



Recommendations for the updated Epping Forest Transport Strategy

Introduction

Further to the workshop in February, we would like to put forward six recommendations for the updated Epping Forest Transport Strategy (the “New Strategy”).

These recommendations are based on engagement work from 2025, including a public survey which forms part of our Make Epping New Road Safe campaign, our membership survey of their priorities, and a public stall in November where we asked Forest visitors about their main concerns and priorities regarding transport and accessibility.

As a charity, we maintain that people’s safe access to Epping Forest, and the nature and heritage connectedness that results, is imperative for those people to then care for and protect the Forest.

We are therefore in complete support of the City of London’s reinvigoration of the former strategy. Our following recommendations each reflect one or several overarching principles for the strategy which we maintain will support this ambition:

- Enhancing the capacity of the public to explore the Forest widely, safely and through sustainable means
- Reflecting the diversity of transport and access needs of residents around different parts of the Forest
- Cross-boundary working between the City and local authority

1. The New Strategy should cover the whole Forest, involving the local authorities of Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest as well as EFDC and ECC

We strongly believe that the New Strategy should capture the whole Forest, and that the three local authorities in the South of the Forest be included in its development and delivery.

This would facilitate discussions in relation to transport across local authority areas, as well as an essential joining up of thinking around better walking and cycling provision within and around the Forest. It would also enable greater consistency in

approach across the Forest around issues such as road speed, especially when roads like Epping New Road cross through different local authorities in London and Essex.

Dovetailing with this increased scope and consistency, increased local authority involvement would help discern the different transport and access needs which are required for the north and south of the Forest, reflecting differences in demographics of residents and urban/rural constitution of the surrounding areas.

This dialogue across local authorities would therefore allow for a spatial strategy which embodies both joined-up and carefully differentiated thinking. This is necessary for progressing strategies which stretch across transport and visitor management, including our recommendation for an all-weather walking path through the Forest from the south to the north, to enable people to access the full extent of the Forest all year round. The starting point could be the route of the Big Walk from Manor Park in Newham through to Epping. It could then be developed in stages, prioritising areas where poor paths discourage access in the winter (for example around Snaresbrook, Gilberts Slade, Highams Park), creating a truly sustainable way to explore the Forest all year round. Iterative processes like these would be enabled through collaboration with the relevant local authority of each part of the Forest.

Through extending the scope of the New Strategy, and maximising local authority engagement, all six of its Strategic Objectives would be supported.

2. Improve Epping New Road with a 30mph blanket speed limit and traffic calming measures at Lincolns Lane and Mount Pleasant crossing points

We commend the original strategy for seeking to address the access and public safety issues posed by Epping New Road through proposing crossing points which Essex Highways have subsequently adopted in their A104 Safer Roads Scheme.

We are concerned, however, that this initiative is not being accompanied by a complete reduction of the road's speed limit or the implementation of traffic calming measures near the crossing points.

Regarding the speed limit, our survey result for comfort score of pedestrians crossing the road, at 40mph, was 3.2/10. The heightened risks of crossing for people with mobility issues and young families were raised by both survey and stall participants.

Regarding the crossing points, several stall participants voiced concern about being trapped on the island between two pillars of fast-moving cars if the islands are introduced without speed limit changes or traffic calming measures.

Other stall and survey participants cited broader access concerns: the difficulty the road speed poses for crossing East-West in the Forest.

Accordingly, we do not believe that simply adding crossing islands will meet the following three Strategy Objectives:

- A Forest-centric approach in the formulation of transport proposals, reflecting the unique characteristics and international importance of the Forest environment.
- Providing improved accessibility to the Forest for all users especially those arriving by public transport or on foot, bicycle or horse-back.

- To enhance road safety and reduce severance by improving crossing points for all users across the Forest.

Our two proposals, evidenced as popular by our survey, would support these Strategy Objectives. The reduction of Epping New Road to 30mph and the implementation of traffic calming measures would constitute a Forest-centric approach, ensuring that the road's speed attends to the Forest's protected status and high visitor numbers, such as with speed limits around other Special Areas of Conservation like Richmond Park and Wimbledon Common. Reducing speeds and making the road easier to cross would also fulfil the Objectives of improving accessibility and enhancing road safety.

We see potential for this new Transport Strategy to complement the Safer Roads Scheme. The web page for the scheme itself notes that "[i]t will work in partnership with the Epping Forest Transport Strategy, for further changes in the area outside the safe roads brief."

