

NORTH COMMON ROAD, UXBRIDGE - PETITION REQUESTING MEASURES TO DETER "RAT RUNNING"

Cabinet Member(s)	Councillor Keith Burrows
Cabinet Portfolio(s)	Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation
Officer Contact(s)	Sophie Wilmot, Residents Services
Papers with report	Appendices A, B and C

1. HEADLINE INFORMATION

Summary	To inform the Cabinet Member that the Council has received a petition from residents requesting measures to deter rat running in North Common Road, Uxbridge.
Contribution to our plans and strategies	The request can be considered as part of the Council's annual programme of road safety initiatives.
Financial Cost	There are none associated with the recommendations to this report, other than Council officer time.
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Residents', Education and Environmental Services
Ward(s) affected	Uxbridge North.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Meeting with the petitioners, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation:

- 1. listens to their concerns with "rat running" in North Common Road and South Common Road, Uxbridge; and**
- 2. subject to the outcome of the above, asks officers to undertake an informal consultation with residents in the area on concerns outlined in the petition and then report back.**

Reasons for recommendations

The Petition Hearing will provide a valuable opportunity to hear directly from the petitioners of their concerns and suggestions.

Alternative options considered / risk management

None at this stage.

Policy Overview Committee comments

None at this stage.

3. INFORMATION

Supporting Information

1. A petition with a total of 23 signatures (of which one is a resident from North Common Road, 13 from West Common Road and nine from Water Tower Close) has been received by the Council.

2. The covering letter of the petition states: *“Having spoken to a number of the residents, the consensus was that we needed another petition to reinforce the view of the following: 1. there was still a perceived issue with the rat running at peak times 2. That the proposal of exit from North Common Road into Park Road at peak times (TBC) should be mooted. Also please see attachment regarding how NPR has been used successfully by other Councils to allow residents to still use the roads WITHOUT constraint 3. That the 'Duck Pond' junction redesign should be revisited. Although, the lack of Island, may stop people FULLY going on the other side of the road, the loss of streetlight and the problems with the redesign of the kerb have left it in terrible disrepair with the pond now regularly overflowing across the road (I know we have had a lot of rain but it never used to do that, ever), which would create black ice on an icy night. Again this redesign, would NOT have been required, if the original idea, to stop the rat run had been followed through and I think a lot of residents are extremely disappointed about the way this has been handled. We would all welcome much more interaction with the Council on these decisions rather than the “fait accompli” type notifications that “such and such” is going to happen. Many residents said they would rather the island design had just been left as it was (because of the mess made) and although that they agreed a redesign was now needed, they just didn’t have enough confidence to agree to it because they didn’t want it made any worse, so decided to err on the safe side and leave as it is. So, please find the required petition and please can any hearing and subsequent solution be thoroughly discussed, so we are all on the same page, so no further confusion and delays ensue. This whole episode has wasted a great deal of everyone’s time and after 3 years, we are still back where we started, so please let’s work together to produce a working solution for everyone.”*

3. The petition asked signatories to respond to three separate questions, the questions and responses are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of results of questions in the petition document		
Question	No of responses	
	Yes	No
Is 'rat running' an issue around Uxbridge Common?	23	0
Do you agree with a time restricted 'no left turn' from North Common Road to Park Road (Mon-Fri, evening peak times)?	22	1
Do you agree that the 'Duck Pond' junction needs the island reinserted and the junction redeveloped to stop cars cutting the corner?	15	8

4. North Common Road is a residential road that forms a horseshoe with West Common Road and South Common Road around Uxbridge Common green. These roads join the northbound side of the dual carriageway part of Park Road (B483). The carriageway in North Common Road is approximately 5 metres wide. These roads are within Uxbridge North Parking

Management Scheme, with vehicles parking within designated bays on one side of the road. Water Tower Close is a no through road off North Common Road. The roads in question are shown on the plan attached as Appendix A to this report.

Previous Petition

5. A previous petition was submitted in October 2016 requesting rat running measures around the common and asking the Council to consider the following: keep clear markings on the exit of South Common Road and North Common Road; a resident only barrier at the junctions with Park Road and centre road markings and parking restrictions on North Common Road.

