

Appendix 8 – Feedback and Lessons learned

Legibility (understanding of restriction)

This was the first implementation of a Zero Emission Street in England. Guidance for local Zero Emission Zones is provided by Transport for London (TfL) and the criteria has been followed for the scheme design. Approval of the restriction signage was granted by the Department for Transport in early 2020.

From 18 March until the 2 August, the restriction was enforced passively. In this time warning notices were issued to raise awareness of the restriction. Active enforcement with the issues of Penalty Charge Notices began on 27 July.

Of the through traffic using Beech Street, an average of 150PCNs are being issued each day. With new traffic restrictions we usually experience an improvement in compliance over time. Because traffic volumes have been low during large parts of the experiment it is expected that this number would initially increase as traffic volumes return at the end of lockdown restrictions, before motorists become more aware of the restriction. This is likely to also impact on the air quality measurements for a short period of time.

It is difficult to accurately estimate what the percentage level of compliance with the restriction would be if the pandemic had not occurred. Due to the longer warning notice period and the very prominently placed signing, a reasonable assumption is that compliance should eventually reach similar levels to Bank Junction. This is 96%. If the same percentage of traffic was to contravene the restriction, and if vehicle numbers in the City return to pre-COVID levels, this number of compliant vehicles may increase

Access to properties

Generally, it appears that residents in the wider area now understand the restriction and how to access their property.

Residents whose properties are not on Beech Street have not yet experienced the possible longer journey times that were expected from using the alternate routes, due to lower traffic volumes. The majority of enquiries received about access issues have come from the Barbican Estate area, comparatively much fewer have been from the Golden Lane Estate area and Bunhill Ward area in Islington.

Some businesses have yet to experience the true impact of the restriction on their normal business operations.

One of the key design features of the scheme was to continue to allow access to properties within the area of restriction on Beech Street. To do this, a sign plate below the main sign was provided “Except for zero emission vehicles and for access to off-street premises”. This allows all vehicles to access:

- The Virgin Active service area
- Cromwell Tower forecourt and ground floor car park
- Barbican Centre Car Park (no. 5)
- Refuse collection area
- Defoe House/Shakespeare Tower
- Lauderdale Place

Vehicles must access these locations in the correct direction due to the central reservation. Some residents for Defoe House and Shakespeare Tower coming from Aldersgate Street have traditionally travelled through Beech Street eastbound and then performed a U-turn or turn around via Silk Street. This has meant a technical infringement as they have travelled along Beech Street without accessing an off-street premise and have activated the entry and exit camera trigger. The exception to this rule is access to Cromwell Tower forecourt which can be made as there has been a gap in the central reservation for some years and the right turn is able to be performed before the camera trigger point. There is a U-turn ban at this location, which prevents drivers wishing to access the Defoe / Shakespeare carpark or Lauderdale Place from performing this manoeuvre.

There have been clear issues with some taxis and delivery drivers not understanding the restriction. On occasion this has resulted in the driver refusing to enter Beech Street. This is acknowledged as a frustrating situation for a number of residents. Following discussions with the Barbican Association, additional temporary signing has been deployed to reinforce the message that access to Beech Street is permitted for any vehicle with a legitimate off-street activity i.e. parking, loading, drop-off, pick-up.

Determining the quantum of scale of the access issue to residential properties is a challenge as not every resident will write to the Project team each time their delivery or taxi does not arrive. The Barbican Association has also been handling some enquiries about missed deliveries from Barbican residents. However, it is acknowledged that over 250 enquiries and complaints have been received from residents in relation to access issues.

The view of the Barbican Estate Office Car Park Manager is that the vast majority of deliveries are made successfully. The number of deliveries has increased during the pandemic.

The electric taxi fleet has grown to 1 in 4 taxis, people seeking to hail a taxi on Beech Street are still able to do so. Due to the lack of frontage, there is modest demand for hailing taxis on street compared to other City locations, mostly from residents exiting their properties at street level. The reduced numbers of taxis may mean it now takes longer to hail a taxi from the footway.

Officers have endeavoured to communicate to a wide range of taxi, private hire and delivery organisations about the details of the restriction. The success of this has been mixed due to the varied nature of these (often national) companies and how they cascade the information. Officers also meet regularly with representatives of the taxi trade. There is a perception from some residents that taxis avoid the area and refuse to enter Beech Street, however the trade representatives do not report any confusion amongst their members. Officers will continue to push this message.

The access issue is likely exacerbated by the fact that many delivery and private hire vehicles use Google maps as their default Satnav (which shows no access on Beech Street), as it lacks the functionality to allow for electric vehicles and those vehicles accessing off-street premises. This awareness has provided a useful outcome of the experiment to date. Officers are considering how this can be further mitigated and if Option 2 is agreed the continued experimental period will provide a useful opportunity to explore mitigations and evaluate their effects.

Fortune Street

The impacts of the restriction affect adjacent areas in LB Islington and City and Islington. Officers have met regularly on the detail. Pre-scheme traffic flows from Golden Lane into Beech Street would have reassigned to Fortune Street and Whitecross Street and come back down to the Silk Street junction. To protect the amenity of residents on Fortune Street and the Golden Lane school campus, LB Islington introduced an experimental restriction on Fortune Street (which is also a one-way street).

The management of the scheme has been somewhat problematic for Islington and has taken up more staff time than estimated. If Members opt for Option 1 or 3, Islington would need to take a decision on whether to continue with Fortune Street experiment. For Option 2 Islington will continue with their experiment and expect to be consulted if Members decide to promote a new permanent order in respect of the Beech Street restriction.

The combined restrictions on Beech Street and Fortune Street are understood to be a challenge for the Golden Lane Campus, which comprises the Richard Cloudesley Primary School, Prior Weston Primary School and Golden Lane Children's Centre. It has access points on Whitecross Street, Golden Lane and from Fortune Street Park. Officers have offered to meet with the Richard Cloudesley Primary school, but a meeting has not yet taken place.