

Beech Street Consultation

Consultation Findings Draft Report

May 2023



SYSTRA



Beech Street

Consultation Findings

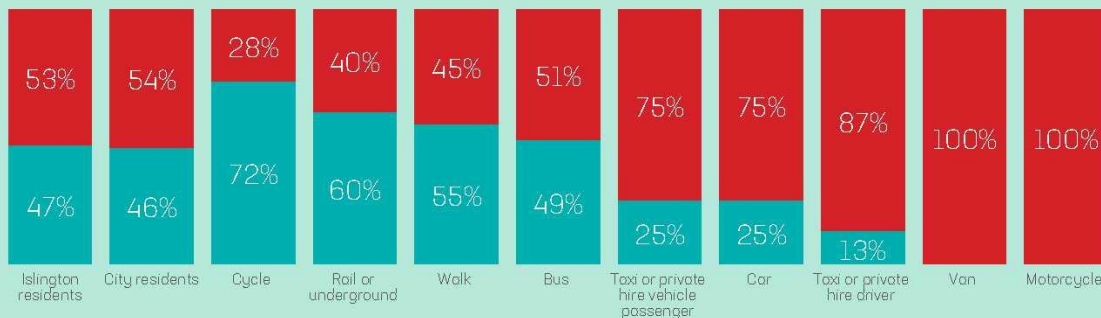
SYSTRA



In 2020, The City of London Corporation (“The City”) ran an 18-month traffic experiment on Beech Street to reduce NO₂ levels. The experiment restricted polluting traffic from using Beech Street as a “through route” 24hrs a day. Unrestricted access was allowed for zero-emission capable vehicles and for any vehicle accessing properties and car parks on Beech Street. Following this experiment, the City have developed a new proposed permanent scheme for Beech Street, working with Islington Council. This report presents the findings of a consultation on the new proposed changes to the Beech Street Zero Emissions Scheme. The consultation was live between 14th January 2023 – 6th March 2023, and a total of 827 responses were received.



■ Support ■ Oppose



Over a third reported living or working in the City of London

76% travelled by foot around the Beech Street area

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Introduction

Introduction

Background to the consultation

The City of London Corporation (“The City”) is working to enhance the air quality on Beech Street, one of the worst-polluted streets in the City of London with nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels often much higher than the maximum levels recommended by the World Health Organisation.

In 2020, the City ran an 18-month traffic experiment on Beech Street to reduce NO₂ levels. The experiment restricted polluting traffic from using Beech Street as a “through route” 24hrs a day. Unrestricted access was allowed for zero-emission capable vehicles and for any vehicle accessing properties and car parks on Beech Street.

When the experimental scheme finished in September 2021, the traffic restrictions were removed. Since then, traffic has returned and is now at 85% of previous traffic levels. As a result, air quality has worsened, and the level of NO₂ is again near legal limits. If traffic were to continue to increase, it is anticipated that it will again be above legal limits.

The City have now developed a new proposed scheme for Beech Street, working with Islington Council.

The City commissioned **SYSTRA** to design, host, analyse and report on a consultation survey assessing the level of support for making the new proposed changes to the Beech Street Zero Emissions Scheme permanent.

This report outlines the findings of this consultation survey which ran between 14th January 2023– 6th March 2023, and received 789 responses.

In addition to responses being received via the consultation survey, a total of 38 free-form responses were provided via email. Email responses have been summarised in Chapter 7 of this report.

The findings from this consultation will be used by the City to inform the decision on whether to make the Beech Street Zero Emissions Scheme permanent.

Introduction

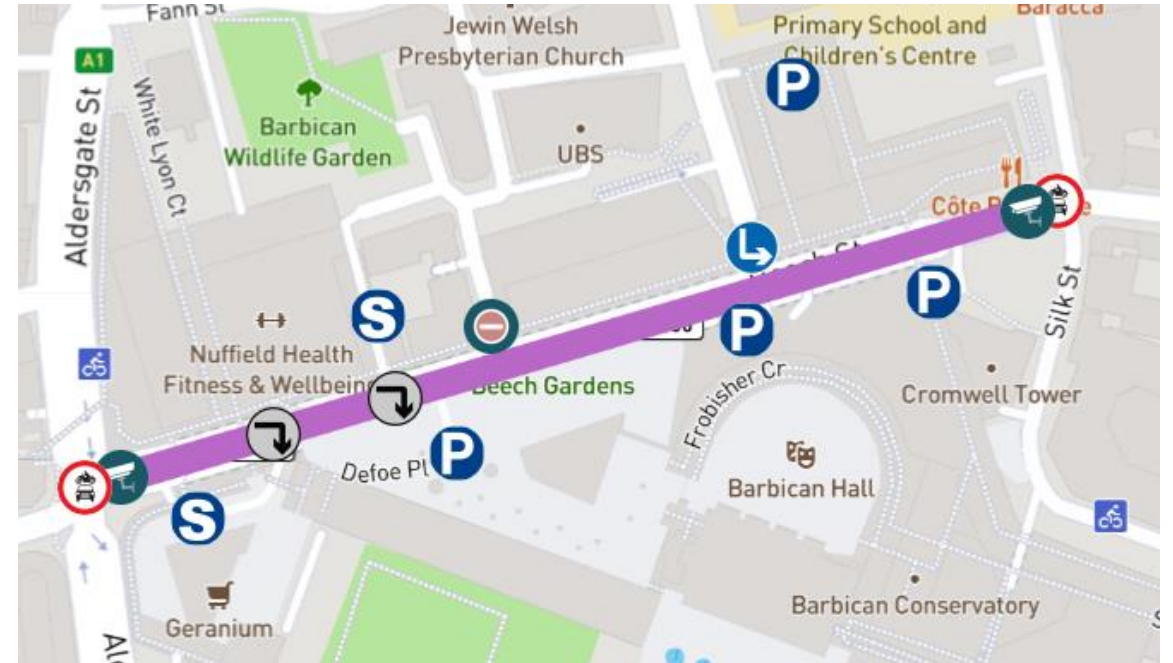
The consultation survey

The consultation survey was primarily delivered using **PlaceChangers**, an interactive online map-based consultation tool. An interactive map showed the different elements of the new proposed scheme for Beech Street and used 'guided tour' functionality to encourage respondents to navigate between the different elements.

