

**SUBMISSION FROM KINGS HEATH RESIDENTS FORUM (Updated version)**

**- CONSULTATION ON 2026 DELIVERY PLAN FOR TRANSPORT, MOVEMENT FOR GROWTH**

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**COMMENTS ON THE SUMMARY DOCUMENT**

Sections 1 to 3

Introducing the Challenge - seems to miss out engagement with communities and aspirations of people to establish local neighbourhood environments and community.

Delivery Plan - we welcome the inclusion as priorities of

- Camp Hill Chords
- increased rail capacity and opening new rail stations
- local bus network improvements,
- metropolitan and local cycle networks
- key walking routes,
- 20 mph limits,
- personal mobility
- a WM road safety strategy.

We are very surprised however that there is no cross-reference to the development of options for mitigating/adapting/controlling freight access to local areas (these are mentioned in the WM Freight Strategy).

We strongly suggest there needs to be a review of "key routes" and whether they are all "key" in the same way. Our view is that the A435 is very unsuitable as an all purpose key route :-

- It is particularly unsuitable for freight other than freight essential to local deliveries.
- More attention should be given to reducing impacts of freight on vulnerable people and local suburban shopping centres such as Moseley and Kings Heath. On A435 since 2008, 4 of the 5 pedestrian fatalities on this road occurred from collisions with HGVs. A further serious injury occurred recently in May 2017 following a collision between an HGV and a female pedestrian who is currently in hospital critically ill. We suggest freight access should be denied access to the A435 and linked streets in this area other than for local delivery or servicing. In every case of pedestrian fatalities involving HGVs on this road there was reference in police and inquest reports to pedestrians being "in HGV blindspots". This indicates for local deliveries to be done by suitable freight vehicles, of restricted

lengths and weights and equipped with mirrors, cameras or sensors to have all round vision.

- The residential and shopping centres along the A435 (Balsall Heath, Moseley and Kings Heath) are choked by slow moving congested traffic causing major environmental harm and air pollution. A major impetus should be to reduce through car and freight road traffic here in order to achieve the public health and environmental objectives identified in this delivery plan.

We are interested in whether the WM Road Safety Strategy will address freight vehicle design and type of HGV (or LGV) for local urban centres such as Kings Heath in order to make them safer and less intimidating for nearby vulnerable road user safety.

#### Section 4

The Forum welcomes the planned improvement in transport systems including light rail and extension of rail services to Kings Heath. An integrated bus system which matches the number of buses on the roads to demand times would reduce congestion and pollution especially when routes go through narrow crowded High Streets as happens in Kings Heath. We would also stress the importance of ensuring and improving pedestrian and cycling access routes to planned new stations. Many older access pathways to the historic site of Kings Heath station have been blocked by more recent housing developments. Some modelling and opening up of potential pathways and cycle routes should be part of the program of the development of local stations wherever they are sited.

#### Section 5

There needs to be rethinking of key routes.

We are particularly concerned that the A435 (from the Maypole to the Birmingham centre) is very obviously unsuitable as an all-purpose key route and its status should be changed.. The priority here should be to recognise the needs of the local centres along the route and prioritise this route for cycle, bus and walking use. We suggest access should not be permitted to this area for through freight traffic as an immediate priority and all efforts made to divert unnecessary through car traffic as this impacts significantly on local areas such as Kings Heath, Moseley and other centres where there are high volumes of pedestrians and cyclists.

As the A435 is not mentioned as a corridor route, the case for downgrading it as a main route is compelling. Without the infrastructure development of the route, further traffic increase would be at odds with the aims of Transport for West Midlands to improve health, mobility, the environment and the economy of the region.

Kings Heath is particularly badly affected in the following ways:-

- through traffic crawls through at peak times
- Kings Heath High St is among the top 5 worst streets for air quality in Birmingham, way below EU minimum standards.
- the roads & pavements are narrow and both roads are congested. It is a dangerous and difficult environment for both pedestrians and cyclists.

- HGVs' blindspots and their size impacts severely on pedestrians and cyclists nearby. As mentioned above there have been deaths and very serious injuries as a result and vulnerable road users and walkers constantly refer to feeling intimidated and frightened.
- We have information from HGV drivers that Birmingham based haulage companies send freight along the A435 daily as a North- South transit for freight. It was reported to us that one particular company makes 40 return HGV journeys daily for this purpose.
- The presence of high volumes of cars and freight is intimidating and leads people to reject walking and cycling alternatives.
- Buses are frequent but painfully slow.

Kings Heath High St has very high numbers of pedestrians on it daily. A day-time survey on Sat 11 June 2016 counted over 35,000 pedestrian movements in 4 sites on Kings Heath High St. The same survey identified 136 cycle movements on the footpaths in the High St, presumably most there because they did not feel safe on the main carriageway.

