

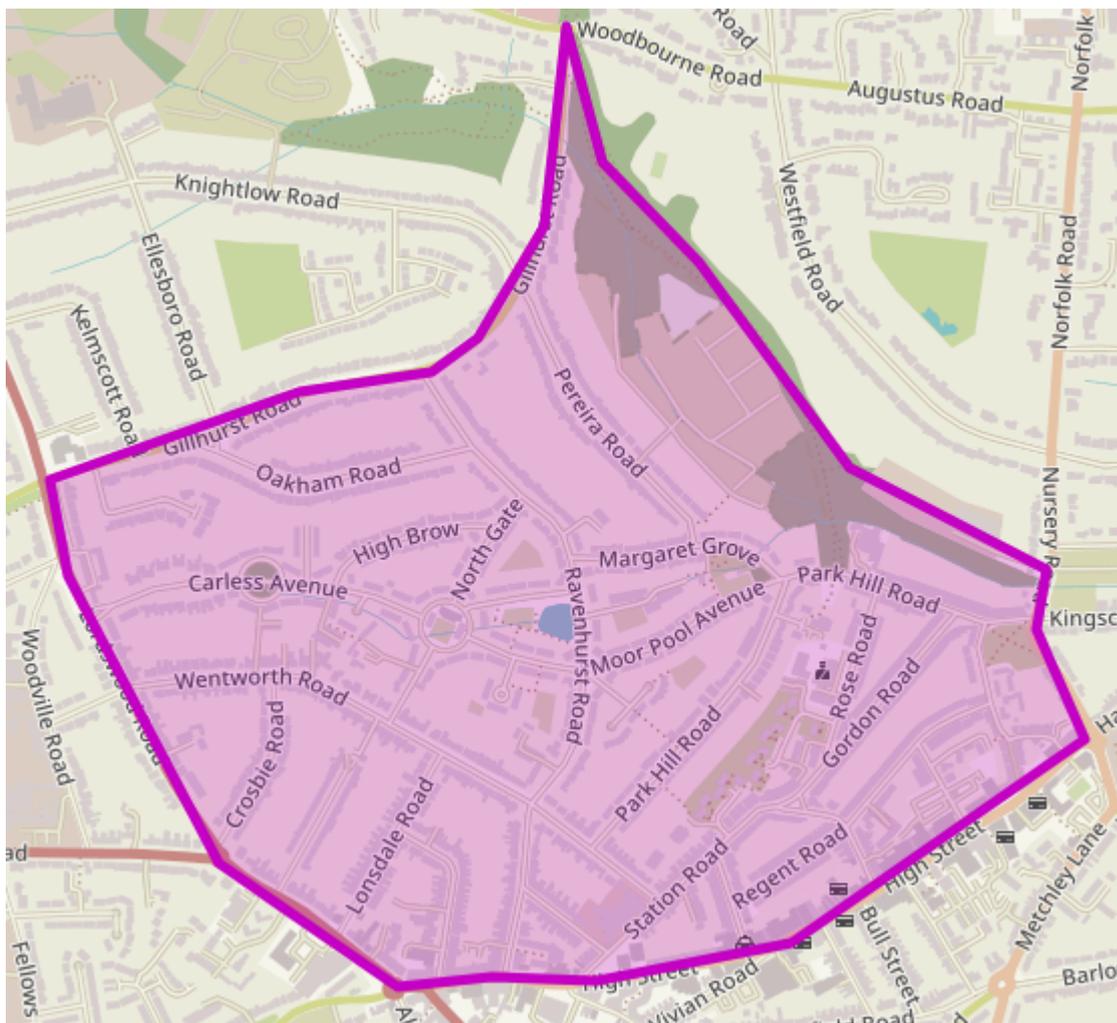
Moor Pool memo

Sept 2024 - v3

Context

At a Better Streets for Harborne and Quinton (BSfHQ) group meeting on 12th September 2024¹, we identified several parts of Moor Pool and adjoining areas that we believe would benefit from traffic management. This document details the traffic problems identified, offers some proposed solutions, and outlines the thinking that has led to these proposals. It will conclude that a Moor Pool LTN is the most cost effective traffic mitigation and place making solution that can be achieved within current budgets.

By Moor Pool, we refer to the wider Moor Pool area, including the garden suburb, with the boundaries of Gillhurst Road to the north, Nursery Road to the east, the High Street to the south and Lordswood Road to the west. This area covers around 1/3 of the Harborne Ward.



¹ https://docs.google.com/document/d/15XUVXH3HTtuirLbKfft2sDYUxf5Xnww_eRITfGQKLo/edit

Problems

Each day, large volumes of traffic pass through Moor Pool, collecting around the boundaries in key areas like Park Hill Road, Station Road and along Gillhurst Road; all dense, residential areas.

Moor Pool as a village and the surrounding terrace rows were not built to handle the number of cars that are using the roads today. For both Harborne Primary and Chad Vale Primary schools, children are forced to walk to school and wait beside queues of cars that are idling because of congestion. Having roads full of cars reduces air quality, which impacts child development and asthma levels. Birmingham has the worst air quality of any city in the UK; five times the WHO recommended levels. Every child deserves to walk to school in a safe and clean environment.

