



**Easton Voice – Letter for consideration by all councillors prior to voting on the Easton Safer Streets proposals on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

Dear Councillors,

We have been made aware by Sam Kirby on 2<sup>nd</sup> November that a final vote on the Easton Safer Streets proposals will take place on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November.

We thank the project managers behind the Easton Safer Streets (ESS) proposals for meeting with us on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November. It was however disappointing that ESS made it clear that they would listen to the concerns from the local community, but would not take any action to address any of these concerns. It was also highly concerning that ESS have moved to a position where they want Easton residents to either accept these flawed proposals or get nothing.

As ESS will not address the objections of **930** Easton residents, businesses and faith groups, that we have captured, we ask you as our elected representatives not to ignore these objections.

**The clear message from the whole community is, they want traffic improvements but no road closures. Easton Voice and local residents do not understand why a compromise approach based on what the community wants cannot be achieved.**

You must not forget that the aims of the Easton Safer Streets project (as signed off by the Council and elected representatives) were to:

- **Develop and agree with the community a strategic approach to developing solutions to issues identified as a result of community engagement.**
- **Assess appetite for the delivery of interventions addressing issues raised through engagement.**
- **Support the community in designing interventions acceptable to LOCAL people, and that meet local people's needs.**

The consultation process conducted by Sustrans on behalf of ESS at cost of £83,600 was clearly flawed and did not create proposals that are **acceptable to LOCAL people**. Since then the Council has gone on spending, and after a total of at least £150,000 has achieved only one thing – a polarized and divided community which officers think is the normal outcome of consultation – maybe in Bristol, but not elsewhere. Not only was the consultation process flawed, but at a time of austerity where we are losing local services due to budget cuts, I am sure you find this expenditure unacceptable and are questioning 'value for money'.

Our evidence on the failures and ineffectiveness of the consultation process have previously been detailed to yourselves, Easton Safer Streets and other key project leaders/stakeholders.

**A summary of our key concerns with the consultation process conducted by Easton Safer streets is as follows:**

- Demographic data from ESS clearly confirms the consultation process captured opinions from a **significantly whiter, younger** sample of individuals. Easton, Lawrance Hill and Eastville have a statistically high percentage of BAME and elderly residents whose opinions have not been actively sought. We hope you are equally as concerned as we are, that elderly and BAME voices have been ignored and this needs to be investigated and not ignored to push proposals through.
- Claims by Sustrans that they captured 855 individual's opinions on the proposals at a cost of £83,600 are misleading. Sustrans conducted 4 separate and distinct consultations, speaking to 308, 212, 243 and **92** people at each respectively. The names and postcodes were not collected from these individuals, so there is no way of knowing the proportion who were double or triple counted or were even LOCAL residents in the area. (as attended more than one workshop, provided opinions online, or attended pop up event).
- Further claims by Sustrans that nearly 40,000 cars use Easton in a 24 hour period are also deliberately misleading. The number of cars reported has been totalled together with no sorting for counting the same car multiple times. Three of the ANPR sites were all on the same road of Lower St Mark's Road, triple counting every car that passed through the area. These numbers claim that 10,000 cars used that road when the true number is closer to 3,000. If 40,000 cars really used Easton per day that averages to 1,600 cars every hour. Or at least 400 cars per hour on every major road through Easton for 24 hours solid. This is ludicrously high. Even the busiest roads in Easton barely count 100 cars per hour at rush hour and are very quiet after 9pm. The Sustrans through traffic numbers are flawed and deliberately misleading to create a picture of a traffic problem that doesn't exist.
- Preferred solutions picked by participants in top 5 areas, as detailed in the ESS final report, confirmed that filtered permeability [code for 'Road Closures'] was at best a 3<sup>rd</sup> choice with a maximum of 14% of only the people asked in that stage selecting this. Even with this information, road closures seemed to be a priority for the ESS project team and we hope you are questioning why. Our findings confirm the ESS findings that the vast majority of Easton residents don't want road closures, so why are we continuing to impose a change that is not acceptable to local people.
- Our additional concern is that only **92** people were involved in Co-Design Phase 2 [it may be less than **92** – we cannot establish how many attended more than one Co-Design event]. The outcome of Phase 2 was also to close Albion Road railway bridge. There is no information to confirm the percentage of these **92** participants that prioritised road closures or the demographic breakdown. It seems appalling that ESS will LISTEN, ACT and IMPLEMENT proposals on the selective opinions of **92** people but not the 900+ local voices collected by Easton Voice.
- Many significant stakeholders have been excluded – e.g. local voluntary groups, community centres, Taxi and Delivery Van Drivers, despite this being a major local source of employment. Other significant stakeholders were only involved late in the process, for example, Faith Groups. With over £150,000 already spent on this consultation, these exclusions need to be investigated. We are aware that local faith groups have already made their concerns clear or are waiting for you as their elected representatives to explain what went wrong.

