Lower Lansdown and The Circus Liveable Neighbourhood

Review of Heart of Lansdown Conservation Group Submission

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 This technical note has been prepared by Arcadis on behalf of Bath and North East Somerset Council (referred to hereafter as 'B&NES' or 'the Council'). It provides a review of data collected by the Heart of Lansdown Conservation Group (HoLCG) in relation to trial traffic restrictions introduced as part of the Lower Lansdown and The Circus Liveable Neighbourhood. The purpose of this technical note is to review the HoLCG data and summarise key observations.

1.2 The Trial

1.2.1 The Lower Lansdown trial consisted of three linked through-traffic restrictions which were installed under a single Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) in November 2024 for an initial period of six months. The measures included:

1. A through-traffic restriction on Winifred's Lane comprising of one set of bollards placed just north of Holywell House and one set of bollards placed just south of Somerset Lane
2. A no right turn into Sion Hill (east) from the top of Cavendish Road applying to motor vehicles but not cyclists
3. A through-traffic restriction on Catharine Place comprising of a set of bollards between the junctions of Margaret's Buildings and River Street Mews
4. A no-entry into Gay Street (north) from the George Street (A4) junction applying to all northbound vehicles but not cyclists
5. A left-turn-only into George Street for vehicles exiting this upper stretch of Gay Street
6. Vehicles prohibited from travelling south towards Queen Square when exiting the upper stretch of Gay Street
7. Two-way traffic maintained on Gay Street, but with entry only via The Circus.
8. A contraflow bike lane and pedestrian refuge island crossing at the foot of Gay Street (north).

1.2.2 The trials in Winifred's Lane, Catharine Place and Gay Street have been introduced under the Council's Liveable Neighbourhood (LN) programme. In line with the broader objectives of the LN programme, the restrictions aim to:

- Reduce excessive traffic in this central, residential area;
- Discourage commuter traffic using residential streets in the area as a short cut to and from the A46 / M4;
- Keep through-traffic on the main road and disperse local traffic across a wider area; and
- Create safer routes for walking and cycling through the area.

1.2.3 From the launch of the trial, and until 16th December 2024, the Council placed temporary variable message signs at the junction of Weston Road and Cavendish Road for motorists approaching from the west, south and east. These informed motorists of the no-through-route to Lansdown using Cavendish Road/Winifred's Lane and were placed to embed the required behaviour change particularly during the Bath Christmas Market period when there would have been many visitors to the city.

1.2.4 The Council placed two additional signs for the duration of the trial at both ends of Marlborough Buildings, alerting drivers to the no-through-route to Lansdown via Winifred's Lane.

1.2.5 The trial did not restrict vehicular access to homes or businesses, but it may have required drivers to take alternative routes.

1.3 Heart of Lansdown Conservation Group

1.3.1 The HoLCG wrote to Council Leader, Councillor Kevin Guy on 09 April 2025 to highlight their concerns regarding the closure of Winifred's Lane to vehicular traffic. In their correspondence, the Group emphasised the impacts that it had observed locally, particularly the perceived safety risks to schoolchildren and other residents resulting from the closure.

1.3.2 To evidence this, the HoLCG, together with local residents, commissioned Smart Transport Hub to collect and analyse data on traffic flows during March 2025, prior to the end of the school term. The assessment focused on roads within the proposed LN and other roads that might be affected by the closure of Winifred's Lane. The following paragraphs detail the key findings reported by the HoLCG (quoted verbatim):

