

JL's PDS Meeting LN Update Questions

1. CE&S PDS Meeting of 11 Jan 2024

An update on the B&NES LN programme was presented to the CE&S PDS Panel at its meeting in Keynsham on 11/01/24.

What happened with the early LTNs implemented in London from 2020 onwards showed that, to be successful, LTNs need to be designed with care. I am not sure we are there yet with the LNs we are going ahead with here in B&NES. I had a number of questions on the process B&NES has followed for designing its LN schemes, some of which I was able to ask at the PDS meeting within the time available. The remaining questions will be answered by email and both the questions and answers will become part of the public record of the meeting.

For the five proposed LN ETROs in 2024:

Yes, specifically at the request of Members, the Project Team identified measures originating from the co-design workshops which were appropriate for ETROs and then instructed our consultants, in consultation with Highways colleagues, to create preliminary designs. This has been a significant piece of work conducted over the last quarter.

For the wider LN schemes:

The Project Team identified measures originating from the co-design workshops and then instructed our consultants, in consultation with Highways colleagues, to create preliminary designs.

Question 2 – I have received conflicting answers in the past when I have asked whether preliminary designs were produced by the contract engineers or by Council officers or by Council members. In a conversation I had in early December 2023 with the contract engineers about the Walcot LN preliminary design, the engineers said they were not tasked with producing that preliminary design but were presented with it by officers. In a subsequent meeting I had with the Cabinet Member later in December 2023, she said that it was the engineers who had produced the preliminary design. May I see a copy of the Schedule or Scope of Work covering the work the contract engineers were asked to undertake by B&NES for their part of the B&NES LN Programme? I do not need to see any commercially confidential aspects of the contract, just the specification of the work the contract engineers were asked to undertake.

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The Councill Officer Project Team worked closely with consulting engineers to identify possible measures for inclusion in the preliminary designs for the Walcot LN. Based on the co-design output and a technical review, residents' priorities were shortlisted and developed into outline sketches along with the ward members. These were developed into preliminary designs by our consultants.

The preliminary design was based on a shortlist of measures. This SM decision has now been postponed until the FBC is approved. However, the shortlist formed the scope of work for the engineers who continue to work very closely with our project and highways teams, and who have also been integral to delivering the community engagement throughout the project (since 2021).

Question 3 – were the contract engineers asked to consider alternative possible preliminary designs and were the contract engineers or anyone else tasked with performing a comparative analysis of different possible preliminary designs for each LN?

Yes, alternative designs have been considered. As part of this, the benefits and dis-benefits of each design have been discussed.

Question 4 – were the contract engineers or anyone else tasked with doing any traffic analysis or traffic impact assessment for the proposed preliminary or final designs for each LN?

No. This is because the decision was taken early on in the project to adopt a “consult, design, test, monitor, decide” delivery model, rather than a “design, predict, provide” delivery model.

Question 5 – were the contract engineers or anyone else tasked with doing an Equality Impact Assessment for the proposed preliminary or final designs for each LN?

For the five proposed LN ETROs in 2024:

Equality issues have been considered throughout the design process. There is an overarching EQuiA for the project which underpins the whole project, and it has recently been updated.

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Question 6 – were the final designs subject to consultation with and/or signed off by suitable representatives of disabled residents?

For the five proposed LN ETROs in 2024:

Equality issues have been considered throughout the design process. Should the trials go ahead, then individual EQulAs for the 5 schemes will be developed and consultation with groups through the Independent Equality Advisory Group will take place. You can find out more about how we ensure inclusive designs at our LN website at www.bathnes.gov.uk/liveableneighbourhoods (See Approach to developing LNs)

Question 7 – were the final designs subject to consultation with and/or signed off by the emergency services?

For the five proposed LN ETROs in 2024:

Emergency access has been considered throughout the design process and we have discussed the trials with representatives from Avon Fire and Rescue and SWAST, which resulted in us in making some small changes to the proposed designs. Further consultation will happen should the trials go ahead.

For the wider LN schemes:

Not formally at this stage as the designs are not finalised and the FBC has not been approved. Once these have been submitted as part of the FBC and approval given, consultation will take place.

Question 8 – were the final designs subject to consultation with the local residents who would be affected by each design?

For the five proposed LN ETROs in 2024:

*We took the decision to go straight to experimental trials after consulting on the design with highways and emergency services and ensuring that the designs aligned with the sentiments expressed at co-design and in earlier consultations. They aim to address issues that we know people in the area feel strongly about, and they are technically sound. **It is essentially a six-month consultation.***

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During the trial we would monitor traffic and air quality impacts. In this way we can allow people to get used to change and draw on a range of evidence before deciding whether to make schemes permanent or not.

For the wider LN schemes:

Not formally at this stage as the designs are not finalised and the FBC has not been approved. Once these have been submitted as part of the FBC and approval given, consultation will take place.

Question 9 – given the lack of analysis of, and consultation on, the final designs, does the Cabinet Member consider it appropriate that these designs should be implemented using ETROs? The ETRO process essentially treats residents as guinea pigs in order to find out what the consequences, intended and unintended, of each design on residents' lives and wellbeing might be?

The ETRO process is designed to do "learning by doing" We have consulted our highways team and the emergency services on the design, and our team of engineers work to national and local design standards, including government best-practice guidance on inclusive mobility.

The aim of introducing a trial scheme is to allow people to experience the change (both positive and negative) over a six-month period before we decide whether to make it permanent. We can also monitor the impact on traffic and air quality to ensure our decision is based on evidence. Fear of change is common, and people's views can often change once they have experienced and become used to the change being proposed.

Question 10 – if it turns out that a design has hugely harmful unintended consequences on local residents, is there a way that the ETRO could be terminated before the minimum term of six months has expired, or would residents be forced to suffer those consequences for at least six months regardless of their severity?

No, it takes a minimum of 6 months for the behaviour to change and to get enough data to evaluate the impact of the interventions.

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Question 11 – In para 2.12 onwards you say that engagement has taken place with ward members for each of the remaining LN areas to help you understand the issues these designs might create. What was the purpose of that engagement: was it just to identify those issues, to modify the designs to address or minimise the adverse impacts identified, to deprioritise those LNs that might have significant issues associated with them, or something else?

The purpose of the engagement with ward members was to “test the temperature” of the elected ward members of public perceptions of the draft designs, to help prioritise what interventions should be included in the FBC with the limited resources we know are available. All the feedback from ward members was reflected on carefully.