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| **Agenda Item** |  |
| Chairs Introduction | Linda Wilkinson |
| Barnet Grove Closure at Columbia Rd | Kate Evens |
| Gosset St Closure at Columbia Road | Carol Budd |
| Other Items | Participants |

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| **Present** |  | **Role** |
| Linda Wilkinson | Chair JHERA | Joint Chair |
| Saun O’Callahan | Treasurer JHERA | Joint Chair |
| Chris Harrison | London Borough Tower Hamlets | Liveable Streets – Programme Director |
| Shaun Harnett | Columbia Rd Market Trader |  |
| Carol Budd | JHERA | Note Taker |
| 57 Registered |  | Participants |

**Chairs Opening remarks – Linda Wilkinson**

* Introductions as above.
* Are there any Journalists in the room? – None forthcoming
* Thanks to Naomi and Catherine at the Oak for allowing us to use this space at very short notice.
* The purpose of this meeting is firstly to encourage as many people as possible to engage with the consultation process on Liveable Streets.
* Secondly, it seems that we will have to live with a certain amount of street closure - as this scheme is being promoted heavily by the Mayor of LBTH and is following Sadiq Khan’s lead on air quality improvement.
* The issue therefore facing us is to reduce the negative impact on residents and business owners, while still reducing heavily the through-drivers. We have the added complexity of the market and the access of the trucks to Columbia Road and the park-up after unloading. Which currently works smoothly.
* In the end it will almost certainly be a case of picking winnable fights so let’s hope we can find a comfortable compromise.
* This meeting will finish at 9 pm this evening.
* So, I propose that initially we discuss two of the most contentious aspects of the plan for our area. Those seem to be the closure of Barnet Grove at the junction with Columbia Road and the proposed closure and pedestrianisation of Gossett Street by the Birdcage. I think that many of our concerns are involved within these. I will give 30 mins if needed on each of these. There will be 30 minutes left for other points people wish to raise.
* If another meeting is required, we will do our best to accommodate but we do have a coalition of local groups and associations working together on this and who hope to meet with the Council to discuss how this might work to everyone’s advantage.
* For Scheme 2 &3 the volunteers are Nick Fiveash and Kate Adler who will be happy to receive suggestions about the proposals.
* The minutes and outcomes of this meeting will be published on the JHERA website.
* What we won’t be discussing is the security of the market, i.e. the vans that currently block it off at either end. That is a different part of the Council’s funding stream under security, and Liveable streets has no input into that. In my personal view, that’s a shame as a holistic approach would be good, but there you are.
* I am going to ask Kate Adler to lead on the closure of Columbia Road at Barnet Grove.
* Carol Budd will lead on the Closure at Gossett Street.

**Barnet Grove Closure at Columbia Rd - Kate Evans**

**1. A Partition Line**

* This proposal creates a partition line through the heart of our local community The Jesus Hospital Estate, (JHE) designed as one cohesive residential and commercial area in the 19th Century, a vibrant and cohesive community to this day, a traffic partition line will exist, cutting off one part of the estate from the other.
* Those living on the Columbia Rd side of the traffic divide will not be able to transit directly to the Bethnal Green Road or any other route in that direction without a lengthy & circuitous route and vice versa, those living on the other side of the divide will not be able to connect with the Columbia Rd shops, restaurants & businesses & residents or travel directly to Hackney Rd or other routes in that direction.

**2. Flower Market Lorries**

* It is unclear if any consideration has been given to the regular routine of the Sunday Morning Flower Market Lorry parking or loading & unloading procedure?
* A well-established routine has been established to cause a minimum of disturbance to residents on the JHE. This involves each market vehicle having the ability to enter Columbia Rd to unload and then parking in their allocated parking spot placed in strategic locations on the JHE.