At the end of the guided tour, respondents were provided with the option to leave **feedback** on the street by completing a short online survey that captured:

- Demographic questions;
- Usual travel along the street;
- Level of support for making changes permanent; and
- An opportunity to provide feedback on why they did not support the scheme, if applicable.

A total of 787 responses were provided via the online consultation tool. In addition, 2 responses were provided using paper versions of the survey form. Both online and paper survey responses have been analysed together.



Introduction

Analysis and Reporting approach

All survey data was cleaned and analysed using statistical analysis software, SPSS. All **closed questions** within the consultation survey were tabulated and chi-square statistical tests were run to assess whether there were variations in survey answers between different groups of respondents. **This report highlights where statistically significant differences between different groups of respondent have been found.**

The consultation survey included one **open text** question:

- If you have other reasons for why you do not support the scheme, please provide details in the free text box below.

Each response provided to this question was read and analysed in detail, with each sentiment allocated to a code. These codes (and their relationships) are known as the 'coding framework'. Coding ensures all ideas and points raised by respondents to the open-ended questions are captured and reported on. Responses to the open text question are reported in Chapter 6 of this report. Anonymised verbatim quotes are used to illustrate the points made.

The 38 free-form responses provided via email were also analysed using a coding approach. As the free-form email responses cannot be matched up to questions within the survey, these responses were analysed and reported on separately for the purposes of this report. Detail on email responses can be found in Chapter 7. Anonymised verbatim quotes are used to illustrate the points made.

As with all analysis of consultation data, it should be noted that:

- The sample of respondents is self-selecting and therefore the findings do not aim to be representative of the City population or road user groups;
- The base sizes for each question vary, as not all questions were compulsory to answer;
- The consultation survey included some multiple response questions (MRQ), for which participants could select more than one response. These are signified through use of 'MRQ' in relevant figure headings;
- The views and opinions reported are the views and perceptions of respondents and are not necessarily factually correct;
- The consultation process cannot be seen as a 'vote' and we do not attempt to draw conclusions, based on the number of people offering positive or negative comments toward the schemes; and
- The open text data provided by respondents was self-selecting, meaning respondents could choose whether or not to provide a more detailed comment. Whilst this approach ensures the views and opinions of different types of people are heard, the detail provided cannot be taken to be representative of the respondent sample, the City population or road user groups.

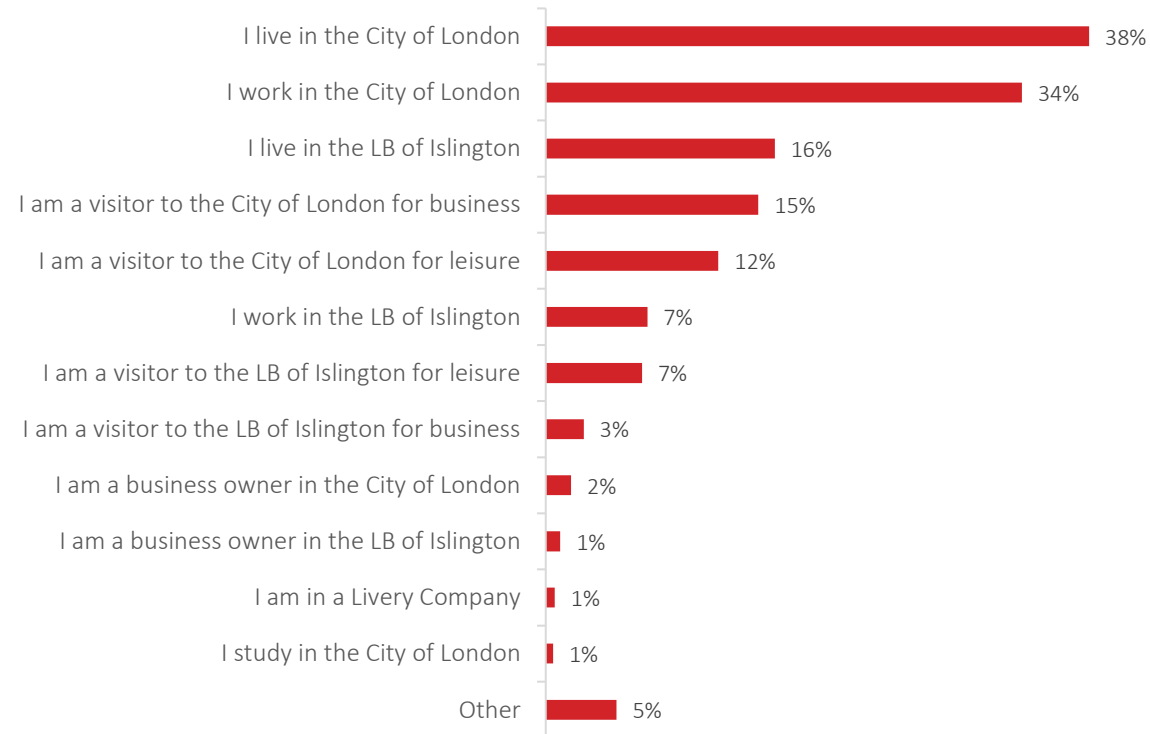
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**Survey
Respondent
Profile**

Overall Survey Sample

Relationship to the Beech Street area

Two in five respondents (38%) to the consultation survey reported living within the City of London, and just over a third (34%) reported working within the City of London. This compares to 16% who reported living in Islington, and 7% who reported working in Islington.