6. The petition had a total of 31 signatures (of which 10 are residents from North Common Road, two from South Common Road and 19 from Water Tower Close). The petition was heard by the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Recycling in January 2017, with the following outcome:

The Cabinet Member:

- *Listened to the petitioners concerns with "rat running" in North Common Road and South Common Road, Uxbridge.*
- *Asked officers to undertake traffic surveys, at locations agreed by the petitioners and then report back to the Cabinet Member.*

Traffic Surveys

7. Following the Hearing of the first petition, traffic surveys were undertaken at agreed locations around the common in March 2017. An analysis of these traffic surveys indicated that some vehicles were turning left into South Common Road from Park Road to avoid traffic queues on Park Road during the evening peak, in particular between 5pm and 6pm mid week.

8. Detailed turning counts were undertaken via video surveys on two weekdays. This showed that of the vehicles turning left into South Common Road, approximately 90-100 vehicles were in all probability rat-running to avoid traffic queues on Park Road northbound between 5pm and 6pm. Screenshots taken from the video survey confirmed that some motorists were travelling on the wrong side of the road when turning into North Common Road from West Common Road.

9. Analysis of the 24 hour / 7 day vehicle speed and volume surveys have shown the highest total 85th percentile speeds were on North Common Road in an eastbound direction (33.8 mph) and on West Common Road in a northbound direction (32.2 mph).

Transport Study

10. As a result of the traffic surveys undertaken in March 2017, the Council's term consultants Project Centre were commissioned to undertake a study of the Uxbridge Common area and produce a package of suggested measures which could be considered for implementation in the area to improve road safety and reduce the level of vehicles rat running. The consultants suggested the following measures for consideration:

- Introduction of a gateway feature on South Common Road with a pinch point and associated priority give way.
- Introduction of a build out at the junction of West Common Road with North Common Road (colloquially known as the 'duck pond' junction).
- Introduction of traffic calming measures around the common.

- Introduction of a banned left turn from Park Road into South Common Road, using camera enforcement.

Works at the 'Duck Pond' junction

11. Following the study, a decision was made to initially look to implement the build out at the 'duck pond' junction, as there were road safety concerns raised as a large number of people were observed cutting across the junction. In addition, a build out could deter people 'rat running' as they would need to slow down to negotiate the junction, so little time would be gained.

12. The works were carried out using 2019/20 Transport for London Local Implementation Plan funding. Remedial measures were carried out in conjunction with the Council's Flood Officer and Green Spaces team to improve the flooding issues at the junction and to plant new greenery, although this will take some time to become established in the area.

Further Traffic Surveys

13. In order to review traffic in the area, further traffic surveys were undertaken in September 2019. These results were reviewed in conjunction with the previous surveys in March 2017. The key outcomes from this analysis are summarised below:

- The average 85ththtile is 27mph. This is the same in the current and previous surveys. (*The so-called 85th percentile speed is the speed at or below which 85% of traffic is travelling, and is the standard robust statistical tool used by traffic and road safety professionals when analysing speed trends.*)
- The data shows a reduction in traffic flow on South Common Road, Norfolk Road and West Common Road.
- A very slight increase in traffic flow on North Common Road.
- There are clearly much higher flows in the 'rat running' direction than in the opposite direction.
- The flows are fairly evenly spread between Norfolk Road and South Common Road. There is also a potentially higher level of vehicles coming along Gravel Hill than expected.
- In the 'rat run' direction an average of 46% of the traffic occurs in the PM peak 4-7pm, on weekdays.

Informal Consultation

14. Between 13th September and 4th October 2019, informal consultation was undertaken with residents of South Common Road, West Common Road and North Common Road asking residents if they would support the introduction of a banned left turn from Park Road into South Common Road, either at all times or peak times only.

15. The consultation had a response rate of 67%, a total of 40% of respondents were for the proposal of a banned left turn from Park Road into South Common Road and 60% against. Of those who responded in favour of the scheme, 35% supported an at any time restriction, whilst 65% supported a peak time only restriction.

