

Bathampton Primary School Safer Routes to School Group

Response to the B&NES Clean Air Zone Consultation, November 2018

The Safer Routes to School Group at Bathampton welcomes measures to tackle poor air quality generally – we understand the growing body of evidence about the impact that poor air quality has on health and therefore support that there needs to be a wider debate about how everyone can take steps to reduce the amount of pollution they produce.

We put this knowledge into practice. Recognising that a key source of air pollution is vehicle emissions, as a school we have been travel planning for several years, both to make our roads safer for active travellers and encourage families and staff to leave cars behind where practical. This year we have been nominated for a second year running as B&NES Primary School of the Year for our travel planning as evidence of how seriously we take this as an issue.

Given that both consultation documentation and the meeting at Bathampton Village Hall (Sat 17th Nov) made it clear that there is no major alternative for the outline business case being prepared other than a CAZ, we have focused our response below on how this solution affects Safer Routes in Bathampton as follows:

- Bathampton is already a key existing rat run to the East of the City and as a group are worried that the current Clean Air Zone proposal will cause a significant additional number of higher polluting vehicles to travel right past the school and through Bathampton village's narrow streets.
- Bathampton's air pollution levels, measured just over the bridge from school by the Council, have had months where air quality exceeds the legal limit set in the past. It is not reasonable to export more poor-quality air from one area to another that is already impacted in this way.
- We are concerned that the CAZ documentation saying that only 10 additional cars will come over the toll bridge an hour is significantly under-estimated and would like far greater clarity about how this figure has been arrived at. There are 24,500 vehicle movements a day on the London Road – 1,500-1,800 an hour in peak times according to Oct 2017 council traffic counts. It is counter-intuitive that only 10 of these per hour will divert over the Toll. At the weekend there was a drop-in session at Bathampton Village Hall and it was clear from this event that no focused analysis has been done about the impact of the CAZ on Bathampton.
- We are not just worried about extra polluting cars, but the impact that even a small number of extra cars or vans could have in snarling up our already tight junctions. This is especially true where Down Lane meets the High Street where cars regularly back up in all directions when someone gets a manoeuvre wrong. Already we have vans, lorries, Network Rail vehicles and coaches on regular routes in the village. These larger vehicles cause issues already without extra vehicles in the mix. Junction overloading is a key issue that the Council must consider in its plans and it is of concern that this has not been done for Bathampton.
- The impact of extra vehicles is not just an issue of air quality or navigability of the roads – it is for us about children's' ability to come to school safely in and among this traffic situation. It is our aim to get children to come independently to school as they reach the appropriate age and for families to feel confident to come to school actively. By not doing any focused analysis on the impact of the CAZ on our community, there is less opportunity for discussion about mitigation measures that will keep families feeling confident coming to school in an active way.
- There is certainly capacity for more traffic to come over the Toll Bridge. There is evidence from this month already on more than one occasion that cars are willing to sit in traffic right along from the toll bridge and past the school over the canal bridge. How can it be certain that this will not become a regular feature avoiding the £9 charge throughout the day, not just at peak? If these cars sit idling, this will worsen local air quality. The streets are sufficiently narrow that they cannot turn around once vehicles are in the queue – the queue just grows.
- Finally, on a practical level, we are concerned that people with higher polluting vehicles won't just rat run through, they might park in the village to access the towpath, including the George Car Park that we rely on for safe school drop off and collection parking, as well as for staff.
- The first step towards having a further discussion about next steps would be an acknowledgement that there will be an issue in Bathampton, caused by the Toll Bridge rat run.