

IMPROVE YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Improve your neighbourhood by preparing a project that may be funded by Transport for London's Liveable Neighbourhoods programme, or by Wandsworth Council's Local Fund.

1 Healthy Streets and the Mayor's Transport Strategy

Did you know that Transport for London (TfL) produced an important document this year, entitled Healthy Streets ¹. This identifies 10 indicators of what constitutes a healthy street ². These are shown in Figure 1.

The document provides a foundation for the draft Mayor of London's Transport Strategy which calls for :-

- Healthy streets designed to tackle the physical inactivity crisis
- Reduced traffic on London's streets
- Better air quality and work aimed at making London a zero-carbon city
- A reliable public transport system that can cope with more passengers
- An accessible, affordable and safe transport network
- Investment in transport to support the creation of new homes and jobs

Figure 1 : Healthy Streets Indicators



2 Liveable Neighbourhoods

To implement the Strategy TfL have established a grant fund, called Liveable Neighbourhoods, to encourage projects that London Boroughs prepare in accordance with Healthy Streets. Approval is dependent on the degree of accordance and the support of local residents.

Wandsworth Borough also has its own programme called Wandsworth Local Fund. The fund derives from

a portion (15%) of the revenues collected from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on new developments. Residents are encouraged to identify projects to improve their neighbourhoods and submit bids for this fund. The cost of work should exceed £20,000 and meet the following criteria :- ³

- Making the area feel safer
- Improving parks, commons and riverside walks
- Repairing roads and pavements
- Better facilities for cyclists, and
- New and improved green spaces.

3 Improving your Neighbourhood

In line with the Mayor's Strategy, and the Healthy Streets report, the remainder of this document outlines some suggestions that might be applicable in your neighbourhood. The examples all fall within Putney, not for any reason other than that this is the neighbourhood of the author.

The suggestions may be summarised as :-

- Mini Holland and what could be achieved following the example of Waltham Forest.
- Contra-flow cycling to increase the permeability of a locality to encourage cycling as a sustainable means of travel.
- Creation of a civic space in a busy shopping street.
- Rebalancing the competing functions of "movement" versus "place" on a busy shopping street.

4 Mini-Holland (Low Traffic Neighbourhood)

Mini-Holland is the name of a TfL grant funded programme that preceded Liveable Neighbourhoods. The Borough of Waltham Forest successfully bid for funds to implement neighbourhood improvements that restricted through traffic from using residential streets by road closures, traffic calming measures and landscaping. In addition, the council installed additional cycling facilities including protected cycle routes, bike hire and lockable parking cages.

The outcome is a great success as can be seen by the enhanced environment of Orford Road which previously suffered from excessive rat running traffic. See Figure 2. The photo shows how these measures have created a much improved sense of space and has stimulated pedestrian footfall to the benefit of local shops. This has been achieved by :-

- narrowing a two way road to a single lane in one direction and including a deliberate kink to heighten drivers' awareness and reduce vehicle speed.
- widened the pavements to allow greater pedestrian movement as well as other uses associated with a local shopping centre.
- planting of trees together with low level greenery.
- installing cycle parking stands
- protect pedestrians from vehicles by bollards (not that this is necessary) which preclude any possibility of illegal parking.

¹ <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/healthy-streets-for-london.pdf>

² <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/guide-to-the-healthy-streets-indicators.pdf>

³ http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/downloads/file/12995/wandsworth_local_fund_application_form

Figure 2 : Orford Road in Waltham Forest



Waltham Forest achieved this by identifying a neighbourhood similar to that shown in Figure 3. This is residential area just outside Wandsworth's boundary. Traffic rat runs between the two main roads that define its west and east extent. In the centre is a school. Traffic is a source of danger and may contribute to higher than safe levels of air pollution. By closing the roads at the points indicated in the figure :-

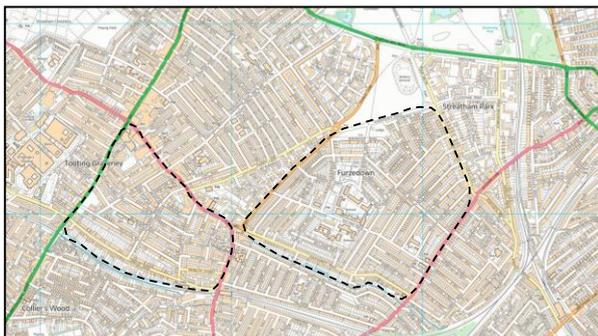
- rat running traffic is eliminated
- the road closures could be made into pocket parks and/or play areas.
- residents' access is permitted on the understanding that vehicles enter and leave from the same main road. No one is allowed to drive right through from one side to another.
- roads immediately adjacent to the school could be closed to traffic during the periods when children are dropped off or collected by vehicles in order to reduce congestion and improve air quality.

