



Highways Committee 19th January 2010

Report from the Director of Policy & Regeneration

For Action

Wards Affected:
ALL

Tubbs Road Councillor Call for Action – recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 At its meeting on 8th December 2009, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the councillor call for action (CCfA) submitted by Councillor James Powney in relation to the traffic issues at Tubbs Road, Kensal Green Ward. Details of the CCfA are included as an appendix to this report.
- 1.2 The councillor call for action was made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee because Councillor Powney wanted members to consider recommending solutions that would:
- Reduce traffic congestion, in what is a narrow, largely residential street.
 - Reduce the air pollution, associated with the large volume of traffic.
 - Allay concerns about road safety.
- 1.3 Full details of the discussion at the committee meeting, plus a previous site visit to Tubbs Road are included in this report. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agrees with Councillor Powney and local residents that the council should see if measures can be taken to reduce traffic congestion in Tubbs Road, but also appreciates there is not a straightforward solution to the traffic problems in the area. The committee has made a number of recommendations on this issue which it hopes will be given full consideration by the Highways Committee. Of utmost importance to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is that residents are involved in developing solutions to the traffic issues in the area.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Highways Committee considers the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee set out in paragraph 3.10.

3.0 Detail

3.1 At its meeting on 8th December 2009, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the councillor call for action (CCfA) submitted by Councillor James Powney in relation to the traffic issues at Tubbs Road, Kensal Green Ward. Details of the CCfA are included as an appendix to this report.

3.2 The councillor call for action was made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee because Councillor Powney wanted members to consider solutions to:

- The traffic congestion, in what is a narrow, largely residential street.
- The air pollution, associated with the large volume of traffic.
- Concerns about road safety.

3.3 Tubbs Road is a narrow, largely residential street that links High Street Harlesden and Old Oak Lane. Most of the road is one way (east to west) apart from a short stretch at the western end where traffic flows in both directions. Traffic going east on Tubbs Road continues up Nightingale Road to High Street Harlesden. Nightingale Road is also a one way road, west to east. A map of the area is included as an appendix to this report.

3.4 Members will note from the map that Tubbs Road is an A road (the A4002). This is an historical designation. The reality is that unlike most other A roads, Tubbs Road is a narrow residential street and not suitable to be a major traffic carrying road. However, electronic maps and satellite navigation systems do not recognise this and so people unfamiliar with the area could assume it is a significant part of the road network. As a result of the road's status, funding for road maintenance and traffic calming measures comes from TfL rather than the local authority.

3.5 There are two current funding bids in place for environmental improvements in the Harlesden area. A bid has been worked up under the "Streets for People" Scheme to improve the environment of Harlesden Town Centre. At present Tubbs Road is not included in this scheme, although the second scheme is for improvements to pedestrian facilities at the western end of Tubbs Road.

3.6 Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee carried out a site visit to Tubbs Road to see the scale of the problems for themselves. The visit took place on Tuesday 24th November at 8.30am. It was deliberately scheduled during rush hour so the situation could be observed at a busy time of day. Councillors Lesley Jones, Bobby Thomas, James Powney and Bertha Joseph attended the site visit, along with Tim Jackson, Director of Transportation, Andrew Davies, Policy and Performance Officer and two local residents. The main observations were:

- Significant numbers of cars were turning right from Furness Road on to High Street Harlesden and then left into Tubbs Road, suggesting that the route is being used as a cut through towards the A40, avoiding the Harlesden one-way system.
- Vehicles are regularly getting stuck at the point in Tubbs Road where it narrows to only allow vehicles less than 6'-6" to pass. The group saw one lorry having to turn around at this point and a number of vans struggling to get through the traffic calming measures. Lorries approaching Old Oak Lane from Tubbs Road have to turn up into Nightingale Road where the road narrows,

because they are not able to get through to narrowest point in Tubbs Road. The street furniture at the road narrowing was damaged where it had been hit by vehicles. This can be seen in the photographs taken on the day (which will be available at the committee meeting).