We therefore ask that the City of London work with Essex Highways to make these changes.

3. Implement joined up policy between the new Transport Strategy, the Visitor Management Strategy and the SAMM strategy, ensuring that these strategies are cross-referenced in each

We maintain that the New Strategy, upcoming Visitor Management Strategy and SAMM Strategy affect each other and therefore need to be developed in a coordinated way, to maximise public access and nature conservation.

As an example, decisions regarding Forest roads, like the removal of the Epping New Road cycle lane by the A104 Safer Roads Scheme, alongside impacting the safety of cyclists, will have potential impacts on the use of Forest paths. How the safety of cyclists within and through the Forest can be safeguarded whilst the visitor experience of pedestrians and ecological integrity of the Forest is maintained rests on a joined-up effort between the new Strategy and SAMM Strategy to ensure that Forest infrastructure accounts for any policy changes for roads surrounding the Forest.

Furthermore, we maintain that the New Strategy's Objectives, such as providing improved accessibility to the Forest for all users and enhancing road safety, are as much issues of visitor management as they are transport. Accordingly, there is also a need to explicitly express how the new Transport Strategy will relate to the upcoming Visitor Management Strategy. Access for different demographics, including those reliant on public transport, younger people and those with access needs can only be comprehensively addressed when transport and visitor management become integrated concerns.

Moreover, returning to Recommendation 1, an integrated approach would enable consistency in how the different Strategies approach different parts of the Forest. We strongly support the City of London's hiring of three SAMM officers to have jurisdiction over the bottom, middle and top sections of the Forest respectively; this shows recognition of the need for specificity of policy approach depending on region. In guiding the approach to its strategies, we ask that the City utilises the same data

around local access and transport needs to inform all three, such that complimentary policy decisions can be made. We would also encourage the relationship between each strategy to be made explicit, with each strategy cross-referenced in the others. This would ultimately enable more ambitious projects to be carried out in future, like our proposal for an all-weather path.

4. Implement better bus services to, through and around the Forest

During our stall, as well as in our member surveys, several people suggested better bus services would help them explore parts of the Forest with little public transport connection, such as High Beach and areas closer to Waltham Abbey.

As well as enabling greater access within the Forest, in accordance with the Strategy's Objectives, it would support access for people without vehicles and encourage fewer vehicular trips within the Forest, in accordance with the Objective of "improving accessibility to the Forest for all users especially those arriving by public transport or on foot."

We recognise that, after the prior strategy, a bus route through Chingford Station, High Beach and Loughton was trialled and experienced a poor uptake. But, in our proposed context of widening the scope of the new Strategy to the London local authorities, we would ask that factors like population increase in boroughs like Waltham Forest since the previous Strategy be considered, as well as the possibility of collaborative work with TFL. Through this collaborative work other potential/existing public transport routes can also be investigated and evaluated.

Alongside this, we encourage that the City of London work with all surrounding local authorities to promote the new routes through means like Waltham Forest's "Discover Waltham Forest" website.

5. Investigate modern ways to restrict traffic which impedes Forest visitors and local people, using all the modern technology at its disposal.

We support the development of "quiet lanes," as suggested in Part 2: "Route Management" of the old Strategy. At rush hour huge numbers of vehicles come use the Forest as a rat run to cut the corner between the M25, Waltham Abbey and the Epping New Road. This traffic damages the Forest in one of its most sensitive areas and inconveniences local people in High Beach, compromising a Forest-centric approach to transport management.

There are modern ways to reduce rat-running, like those used in London's Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, using cameras and ANPR. We recommend that the City works with local authorities to push for this infrastructure.

6. Review the red lines at High Beach

We believe these need to be reviewed strategically to help deliver the aims of the New Strategy and better protect the Forest. This could also optimise the use of existing car parks, generating important revenue for the City whilst mitigating

ecological impacts of car use in sensitive areas of the Forest. For example, car users can currently park for free around High Beach along the roadside, bypassing the nearby carpark. Addressing this would accord with the New Strategy's Objectives to support and integrate with the conservation management of the Forest and reduce the visual impact of roads.

This revaluation of red routes, once more, is also a key way in which the new Transport and Visitor Management Strategy could be integrated, encouraging/discouraging footfall in strategically chosen areas.

We would be happy to discuss these ideas further. We would also be interested in participating in any subsequent working groups to help integrate these ideas.

Kind regards,

James Harrington

Chair

Epping Forest Heritage Trust