Three Rivers People's Plan: **Transport**

Maple Cross & West Hyde Residents Association

Relevant Council duties:

NPPF: Promoting sustainable transport, meeting the challenge of climate change and flooding.
Health and Social Care Act 2012: Duty to improve public health.

Context:

Air pollution:

- UK: 28,000 to 36,000 deaths every year due to long-term exposure.
- Herts: 80 residents died from air pollution and just 20 on the roads in 2017.
- Road casualties decreased by 16% in 2017. Pollution death rates are *rising*.
- No current monitoring of the most dangerous PM size (PM2.5) in TRDC

Transport and access:

- Much of TRDC is poorly served by public transport which increases traffic.
- Many areas have few local services and amenities, which increases traffic.
- Many areas have dissuasively dangerous and poorly maintained, foot and bicycle access, which increases traffic and reduces exercise opportunities.
- Local congestion is often extreme, roadworks and future development are not intelligently managed by Herts CC or TRDC.

In plain english:

How do we improve access *and* reduce pollution in *practical* ways?

NB: All points here are *practical*: by that we mean: *cost negative, neutral or minimal*.

Quick Wins: (by summer 2021):

1-Prioritize fluidity:

- When vehicles brake and accelerate, more dangerous particulate pollution (fine dust) is created than when the same traffic is fluid (brakes and tyres will account for 10% of UK PM2.5 pollution by 2030[1]).
- Accelerating a vehicle is *hugely* less fuel efficient than maintaining a steady speed.
- TRDC directly controls the majority of environmental fluidity variables: traffic calming, traffic lights, on street parking and development of new trip generators.

Improving traffic flow *whilst discouraging through-trips* is the most effective cost neutral strategy for reducing traffic generated air pollution in TRDC, and it relies on factors *that TRDC itself controls*. So, it should be at the heart of TRDC policy.

[1] Statistics from DEFRA

Quick Wins: (by summer 2021) - cont:

1-Prioritize fluidity - cont**:**

Actions:

1.1 Roundabouts not traffic lights: In January 2020 (daytime only) the Reach Free school traffic lights in Maple Coss generated over 1,500 individual 30mph to 0 to 30mph braking and acceleration events per day (a vehicle stopping or pulling away). The choice to use lights raises pollution levels in adjacent homes and further afield. Planning should always insist on roundabouts and retrofit key locations such as adjacent to the Reach School:

- Roundabouts are proven to be more efficient at moving traffic than traffic lights.
- Roundabouts do not require expensive maintenance contracts / computers (see 1.2).
- Roundabouts can work *with* pedestrian crossing lights for the best of both worlds.

1.2 Effective contract management: Traffic lights that *can't* be converted to roundabouts must have *effective* sensor control. Ringway, the contractor we pay to maintain the lights, says *all* TRDC traffic light sensors have faulty control software which defaults to regular stop/start cycles, regardless of traffic, after 19 hours. They attend locations multiple times a year and the lights malfunction again, sometimes the day after. The contractor gets paid, Herts CC Highways say they've "responded", and TRDC says it's not their job. This contract is "managed" by Herts CC, but management of *that* relationship lies with TRDC. TRDC must ensure that services in our area are effectively managed or take steps to directly recover funds and to take over management of critical infrastructure.

1.3 Ban parking on key choke points in major roads with regular tailbacks: Just a few spaces have a huge impact on traffic and emissions. But don't leave the people who live there without space! The locations are often opposite empty residential roads with excess parking capacity that could *replace the lost spaces for residents*.

1.4 Stop spending on traffic management that doesn't work, or worse, creates positive feedback loops: no more partial "island" speed bumps. The design costs money, damages cars, causes conservative drivers to lose fluidity, and *does not prevent speeding:* the faster you go the less impact they have. Use Field Way (WD3 7EL) style full width *speed tuned* bumps engineered to create negative feedback: conservative drivers find they can go safely and smoothly at normal speed, but if a dangerous driver exceeds the tuned speed, they cannot drive unimpeded. The faster you go the worse it gets. In short: slow drivers can drive smoothly reducing local pollution, and fast drivers *have* to slow down.

1.5 Measure and collate data on traffic flow and type. TRDC is full of cameras and sensors. Use that to improve flow and reduce through trips in measurable ways and assign a champion / team to take responsibility and co-ordinate action on traffic in TRDC. Start following incidents and solutions through to completion e.g the situation in **1.2**.
Without data on what happens in Three Rivers, TRDC is powerless *and* blind. We need data to drive decisions and policy, and to support lobbying on regional and national stages. At the moment TRDC is officially asking the public to do surveys to prove that traffic exists and that air pollution requires monitoring. This is a perverse situation which must end now.

How do we improve access *and* reduce pollution in *practical* ways?

Quick Wins: (by summer 2021) - cont-:

2) Eliminate wasteful, costly, and harmful unnecessary fuel burning:

London local authorities have been enforcing the law for years. After prolonged lobbying by MXRA members, TRDC put up a single sign about idling, in an undisclosed location in 2019.