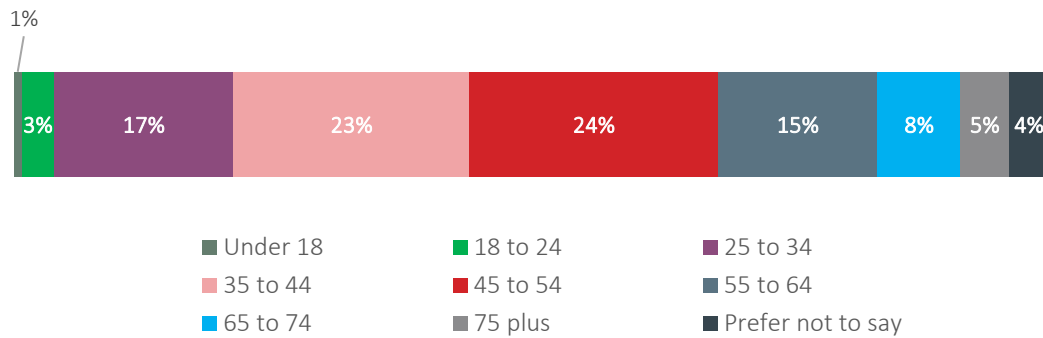
What is your relationship to the Beech Street area? (MRQ; Base: 782)

* Note, not all respondents to the online consultation survey chose to answer this question. Respondents could also provide more than one answer so the percentages do not add up to 100%

Survey Respondent Demographics

Age

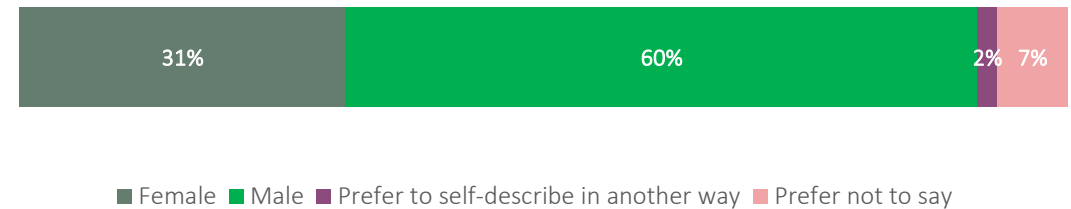
Almost a quarter of respondents fell within the 45 to 54 age category (24%), and a similar number (23%) fell within the 35 to 44 age category.



Which of the following age groups do you fall within? (Base: 543)

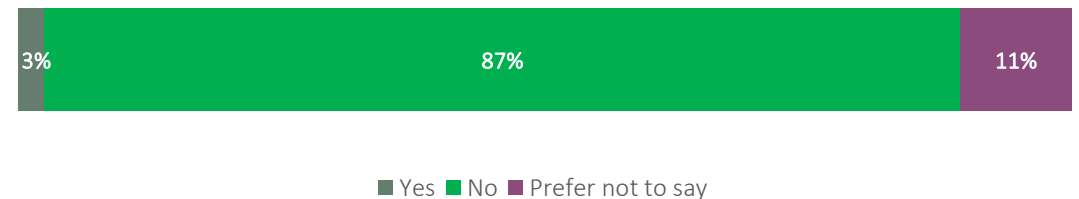
Gender

A large proportion of respondents identified as male (60%), compared to just under a third (31%) who identified as female and 2% who identified in another way.



Which of the following best describes you? (Base: 536)

The majority of respondents (87%) reported that their gender does not differ from that assigned at birth.



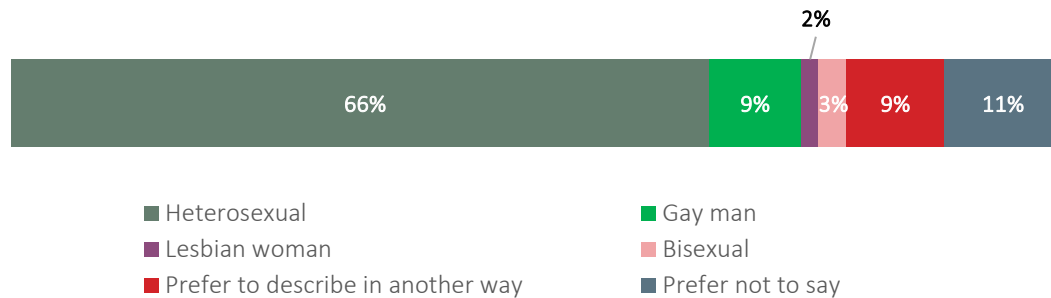
Does your gender differ from that assigned at birth? (Base: 518)

* Note, not all respondents to the consultation survey chose to answer these questions

Survey Respondent Demographics

Sexuality

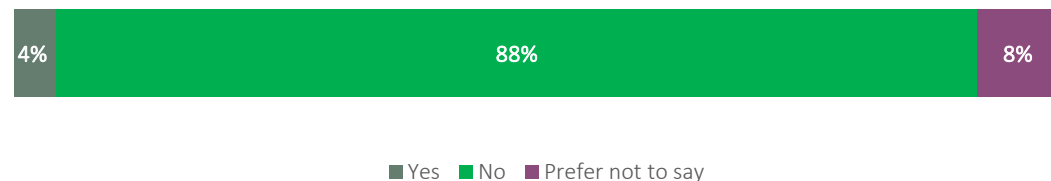
Two thirds of respondents identified as heterosexual (66%), while just under a tenth (9%) identified as gay men, 2% as lesbian women, and 3% as bisexual.



Please select the sexual orientation that best describes you. (Base: 500)

Maternity

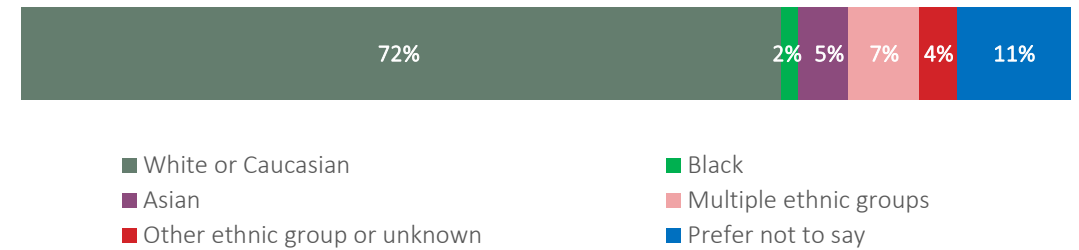
The majority of respondents reported not having had a baby in the last 12 months (88%).



