

Advice from Better Archway Forum (BAF) on Lobbying for Improvements to the Archway Road Plan

There is to be further public consultation on matters pertaining to buses relating to the current TFL proposals for the abolition of the Archway gyratory. At this stage all we know is that it will be some time in the autumn, but not exactly what it will cover.

At the recent meeting called by WHPARA to discuss the situation we encouraged people to express their concerns in writing ahead of the formal consultation. There were particular concerns about the proposal to have up to 12 buses using the lower Archway Road as bus stands.

As promised, here are the people to write to when lobbying for improvements to the Archway road plan. A unique letter is infinitely more effective than a copied one so below are a series of points highlighting both the disbenefits and possible solutions to the current scheme. Please feel free to use any of these if useful.

Ultimately this is now a political decision. The officers have done their best according to the legislation as they interpret it, and it needs the politicians to instruct them to interpret that legislation in a way that better reflects the change of emphasis on public space in inner London. For this reason the people to write to are the GLA members who lead for their party on transport:

Val Shawcross (Labour) valerie.shawcross@london.gov.uk
Richard Tracy (Conservative) richard.tracey@london.gov.uk
Darren Johnson (Green) darren.johnson@london.gov.uk
Caroline Pigeon (Lib-Dem) caroline.pidgeon@london.gov.uk

It would also be useful to copy the following Islington councillors as Islington is partnering with TfL on designing the scheme:

Claudia Webbe, the Islington Executive Member for the Environment (i.e. transport)
claudia.webbe@islington.gov.uk

And local councillors:

Hillrise Ward (includes Whitehall Park area):

David Poyser david.poyser@islington.gov.uk
Marian Spall marian.spall@islington.gov.uk
Michelline Ngogo michelline.ngongo@islington.gov.uk

Junction Ward (covers the rest of Archway):

Janet Burgess janet.burgess@islington.gov.uk
Kaya Comer Schwartz Kaya.ComerSchwartz@islington.gov.uk
Tim Nicholls tim.nicholls@islington.gov.uk

Background

Since the 1960s and the demolition of the Whittington Almshouses, Archway has been dominated by poor road layout and motor traffic.

The gyratory was built at the same time as the Wellington gyratory at the top of Archway Road, and the one-way system now removed in Highgate. These were supposed to serve a giant one-way system with all northbound traffic going through Highgate Village, and all southbound down Archway Road. The scheme was discarded but the gyratories were still built, along with a bit of dual carriageway.

The result is an eight-lane section of the A1, much wider than any other part between St Paul's and the North Circular.

The presence of this wider section attracts additional traffic, which, because blocked by narrower roads at either end, queues here, adding to the air pollution.

Motor vehicles make up no more than 40% of the users of Archway, but are totally dominant being given around 85% of the public space.

Other parts of the A1, for example in Upper Street, do not prioritise motor vehicles in this way, and Archway has more residents than the surroundings of Upper Street.

What is needed

The aspiration for the last 20 years has been to address all of this by:

1. Returning to a traffic hierarchy that keeps as much traffic as possible flowing smoothly on to the main roads – avoiding traffic displacement.
2. Improving transport interchange
3. Making the area more liveable for all users, improving the public space and avoiding the community severance caused by the gyratory and dual carriageway (making it easier for residents for example to reach the tube station).

In addition, as the number of those travelling by bike has increased, there is growing demand for safe and continuous cycle paths.

TfL Proposals

TfL has produced a series of proposals for returning traffic to traditional, two-way flow, each an improvement on the last. The current scheme is the best so far, but still fails to address some requirements. Some aspects of the current layout (bus stops for example) would be worsened by the proposals.

Disbenefits of Current Proposals

1. The no-right-turn from St John's Way might displace traffic through local access roads in Whitehall Park.
2. The proposed routing of the 210 and 41 buses (20 an hour) plus other right-turning traffic along Vorley and Macdonald Roads would similarly displace traffic through local access roads, past the Archway Early Years nursery and bedrooms of the Girdlestone Estate.
3. Some of this displacement might also affect roads like Dresden and Lidyard to the north of the centre, and Hargrave Road to the south.
4. Transport interchange would be worsened.
5. The scheme proposes separate routes for buses travelling to the same destination.
6. It includes a planned public space which is severely wind blighted and in shadow almost year round.
7. It proposes one mega bus stop outside the Co-op on Junction Road with a doubling of services (134 and 390 plus 210 and 41) at a point that is already extremely congested.
8. The scheme proposes buses running empty with up to 12 of them standing either side of the lower Archway Road rather than serving points of demand i.e. the hospital for northbound routes and Upper Holloway for southbound.
9. The proposed cycle routing is not best practice for the safety of those who cycle or walk.
10. Proposals for shared pedestrian and cycle crossings worry both those travelling on foot and by bike.
11. Those on bikes travelling downhill could be dangerous for those on foot.
12. Turning left onto the Archway Rd from Pauntley Street will be made more difficult and potentially dangerous with buses standing in the current bus lane.
13. The new pedestrian crossing on Archway Rd, replacing the underpass, is causing concerns in terms of safety for children, especially with several buses doing U-turns.

Proposed Solutions

1. Southbound routes C11, 143 and W5 should terminate outside St John's church for connection with Upper Holloway Station, standing either outside the church or the adjacent Aparthotel, with facilities for drivers at either the station or Metroline bus garage.
2. Northbound routes 17, 390 and 41 should terminate at the hospital, turning in the wide space in front of the main entrance before standing either on Magdala Avenue or Highgate Hill with drivers using the facilities at the hospital.
3. A right turn from St John's Way on to the A1 should be permitted – contrary to the current proposal.

4. Traffic engineers are worried about the delays this might cause to A1 traffic, but traffic levels have been falling and will fall further with the extended delays from all the bridge work on Holloway Road plus the 20mph limit on Holloway Road up to Nags Head.
5. Traffic evaporation does occur – the opposite of the increase in traffic when a new road is built or widened (see the M25) - so limiting capacity would reduce traffic levels, also improving air quality.
6. Although adding an additional turn to the lights at the Archway junction would make the sequence longer, the St John's Way green light need not operate every time but could be triggered by a transponder on the front of the 210 and 41 buses, so enabling those to turn right, along with any other vehicles standing with them.
7. All road corners should be squared off to offer more space for those on foot, and require slower and so safer turning by motor vehicles, particularly by HGVs.
8. This will enable narrower, straight across crossings for both those on foot and by bike, next to each other rather than together. (Wide curving pavements create extra long crossings.)
9. While national policy requires facilitating the movement of traffic, that does not just mean private motors but also buses, those travelling by bike and even those on foot.
10. As this is a new approach for traffic engineers, it can be designated a pilot scheme.
11. There is also an opportunity to introduce a circular, two-way Quietway for cyclists via Hargrave Road, Vorley Road, Macdonald Road, Tollhouse Way, the edge of Archway Park, the path next to Bowerman Court, Boothby Road and Elthorne Road, suitable for cyclists wishing to stay right out of the main flow of traffic. Some of these roads such as Hargrave, Vorley and Macdonald could then be closed to two-way motor traffic, further reinforcing traffic hierarchy.

Benefits

1. Like a river when the banks have been repaired, the flow of traffic would be smoother and more contained along the main roads with the above amendments.
2. That in turn would improve the liveability of the wider area with better space for those travelling on foot, by bike, and public transport.
3. There would be a significant improvement to the public space in Archway.

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