

# BBRAG NEWS

## BROMLEY BOROUGH ROADS ACTION GROUP – No. 9 (April 2001)

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Apart from some updates on recent road safety proposals, the major stories in this edition are the Draft Unitary Development Plan (UDP) for Bromley, and some information on air pollution in the Borough.

Note that any comments you wish to submit to Bromley council regarding the UDP need to be in by May 10<sup>th</sup> so don't delay reading that article if you wish to comment on this subject.

Although air pollution is not a major focus of our organisation, it is relevant to the extent that proposals for restrictions on private car use are often justified on pollution grounds. Public transport, particularly buses, also has a significant impact on air pollution, so your editor thought it was a subject worthy of examination.

If you have any comments or points of general interest you wish to raise on anything in this newsletter, please send them to me at the address on the last page.

Roger Lawson, Editor

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### Unitary Development Plan

Every few years, Bromley Council has to prepare a Unitary Development Plan which is primarily concerned with the definition of policies related to planning matters - such issues as land use, housing, transport, environment, and associated matters. A draft new plan has recently been issued for public consultation. Although it is about 200 pages long, and rather tediously worded, anyone who lives in the Borough would find some things of interest in it. You can obtain a copy from Bromley Council planning department, inspect it (or borrow it) from your local public library, or view it on the web at [www.bromley.gov.uk](http://www.bromley.gov.uk). The latter is incidentally the main site for Bromley Council and contains lots of other useful information such as lists of councillors and dates of council committee meetings. To get to the UDP location within the site, the easiest way seems to be to use the A-Z index and simply look under "U".

As regards the Transport policies, these are listed in Appendix A to this newsletter. Although many of these policies are well intentioned, and are bland enough that they are difficult to argue with, you only have to look at policy number 3 where it talks about restraining use of private cars, to realise what may be the underlying agenda. The content of the document, as is usual in the case of anything that comes out of Bromley Council recently, is generally anti-car and as a result the detail proposals are often misconceived.

For example, it states "parking policies are [to be] used to promote sustainable transport choices and reduce reliance on the car".

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In essence what this means is that car parking will be reduced to "discourage" car use.

To give specific examples, there are proposals to redevelop some parking already provided at Bromley South and North stations, with the likely reduction in off-street parking availability for commuters - they are expected to walk or use public transport to get to the station, which may not be a realistic scenario in many cases.

Likewise the provision of parking at new business or retail developments is likely to be severely restricted if the policies in this document are pursued. The result is certain to be a drift of such developments out of the borough with poor economic consequences for borough residents, and much inconvenience also.

Our major objections to the document as it stands however, is that it contains nothing about solving the major traffic problems of the borough. Encouraging the use of public transport or alternative travel modes (e.g. walking) is all very good, but it is very unlikely to have a major impact on existing car usage. There are no significant plans to improve the road infrastructure or remove many of the major traffic bottlenecks.

B.B.R.A.G. has made a number of representations concerning the Draft UDP, and members are encouraged to read it and make their own submissions to the council. But please send any comments in by May 10<sup>th</sup> which is the deadline for submissions.

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## **Air Pollution**

You may have seen in the local press recently that following a study of air pollution levels in Bromley, the council announced that the area will safely meet government clean air targets. To quote Duncan Phillips, Bromley Council's Scientific Officer: "The study indicates Bromley Council will not have to introduce Air Quality

Management Areas. It is predicted air pollution will be below the set targets." However the study concluded that the main factor contributing to air pollution in the borough is road traffic. Bromley Council has been taking steps to try and reduce air pollution from road traffic and this is evident in the Unitary Development Plan, the Integrated Transport Strategy, Local Agenda 21, and other policy documents.

So, if we are going to be within the targets, and are clearly in a more favourable position than many other London boroughs, why the concern? Is there a problem or isn't there?