Have you had a baby in the last 12 months? (Base: 508)

Ethnicity

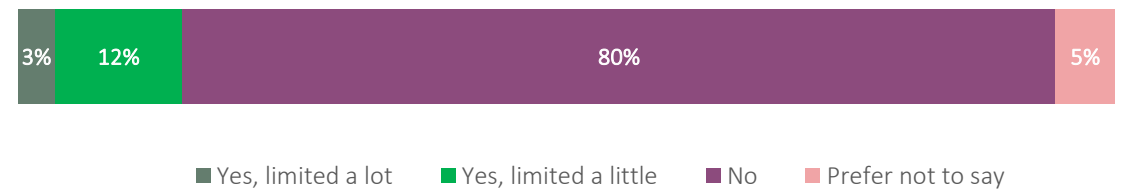
Nearly three quarters of respondents identified as White or Caucasian (72%), 7% as multiple ethnic groups, 5% as Asian and 4% as other/unknown.



Please select the ethnic group that best describes you. (Base: 501)

Disability

15% of respondents reported having a health problem or disability that limits their day-to-day activities.



Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability? (Base: 535)

* Note, not all respondents to the consultation survey chose to answer these questions

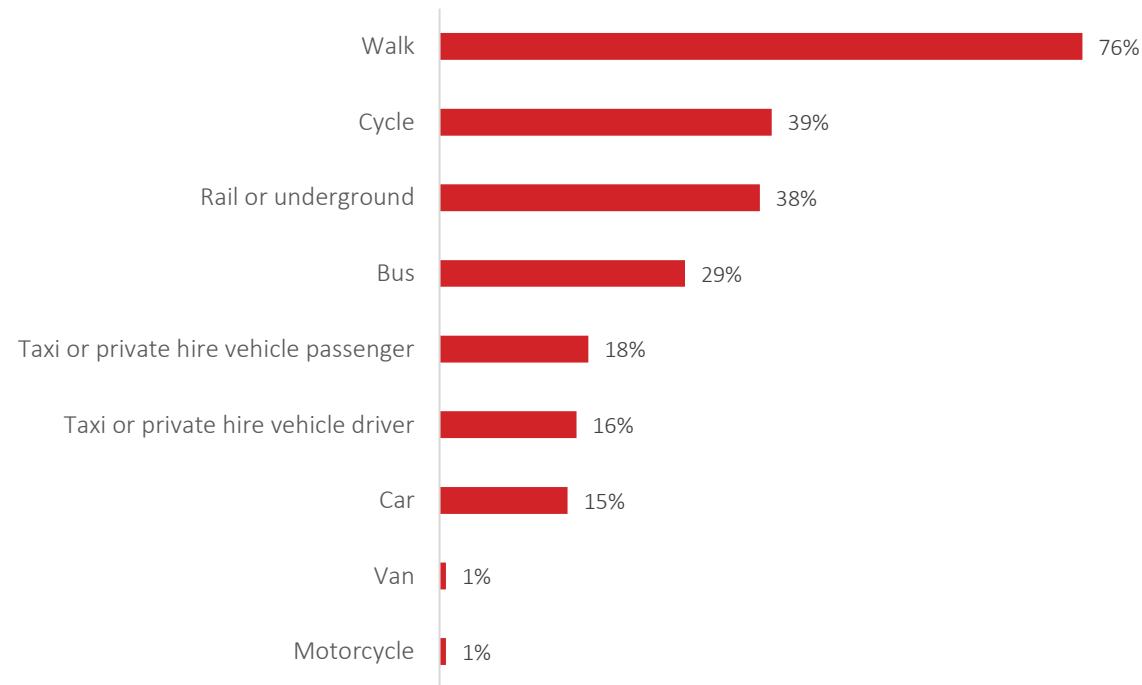
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**Travel
Behaviour**

How do people travel around the Beech Street area?

Normal mode of travel

Those responding to the consultation survey were asked about their usual mode of travel when travelling around the Beech Street area. **Travelling by foot** was the most common, reported by three quarters of respondents (76%), followed by two fifths who reported cycling (39%), or using rail or underground services in the area (38%).



How do you normally travel around the area? (MRQ; Base: 775)

* Note, not all respondents to the online consultation survey chose to answer this question. Respondents could also provide more than one answer so the percentages do not add up to 100%

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**Proposals for
Beech Street**

What information did the consultation provide on the Beech Street Zero Emissions Scheme?

Travelling on Beech Street

The changes to travelling on Beech Street would be:

- Only zero-emission capable vehicles would be able to drive through Beech Street without stopping. In most cases a zero-emission capable vehicle is fully electric and not a hybrid. Vehicle criteria can be checked at: <https://www.vehicleenquiry.service.gov.uk/>
- All other vehicles (including deliveries, taxis and visitors) would be able to enter Beech Street if accessing a car park and forecourts.
- The car parks at Cromwell Tower (Ground Floor), Shakespeare Tower and Defoe House would be accessed by all vehicles in both directions as the central reservation gap will be retained.
- The servicing and delivery area at Lauderdale Place would be accessed by all vehicles in both directions as the central reservation gap will be retained.
- The Barbican Trade Centre would only be accessed from the Aldersgate Street end of Beech Street.
- Barbican Centre car parks would only be accessed from the east via Chiswell Street or Silk Street.
- The car parks at Breton House and Ben Johnson House would only be accessed from Beech Street by zero-emission capable vehicles travelling from the Aldersgate Street end of Beech Street.
- Maps showing permitted movements can be seen the Beech Street Website: <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/services/streets/traffic-schemes-and-proposals/beece-street>



What information did the consultation provide on the Beech Street Zero Emissions Scheme?

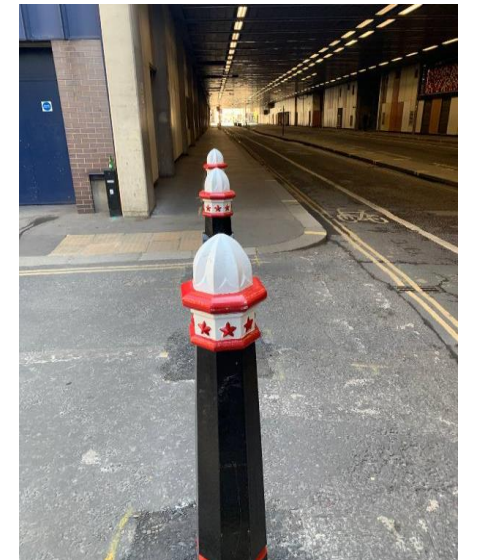
Junctions on Beech Street

The changes to the Golden Lane junction on Beech Street would be:

- Golden Lane junction would remain open to all vehicles travelling down Golden Lane into Beech Street. Only zero-emission capable vehicles travelling from Aldersgate Street could turn into Golden Lane from Beech Street.
- Prior to the experiment 3,300 motor vehicles a day travelled on Golden Lane. Today there are approximately 1,800 motor vehicles a day. It is estimated that opening the junction to all vehicles will increase motor vehicle traffic to 3,000 vehicles a day.
- Fortune Street would not have any additional traffic restrictions.