16. A number of the responses also provided further details on traffic concerns in the area, a summary of key points raised by residents within this informal consultation is provided below:

- *'There is no need for any morning restriction, it is only the PM peak which is a problem'.*

- *Some respondents felt that the alternative suggestion by some residents of a 'no left turn' out of North Common Road would not work.*
- *'This is a complex issue due to the interlocking roads in the area. Agreed it is not an easy solution - suggested traffic modelling be undertaken.'*
- *'This ban will only affect the residents.'*
- *'Do not want a ban anywhere near the common.'*
- *'This would just move the problem into a more condensed area.'*
- *'Residents already impacted by banned right turn out, due to the dual carriageway.'*
- *'Traffic is high speed - this needs to be addressed.'*
- *Of those keen on a banned left turn from North Common Road to Park Road - they would want it to be residents only.*
- *Some felt things should just be left how they are.*

Proposals in March 2020 Petition

17. The petition which has been submitted outlines three main points, each of which are discussed in turn below:

There is still a perceived rat running problem

- The data collected in September 2019 does show that there are still issues with rat running in the area but actually with a decrease from Norfolk Road / South Common. However, a key reason that people take the conscious decision to rat run is the traffic in Uxbridge Town Centre in the peak periods, in particular the traffic travelling towards the Swakeleys roundabout. Further work is being done by Council officers in regard to Swakeleys Road and the impact on this on the HS2 construction works.

Proposed no exit from North Common Road to Park Road

- The petition is asking for reconsideration of a banned left turn from North Common Road to Park Road. During the informal consultation held in September / October 2019, a number of correspondences were received from local residents saying they did not support the proposals for no exit onto Park Road from North Common Road.
- The petition outlines a desire for local residents to be exempt from the restriction and provides an article in regard to number plate recognition technology to allow such an exemption, the article is provided in Appendix B. The article shows that the trial is in its early stages. An exemption of such a kind would be difficult to manage given: the number of interlocking roads in the area; how far the exemption would be applied; the database would need constant updating with registration numbers as people change vehicles and move home; and it is likely a number of appeals would be generated resulting in significant response challenges for the Council. Therefore, it is felt that, should such a restriction be put in place, it would need to be done for all and residents could not be exempt.
- This type of restriction is only in place at a couple of locations across the Borough and the signage and traffic orders are not standard. Therefore, any proposals would need to be referred to the Secretary for State.

Works at the 'Duck Pond' junction

- The petition asks for the island to be reinstalled at the junction as people still cut the junction, albeit not entirely on the other side of the road.
- Some snagging works were undertaken with the Council's Flood Officer and Green Spaces team due to the pond area causing excess water on the carriageway. The Green Spaces will be arranging for vegetation in this area but this will take some time to get established.

- As the mitigation measures have not long been introduced, it is proposed not to take forward any changes to this junction at this time but keep the matter under review.

18. It should be noted that the Council has already received an email from a local resident in objection to the new petition which has been submitted. The email received states the following:
"I understand from Ray Graham that there is a petition put forward to restrict the exit from North Common Road in the afternoons.....I object strongly to a restriction being put in place. The so-called rat race does not impede traffic."

Conclusion

19. In conclusion, the petition is asking for the Council to consider a PM peak banned left turn from North Common Road on to Park Road. The petition would like for this restriction to allow residents in the area be exempt from enforcement. As discussed above, there are considerable difficulties exempting residents. Therefore, it is proposed that any consideration of the implementation of such a restriction is undertaken without allowing residents to be exempt, or an 'all or nothing' approach.

20. The Council has correspondence from local residents not supporting an introduction of such a restriction and, based on this information, the Council does not have a clear mandate to consider implementing such a measure. However, in order to establish the current thoughts of local residents to the introduction of such a measure, the Cabinet Member may be mindful to consider instructing officers to undertake an informal consultation asking two questions:

1. Do you support the introduction of a banned left turn from North Common Road to Park Road, without an exemption for residents?
2. If you support the introduction of a restriction, would you support it being operational 'at all times' or 'PM Peak' (4-7pm)?

