

BRIEFING NOTE – 28th May 2020

To All Members

Subject / Title: Covid 19 – Update on supporting Social Distancing in the Public Realm

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The government has directed local authorities across the UK to look at temporary schemes to be implemented as a matter of urgency to support social distancing in the Public Realm and support the transport system. While the current Covid 19 lockdown is scaled back and people return to moving around the borough and London we want to keep residents safe while they use our high streets and businesses in the borough.

This briefing note outlines the schemes that we are looking at to improve town centres, support the re-opening of schools and facilitate cycle lanes. Recognising that these schemes will have local implications ward councillors will shortly be consulted as appropriate.

Government and TfL Funding for Social Distancing work

The Government and Transport for London (TfL) have announced that there is funding available for councils to support social distancing in the Public Realm and have asked boroughs to consider schemes specifically around the following:

- Looking at proposals to support social distancing in key locations such as schools, town centres and tube stations where people density is likely to be at its highest
- Low traffic neighbourhoods – measures to help retain benefits of current lower traffic levels
- Looking at proposals to support cycling, such as strategic cycle routes
- Bus priority (or similar) proposals to help mitigate impacts on public transport

You may be aware that the council usually receives an annual allocation from Transport for London (TfL) to spend on projects that support the Mayor's Transport Strategy through a Local Implementation Plan (LIP). In previous years the LIP funding has been used for local projects such as highways and public realm improvements, parking and traffic schemes and similar. As a result of

Covid 19, all of this funding has been diverted to the social distancing etc schemes noted above.

Supporting Social Distancing in the Public Realm

The council is bringing forward some workstreams to support social distancing include the public realm. This includes looking at providing more social space at crowded locations, supporting residents using businesses and the highstreets, providing communications to remind people to social distance and supporting active travel (walking and cycling). The council have been identifying proposals which can be implemented in a relatively short term - these proposals can either be temporary while we are required to social distance or could be permanent.

The following workstreams have been established and work has commenced to look at potential actions which could be undertaken;

- Supporting education (nurseries and schools) as they re-open
- Supporting Town Centres / Highstreets
- Supporting and encouraging cycling

In addition, we have been providing advice and support to TfL around tube stations and bus stops and have been reviewing our existing LIP Programme to see whether there are any schemes which will support social distancing and could be progressed

Workstreams

A) Education

Primary schools, nurseries and kindergartens are starting to open from 1st June. It's key that social distancing measures are followed within schools, around schools and on the way to schools to prevent the spread of infection and keep cases down. We need to limit use of the car to prevent traffic issues during the peak and also avoid congestion and disruption throughout the borough. Equally, approximately 30% of residents in the borough don't have a car and would need to reach school by other means.

We have been working with the Education Service to engage with schools, nurseries and kindergartens. On the 27th May we were informed of which schools will be opening in early June. From Thursday 28th May we have been putting in place markings on the pavement and signage outside schools to encourage social distancing (see below for examples of the signage and markings which will be used).

We are also creating a range of initiatives which could be implemented at schools – these will need to be addressed on a case by case basis for each

school. For example, looking at whether space needs to be freed up for social distancing around school entrances, this may necessitate removing parking spaces or introducing school keep clear markings where these are not currently present so there is more space for pedestrians. We will also look at how we can support travel to schools, for example looking at whether implementing some kiss and ride drop off points where parents can drop off or park up some distance from the school for the last leg of the journey to be carried out on foot or scooter etc. Additionally, there is also the option of school streets where streets around schools are closed only to through traffic during the peak drop off or pick up times.

We will also be looking at how we can support teachers with parking as some schools currently have parking on site for teachers however would like to use this space differently – for example for playground space.



Image 1: The banner which has been produced and will be fixed to school gates / fence



Image 2: The markings which have been used on the pavements outside school entrances (this is the same as the markings we used at the entrances to parks)

B) Town Centres and Highstreets

The London Borough of Barnet has a strong town centre and High Street offer and we need to support social distancing on the high street as more people visit the high street and as more businesses re-open. It is probable that existing infrastructure is not going to cater adequately for more people kept farther apart. In addition, the council would like to support businesses and the highstreets to ensure that they continue to prosper. We will be consulting with ward councillors where appropriate to understand any local considerations which should be taken into account.