The changes to the Bridgewater Street junction with Beech Street would be:

- The Bridgewater Street junction with Beech Street would be closed to all vehicles except people cycling.



What information did the consultation provide on the Beech Street Zero Emissions Scheme?

Signage and Enforcement

The proposed **signs** would stop Beech Street being used as a “through” route for polluting vehicles, but would still allow access to car parks and properties. This includes access for deliveries and pick up and drop off by taxis and private hire vehicles.

Vehicle movements would be **enforced** by Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR). ANPR cameras would enforce the Beech Street restriction as follows:

- Non-zero emission capable vehicles driving through Beech Street without stopping would receive a Penalty Charge Notice
- Polluting vehicles accessing a property or car park on Beech Street would not receive a Penalty Charge Notice
- Zero-emission capable vehicles driving through Beech Street would not receive a Penalty Charge Notice



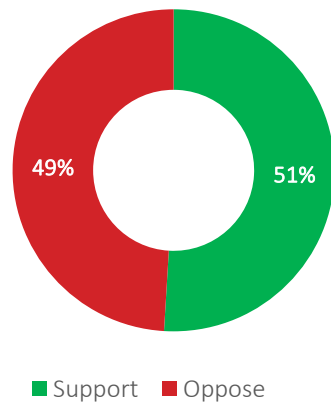
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**Support for
proposals**

Is there support for making the changes permanent?

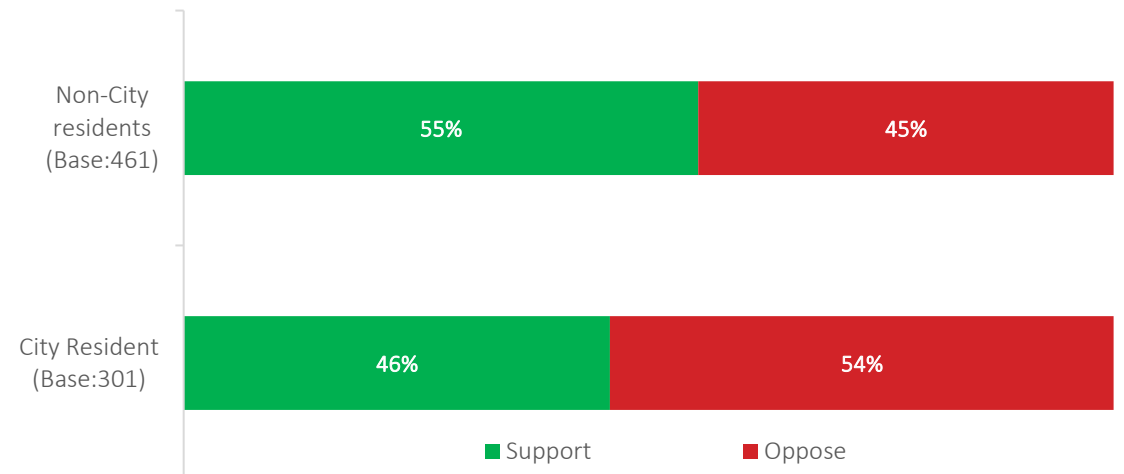
After being provided with detail on the proposals for the Beech Street Zero Emissions Scheme (as outlined in Chapter 4), respondents to the consultation survey were asked whether or not they supported the proposals presented.

Support was divided, with **half of respondents stating support** for the proposals as presented (51%) and half stating opposition (49%).



Overall, do you support the proposals as presented? (Base: 789)

Level of support varied significantly by area of residence. Specifically, those who live in the City were significantly more likely to oppose the proposals, as presented, than those who do not live in the City (54% compared with 45%). Level of support did not differ between Islington and non-Islington residents.