- ESS identified that the majority of through traffic is from Devon road (61%) and Upper St Marks Road (59%). These roads have been ignored in the final proposals, so the objective to reduce through traffic will not be achieved. The roads selected for closure will simply create new pinch points on Stapleton road and Fishponds road, as traffic diverts to other roads in Easton to reach their destinations.
- ESS continue to ignore or delay our freedom of information request on many outstanding questions we have. This is clearly to ensure this whole consultation process is not transparent and stops us from highlighting more issues. We have already had to seek advice from the Information Commissioners Office.
- No detailed traffic flow feasibility study has been conducted by ESS, so there no way of actually knowing how the proposed road closures will actually affect Easton and surrounding areas. ESS 'hope' traffic will dissipate as people stop using their cars.
- ESS highlighting that they sent out 5000 letters to Easton residents with very few objections received. To be clear, ESS sent these consultation letters during Ramadan and it fails to recognise how unacceptable this is. Simply justifying such consultation as 'unfortunate' but necessary because of timetables fails to recognise the discriminatory effects of this action. It is unacceptable that the Council still does not recognise the problem, and its senior officers still say that consultation during Ramadan is "not a problem". Unless the Council addresses this satisfactorily, we will be seeking the opinion of the Equality Advisory & Support Service, and other relevant bodies, on the assumption that it is Council Policy to discriminate during the consultation. This further highlights our concerns that published demographic data from ESS is not seen as a concern for those who want to push these flawed proposals through.
- Crash statistics for the area over the last 10 years clearly show a higher majority of accidents occur on smaller side roads and on intersections of major through roads, including a fatality. None of these accident hotspots have been recognised or addressed and the proposed changes will force more traffic onto these already dangerous streets.
- The claims that there is an air quality problem are based on data from scattered measuring points. These measuring points are near the M32 and at bridges over railway lines that are frequently used by heavy diesel goods trains and present a biased representation of air quality in Easton. The proposed changes will cause more congestion in smaller residential roads in Easton and will lead to more air pollution around schools and play areas.
- Detailed Air Quality Mapping obtained by RADE [Residents Against Dirty Energy] from EarthSense [a joint venture between the University of Leicester and Bluesky International Ltd] shows that the air quality within Easton is comparatively good, as opposed to the main roads around the outside of the area. Yet it is onto these congested, and polluted roads that the ESS proposals will divert traffic – not only through traffic but local traffic that would have to negotiate the road closures being proposed. EarthSense mapping supports the original expert opinions given to RADE, that the effect of the ESS proposals would be to increase air pollution by 15%. Council officers have dismissed out of hand RADE's findings, but have not seen fit to explain how longer and more congested journeys will reduce air pollution, but then RADE has already seen these council officers twice recommend 48 diesel generators [equal to 100 buses] for planning approval, as they would not have a significant impact on air quality!

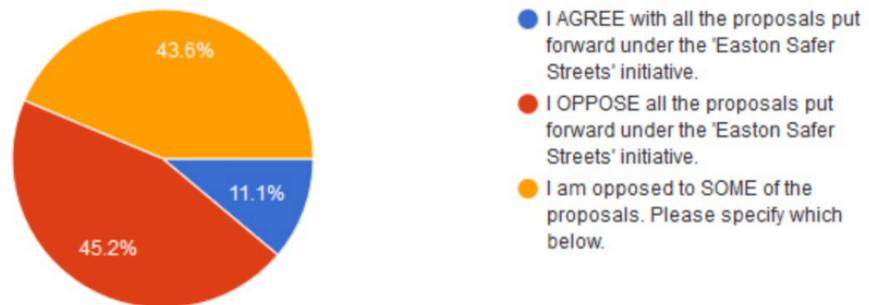
- There are major questions about the way that the Cycle Ambition Fund 2 2015 Cabinet Report was implemented. Financial and decision process irregularities seem to have occurred, for example, contracts being split to avoid tendering regulations, and incomplete Equalities Impact Assessments being ignored. However, our attempts to establish this have been frustrated by bureaucratic delay that will not withstand external scrutiny by the Information Commissioner. For officers to wait until the 20 days given to answer a Freedom of Information enquiry have expired, then ask clarificatory questions, and then say it will take a further 20 days to answer the query, is not very clever – after all if the councils exploratory questions had been asked at the beginning, the FOIA query could have been answered within the original 20 days.
- We would highlight the fact that low-income families, and their transport/employment needs, have been virtually airbrushed from the ESS reports, and proposals. This is worthy of a separate enquiry in its own right. Without a car, from Easton, it takes a round trip of over 13+ hours to work a minimum wage 8 hour evening/night shift at a distribution centre at Severn Beach [source: TravelWest]. ESS proposals will only make this worse.