On wider roads, such as Pereira Road, Wentworth Road and Ravenhurst Road, cars frequently and significantly exceed speed limits. Wide mouth junctions, like that of Oakham Road, Parkhill Road and Eastway, encourage cars to take corners at speed, while extending dangerous crossing areas for vulnerable pedestrians. Many of these cars are cutting through the area, in a bid to avoid the arterial roads. This type of infrastructure makes it less safe for those living within the communities being used as a cut through.

With the current road infrastructure around Moor Pool, it is understandable that people may feel safer in cars than outside of them. If we want to ensure safe, clean and accessible streets for all, we need to rethink how the traffic is managed in this area.

Solutions

We have identified three potential, complementary solutions for reducing traffic and improving air quality in the Moor Pool area, presented in order of what we judge to be highest to lowest impact:

1. Low Traffic Neighbourhood
2. School Streets
3. Traffic calming

Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN)

Many roads currently used as alternative through-routes should be protected for residents only. In most cases, the only way to discourage using a road as a cut-through is to prevent it being used as one.

A Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) is a means to manage abuse of residential roads as main routes. The main tool in creating an LTN is the modal filter; either a bollard or a planter placed in such a way that allows smaller road users, like bikes or scooters, to pass through, while preventing cars from doing so.

Modal filters are an effective way to manage through-traffic, making roads quieter and those outside of a car safer, while still providing easy access for residents as well as, commercial and emergency services.

Concerns around LTNs

LTNs have been at times controversial, often where plans have been pushed through without due consultation. LTNs are now well established in many areas around the country, and studies widely report positive outcomes in terms of traffic reduction, improved air quality and reduced street crime², as well as an absence of adverse effects on emergency services response times³. The ultimate goal of an LTN is to make a neighbourhood safer, cleaner and generally more pleasant for its residents.

Where would the LTN modal filters be?

It is not an intention of this document to recommend the location of filters, as that should be done with stakeholders. However, suggestions include placing filters through the centre of the Moor Pool area, which has the effect of providing no impediment to residents driving in from the periphery, while still preventing traffic traversing the LTN. Another option is to place filters along one edge, guiding car traffic out the other side. Most importantly, the specific design would be community-led, ensuring residents' needs are met.

School Streets

School Streets schemes involve the temporary closure of roads very close to schools for short periods (from 30 minutes to 1 hour) at drop-off and pick-up times. There are at least 20 of these schemes running successfully around Birmingham⁴. School Streets need support from local residents, parents and the school administration. The two schools in this area that would greatly benefit from such a scheme are Harborne Primary School and Chad Vale Primary School. BSfHQ are currently in talks with both schools about setting these up.

Which streets?

For Harborne Primary main school we would suggest closing Emerson and Wentworth from Station Road to Parkhill.

²

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/for-professionals/infrastructure/an-introductory-guide-to-low-traffic-neighbourhood-design/an-introductory-guide-to-low-traffic-neighbourhood-design-contents/design-guide/all/8-a-guide-to-the-evidence-around-low-traffic-neighbourhoods/>

³

<https://findingspress.org/article/18198-the-impact-of-introducing-a-low-traffic-neighbourhood-on-fir>

⁴

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50347/neighbourhoods_and_schools/1891/car_free_school_streets

For Chad Vale Primary school we would suggest the closure of a short section of North Road at the end of Park Hill Road, where the junction meets Nursery Road.

These temporary closures will still leave busy roads near both of the schools that will need further mitigation, but will offer a significant improvement.

Traffic calming

If it is not possible to stop or discourage the use of some roads, especially those which serve important public transport links, for example the 55 bus route which includes Ravenhurst Road. In this instance, we would propose traffic calming measures to mitigate the continuing rising levels of car usage. This could be via road narrowing, chicanes or road tables. In cases where road junction width provides a hazard, planters and paint can be used as a cost-effective solution, or as a pilot to the structural widening of pavements.

Costs

LTNs can be very cost effective to create. Full costings will require a consultation with local engineers, but based on reviews of other schemes⁵, as well as discussions with Birmingham transport engineers, costs are estimated as follows:

- £13-15k for preliminary surveys and traffic orders, with local community support in delivering consultation.
- £5-£10k per filter (only a handful are needed in this case)
- Up to £10k for signage.

Funding for this would be sourced from a combination of funds including the Brum Breathes fund and the Environment and Transport Neighbourhood Ward fund.

School Streets are funded separately by Birmingham City Council. The main associated cost is the application time by the school and community.

Traffic calming measures can cost significantly more than LTNs and School Streets. A blended speed hump crossing can cost in excess of £25k, whereas a bollard for an LTN is about £2.5k. Full road narrowing with cycle lanes is far more costly again. These costs could be mitigated through action from the community itself, such as the building of planters by residents which could then be placed according to traffic engineers' plans. Future funding may then be used to make these calming measures more permanent.

Summary

If we want to tackle the growing traffic problems in the Moor Pool area, encourage alternative modes of transport, and work to improve air quality and reduce childhood illness and life threatening conditions for adults, then we need to implement all three

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<https://londonlivingstreets.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ltns-e28093-priority-measures-costs-4.5.2019-2.pdf>

solutions. With limited funding we understand this may not be possible; if this were the case we would seek support for what is clearly the highest impact strategy of introducing a Moor Pool LTN. An LTN has the advantage of providing some traffic protection for the schools and may mitigate some through traffic on the roads where calming is still too expensive.

An LTN is a low cost solution that can measurably improve the lives of a large fraction of Harborne residents, and children at two of the primary schools of Harborne. There are no other schemes that have the same return value.