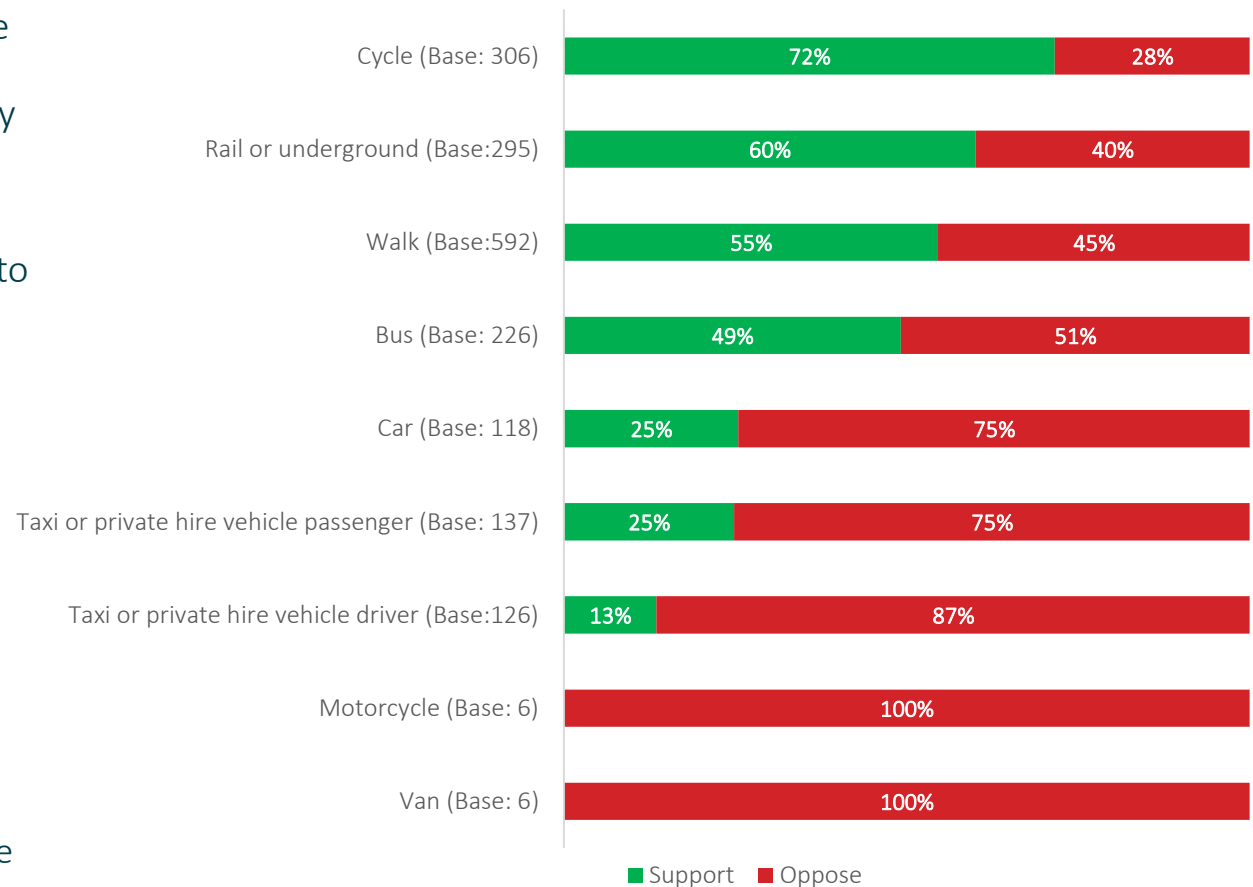
Overall, do you support the proposals as presented?

Is there support for making the changes permanent?

Support for the proposals was highest from people who cycle in the Beech Street area (72%), followed by those who travel by rail or underground (60%), those who walk (55%), and those who travel by bus (49%). Opposition was highest from those who reported travelling by private vehicle or taxi or private hire vehicle.

Level of support varied significantly by usual type of transport used to travel in the Beech Street area.

- People who walked were more likely to **support** the proposals than those who did not walk;
- People who cycled were more likely to **support** the proposals than those who did not cycle;
- People who travelled by rail or underground were more likely to **support** the proposals than those who did not travel by rail or underground;
- Taxi drivers were more likely to **oppose** the proposals than non-taxi drivers;
- Taxi passengers were more likely to **oppose** the proposals than those who did not travel by taxi, as a passenger;
- Those who travelled by car were more likely to **oppose** the proposals than those who did not travel by car.



Level of support for proposals, as presented, amongst different transport users

* Note, respondents to the consultation survey could fall into more than one category, due to the multiple response nature of the question.

Is there support for making the changes permanent?

Level of support also varied significantly by:

- **Age:** Those up to age of 34 years were most likely to support the proposals, followed by those aged 35-64 and those aged 65+ (80% compared with 55% and 42%);
- **Gender:** Those who identify as female were more likely than those who identify as male to support the proposals (63% compared with 58%);
- **Disability:** Those who do not have a disability or health condition that limits their day-to-day activities were more likely than those who do to support the proposals (61% compared with 45%); and
- **Maternity:** Those who have had a baby in the last 12 months were more likely than those who have not to support the proposals (70% compared with 60%).

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**Reasons for not
supporting the
proposals**

Reasons for not supporting the proposals

The online survey respondents who reported opposition to the Beech Street proposals (49%) were given the opportunity to provide reasons for their opposition and the majority (80%) did so. Respondents could select as many reasons as they liked and also had the opportunity to add further reasons in a comments box. The chart shows reasons provided by more than 5% of opposing respondents.

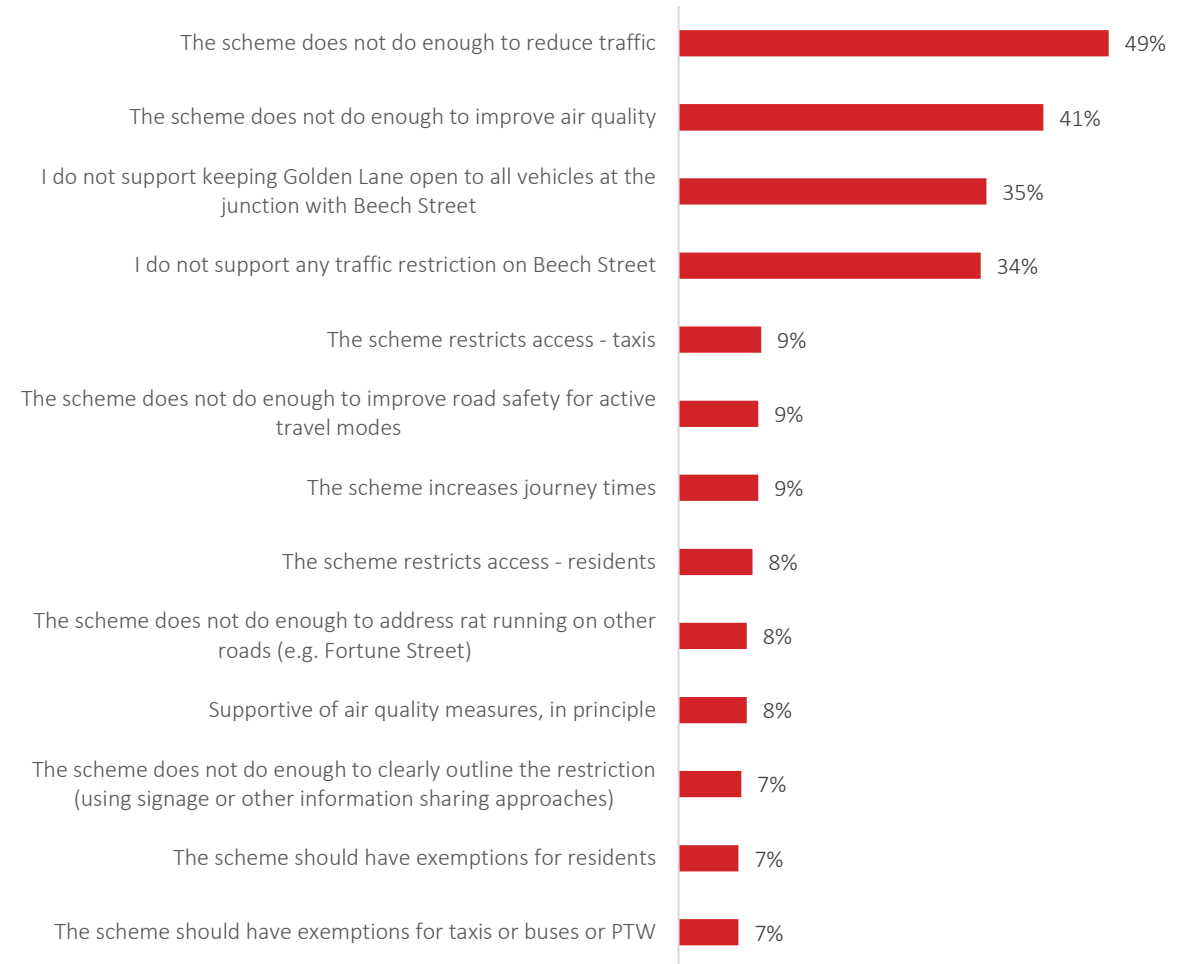
A common reason for not supporting the proposals was a feeling that the **scheme does not go far enough** to address the issues in the area, including (in order of prevalence):