21. Should an informal consultation be supported, it would be suggested that the Cabinet Member consider extending this to the following roads: South Common Road; West Common Road; Water Tower Close; Gravel Hill; Colendale Road; and Norfolk Road. A plan of the proposed study is provided at Appendix C.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with the recommendations to this report. If works are subsequently required, suitable funding will need to be identified within the Road Safety Capital Programme which will be subject to the capital release process.

4. EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendation?

To allow the Cabinet Member an opportunity to discuss in detail with petitioners their concerns.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

None at this stage.

5. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance has reviewed the report and concurs with the financial implications set out above, noting that there are no financial implications arising from the report recommendations.

Legal

There are no special legal implications for the proposal to discuss with petitioners their concerns with traffic volumes in North Common Road, Uxbridge, which amounts to an informal consultation. A meeting with the petitioners is perfectly legitimate as part of a listening exercise, especially where consideration of the policy, factual and engineering issues are still at a formative stage. Fairness and natural justice requires that there must be no predetermination of a decision in advance of any wider non-statutory consultation.

In considering any informal consultation responses, decision makers must ensure there is a full consideration of all representations arising, including those which do not accord with the officer recommendations. The decision maker must be satisfied that responses from the public are conscientiously taken into account.

Should there be a decision that further measures are to be considered, then the relevant statutory provisions will have to be identified and considered.

Corporate Property and Construction

There are no corporate property and construction implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Relevant Service Groups

None at this stage.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Petition received.

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Classification: Public

News

Tech could save 'rat run'

NUMBER PLATE RECOGNITION PLAN TO PREVENT CONGESTION IN FULHAM STREET

By OWEN SHEPPARD
owensheppard@readplc.com
@owen_sheppard

The 'high tech' plan to stop non-locals driving through Fulham's residential streets in midst of Harwood Terrace row is revealed.

Harwood Terrace will stay closed for up to six weeks after the trial finishes, until the NPR cameras are up and running.

Hammersmith & Fulham Council wants to install cameras with number-plate-recognition (NPR) technology at entrances to Imperial Road, Bagleys Lane and Harwood Terrace.

Fines would be issued to motorists who have not joined a "registration scheme", via an app, that would give drivers a permit to enter those roads.

Drivers eligible for a permit will include all Hammersmith and Fulham residents, local residents' guests, delivery drivers, taxis, buses and emergency vehicles.

This proposal was unveiled at a

cabinet meeting on March 2, which heard that the trial closure of Harwood Terrace has had mixed effects on traffic in surrounding streets.

Explaining the proposal, chief officer for public realm, Bram Kalnith, said: "You would have four control points: at Imperial Road next to the pedestrian crossing, on the eastern end of Harwood Terrace, and in Bagleys Lane."

"This would significantly reduce the traffic in the whole area as well as the SW6 area."

The six-month trial closure of Harwood Terrace, which began in October, will officially end in late April. It is all but certain to remain closed until a new trial of this NPR scheme commences, which could take up to six weeks, Mr Kalnith said.

He then explained that 92 per cent of traffic in the area comes from people who live outside the borough, and said the idea was to prevent "rat running" by drivers who are not local.

Council leader Stephen Cowan said "mistakes" had been made in the run-up to the closure, which was preceded by a consultation shared with just 49 addresses.

Hundreds of residents in the Sands End area of Fulham complained congestion and air pollution increased as a result of closing Harwood Terrace.

Replying to comments from James Spokoini, who coordinates the SW6Traffic campaign, Mr Cowan said: "We don't agree with everything you have said but we absolutely accept that this has not been handled well from the beginning, but once a trial experiment began it needed to be followed through in order to get the data."

Mr Spokoini urged Mr Cowan to carry out a new public consultation with hundreds of residents before committing to a trial of the NPR system.

One councillor who wished to be anonymous said he didn't think the



PHOTO: OWEN SHEPPARD

NPR scheme would make a big difference to the increased congestion in Bagleys Lane, because less than 10 per cent of its traffic is from local drivers.