**3. Access**

* There will only be ONE possible entry route onto Columbia Rd for the residents or business on Columbia Rd, from Hackney Rd down. There will only be one possible exit up Ravenscroft St & back onto Hackney Rd.
* This also impacts onto the existing traffic system around The Shoreditch Triangle as one has to get onto Hackney Rd in the first place to access Columbia Rd or in my case home, no matter what direction you are travelling from. The one scheme is adjacent to the other therefore quite feasibly one gets stuck in both one-way systems trying to travel to and from home or work.
* Hackney Rd is already a busy road and subject to traffic jams how is it to deal with the additional traffic being pushed onto it. Surely this will lengthen journey times and increase emissions in the surrounding area?

**4. Travel Times & More Emissions**

* The scheme will create two “rat runs” the first being the one way down Columbia Rd & up Ravenscroft St. Already a busy street with a School on the street it is difficult to see how this will improve the current traffic flow at this end of the street. It will possibly create a short cut to cut off a corner from the blocked traffic on the Hackney Rd.
* The other “rat run” will be the Gosset St/ Wellington Row loop which will become the only entry for residents in the other half of the JHE but also the circulation road for any lost traffic in the scheme getting stuck on that side of the partition.

**Comments from the Floor/via email**

1. I have a business on Columbia Rd and 2 children. Pollution affects children’s health and has failed to meet EU minimum air quality standards.
   1. Guardian quote ‘Air pollution was until recently regarded as a problem mainly for those whose health was already compromised or vulnerable in some way: the very old, the very young, and those with existing respiratory problems such as asthma. Thanks to groundbreaking research in the last few years, we now know the problem goes much further, to the root of human health: air pollution has been linked to miscarriage, dementia, heart disease and lower intelligence.’
2. As a daily cycle commuter, the last thing I’d want is for the most dangerous parts of the ride (I.e. Bethnal Green or Hackney road depending where I’m working) to become more dangerous as a result of the increased traffic. The nicest bit of my commute is always within our estate with virtually no traffic, so the idea that this is orientated to encourage cycling is laughable!
3. Why not have a ‘Schools Streets’ system like Hackney which bans traffic outside schools are key time of the day only.
4. The current system creates a ‘ghetto’ where some resident are unable to travel north (or south). This speaker subsequently agreed to change the word ‘ghetto’ to ‘open prison’.
5. What is currently a 280 yard journey becomes 2.4 miles. Emissions don’t stay on the main road, they float across the whole area.
6. There are already traffic jams on Hackney Rd at 15:30.
7. Displacement of traffic within the Borough does not make sense. It is a blunt instrument.
8. Parking on Sundays. There is insufficient parking to take cars which need to move for the market. My current 280 yard journey becomes 2.4 miles.
9. Why cants we have a resident’s only solution using technology.
10. Streets need to be alive. We are not Covent Garden. The area needs to be liveable.
11. To say there is no evidence that pollution affects health is ridiculous.
12. Why are some streets being cut off and not others? (reference to Wellington Row become the only through route for all traffic in Scheme 3).
13. Some disabled drivers are dependent on cars and need reasonable access to and from their homes.
14. A significant cause of traffic is people dropping and collecting children (including teenagers) at schools.
15. It could be seen that the Council is affecting the poorest in society by pushing all traffic from middle class areas onto working class areas. Wellington Row has Council Flats on one side of street.
16. Having a one-way system around the Birdcage doesn’t help cyclists if they can only cycle one way.
17. We need to get away from a car centric culture. Wider changes are coming all over London.
18. Everyone is hell bent on getting rid of cars. Electric cars are coming. Cars are here to stay.
19. I drive a bus for the Sundial Centre (provides a day care centre for elderly). This will be a nightmare to collect and return people to their homes.
20. Bikes need to be able to travel two way on one-way streets. (But this can increase risk to both cyclists and pedestrians.)
21. Ravenscoft one way system will help drugs???
22. Columbia Rd could be pedestrianised in a time limited way.
23. There is a key danger point a for cyclists at the junction of Columbia Rd and Ropely St. I have had to call an ambulance 4 times when an accident has occurred. (This junction is an acute angle, creating a blind spot for drivers coming in from Hackney Rd. The short distance to a corner on the cycle path means that cyclists and drivers cannot see each other.)
24. I am strongly in favour of all the proposals, except that I am happy to defer to others in considerations of how the scheme might have to be altered, on Sundays, to facilitate the operation of the market.
25. Of course, the scheme is going to make it less convenient for us to drive everywhere. I think it’s a good idea to reduce the traffic on the estate and appreciate that this will affect me as well as non-residents. I don’t think that we have, anymore, a God-given right to motor about as we please or might want.
26. I am not persuaded by arguments that intolerable congestion will be caused on the Bethnal Green and Hackney Roads. It’s well known that building roads increases road-use, conversely reducing the availability of roads is likely to reduce their use. I know this is political, but I think it’s a good thing.
27. I don’t think the scheme, by having only one way in and out will encourage drug-dealing. I’d have thought that dealers are going to be less likely to enter an area where they can be trapped just by closing a single road.
28. If TFL want to encourage usage of public transport, why have they reduced our bus services?