- Congestion rather than speed appeared to be the main issue. The traffic was building up at the junction between Tubbs Road and Old Oak Lane. Most of the traffic observed on the visit was turning left towards the A40 at Old Oak Lane, rather than right towards Harlesden.
- The idea of stopping left turns at the junction of Tubbs Road and Old Oak Lane may not be workable in practice. People may still turn left, illegally, and it would also be problematic for residents who wanted to turn left when they came out of the street. They would be forced to make a detour through the Harlesden one-way system.
- The Transportation Unit has made a bid to TfL to improve pedestrian facilities at the junction of Tubbs Road and Old Oak Lane. Although safety would be improved for pedestrians, congestion could increase if a Pelican crossing was introduced as traffic would be held in Tubbs Road for longer than is the case at the moment. A second bid has been made to improve the public realm in Harlesden which could have an impact on the road layout.
- Whatever is done to improve traffic congestion in Tubbs Road and Nightingale Road (the neighbouring street) it could have a knock on effect in the surrounding area. Careful thought will have to be made to any possible solutions.

3.7 Councillor Powney and local residents made representations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 8th December. There were a number of issues that they wanted to the council to consider in order to improve the local environment at Tubbs Road. Their suggestions included:

- Tubbs Road should be downgraded from an A road to a B road.
- Right hand turns from Furness Road into High Street Harlesden should be prevented to stop people then turning left into Tubbs Road to use it as a cut through to the A40. Traffic should instead be directed to the A40 via Scrubs Lane.
- They would like drivers to be stopped from turning left into Old Oak Lane / Station Road from Tubbs Road, which would take away one of the incentives to use it as a cut through.
- Right turns into Tubbs Road from Station Road should be prevented to stop traffic using Tubbs Road / Nightingale Road as a cut through to High St Harlesden.
- Road signs in the area should be reviewed to improve signage to the A40 via Scrubs Lane and better inform drivers that Tubbs Road has width restriction barriers in place.
- Width restrictions should be placed at the eastern end of Tubbs Road to stop larger vehicles, especially lorries, from entering the road. Lorries turning around at the width restriction barriers at the western end of Tubbs Road adds to the congestion.
- Pedestrian crossings shouldn't be put in place at the western end of Tubbs Road because this will increase traffic congestion in the area.
- Residents should be asked their views on traffic calming schemes for Tubbs Road so that the council is clear as to what would and would not be acceptable to them.

3.8 The committee also heard from Tim Jackson, Director of Transportation at Brent Council. He acknowledged the heavy volumes of traffic using Tubbs Road, as

demonstrated by traffic surveys that have been carried out in the street. However, he did have concerns about the suggestions put forward by residents and Councillor Powney. Transport for London (who weren't represented at the scrutiny committee) may have objections to any traffic schemes that have a significant knock on effect on roads that carry buses, such as High Street Harlesden. The emergency services may also have objections to banning turns into and out of Tubbs Road as this could limit their access. The committee was told that consultation hadn't been carried out with residents on traffic reduction schemes because the council did not want to unrealistically raise residents hopes that a solution to the traffic congestion at Tubbs Road could be found. Finally, Transportation Officers have to consider how work on one part of the road network will affect other streets, particularly residential streets and ensure that there isn't a significant increase in traffic congestion on other parts of the road network.

3.9 The committee considered the points made by the residents and Tim Jackson and discussed the situation at Tubbs Road. Although possible solutions to the traffic congestion in the road are complicated by the street's position in the road network the committee felt on balance that the council should look at possible ways to improve the local environment and at the very least, carry out some further work to see whether any of the resident's ideas could be implemented.

3.10 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee made the following recommendations for consideration by the Highways Committee:

(i). The Highways Committee agrees that

(a). Officers in the council's Transportation Unit consult residents of Tubbs Road and Nightingale Road and local councillors to find out what traffic calming solutions would be acceptable to them in order to reduce the volume of traffic using both streets.

The point was made at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the residents of Tubbs Road and Nightingale Road have never been formally asked what solutions they would like in order to reduce traffic congestion in the area. The opinions of a small number of residents are known and they are in favour of radical solutions such as preventing left turns out of Tubbs Road to reduce the amount of traffic using it as a cut through to the A40. The committee would like all residents to be asked for their views on the range of solutions put forward at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to see if there is support for one or more of the ideas suggested.