1. *"The data was compiled 24/7 for a full week and weekend from 17 March (capturing normal traffic before the school holidays) by an independent assessor, Smart Transport Hub, and is therefore an accurate reflection of the damage that this ETRO has caused on unclassified residential roads, the increased safety risks, not least to school children, and likely rise in pollution levels in key locations.*
2. *The key findings of the data were:*
    a. *Northbound traffic on Sion Road outside the exit to Kingswood junior and nursery school has risen 720%. Going North (as per Winifred's Lane) traffic has risen from 116 vehicles per day to 951 on average, a rise of 835 vehicles per day.*
    b. *On some days it exceeded 1100 vehicles, just going North (and peaked at more than 2100 in both directions). So, an increase of some 1000 cars past a school exit, and that in only one direction. It should be noted that Sion Road is not only a narrow residential road but is also within the proposed LTN itself – the very area where the council is seeking to reduce traffic.*
    c. *On Morford Street, another unclassified residential road, northbound traffic has risen from 1473 per day average to 1833 (a rise of 360 vehicles). Again, a direct consequence of Winifred's Lane being closed as traffic seeks to get up to Lansdown.*
    d. *Pre the closure of Winifred's Lane, average traffic on the one-way lane was 1219 per day. Combined, northbound traffic on Morford Street and Sion Road is up 1174.*
    e. *So, in short, the traffic originally using Winifred's Lane has diverted onto heavily residential roads and is now passing two junior schools – St Andrews junior school on Julian Road and Kingswood junior school. This means the ETRO has sent at least 1000 cars a day past junior schools and in the process exposes children to greater safety risks and levels of pollution.*
3. *It is also believed that traffic still turns right from Cavendish Road onto Lansdown Crescent, ignoring traffic signs, for convenience, and/or utilizes the steep and dangerous Lansdown Lane in Weston."*

2 Heart of Lansdown Conservation Group Review

2.1 Data Collection

2.1.1 The HoLCG method of data collection is unknown, and as such, it is not possible to comment on whether appropriate and suitable data collection methods have been employed. In the absence of the public availability of the raw data, it is not possible to assess its robustness or representativeness.

2.1.2 The data supplier, Smart Transport Hub, does have experience of working with other local authorities. However, no information has been provided of any verification of the data collected, including manual review of captured data to ensure that the data is free from biases and processing errors.

2.2 Spatial Scope

2.2.1 The HoLCG presented data at two locations: Morford Street and Sion Road. The siting of these count points is broadly similar to those used in surveys commissioned by B&NES; however, the HoLCG count point on Sion Road is situated to the north of the Bath Spa University access, whereas the B&NES count point is located to the south of this access. On this basis, the traffic flow may not be directly comparable due to the influence of the University campus on travel patterns in the local area.

2.2.2 The spatial scope of the data collection undertaken by the HoLCG is limited, which constrains the ability to fully understand the impacts of the trial traffic restrictions. The limited coverage omits roads where reductions in traffic flows might be expected, thereby impacting on the representativeness of the findings across the Liveable Neighbourhood as a whole.

2.2.3 As set out in the Traffic Monitoring Report, prepared by Arcadis, reductions in traffic flow were recorded on eight roads in and around the trial traffic restrictions, including on Cavendish Road, between Sion Hill and Cavendish Crescent; Lansdown Road, between Lansdown Park and Fonthill Road; and Winifred's Lane, between Somerset Lane and Sion Hill.

2.3 Temporal Scope

2.3.1 When assessing the representativeness and validity of traffic surveys, it is necessary to consider the temporal scope. This includes the hours of the day; the days of the week; the weeks of the month; and the months of the year. These can all impact the findings. Surveys therefore need to be carefully planned to ensure that the data is representative, and that valid comparisons can be made between different survey periods.

2.3.2 The HoLCG presents baseline data collected on its behalf for Morford Street and Sion Road; however, the dates of this baseline data collection are unknown. It is therefore not possible to confirm whether the data was gathered during a neutral period. It is therefore not possible to assess whether any comparisons made against the baseline data are valid.

2.3.3 In addition, the Group provides in-trial data for both Morford Street and Sion Road, collected during the week commencing 17 March 2025. It is unclear whether traffic patterns during this week may have been influenced by roadworks or other events in the city. These uncertainties limit the ability to assess the validity and representativeness of the temporal data.

2.4 Data Analysis

2.4.1 The results of the data analysis are presented in terms of average days and maximum days; however, it is not specified whether these figures correspond to 24-hour periods or other timeframes, nor is it clear whether they represent averages across all days of the week.

2.4.2 Similarly, results for average hours and maximum hours are provided without clarification regarding whether these relate to specific hours, whether the hours and days of the week are consistent across all count points, or whether they represent average and maximum flows across all hours.

2.4.3 Additionally, drawing conclusions based on maximum flows is not considered representative, as such values may be significantly influenced by one-off events such as roadworks or incidents on the transport network. The validity of the data analysis findings cannot be assessed, as the raw data has not been available in the public domain.