Actions:

2.1) Ban all unnecessary idling by all council staff and contractors. Monitor and publicly report on compliance.

2.3) Find and deploy a *self funding* idling enforcement contractor / Officer to strategic locations preceded and initially accompanied by awareness raising.

2.4) Work with local businesses that generate significant idling pollution to enforce on location (Tesco, Waitrose, Colne Surgery etc).

2.5) Take immediate action (monitoring and enforcement) to ensure Herts CC staff comply with the law whilst in TRDC. Herts CC contractors are clearly identified repeat offenders and Herts is on record as having no policy enforcement or monitoring in place.

3) Make alternative transport options safer and more attractive FIRST:

Cycling from Oxhey, or Maple Cross to Rickmansworth station is a terrifying experience. Road routes are poorly managed and overparked with deep holes and wide grates. Bike lanes (where they exist) are often obstructed and peter out during dangerous sections. It is scary for expert cyclists and highly inappropriate for children. This leaves 3,000 Maple Cross residents with almost no sustainable transport options for access to local services and public transport outside of the 5.2 mile walk. It's a similar situation elsewhere in the area too:make *realistic* alternatives possible by default (see Planning Policy)

Actions:

3.1) Wake up and experience reality: We invite all TRDC Cllrs, especially our ward Cllrs and TRDC leader to ride the route with us on a normal weekday morning or afternoon to gain better understanding of the experience that residents have when cycling.

3.2) Prioritise bike use in road and junction design, and enshrine safe bike and foot access into planning policy. It's not rocket science: the Netherlands have mastered bike centric design and it offers benefits for everyone: improved safety, reduced congestion and pollution, improved wellbeing and health outcomes etc etc...

3.3) Prioritise pothole repair and road surface maintenance when it affects cycle paths. Potholes are an inconvenience in a car. The 15cm deep holes in the Uxbridge road apron are a severe hazard for cyclists who risk crashing or swerving into traffic.

How do we improve access *and* reduce pollution in *practical* ways?

Mid Term: (by summer 2021):
Policy and Practice - Challenge:

Root cause analysis and data capture: what can we control or affect?

1. Traffic levels (Data to be captured: trips p/a, pollution levels inc. PM10 and PM2.5 [2])
2. Type of vehicle (Data to be captured: car/truck/ petrol/diesel/age)
3. Driving conditions and behaviour (Data to be captured: congested hours p/a)
4. Identify and implement traffic and pollution monitoring framework to assess current levels and track progress / policy outcomes: trips p/a, pollution levels inc PM10 and PM2.5, congested hours p/a on worst affected / most sensitive roads (eg by schools, healthcare, residential).

Further pollution related factors that TRDC already controls:

1. Planning : especially trip generators.
2. Local pathways.
3. ???....Also: what *could* TRDC control....?

Internal challenge: (evaluation and implementation):

1. Identify and implement quick wins (collaboratively).
2. Put champions in place with aggressive cross departmental quick win targets.
3. Crosslink with other departments: balance planning policy to ensure new multiple trip generators have fluid access, and offer measurable direct benefits to residents.
4. Look for best policy and practice, evaluate and adopt.
5. Look for and secure external funding.
6. Include securing external funding as an Officer KPI where applicable.
7. Act from now on areas where impact is calculable: We know how much pollution individual cars generate. We know how much fuel is burned at HS2 and other works in TRDC. It is already possible to evaluate the emissions we generate. We want that level to go down over time. *We don't need more evidence to determine that less air pollution and less traffic is better*. We know that we all need to be making less car trips and walking more. So, let's start implementing policy now on the areas that we do control: Don't wait to be told to do better, and don't wait for Herts CC. Coordinate - but don't wait to be led in an emergency.

[2] ...but you still need to try. If you don't measure pollution and gather evidence you are powerless to act, locally, nationally, or internationally.

How do we improve access *and* reduce pollution in *practical* ways?

Long Term: (by summer 2022):
Policy and Practice - Challenge:

Overall, we need to create a culture of excellence and innovation at TRDC that puts it amongst the leading local Authorities in the UK. Internal performance indicators may show that current culture is performance driven, but in reality, manifestly, residents are having to drive policy change and performance improvements at TRDC. This cannot continue long term: not least because it is cripplingly inefficient: officers are supposed to be experts to whom citizens delegate areas of management via Councillors, policy and national legislation. At the moment that chain is broken. We need TRDC to inspire and educate us, not vice versa. Local Authority Officers should be leading the way to order of magnitude improvements in council performance (and finding the income to enable them), yet TRDC doesn't even have its own targets for river or air pollution for example, despite being literally named after our incredibly, globally rare and significant chalk streams (<200 on earth).