Kings Heath High St is part of the journey to a very large number of schools (at least 12) and consequently a large number of young people of various ages transit through here at the beginning and end of the day. We have a reliable estimate of the numbers of 3 to 18 year olds accessing parts of the A435 in Balsall Heath, Moseley and Kings Heath as over 11,000. The radial buses (eg 50 and 35) and circular bus route (11) meet in Kings Heath and the area is an interchange for children on journeys to and from school. This is an important aspect of the High Street movements at the beginning and end of the school day. Children are being exposed to harmful pollutants repeatedly, which will impact long term on lung development, asthma etc. Of course the harm is not restricted to children as large numbers of people of all ages transit through Kings Heath High St daily. Efforts need to be co-ordinated to create an environment where it is possible for them to be healthy and safe in walking and cycling or taking the bus.

The A435 is also part of the developing cycle network, there is a Green Travel District for Kings Heath / Moseley, there is a 20mph limit on this part of the A435 and the route is identified for bus improvement. These aspects of this road are incompatible with its status as a key route. Sheer traffic volume is limiting any of these measures having any significant intended effect.

## Section 6

We welcome the increased rail connectivity and the intention to create a rail station in Kings Heath. The sooner the better.

## Section 8

We welcome many aspects of this section.

- However we question the need to allow bus fares to rise above the RPI
- The Forum welcomes the planned improvement in transport systems including light rail and extension of rail services to Kings Heath. An integrated bus system which matches the number of buses on the roads to the demand times would reduce

congestion and pollution especially when routes go through narrow crowded centres such as Kings Heath.

- Given Kings Heath's poor air quality (above) an immediate priority for delivery should be air quality standards for all bus companies going through this area. At the moment there have been improvement in one company but not others.
- There should also be only one company per route in order to reduce the numbers of near empty buses on this route, to improve bus standards overall, to improve air quality and so pricing and ticketing is made simpler for passengers
- We welcome the proposed study of the bus corridor of Druids Heath to Birmingham via Kings Heath and Moseley and would welcome the opportunity to input into this. This could perhaps also be a good place to trial hydrogen powered buses (air quality concerns here).
- Another need is to review the location of bus stops in Kings Heath High St. At least 2 of them are located on very busy narrow parts of the pavement outside pubs, resulting in severe congestion on the pavements. We are also aware of people with disabilities finding the location of bus stops difficult and would suggest this is part of a review/ study.

#### Section 11

Health, environment, mobility, economy are all key elements of the modelling process. Kings Heath residents have expressed to the Forum that their concerns about living in a suburb with a range of problems stemming from the exceptionally high volumes of traffic moving through a confined and narrow A roads. These experiences should be part of the data gathered and interrogated.

#### Section 12

We welcome the SMART payments developments and associated flexibilities as generally useful improvements. However does the smart ticketing system make provision for vulnerable and disadvantaged people to access these modes of paying for transport? If people especially the disadvantaged, vulnerable and elderly cannot access smart ticketing, then the model of inclusion fails.

#### Section 13

Much to welcome here but will it be aspirational or real?. Monitoring of impacts on vulnerable groups is essential to making it real.

#### Sections 14 and 15

We have already commented on this above to some extent.

Poor air quality is a major feature of Kings Heath as it is among the worst streets in Birmingham for air quality, which seems to be reflected in higher mortality rates locally for residents, particularly associated with respiratory problems.

Strategies and delivery need to be brought together urgently to impact on this. There are significant contradictions which lead to poor health outcomes in encouraging walking and cycling on polluted and dangerous roads.

Reducing air pollution by reducing unnecessary traffic on the roads and removing older polluting vehicles is very important. It should not be an aspiration but should be implemented swiftly. As the report points out pollution is so bad in some areas that a Birmingham CAZ needs to be implemented as soon as possible and for it include Kings Heath.

We strongly welcome opening the new rail stations. However there is a real risk that without some form of control and change of road status, the A435 will subsequently be seen as a more attractive route road for through freight and car travel, leading back to the status quo or worse.

We also welcome that the A435 is a part of the local and metropolitan cycle network but we cannot see how it is not possible to do this effectively and safely unless the road status changes from key route, and controls are in place on through freight and other through traffic.. Changes to HGV vehicle design, improved safety features (mirrors, sensors and cameras for all round vision), length and weight for HGVs/ LGVs servicing the local area need to be part of this planning also along with other options for local areas identified in the WM Freight Strategy.

#### Additional comments

One of the problems of traffic congestion is around unnecessary journeys made by parents dropping off and collecting children from school. The cuts to local government have made the programmes to encourage children to walk to school or use public transport almost impossible to deliver as there are fewer staff available to concentrate on this area. Part of the strategy for WM transport could include a major education campaign to influence the behaviour of children and parents from reliance on the use of private transport for journeys to and from school. The reduction in traffic on the roads in school holidays illustrates the dramatic improvements in congestion which could be realised if this programme of re-education was implemented.