**Response from Chris Harrison**

* The Council wants to keep to objectives of reducing traffic but some compromise is possible.
* The key thing is for people to get engaged with the consultation process.
* Schemes elsewhere have been transformational.
* We want to put forward proposals that will benefit the area.
* It is a consultation process; nothing is yet set in stone.
* Whatever happens not everyone will be 100% happy.
* Whatever happens, complete the survey. Put your voices forward and be heard.
* TFL pledge under ‘Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy. <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/transport/our-vision-transport/mayors-transport-strategy-2018>
* Two areas which have implemented the strategy over a longer timescale are Waltham Forrest and Kingston.
* In other areas, main road usage has gone down, and bus journeys are quicker.
* Long distance traffic will move (relocate).
* Other approaches which can be considered include:
  + Hackney style School streets. This was introduced AFTER some road closures.
  + Timed closures
* There are a lot of short trips, only 50% through traffic.
* Allowing residents freedom of movement does not change behaviour.
* All relevant Council Departments and Emergency Services have been involved in the consultation.

During Chris’s replies, it became apparent that a journalist had entered the room, uninvited, and was recording the proceedings. Following objections from the Chair, the journalist refused to leave the room. A show of hands was taken with the majority in favour the journalist remaining, the meeting continued with the journalist present. (see resulting article at end of notes)

**Gosset Street Closure at Columbia Road - Carol Budd**

**PUBLIC SPACE (from the Project website)**  
We have listened to your comments about the narrow footways, excessive guardrailing and difficulty of crossing outside the junction of Columbia Road and Gosset Street and so we are proposing a new public space. This would be a space the whole community could enjoy, with new planting and seating and improved air quality. We also propose to introduce public artwork in this new public space.

**ROAD CLOSURES**  
Over 8000 vehicles a day pass by Oakland School on Old BG Rd and Columbia Nursery on Columbia Rd near Hackney Rd. At least 50% of these vehicles are through traffic as indicated by APNR analysis. Under any scheme to reduce traffic, the closure of Gosset St can be taken as a no brainer. This is a red line for the Council and fighting is unlikely to gain us any concessions. Therefore, we should work with the Council to make this an asset to the community.

**Suggestion which have been put forward to date include:**

* There is to be NO seating to discourage drinking and anti-social behaviour.
* The area could be used to install a ‘community hub’ which would be a resource for the local community groups in the area, as per the coffee shop at Aldgate ex—gyratory.
* Any planting should be low level and not provide ‘seating’.
* Drinking fountains.
* Other improvements we could seek are:
  + Motability scooter parking and charging points.
  + Improve walk paths in Ravenscroft Park

**Street Drinking particularly at Weekends**

* Whilst we appreciate the concept of landscaping and improving pedestrian access surely an unintended consequence of the proposed park closure of Gosset St & Columbia Rd will be to create a ‘beer garden’ for the Birdcage.
* A recent meeting of the JHERA with officers from the Licensing Department discussed the issue of street drinking on Ezra Street creating additional noise and disturbance to the residents in the immediate area.
* We fear that this will just allow the customers of the Birdcage to spread further than already and also encourage people to purchase off sales from the nearby Flower Supermarket off licence to consume in this area increasing disturbance for local residents largely at weekends & particularly on Sundays when the market is in operation.