(b). Road signs in the area should be reviewed so it is clear to drivers that Tubbs Road has width restrictions and should not be accessed by vehicles wider than 6ft 6inches. Additional signs to this effect should be erected at the junction of Tubbs Road and High Street Harlesden and Tubbs Road and Old Oak Lane if necessary.

(c). Road signs should be erected on High Street Harlesden that clearly directs traffic to the A40 via the Harlesden one-way system (A404 and A4000). Likewise, signs should be erected on Furness Road that direct traffic to the A40 via Scrubs Lane (A219).

(d). The traffic lights at the western end of Tubbs Road should be re-phased so that traffic does not build up beyond the width restrictors in Tubbs Road to ease traffic congestion in the street.

(e). Satellite navigation companies and internet mapping organisations should be contacted by officers in the Transportation Department to see if the narrow, residential nature of Tubbs Road can be shown clearly on their maps, and that it isn't depicted as a major through route, as is currently the case.

(f). Officers should consider the feasibility of:

- Preventing rights turns out of Furness Road into High Street Harlesden, which drivers appear to be using as a route to Tubbs Road to cut through to the A40. Instead traffic should be directed to the A40 via Scrubs Lane.
- Preventing left turns out of Tubbs Road into Old Oak Lane, again to reduce the number of cars using Tubbs Road by stopping the direct cut through towards the A40.

(ii). That in noting that the Harlesden Town Centre's "Streets for People" scheme is being prepared, that the Highways Committee is requested to consider within the scheme's scope the traffic management issues for local roads, including Tubbs Road and Nightingale Road.

3.11 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will follow up these recommendations within 6 months, assuming they are agreed by the Highways Committee.

4.0 Comments from Director of Transportation with Financial Implications

4.1 It is difficult to provide an estimate of the cost of complying with the recommendations set out in 3.10 with any degree of confidence because a number of the recommendations are for officers to undertake reviews which may or may not subsequently lead into further works. There is no specific budget available for undertaking any of the recommendations.

4.2 Generally projects to introduce new, or amend existing, traffic management arrangements are funded from the Council's annual (Local Implementation Plan - LIP) allocation from Transport for London (TfL). There is no budget within the Council's 2010/11 TfL/LIP allocation to progress any of the recommendations set out in 3.10(i) above.

4.3 Notwithstanding the above the estimated costs of implementing the recommendations set out in 3.10 are as follows:

	Recommendation	Estimated cost	Comment
(a)	Consult residents on a range of options.	£4-5k	Cost will vary with number of options and extent of consultation area. Estimate excludes the cost of subsequently implementing any desired measures
(b)	Review & upgrade width restriction signage	£2-3k	Extent of new signage (& hence cost depends on outcome of review)
(c)	Review & upgrade directional signage (to A40)	£4-5k	Extent of new signage (& hence cost depends on

			outcome of review)
(d)	Re-phase traffic signals at Tubbs Road/Station road junction.	£1k	Traffic signals phasing is the responsibility of TfL and so this may not be deliverable. Estimate covers officer liaison only
(e)	Liaise with Satellite Navigation companies and others to locate width restriction on mapping systems	Nil	Officer liaison required only
(f)	Investigate feasibility of introducing banned turns at Furness Road and Tubbs Road	Not possible to estimate	Cost will vary with extent and complexity of any traffic modelling & surveys that TfL may require to support this.
3.10(ii)	Including Tubbs Road & Nightingale Road traffic issues within the scope of Harlesden "Streets for people" area based scheme"	None	The scope of the Harlesden scheme can be widened to cover Tubbs Road issues. All costs would be met by the (TfL funded) scheme budget – although there would be no certainty that the Harlesden scheme would result in any particular actions for Tubbs Road.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 Some elements of the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would require the making of traffic regulation orders under the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984. The procedures to be adopted for making the orders are set out in the Local Authority Traffic Order (Procedures) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.

6.0 Diversity Implications

6.1 None

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

7.1 None

Background Papers

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