For more background information you might like to refer to the Mayor of London's Air Quality Strategy Draft that was recently issued (at [www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies) on the internet) and the DETR's Local Air Quality Management guidance document. The former indicates that London fails to meet national air quality standards in many areas, and that London is generally the worst city in the UK, and worse than many other major European cities. Particular problems are PM10 and NOX pollutants (fine particulates and nitrogen oxides) in central London and the area to the west.

However emissions are not proportionate across vehicle types. A heavy goods vehicle emits 20 times the NOX and ten times the PM10 of an average sized car. While heavy goods vehicles account for only 5 per cent of distance traveled by road vehicle in London, they contribute 30% of NOX and 64% of PM10 emissions (see the Mayor's report). The figures for buses are similar, if not worse for many of the older models still in use. It is therefore clear that to improve air quality substantially it would be a waste of time targeting private cars, or persuading people to move from using cars to using buses. Or to quote from the Mayors report: "In London a low emission zone might also be effective if targeted at high polluting vehicles such as lorries and buses. It is very

unlikely that there would be any need to include private vehicles."

One point to bear in mind is that air pollution from traffic has been falling quite rapidly because of improvements in vehicle technology and associated government regulation, and is likely to continue to fall. Therefore, encouraging this trend by accelerated replacement of older vehicles, use of alternative fuels and further tightening of the regulations is probably the best strategy. Although both the Mayor of London and Bromley Council have adopted various strategies for traffic reduction to reduce pollution, this is not only like to be ineffective in actually cutting traffic - even more importantly, the benefit of cutting traffic by a few percentage points is likely to be much less than using the other strategies mentioned above. Tackling the major polluters which are buses and lorries would also be much more effective.

For further evidence, refer to Transport Research Laboratory report TRL 431 wherein it states that "restrictions on cars on air quality grounds have been shown not to be warranted by this study". They likewise suggested that diesel engined buses were a much better target.

For some anecdotal evidence to back up the above, just take Orpington High Street as an example. This is a route that is used by a lot of buses and is one of the few roads in Bromley where you can actually smell and taste the pollution. It was actually no better when private cars were banned for a few months.

As an example of what is being done in other countries, Delhi recently banned all diesel public service vehicles and forced them to switch to natural gas - the short notice given apparently created some problems but at least they acted rapidly whereas in London even John Prescott has recently admitted that it could be many years before the bus pollution problem is solved.

In Sweden, low pollution zones in the major cities are used to enforce higher emission standards on the most polluting vehicles.

What is the effect of traffic calming schemes (B.B.R.A.G.'s favourite subject) on air pollution. Well, the Transport Research Laboratory has fortunately just published a report on this very subject. The report indicates that traffic calming measures (eg. speed humps) result in an increase in emissions of up to 60 per cent from both petrol and diesel cars. For petrol catalyst engined vehicles, mean emissions of carbon monoxide per kilometre increased by 59 per cent for example, although only 39 per cent for diesels. Increase in mean hydrocarbons was close to 50 percent for both types. Nitrogen oxides, carbon dioxide and particulates also increased substantially.

In fact, the more severe the traffic calming, in other words the higher the humps, the worse the pollution figures became.

It has been known for a long time that slow moving and stationery traffic increases pollution, but the deceleration and acceleration through traffic calming measures makes the symptoms even worse.

In practice, it would make more sense to take steps to improve the flow of traffic in Bromley if it is desired to reduce pollution, rather than constrain or obstruct it, as has often been the result of recent traffic management policies.

Let us hope that sooner or later Bromley Council will drop some of the more ridiculous environmental policies and concentrate on the things that would actually make a difference to pollution levels. However, it seems fairly clear that there are few risks to health from current pollution levels in Bromley. Whether such pollution contributes to long term weather change is a matter that would need more space and time than this newsletter can provide.

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### **Kemnal Road Closure**

Apparently more than 50 objections to this idea were received by the council or local councillors, and new proposals are still being prepared. It was also raised at the recent AGM of the Chislehurst Society and it was suggested that they hire their own consultants to devise alternative proposals. Apparently one possibility suggested by council officers was to widen the war memorial junction to provide an easier exit onto the main Bromley Lane (A222) by that means, but nobody seems greatly enthusiastic about that suggestion. The whole idea may simply die a quite death as the possible benefits were quite small.