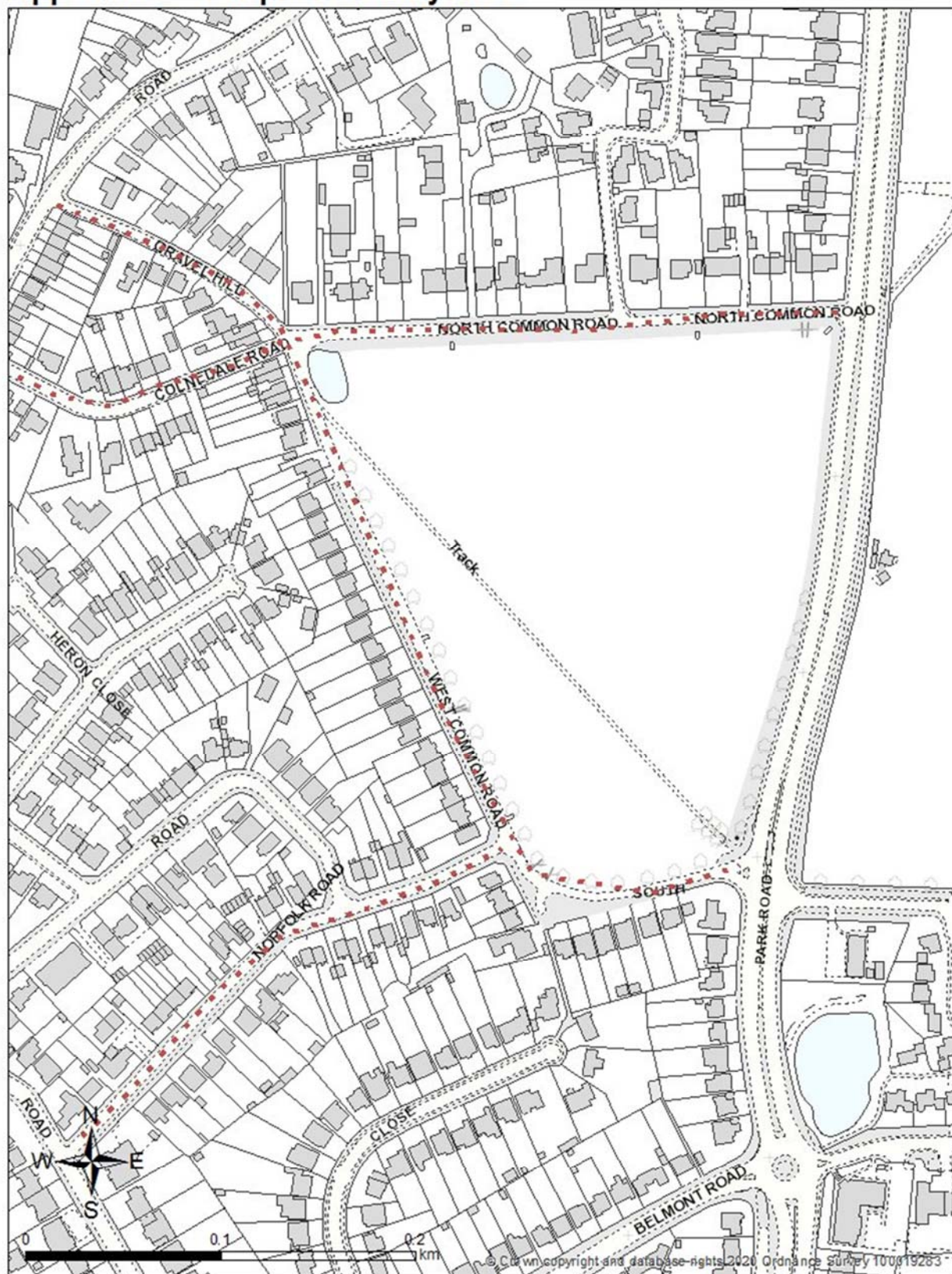
Harwood Terrace resident Nick Smith argued the closure had been "a success" and quoted council traffic surveys which suggest seven local streets have seen a net reduction of thousands of vehicle journeys per

week.

Mr Kalnith added: "What we've found from looking at the data is around 12,000 extra cars a week in Bagleys Lane going northbound and southbound."

"We have seen considerable extended bus journeys times, and actually there's been a positive effect on traffic reduction in Wandsworth Bridge Road and in King's Road."

Appendix C - Proposed Study Area



Map Notes

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