenges and that have proven capable of delivering. **Now is the time for Sutton to show ambition.**

Writing to us on 27 April, Ruth Dombey said "Liberal Democrats and Sutton Council support the objectives of the Liveable Neighbourhoods programme, especially in light of the reduced overall funding from Transport for London for boroughs in the years ahead". The Leader added, "You will be pleased to hear that Sutton is looking to make another application this year to the Liveable Neighbourhoods programme". Another application? That is novel. If Sutton actually applies this year, **it will be the first time of doing so.**

From speeding traffic and rat-runs to low traffic neighbourhoods

At a hustings event organised by the Sutton Civic Society ahead of the May Council elections, local party leaders were asked whether they would commit to take action to reduce the speed limit to 20mph on all Sutton's residential roads and streets. In her response, on behalf of the Liberal Democrats, **Leader Ruth Dombey** said that speeding was a real problem in Sutton and it was extraordinary how fast some people were driving. She was not sure that a blanket 20mph limit across the whole borough was the answer, but said she was prepared to look at the evidence. We will be sending her the evidence in the coming weeks. This will include recent research that has found that the introduction of 20mph limits (alone) is **linked to 21% lower injury odds for people who are cycling compared to 30mph roads**, how the roll-out of 20mph in Bristol has seen **a general increase in the number of residents who walk for ten minutes or more in their local area most days**, and that the introduction of 20mph across Calderdale in West Yorkshire has delivered **a rate of return of £3.65 for every £1 spent** (with future benefits for a minimal on-going cost).

Cllr. David Hicks, on behalf of the Sutton Conservative party (and now Deputy Leader of the Opposition), said in his reply that he thought main roads were for through traffic; he said side turnings were for residents and he would like residential roads used by residents only. That view supports the endorsement given by Party Leader Cllr. Crowley to **Sustrans Streets for People**, and we will make sure that Cllr. Hicks is aware of the Living Streets/London Cycling Campaign '**Low Traffic Neighbourhoods**' briefing. Talking of low traffic neighbourhoods....

In Sutton Central and Sutton North 65% of respondents said “Too much traffic, too fast”

Everything was not quite kept on hold about **Sutton’s first Quietway** prior to the May local elections. In March, a letter was sent to residents to update them on some of the findings from last summer’s [Grennell Road / Elgin Road / Benhill Wood Road Area survey](#). This highlighted traffic count data: **around 70% of the 5,000 daily vehicles using these roads come from outside of the local neighbourhood**; and survey results findings: **65% of respondents thought there is too much traffic in the area, and that traffic is too fast; 87% of respondents thought the borough should be doing more to encourage walking and cycling to school**. The publication of the full Consultation Report, to include design proposals based on the findings, is awaited, ahead of further engagement with residents. Interestingly, the Quietway does not feature as an agenda item at the forthcoming [Sutton Local Committee meeting in June](#). However, good to see that the Healthy Streets approach (LIP3) does: “... this new approach aims to prioritise active travel, making walking, cycling and public transport use the best choices for travel, encouraging the most efficient methods of essential travel for people and goods, and creating more attractive, accessible and people-friendly streets”.

At the seventh annual [Hackney Cycling Conference](#) in May, Will Norman, Walking and Cycling Commissioner, admitted that on some of the existing Quietway routes there was too much traffic. Traffic volumes and traffic speed, he said, were critical areas that must not be compromised. “We are going to continue to review and improve the schemes that are coming forward to design in-line with the London Cycling Design Standards and Cycling Level of Service within them”, adding “there have been tougher decisions in some places. But those are **the conversations that we need to have to up-front, before any funding decisions are made**”. The Commissioner went on to say: “**modal filtering is absolutely essential [for] reduction in traffic around those neighbourhoods and along those routes**”. Quietway 1 (the only Quietway to have been fully opened to a standard the commissioner is happy with in terms of quality end-to-end) has seen up to 188% increase in usage, with 45% of users having switch from another mode (11% of them from cars). Data shows that Quietways can deliver huge benefits for all, if done properly.

From political barriers to physical barriers (or both)

Sometime prior to 2012, TfL provided funding to identify and investigate suggestions from local stakeholders for improving the Wandle Trail. The subsequent ‘[Wandle Trail Feasibility Report](#)’ (Sustrans, November 2012) declared “the proposed improvements for the Trail aim to make the route more accessible for both cyclists and pedestrians...” and **identifies barriers as a major issue**. One recommendation at the time was for all barriers to be of the same type, “likely to be a chicane that all users can traverse” (although the report did not suggest why any barriers were actually necessary). The ‘[Wandle Valley Big Green Fund Celebration Report](#)’ (Wandle Valley Regional Park, May 2015) notes that in June 2013 a **£390,000 grant had been awarded for the Wandle Valley project** (as part of the Mayor’s £2m ‘Big Green Fund’ funding pot), with funding to be matched by project partners. The matched funding included a contribution from **Transport for London of £192,000** specifically for the ‘Wandle Trail in Poulter Park’, and **a contribution of £20,000 from the LB of Sutton**. One of the project’s objectives, deemed successful on completion, related to improved access “for visitors on foot, cycle and for disabled people”. Photos in the report show the completed work. New surfacing, widened paths, essentially barrier-free.

Then in March 2018, courtesy of blogger [@lastnotlost](#), came the news that **the LB of Sutton had installed an anti-moped K-frame barrier** at Watermead Lane (Poulter Park). LB of Sutton’s response, on 15 March, was that the barrier had been installed “in response to illegal mopeds accessing the site which pose a safety risk and damage property”, and that “police were notified of the decision to install the barriers and supported this measure”. Furthermore, “the barrier is adjustable so can be widened to accommodate cyclists, mobility scooters and double width buggies while still preventing incursions by mopeds. Alternative access is available and fully accessible via Peterborough Road, Poulter Park footpath and the new ramp or steps leading back down onto the riverside path. If users have any specific concerns about the width of the barrier we are very happy to look at this”.

Twitter erupted to [this tweet](#), and to a [second tweet](#), published by us on 16 March. The vast majority of respondents were appalled at the installation of the barrier. Quite how pleased TfL will be to learn that councillors have essentially diminished the return on their £192,000 contribution towards the project by giving the go ahead for the barrier, only time will tell. Especially so, given that it looks as though the councillors concerned did not seek advice on the issues, or attempt to discuss concerns with all stakeholders, prior to making a hasty decision. There are clearly more than physical barriers here, there are political ones too.

So where are we with this at the moment? In the next few weeks, Sustrans will be meeting with Sutton councillors and officers to look again at the process that was carried out to get to the 2012 Feasibility Report stage. Sustrans is also undertaking a review of the entire NCN, so there will be input to that. Watch this space.

Beddington Lane: progress stalled? Croydon Fiveways: third time lucky?

Beddington Lane is again open to through traffic. The work to the north of the tramline (in Merton) is finished: on the east side of the road, there is a wide footpath shared with cyclists. Will it get much use when the Sutton side will have the corresponding cycle route on the west side? However, on the Sutton side, there is no sign of any work being done on this well publicised scheme. Much of the carriageway has been lightly resurfaced, so at least the cavernous pot holes are gone for now, but of the new cycle tracks that were supposed to be there by now.... there is nothing to report. At the time of writing, Sutton Council’s dedicated [Beddington North TfL Major Scheme website](#) has nothing to add either (and still reports phase 1 due to be completed by mid-May). Meanwhile, some good news at nearby Fiveways, where [cycling provision is to be strengthened](#).