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### **Permit Parking Extensions**

Bromley Council continues to extend the permit parking scheme. The latest roads to be covered are Canon Road and Madeira Avenue, both of which are some distance from the town centre. These roads are probably affected by displacement from adjoining areas where schemes are already in effect, but even so, it seems that these schemes are getting out of hand. Extending them to areas where there is no off street parking within reasonable distance just inconveniences everyone.

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### **50 mph Limit on the A2**

No doubt some of our readers occasionally use the Blackwall Tunnel. It was mentioned in a previous newsletter that a new 50 mph limit was introduced on the section of the road previously known as the A102(M) - ie. what was previously classified as a motorway. There is now to be an "experimental" 50 mph limit along the A2 either side of the Danson interchange.

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This would effectively extend the controlled area to many miles. These limits do not seem realistic or necessary to your editor, so if you have any comments send them to Trevor Williams at Transport for London, Windsor House, 50 Victoria St, London SW1H 0TL (quote reference SS/AD/SF-TO GLA/2001/222).

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### **"Intelligent" Speed Humps**

Annoyed by the pain of going over speed humps? Technology has the answer - well maybe. The answer is the "intelligent" speed hump which is a new rubber hump that actually deflates before you hit it so long as you are going less than the required speed limit. If you are going above the limit, it stays rigid and gives you a jolt. The Dunlop Transcalm is an inflatable rubber unit that uses valves to control the escape of air as motorists drive over it. The new device is currently under trial in the City of London at Puddle Dock road, but your editor has not yet tried it. Note: this may be the April issue, but I don't think this is an April Fools joke.

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### **GLA Transport Strategy**

The new Greater London Authority will take over a lot of responsibility for transport matters in all London boroughs and therefore the Mayors transport strategy is of significance to Bromley. Ken Livingstone has recently issued a document outlining that strategy for consultation purposes. It includes such proposals as congestion charging to reduce traffic in central London, increasing investment in the Underground, and many other improvements to the public transport infrastructure. A lot of this has had widespread coverage in the national press and on television so we won't provide more details here, but you

can get more information from the GLA web site at [www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies), or contact B.B.R.A.G..

Nowhere in the strategy is any proposal to improve the road infrastructure, as you might expect.

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### **Biggin Hill Airport**

One matter that must concern many of our members is the proposed expansion of the use of Biggin Hill Airport. Certainly this would lead to much higher noise and atmospheric pollution in Bromley than exists at present. If you examine the poor atmospheric pollution areas in London, the area on the flightpath for Heathrow over London is particularly bad. Incidentally if you are troubled by aircraft landing noise from Heathrow, and parts of Bromley are now being affected, then there is an organisation called Hacan Clearskies (web address [www.hacan.org.uk](http://www.hacan.org.uk)) who can help you.

The Biggin Hill Airport operators recently won a legal case over the terms of their lease from Bromley council that will permit them to run scheduled flights. You could encourage Bromley Council to appeal this case. Also the operators wish to build a giant hangar on the site, and this requires approval under normal planning procedures - you may care to write to the council objecting to this approval.

There is an organisation called Flightpath campaigning against expansion of Biggin Hill airport. If you wish to support them then contact B.B.R.A.G. for more information.

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### **Contact Information**

This leaflet was published by the Bromley Borough Roads Action Group, 8 Prince Consort Drive, Chislehurst, Kent, BR7 5SB. Treasurer and Newsletter Editor: Roger Lawson (Tel: 0208-467-2686, fax: 0208-295-0378, E-mail: [roger.lawson@btclick.com](mailto:roger.lawson@btclick.com); Chairman: John Nicholls (Tel: 0208-467-8284). Contact either of the above for information on the aims and objectives of B.B.R.A.G. or for membership information (membership costs £7.50 per annum). B.B.R.A.G. would be glad to advise or assist anyone who is concerned about any traffic or transport problems in the borough.