- Traffic levels (49%);
- Air quality (41%);
- Road safety for active travel modes (9%); and
- Rat running on other roads (8%).

Other reasons key reasons not supporting the proposals included:

- Not supporting keeping **Golden Lane** open to all vehicles at the junction with Beech Street (35%); and
- **Not supporting any traffic restrictions** on Beech Street (34%).

Concerns for **access** were also common, including for taxis (9%), residents (8%), utilities/deliveries (4%), people with disabilities (4%), businesses (1%) and emergency services (1%).



If you said you 'Oppose' the proposals, we would like to understand why. What are your reasons for this? (MRQ; Base: 311)

* Note, respondents could provide more than one answer so the percentages do not add up to 100%

Reasons for not supporting the proposals

Less common reasons for opposition were as follows:

- A feeling that the proposals are **unnecessary** due to air quality (5%) or traffic levels (3%) already being acceptable in the area, or the availability of existing alternative routes (3%);
- A concern that proposals would **increase journey times** (9%);
- Concerns about inadequate **signage** and **other information** on the scheme (7%); and
- A feeling that the proposals were only being introduced as a **revenue** generation exercise (5%).

Additionally, some opposing respondents suggested alterations to the scheme, such as **exemptions** for residents (7%), taxis, buses or powered-two-wheelers (7%), whilst others expressed support for air quality measures in principle, but took issue with certain aspects of the proposals for Beech Street, as presented (8%).

Other comments raised concerns about the **accuracy** of the data collection (2%) and **consultation** on the previous Beech Street scheme experimental traffic order (2%).

Reasons for not supporting the proposals

Whilst **opposing respondents could provide as many reasons as they liked** to describe why they opposed the Beech Street proposals, as presented, a small minority did just select one reason. For example:

- 35 stated that the only reason for their opposition was that they do not support any traffic restriction on Beech Street (11% of all opposing respondents who provided a reason for their opposition); and
- 3 stated that the only reason for their opposition was that they do not support keeping Golden Lane open to all vehicles at the junction with Beech Street (1% of all opposing respondents who provided a reason for their opposition).

This means that for the majority of opposing respondents, multiple reasons were given to explain their opposition. The table below shows how different reasons were selected together, for the key opposition reasons only (those provided by a third or more of respondents) . For example:

- 30% of opposing respondents stated that the scheme does not do enough to improve air quality and reduce traffic;
- 23% of opposing respondents stated they do not support keeping Golden Lane open and the scheme does not do enough to reduce traffic.

	I do not support keeping Golden Lane open to all vehicles at the junction with Beech Street	The scheme does not do enough to improve air quality	The scheme does not do enough to reduce traffic	The scheme does not do enough to improve road safety for active travel modes	The scheme does not do enough to address rat running on other roads (e.g. Fortune Street)	I do not support any traffic restriction on Beech Street
I do not support keeping Golden Lane open to all vehicles at the junction with Beech Street	-	9%	23%	5%	5%	7%
The scheme does not do enough to improve air quality	-	-	30%	5%	4%	9%
The scheme does not do enough to reduce traffic	-	-	-	5%	4%	12%
The scheme does not do enough to improve road safety for active travel modes	-	-	-	-	3%	3%
The scheme does not do enough to address rat running on other roads (e.g. Fortune Street)	-	-	-	-	-	2%

(Base: 311)

Reasons for not supporting the proposals

This page provides a selection of verbatim quotes to exemplify responses received to the consultation question: “If you said you ‘Oppose’ the proposals, we would like to understand why. What are your reasons for this?”

“The scheme pushes the traffic to other roads which creates more noise and air pollution for residents on those roads.”

*“The proposal to keep Golden Lane open to all vehicles turning left into the Beech Street tunnel has potentially disastrous consequences. Traffic flow will increase at the exit of the tunnel, thereby creating *more* pollution, noise and other forms of risk and disturbance for residents in Ben Jonson House and Cromwell Tower, as well as those in the street, in nearby offices, and possibly at Prior Weston School. If this scheme is to have maximum value, then all entry/exit points of the tunnel must benefit from reduced levels of non-emission vehicular traffic. The only viable option is therefore to bring back the closure of Golden Lane to all vehicles entering, or at the very least to restrict entrance to the tunnel via Golden Lane to non-emission vehicles.”*

“The trial was good but more needed to be done so traffic did not divert to nearby streets. Air quality is key and this will not improve it enough.”

“The ULEZ has greatly reduced the traffic in the most polluting vehicles and this is likely to be enough to limit pollution in beech street adequately, without this scheme.”