**Other comments from the floor**

1. Issues with drug dealing on Ezra St have improved since the council replaced an non working street light with a new higher and bright street light. These lights reduce antisocial behaviour.
2. Clarification was sought on the use of the phrase ‘red lines’. This was anecdotal, an impression gained at the Saturday morning consultation.
3. Concern from Wellington Row residents that their street will become busier as a result of the changes.
4. Accept change but make it better. How can we ensure the community concerns are understood by the consultants?
5. Currently the traffic on Barnet Grove is not excessive. (Note that this street already has a one way system operating.)
6. The historic cutting of access from Gosset St into Durant St has made the area safer.
7. Concern that the road closures will increase traffic on the main road.
8. The closures will eliminate ‘cut through’ traffic.
9. What might be the unintended consequences?
10. It won’t reduce drug dealing, they will just move to bikes.
11. The ‘solution’ appears to be dysfunctional.
12. Speeding cars, mostly drug dealers on Wellington Row. This won’t address the problem, it’s not inconvenient enough.
13. The issue is high speed cars, not drug dealing.
14. Columbia Road will become ‘destination central’ for all the party animals from Old St. It will create problems.
15. As JHERA we are concentrating on Schemes 2&3. Other groups are having their own meetings for the other schemes.
16. The system does not include Hackney Rd and Bethnal Green Rd.
17. How will delivery vehicles find routes through?
18. The Birdcage already acknowledges they cannot manage the people outside. Has Licensing at LBTH been consulted?
19. Has Sundial Centre been consulted?

**Market Traders Perspective – Shane Harnett**

* Market Services appear to know nothing about the proposed changes.
* Market traders have not been informed except by JHERA.
* If the changes to traffic flow are implemented, I would leave the market.
* I have just spent over £100,000 on two new truck to be ULEZ compliant.
* I pay the Council £1000 PA in parking fees.

Chair: It has taken over 25 years for the residents and market trader to come to an accommodation whereby the market traders have designated parking places which don’t impact by being in front of houses, and early morning noise is kept to a minimum. The sequence of unloading, parking up, and reloading to close is a fine choreography which has taken years to achieve.

The Consultants and the Council do not understand the impact of the changes and don’t know what the unintended consequences will be. Do not rush so the Council can tick boxes and spend money within artificial time limits.

Whatever plan emerges, I would ask the council to agree to a trial period when residents and visitors, market traders, delivery people and emergency services could try out the proposed new layout.  This could be achieved quite cheaply by using portable barriers which the council frequently use when there is a temporary diversion, plus temporary signs advising drivers about the new layout. It might turn out to be easier to cope with than some of our neighbours are saying. Or it might be proved to be completely unworkable.  Either way, much better to have an inconvenient few weeks trial than costly changes which later have to be undone if they prove to be impossible.

Kate and Nick will be leading on meeting with other group leasers and coordinating any further action. If you want to get in touch or offer further comments:

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**No green light just yet to stop traffic 'rat run' through Columbia Road's famous flower market**

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<https://www.eastlondonadvertiser.co.uk/news/politics/columbia-road-traffic-barrier-scheme-1-6371473>

[Mike Brooke](mailto:mike.brooke@archant.co.uk)

*Two householders at the Royal Oak residents' meeting in Columbia Road study the council's plans to close off their neighbourhood to traffic. Picrture: Mike Brooke*

A packed evening meeting above a pub in the Columbia Road flower market heard from a Tower Hamlets Council planning officer why they should have a road barrier to keep traffic out of their neighbourhood.