Figure 3 : Example of a Mini-Holland



By inspection of the street pattern within the southern portion of Wandsworth Borough it is evident that there are several neighbourhoods where similar measures could be implemented. These are indicated in Figure 4.

Figure 4 : Potential for Mini Hollands in Wandsworth



Low Traffic Neighbourhoods do not need to be extensive. Figure 5 illustrates this with reference to an area to the east of Putney High Street. The District Line passes above Esmond Street, a street that gives access to two houses only and two workshops. During peak hours traffic often rat runs through Esmond Street to avoid the junction of Putney Bridge Road with Oxford Road.

Figure 5 : Low Traffic Neighbourhood at Esmond St.



Figure 6 shows how the street is now. Figure 7 illustrates a pocket park/children's play area - a green space in an otherwise bleak landscape. This could be achieved by :-

- closing the road to traffic, planting a few trees, soft landscaping, bollards and seating.
- eliminating a rat run route whilst enabling residents to access their houses by entering or leaving from either end of Wadham Road.
- providing a space for children to play in a street environment that is presently denied to them by traffic and parking vehicles. The bridge abutments would be perfect for ball games.

Similar opportunities may exist in your neighbourhood. Pocket parks offer a relief to the eye as well as a place to sit and relax, to meet residents and to enjoy a street without the noise, clutter and danger of cars

Figure 6 : Esmond Street Now



Figure 7 : Esmond Street After

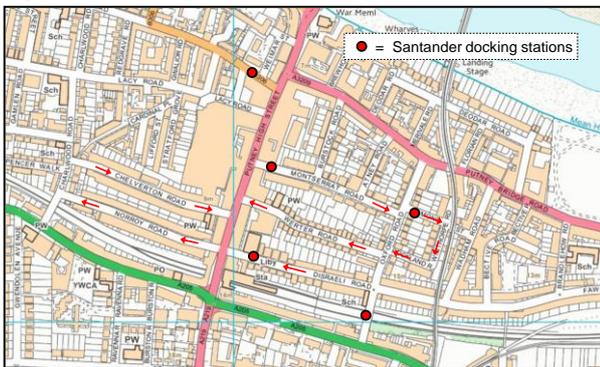


5 Contra-Flow Cycling

The Mayor's Strategy has the ambitious target of 80 per cent of all journeys in London to be by foot, cycle or public transport by 2041. Currently this figure is 64 per cent. Promotion of cycling is an important objective to achieve this target. Contra-flow cycling (cycling in both directions on a one way street) makes peddling more convenient, with no irritating detours. It increases the permeability of localities to cycle journeys and in doing so encourages people to get on their bikes, not into their cars. Active travel is good for you !

Putney has a number of one way streets, as shown in Figure 8. These frustrate those worthy souls who peddle instead of driving. However, the outward or

Figure 8 : One Way Streets in Putney



return journey can be lengthy if the one way system is obeyed and invariably involves a dangerous turn on or off a busy main road.

To make matters worse several Santander bike docking stations are located on these streets. Users despair if their intended direction of travel does not accord with traffic regulations. Many simply ignore the regulations and peddle against oncoming traffic. Thus far there have been no accidents so why not give cyclists a helping hand and make it legal. Drivers would be made aware, as too would be pedestrians who cross the roads. And the cost is minimal - just a sticker saying "Except Cycles".

Other Boroughs have done this, the City of London in particular. There, just about every one way street (and there are many) is contra-flow for cyclists. But Wandsworth is reluctant, quoting safety as one reason and lack of resident support (on the concerned streets) as another. When questioned residents also mention safety as their concern.

Let us consider safety. Imagine you are peddling down a one way street in the correct direction tailed by a frustrated driver anxious to overtake. You can't see the driver so there is no eye contact. He or she might be tempted to squeeze by just when you move out to avoid a pot hole. Compare that with cycling in the opposite direction, against the one way flow of vehicles. The driver can see you and you can see the driver. Chances of a head on collision is about nil because you, as the cyclist, can take evasive action (if necessary) by simply pulling aside to let the vehicle pass.