“During the trial period ambulances and taxis and Uber vehicles were largely prevented from entering Beech St and as I am partially disabled and live on Beech Street this was very inconvenient. Also several delivery vehicles were unable to access Barbican properties.”

“I have stopped cycling down Beech Street since the restrictions were removed as it is so polluted, however even with the restrictions it still feels unsafe cycling as the lanes aren't protected and electric vehicles used to speed along here. Some protection for cyclists would also be welcome.”

“I am a disabled resident... I am dependent upon easy access to taxis in Beech Street to get around London for hospital appointments etc. ...during the last [trial] I found extreme difficulty in getting a cab or an Uber to drive up Beech Street to collect me... the reality was that the number of taxis largely dried up during the trial and left me effectively stranded in my flat. I am fearful that any re-implementation of the Zero Emissions for Beech Street will leave me trapped in my flat... it will also INCREASE overall emissions around the Barbican area... On behalf of myself and many other taxi-dependent residents of Beech Street I would ask that the scheme not be re-implemented.”

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**Email response
feedback**

Email feedback

Reasons for not supporting the proposals

In addition to responses being received via the consultation survey, a total of **38 responses** were provided via email.

“The problem with this proposal is that it simply pushes the traffic to other areas close by and in particular Fore Street. Moor Lane, Silk Street etc. These are all roads directly next to residential buildings so the problem just moves. This was what happened during the trial period.”

“We are deeply disappointed that the filter at the bottom of Central Street/Golden Lane won't be returned. It was much more pleasant to cycle along Golden Lane and Beech Street when the amount of traffic was limited by this filter.”

“The scheme is no longer justified since NO2 levels in Beech Street are now within the legal limit. NO2 levels in Beech Street have been falling for years and are a fraction of what they were in 2015. Regardless of traffic levels, they can only continue to fall as vehicles become cleaner and greener. The proposed restrictions are unnecessary.”

In line with the responses received via the consultation survey, email responses commonly expressed **opposition** to the proposals due to a perception that they **do not go far enough** to address the issues in the area, including (in order of prevalence): Traffic volumes; Air quality; Rat running on other roads; and Noise pollution.

Other reasons for not supporting the proposals, expressed within email responses, included:

- A perception that the scheme **restricts access** for elderly people, people with disabilities, utilities/deliveries, residents, taxis, and businesses (some respondents felt these access issues are exacerbated by other vehicle restrictions in the area);
- Not supporting keeping **Golden Lane** open to all vehicles at the junction with Beech Street;
- **Not supporting any traffic restrictions** on Beech Street;
- A feeling that the proposals are **unnecessary** as air quality/traffic levels are acceptable or will improve on their own, or there are existing alternative routes;
- A perception that proposals will **increase journey times**; and
- A perceived **lack of support** from local residents.

Email feedback

Reasons for supporting the proposals

In contrast, some email responses offered **support** for the proposals, for reasons including **perceived improvements** in:

- Air quality;
- Pedestrian and cycle access;
- Road safety for active travel modes;
- Traffic levels; and
- Noise pollution.

Some email responses included **suggestions for changes** to be made to the proposals, after which the scheme would be supported. These suggestions included:

- Providing **exemptions** for taxis, buses, powered-two-wheelers, residents, people with disabilities, or visitors to the Barbican Centre;
- Pairing the scheme with **other road restrictions** to reduce rat running;
- Improving **signage**, or other approaches to better inform drivers of the restrictions; and
- Reducing the **severity of fines**.

Other comments

Additionally, some email responses included comments in support of other measures in the area, such as:

- Measures to improve walking and cycling in the City;
- Measures to reduce traffic levels or speed of traffic;
- Adding fans to Beech Street; and
- Adding planting/greenery to Beech Street.

In line with the survey, a small number of comments provided via email included more general comments in relation to the accuracy of the baseline data collection, comments on the consultation itself, comments raising concerns about air quality more generally, and queries around the definition of 'zero emission capable vehicles'.

"We write to offer our support for the proposal to reintroduce the Beech Street Zero Emission Scheme... the previous Beech Street Zero Emissions Scheme was very effective at reducing levels of the toxic gas Nitrogen Dioxide. This also coincided with better bus journey times, reduced traffic levels, noise pollution and road danger, making it the sort of action we urgently need to improve public health."

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Conclusions

Conclusions

This report

In 2020, the City ran an 18-month traffic experiment on Beech Street to reduce NO₂ levels. The experiment restricted polluting traffic from using Beech Street as a “through route” 24hrs a day. Unrestricted access was allowed for zero-emission capable vehicles and for any vehicle accessing properties and car parks on Beech Street. Following this experiment, the City have developed a new proposed permanent scheme for Beech Street, working with Islington Council.

This report presents the findings of a consultation on the new proposed changes to the Beech Street Zero Emissions Scheme.

Level of support

After being provided with detail on the proposals for the Beech Street Zero Emissions Scheme (as outlined in Chapter 4), **similar numbers of respondents stated that they did (51%) and did not support (49%) the proposals**, as presented.

Opposition for the proposals was highest from those: who reported living within the City; who reported using private vehicles, taxis or PHVs to travel around the area; and those who were disabled. This could suggest that some further consultation and engagement may be useful with these groups.

Conclusions

Reasons for support / opposition

Despite recognition that the Beech Street Zero Emissions Scheme could provide improvements in air quality, pedestrian and cycle access, road safety, traffic levels and noise pollution, a common reason for not supporting the proposals, as presented, was that the **scheme does not go far enough** to address these factors.

Concerns were also raised in relation to **opening the Golden Lane junction** on Beech Street. These concerns may suggest that an area-wide scheme to improve traffic levels, air quality and road safety may be beneficial in the Barbican, Golden Lane and Bunhill neighbourhood area, including specific measures to reduce traffic levels and improve air quality and road safety on Golden Lane. In line with this, support for an area-wide scheme was offered in longer form email responses.

Access for residents, taxis, utilities and deliveries, people with disabilities, local businesses and emergency services was also of concern, despite the outlined proposals noting that access would be retained to car parks and forecourts off of Beech Street for these purposes. This may suggest that clearer signage and detailed information provision are required to ensure access is not inadvertently hindered and to reassure residents.

SYSTRA
S Y S T R A . C O . U K