**The Easton Voice consultation conducted at a cost of around £300.00.**

- **We** did not target specific residents or groups
- **We** ensured residents that use **all** forms of transport are consulted and informed
- **We** ensured Easton voice members helping with our consultation and engaging with the community were from diverse backgrounds. This reduced barriers to engaging with under-represented groups in the community e.g language.
- **We** ensured that communications and canvassing was conducted using a number of different mediums:
  - Door to door surveys and information
  - Talking to our neighbours
  - Leaflet drops (2000+)
  - Online information
  - Online questionnaire
  - Attendance at the community fayre
  - Contacting and meeting local faith groups
  - Contacting and meeting local community groups
  - Ensured residents whose first language was not English were actively engaged with
  - Conducted road surveys and traffic counting to verify data

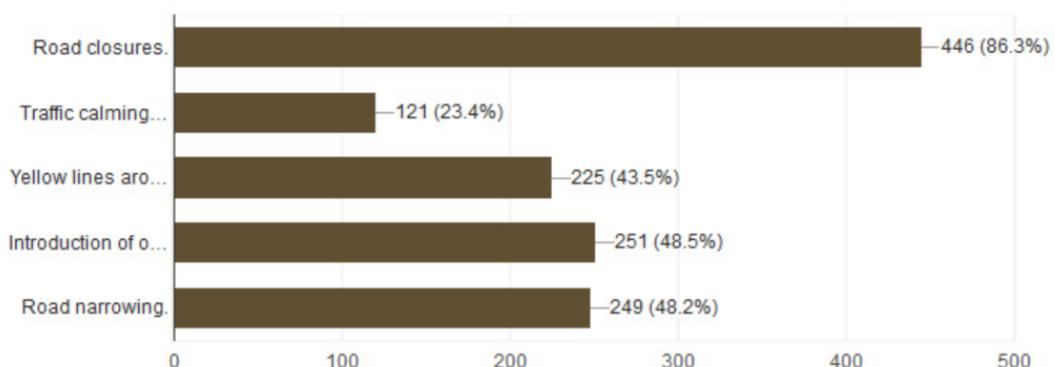
## Our updated results - 933 individual responses (30/10/2017)

933 responses



### I support SOME proposals but I OPPOSE the following parts:

517 responses



The failures of the consultation process have clearly created flawed ESS proposals which **ARE NOT acceptable to LOCAL people.**

Before making your decision on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November we would like you to ask yourselves the following questions:

- Should you accept the questionable evidence of a flawed consultation process, which has created proposals that ignore the voices of local residents, and especially those from BAME and the elderly community?
- Should you approve the complete proposals as being valid and representative of what Local People want and become complicit in this failure? Or should you hold ESS and Sustrans to account (as we are) to ensure Easton Residents have changes they actually want.
- Should Easton residents have the vision of a select group as captured and relied on by ESS imposed on them?

**The clear message from the whole community is, they want traffic improvements but not road closures. Do not ignore the diverse community that has elected you, represent them!**

**The delivery of the ESS proposals without road closures will highlight to local residents that our locally elected representatives are listening to the local community.**

**We look forward to knowing how our locally elected representatives vote on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November.**

## **Easton Voice**

### **About Easton Voice**

Easton Voice is a resident group formed in response to the 'Easton Safer Streets' proposals, a Bristol City Council traffic and transport initiative being pursued in order to gain grant funding from the UK government's 'Cycling Ambition Fund'.

The primary goal of Easton Voice is simply to give our whole community a chance to express their views on any proposals put forward by any organisations/groups.

The Easton Voice group is funded only by voluntary contributions made by the founding members of the group and is not affiliated with any political organisation/group.

More information about Easton Voice can be found at [www.eastonvoice.org.uk](http://www.eastonvoice.org.uk)