*What Tower Hamlets Council wants to do with Columbia Road. Picture: LBTH*

But the town hall's plans to stop 4,000 vehicles a day using Old Bethnal Green Road as a "rat run" have upset sceptical householders who fear the barrier would split the community.

Car-owners say they would be forced to make long detours if they're the wrong side of the barrier just to get to the main road.

"This plan has caused great stress," protester Nick Fiveash told the *East London Advertiser*. "A barrier divides the community into a north-south divide.

"We understand a need for cleaner air, but would have to make a two-mile detour to Cambridge Heath just to reach Queensbridge Road 400 yards away, adding fuel pollution and increasing main road traffic which defeats the object of cutting emissions."

Half the traffic along Old Bethnal Green Road is just avoiding the main roads, the planning official told the Jesus Green residents' meeting at the Royal Oak on Monday night.

The scheme would deter drivers from other parts of London short-cutting between Shoreditch and Cambridge Heath, he promised.

*Angry neighbours lining the spot where the council wants a traffic barrier in Columbia Road which they say would divide the community. Picture: Nick Fiveash*

But the people from surrounding turnings fear the barrier would throw traffic onto their normally quiet streets. Some living around Jesus Green cited empty streets "safe enough to walk down the middle of the road".

The council maintains its *Liveable Streets* programme being rolled out in 17 areas across the East End is to improve air quality.

But even this has been challenged—and not just by car owners railing against the barrier.

Sara Dixon, who doesn't drive, argued that it won't prevent pollution drifting in from main roads which would become more congested, but would cause "massive disruption" to her life because her estate would be separated from the rest of the community.

"Invisible particles float everywhere," Sara points out. "This barrier is just moving the pollution slightly to the left and right of the schools, not eradicating it."

She suggests "more plants and trees to clean the air around us, not pushing problems into surrounding neighbourhoods."

*Columbia Road flower market stallholders Shane and Yvonne Harnett fear the traffic barrier will uproot their livelihood. Picrture: Mike Brooke*

Ironically it's the flower market traders who could supply those trees and shrubs. But the stallholders worry that the barrier would uproot their livelihoods and choke Columbia Road's reputation.

Shane and Yvonne Harnett are pot-plant growers from Essex whose families have sold flowers down Columbia Road since the 1930s who were at the meeting.

Shane told the *Advertiser*: "We don't know where we'd be able to park to unload our bulky goods. We need our vehicles to be close to our market pitch.

"Pollution needs to be controlled, but has to be a balance between traders, shopkeepers and the people living here."

The council's *Liveable Streets* programme aims to stop rat-runs, to improve air quality and also to tackle street crime.

But residents rejected the idea that a barrier would prevent drug dealers in cars who would merely adapt to the environment, perhaps using motorbikes instead, one householder pointed out.

*Mayor John Biggs turned up in Columbia Road with kids on bikes hoping residents would give his barrier the green light to stop through traffic. Picture: Kois Miah*

Public consultations are being held Thursday evening at the council's Professional Development centre in Bethnal Green Road, 5-7pm, to "make tweaks" for a final design. It follows air quality tests showing pollution around schools exceeding recommended EU limits, with Tower Hamlets having the fifth worst levels of air pollution of any London borough.

Tower Hamlets mayor John Biggs said in a statement to the paper: "We want to encourage more people to walk and cycle to reduce congestion and make our neighbourhoods safer, cleaner and greener."

Proposed restrictions around Columbia Road include Arnold Circus, Warner Place, Old Bethnal Green Road and Sale Street, putting "rat run" traffic back onto Bethnal Green Road or Hackney Road and leaving the area to pedestrians and cyclists.

But the "traffic calming" scheme isn't calming those living around the East End's famous Columbia Road flower market.