There are a range of short term activities that we will consider for each town centre / high street;

- 1) Identification of areas of expected high pedestrian congestion caused either by limited existing footway size OR the potential for out of business queues. This have been initially identified as counter service locations such as bakeries, small pharmacies etc as well as potentially banks and cash machines. The impact of queues at bus stops will be assumed. Locations will be given a rating on the likelihood of needing additional space.
- 2) Where space limits are adjacent to existing marked parking spaces, the parking will be removed in favour of the space. The total number of spaces lost and what type (loading, disabled badge holder etc) will be calculated. The preference will be to retain or replace as much loading capacity in the actual High Street and blue badges either on the High Street or on the High Street ends of adjacent side streets. Remaining parking capacity lost will not be replaced where there is a strong wider pay by phone and/or car parks capacity, however, where this is limited then some of the spaces on adjacent residential streets at the points closest to the High Streets will be considered for conversion from permit to pay by phone temporarily.
- 3) Where footway space capacity constraints are adjacent to yellow line restrictions, and there is sufficient carriageway width to allocate some to pedestrian use (this being balanced with the needs of any emergent cycling provision and routing, not in the remit of this paper) this may be allocated for additional footway.
- 4) Where possible closed parking or roadway will be achieved with only road markings. If required some temporary posts/cones or barriers may be installed. It is unlikely that this project could look at target hardening requests.
- 5) In areas where queues (shop, bus etc) are expected, the 'through' walking route will be made clear and the queue area marked if required.
- 6) Where no change is possible, markings will likely be helpful to reinforce directional walking lanes and for people to keep a distance.
- 7) It is recommended that to ensure that parking controls cater for potential longer business opening and workplaces staggering operating hours being

staggered, so changing the pattern of use of parking through the day, town centre linked parking control hours are changed.

- 8) In the vicinity of town centres and High Streets, including approaches from car parks, stencils to remind of space apart from others will be marked, similar to those used in parks.
- 9) Review of any bus stops that are causing issues with queuing / social distancing

C) Cycling

Cycling infrastructure is currently limited in Barnet. As in many London Boroughs, a variety of transport modes vie for limited road space on road corridors, with varying features and facilities, with frequent, sometimes complex junctions, and which service both commercial and residential needs over their lengths. Nevertheless, Barnet has a fledgling cycle network, comprising both off and on road signed routes. There is a commitment to cycling infrastructure in the LIP and draft Transport Strategy and there is engagement with local cycling lobby groups.

Recent weeks have seen evidence of an increase in cycling across the country, either for exercise or for travel purposes in a time of socially distanced travel. Central Government is looking to build on and support modal shift. This gives Barnet an opportunity to develop ideas for cycle infrastructure to assist returning workers reliant on public transport, or private vehicle owners wishing to embrace a healthier lifestyle.

This can include fast tracking current permanent schemes. More importantly it offers opportunity for the introduction of temporary measures that can be monitored for possible development into a future linked network.

Possible routes had already been considered by Officers and an audit on the existing cycle network carried out. Discussions have taken place with local cycling groups, most recently as part of this exercise with Charles Harvey from the Barnet Cycling Campaign.

Work to date has included reviewing options for temporary cycle infrastructure across a few routes. Of these, the A1000 potentially presents the most viable option for initial rapid deployment. Steps are being taken to design a 'pop-up' cycle route along the A1000. Initially, this will concentrate on the section running south from North Finchley to the borough boundary and will seek cooperation with the LB Camden, regards its continuation further south to enable routes into central London. We will be rapidly consulting with ward councillors in the proposed pop up area to understand any local considerations which should be taken into account. Whilst we focus on this route we will also be looking at other potential routes and discussing these with partners who have approached us.