There are many one-way roads in Wandsworth and very few, just 2, are contra-flow for cyclists. If the Mayor's target is to be achieved this has to change. You, as an existing or potential cyclist are the agents of this change.

6 Civic Space

Putney High Street is a linear corridor that has no civic space apart from the square beside St Mary's Church at the north end, near the river Thames. There is nowhere to meet, sit and relax on a street that's choked with traffic and fumes. This omission could be rectified at the western end of Werter Road, in the area between Sainsbury's supermarket and the Baptist Community Church, extending to the High Street. This area is considered to be part of the High Street and is frequently visited by users of the supermarket and church.

Figure 9 : Werter Road - Existing



Figure 9 shows the relevant portion of the road as it exists, from the entrance to Sainsbury's basement car park to the High Street. A lack lustre place with nothing much to commend it. With reference to the Figure, the arrows point to its unfortunate aspects :-

- This section of the road is one way and narrowed by parking on both sides. There is an inherent danger in an area with heavy pedestrian footfall, more so because the majority of the many vehicles that use Werter Road are passing through, obliged to do so due to the restricted right turn at the junction of Upper Richmond Road and the High Street.
- Sainsbury's canopy is an ugly eyesore reminiscent of 60s architecture at its worst. Moreover, something more interesting could be achieved on its street frontage than the existing blank wall, for example a shop window perhaps ?
- The building on the corner has even less to commend it, the facade to Werter Road containing a faceless loading bay.

The only redeeming feature is the Baptist Chapel, recently renovated and now providing a service as a community church for local events and meetings. See arrow d).

Figure 10 shows how this area might be transformed into a civic space by converting the road into a pedestrian priority zone in which trees, landscaping, seating and even market stalls might be introduced. Vehicles would carefully proceed through the zone on the understanding that those on foot have the right of way. If this is considered to be too dangerous and alternative would be to close the zone to all traffic except Sainsbury's delivery vehicles and make Werter Road two way (from Oxford Road to Sainsbury's basement car park).

Figure 10 : Werter Road as a Civic Space



Transformation of this area might encourage W.H.Smiths, the user of the aforementioned loading bay, see Figure 11, to better utilise this facade as a shop front and in doing so create a walk-through store. A fresh coat of paint would also be beneficial.

Figure 11 : W.H.Smiths - Before and After



7 Balancing "Movement" versus "Place"

Every street has a dual function of "movement" and "place". As the southern approach to Putney Bridge (third busiest river crossing in London) Putney High Street carries in excess of 17,000 vehicles per day. Figure 12 shows the High Street on a rare occasion when its dominant movement function is in abeyance,

but what is evident is the complete lack of place. The pavements are narrow and congested, there are very few trees or greenery and nowhere to sit. It has no sense of place - where you would want to be. There is no scope for diverting the traffic and any restriction of vehicles would have implications to the London strategic road network. In short we have to find ways of enhancing "place" without unduly reducing "movement".

Figure 12 : Putney High St - Movement wins over Place



Figure 13 shows how this might be done. The road carriageway is wider than necessary to accommodate the single lane of traffic (in both directions) that currently operates on the High Street. On average the carriageway is 9m wide. This could be reduced to 6m and still leave sufficient space for vehicles to pass one another. The 3m taken from the road carriageway could be equally split as an addition (margin) to the pavements, on either side of the street, and used by pedestrians to ease the congestion that often occurs. However, if the following circumstances occur this margin could be used by vehicles to allow for:-

- emergency vehicles to pass,
- delivery vehicles to unload (during permitted times), and
- breakdowns.

The curb defining the edge of the carriageway is sloping to allow vehicles to enter the margin.

Figure 13 : Putney High St : Movement and Place Balanced



It is not envisaged that the scheme would reduce the capacity of the High Street, indeed, selected removal one or more traffic signals could help to smooth the flow and expedite travel time.

If you are interested to know more about Improving Your Neighbourhood or Wandsworth Living Streets, contact :-

Chair : Susie Morrow : Phone 0 7803 723 425

Secretary: Robert Molteno : Phone: 020 7223 0408

Author : David Irwin : Phone 0 7474 290 011

<https://wandsworthlivingstreets.org.uk/>