2.4.4 Several issues have been identified with the presentation and structure of the data provided. Most of the column titles in the 'Paste values' worksheet are incorrect. The data in the 'Winifreds Lane' sheet is unlabelled and, as a result, cannot be verified. Similarly, the information contained within the 'Amenity' worksheet is both unclear and unlinked, preventing any meaningful assessment.

2.4.5 Additionally, the data in the 'vs Morford Street' sheet appears to compare traffic flows on Cavendish Road and Lansdown Crescent with Morford Street; however, it is not specified whether this data pertains to baseline or in-trial periods, nor are the relevant time periods defined. The purpose of this comparison also remains unclear. These issues collectively limit the ability to fully interpret or validate the data provided.

2.4.6 Notwithstanding the above, a comparison of the in-trial motor vehicle traffic flows collected by the HoLCG and the in-trial traffic flows collected by the Council has been undertaken, as set out in Table 1. Full details of the Council's traffic data collection and analysis are provided in the Traffic Monitoring report, prepared by Arcadis.

Table 1: Comparison of In-Trial Motor Vehicle Traffic Flows (7-Day totalling both directions)

Road	Data Source	November 2024	February 2025	March 2025	April 2025 Week 1	April 2025 Week 2
Morford Street, between Lansdown Road and Julian Road	Council	4,441	4,409	4,545	4,771	4,211
Morford Street, between Lansdown Road and Julian Road	HoLCG	-	-	4,329	-	-
Sion Road, between Sion Hill and The Gardens	Council	1,909	2,196	1,983	1,617	1,328
Sion Road, between Sion Hill and The Gardens	HoLCG	-	-	1,812	-	-

2.4.7 On the assumption that the HoLCG “average” data represents all motor vehicle traffic per 24-hour average day over 7-days, the traffic volumes collected by the HoLCG are broadly similar to those recorded by the Council during the in-trial monitoring of the trial traffic restrictions.

2.4.8 On Morford Street, the HoLCG data shows an average of 4,329 motor vehicles per day in March 2025. The data collected by the Council found that in-trial motor vehicle traffic flows per average day on Morford Street ranged between 4,211 vehicles in April 2025 Week 2 and 4,771 vehicles in April 2025 Week 1, with all other monitoring periods falling within this range.

2.4.9 On Sion Road, the HoLCG data shows an average of 1,812 motor vehicles per day in March 2025. The data collected by the Council found that in-trial motor vehicle traffic flows per average day on Sion Road ranged between 1,328 vehicles in April 2025 Week 2 and 2,196 in February 2025.

2.4.10 Consequently, whilst the in-trial data collected by the HoLCG appears to correlate with the data collected by the Council during the in-trial periods, it has not been possible to verify the source data, nor validate the calculations made by the HoLCG in drawing its conclusions. It is also found that the HoLCG data is limited both geographically and temporally and therefore does not provide a full understanding of traffic patterns following the implementation of the trial traffic restrictions.

2.5 Summary

2.5.1 The HoLCG data is limited by unclear collection methods, lack of provided raw data, and a focus on just two locations. The timing of the data is uncertain and may be affected by unreported events. The data analysis lacks clarity and cannot be validated. Additionally, issues with data presentation and labelling further restrict interpretation and reliability of the findings.

3 Conclusions

3.1.1 This technical note has been prepared by Arcadis on behalf of B&NES. It has reviewed a submission made by the HoLCG in objection to trial traffic restrictions implemented as part of the Lower Lansdown and The Circus Liveable Neighbourhood.

3.1.2 The method of data collection is unknown, and it has not been possible to comment on whether suitable data collections were used, nor has any information regarding the verification of the data been provided.

3.1.3 The spatial and temporal scope of the data collection undertaken by the HoLCG is limited. The data is therefore not representative of the impacts of the trial traffic restrictions as a whole, and the limited sample size means that the data could be subject to bias or inaccuracy.

3.1.4 The data analysis is unclear, and it is not possible to validate whether the analysis is correct or representative. In particular, it is considered inappropriate to undertake analysis based on maximum flows which could be influenced by one-off events such as roadworks or incidents on the highway network.

3.1.5 In conclusion, the analysis undertaken by the HoLCG is limited in scope and scale; cannot be validated or verified; and makes use of methods that are unrepresentative and inappropriate. On this basis, the analysis should not take precedence over the extensive traffic monitoring undertaken by the Council in determining the outcomes of the trial traffic restrictions.

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