Actions:

Continue to develop and improve previous initiatives, and to seek new and more effective ways to reduce pollution, increase wellbeing and health outcomes, and do so in an economically viable way. EG:

1. Develop a concept similar to 'Bristol Green Capital' which links local food production capabilities to the local population to avoid excessive food miles. Ensure all council offices only use food and produce which has been produced locally to avoid food miles. Lead from the front.
2. Expand comprehensive measurement of air pollution across the district. Enable all residents to access 'real time' data via a Council App. Start a forum which would enable residents to contribute ideas on how to reduce pollution with a 'rapid response and concrete action' approach from the council.
3. Seek out and secure grant funding / partnership project with a UK hydrogen fuel cell or Electric Vehicle provider (eg Shell) and start delivering a transition plan for TRDC fleet. Do not wait for Herts, demonstrably a poor performer on environment, to lead.
4. Continue to link these initiatives tightly to planning (see planning policy for details) and ensure existing resources are optimised before approving more trip generators. **EG:** ensure extant warehousing is used before allowing construction of more capacity.
5. Lobby Herts/UK gov for traffic light control of M25 off flow at J17 to stop A412 rat run traffic.

Notes on air pollution: measurement and related policy areas:

Why now?

1. Climate change emergency with a fast approaching irreversible tipping point.
2. Evidence for human impact of air, nano and nano plastic pollution is growing weekly.
3. Inaction is now a more expensive option than inaction in the mid to long term (https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-019-13961-1) .
4. Councils have a responsibility to effectively plan and operate on significant timescales: if we don't act radically, now, residents' children will live to see significant areas of the UK underwater. This is a uniquely serious situation and requires an order of magnitude improvement from TRDC.....why does this need pointing out?

NB: The following briefing was written in late 2019 at the request of the TRDC Environment Committee which demanded residents prove that:

A) Air pollution exists at hazardous levels in TRDC
B) It should be measured.

Having environmental leads and protection officers arguing that residents need to *prove principles behind extant UK Government Policy* and misquoting DEFRA on UK air quality beggars belief. TRDC management team (CEO and Leader) has since failed to take up training offers, and to our knowledge, has taken no action to ensure that key individuals have appropriate levels of knowledge to be able to effectively discharge their duties.

Why do we need *PM2.5* measurement?

1. PM2.5 is the most harmful part of the PM spectrum (particles of all sizes 2.5 micrometers across or smaller - that's two and a half thousandths of millimetre).
2. TRDC does not measure PM2.5 levels at all.
3. It relies on 2015 Government estimates, which currently project that we should be below max threshold levels, on average, if assumptions hold.
4. The levels that TRDC currently describes as "below max" are in fact, *according to all reputable science*, very harmful to human health.
5. The UK threshold is set higher than Scotland for example as we already have more polluted air: it is not a guide to safety. It has simply been set near current levels to reduce "breaches". All levels are harmful. We have simply raised the level we call "max" in South East England.
6. So, TRDC residents are surrounded by dangerous levels of particulate pollution and TRDC does not measure these levels. This means that:
7. TRDC does not *know* what local PM2.5 levels are. Neither does anyone.
8. TRDC does not monitor fuel burn (CO2 contribution) or harmful emissions including dangerous PM scale silicate dust from activity it authorises or is subject to (eg HS2 works, gravel extraction etc).
9. TRDC cannot make fact-based decisions on this matter: it cannot show that we are safe despite HS2. It cannot show that we are being harmed, or protect us if indeed that is the case. It cannot refuse harmful development on pollution grounds. It cannot even properly evaluate if development *is* harmful in the first place.
10. So TRDC cannot apply for grant funding, or use local pollution to fight its own appeals, or to lobby central government, or Herts CC, or anyone.

Notes on air pollution: - cont-

NB: The following second briefing was also written at the request of the TRDC Environment Committee which demanded that we justify why our area specifically should get monitoring because, in the words of the Council: **"*If we give you one they'll all want one*[3]".**

Yes, you read that right: one of the major reasons TRDC and Herts do almost no monitoring at all and actively avoid the subject is because they fundamentally see residents as children and themselves as grown ups defending their wallet.

This pattern of behaviour is replicated by both Cllrs and Officers in their refusal, by constantly avoiding requests, to protect our kids.

Why do we need *PM2.5* measurement: why in Maple Cross?

Maple Cross is closest to and down wind of main sources of pollution that dissipate across TRDC, at a valley junction with the M25. And we have some of the worst health outcomes in the district, so if you want to make it a competition: Maple Cross has a very good case.

But that's a sad and dangerous way to look at things: we *all* need proper data on the situation.

Asking "Why Maple Cross?" is a straw-man argument: as TRDC's senior Environmental Protection Officer opined at the Environment Committee meeting this January "*Up to 25% of PM2.5 comes from abroad*"....because it is by definition very light and airborne....so where we site a PM2.5 monitor is clearly not a major factor.

Everyone in TRDC needs PM2.5 monitoring, yesterday.

And Maple Cross is as good a place as any to put it, if not better.

As other local authorities around Britain realised long ago: we need much more pollution monitoring and feedback with policy making than we currently have:

You cannot plot a course if you literally don't know where you are; and as we need TRDC to start leading the way, it had better start working out where we are now. The stakes are high and growing daily

[3] A local air quality monitoring station