

Life in the Sacrifice Zone

By Jenny and Norman Young
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Untangling the traffic situation in the HOME Resident's Association Area

HOME Resident's Association covers the heart of Victorian Addiscombe, but that heart is under attack.

Over the last three years traffic has increased significantly in HOME roads and whatever we suggest to redress this imbalance, the Council won't listen.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

We deserve to be treated fairly. Ill-conceived, unfair piecemeal traffic mitigations for nearby roads have caused catastrophic changes to the quality of life for HOME residents; our safety is under threat and our well-being continues to suffer as myriad lorries, vans and cars roar up and down our streets night and day. This article seeks to explain the background to this catastrophic situation and detail some of our attempts to seek justice.

You will see that Elgin Road has suffered the most in this depressing and shocking saga, which has its own special irony, since Elgin is the road in HOME (and also within the **East India Conservation Zone**, even within the great Croydon itself) that has the largest collection of locally listed buildings.



Twenty-two buildings in total are considered to have 'high architectural merit' in Elgin Road, not to mention a host of 'unlisted positive buildings' too. This listing was applied by an earlier council, but the present regime... Well, I'll let you read on to find out what the current council has (or has not) been doing for Elgin and neighbouring roads.

Until a few years ago, traffic travelling north beyond East Croydon Station on the Addiscombe side had a number of routes to choose from – Cherry Orchard Road, Lebanon Road, Addiscombe Court Road, Canning Road, and all the roads in HOME.

There was a real problem for residents of Lebanon Road so in 2015 the Council decided to restrict travel to one direction only. They could have chosen to make this either north or southbound, but chose to make it a southbound route. This was a political decision with cross-party support (that happens rarely), but it upset Addiscombe Court Road residents as their road now picked up some of the northerly traffic that would have used Lebanon Road. It's worth noting that at this stage Elgin Road saw a noticeable increase in northerly traffic as a consequence as well.

In January 2018, just before the Ward Boundary changes, the Council made further one way changes to traffic flow because of significant pressure from a small group in Addiscombe Court Road. Both Addiscombe Court Road and Canning Road were closed to all northbound traffic. This reduced total traffic movement in these roads to near zero, dispersing it all onto the next available northbound routes – Elgin, Havelock etc. While this was being implemented, local elections happened, leaving HOME with no representation to oppose the changes. A regrettable state of affairs, to say the least.

Using the Council's own data and our own analysis, we know that at this time Elgin Road had a 40% average increase over the week (up from the already high number of 17,100 to over 23,000 per week), with a 76% increase during night time. Havelock also had a large increase, but a smaller percentage than Elgin. Some residents of Elgin even moved their bedrooms to the back of their houses because of night-time traffic noise. The Council's own data was seriously flawed (because the cables measuring the traffic were incorrectly situated in the road and thus snapped under the pressure of the traffic and recorded zero) but the data was still used to produce a report that not surprisingly suggested we had not been badly impacted. Night-time traffic was not considered at all.

The residents of Addiscombe Court

Road and Canning Road now found that they had almost traffic-free roads, and residents could have their windows open whenever they liked without traffic fumes coming into their homes (a quote from the Chair of their RA).

The residents of these roads use HOME roads to get back home, and companies like Amazon, Hermes, Royal Mail, various building firms, Veolia etc use HOME roads as part of a loop to get access to Addiscombe West. Given that our roads have a 7.5T limit, refuse lorries are not permitted to use our roads unless they are collecting our rubbish, but they ignore this rule (as do many companies – we have photographic evidence of 35 ton vehicles frequently using our roads).

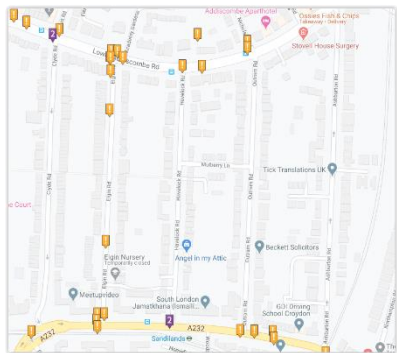
The Council refuses to do anything to reduce traffic flow on our residential roads because they say it will clog up the main roads and they acknowledge that our roads are used as through routes for the many. This is partly because they have failed to make sensible changes to the main north/south routes (such as Addiscombe Grove/Cherry Orchard Road), so our roads are used to get back to Morland Avenue, St James Road and beyond.

Earlier this year, 2020, the Council commissioned Arcadis to carry out a traffic report, based on our proposal to duplicate the no-northbound access in Addiscombe West to our roads in Addiscombe East. The Council refused to provide us with the instruction they sent to Arcadis.

Their report relied on acknowledged

faulty data provided by the Council (where the cables snapped as mentioned before) and newly collected data DURING THE PANDEMIC. I'll leave you to work out whether you think that is fair! Oh, and our proposal of re-opening some north bound routes was not considered and). **This wholly inadequate report cost us tax payers over £26,000.**

The collision map included in the report from Arcadis is interesting, showing as it does the large numbers of accidents that have occurred in



Elgin Road as a direct consequence of the traffic displacement from Addiscombe West.

Crash Map 2015-18. <https://www.crashmap.co.uk>

It's not for nothing that we are known locally as the 'Addiscombe West Bypass' and we are now over double figures in road accidents since the changes, and that excludes 2019 & 2020 reports. We would not like to accuse the Council of not caring about safety, but perhaps the accidents weren't serious enough. Do people have to die? Human sacrifice indeed.

Here are some photos from three of the 11 accidents:



Accident on 17 June 2018



Two accidents in July 2018

The proposal to close all HOME roads to northbound traffic would have meant that there would be eight roads in a row with no northbound access from the Addiscombe Road ('the 8/0 scheme).

Of course, introducing such an '8 south/o north' option would be likely to shift some north-bound traffic into the ASPRA area, and residents of ASPRA would rightly object to such changes impacting them in a similar way unless the scheme extended all the way to Shirley Road. This would certainly encourage drivers to avoid the area altogether as traffic congestion on the Addiscombe Road would be even higher.

We've had numerous meetings, some public (the one involving over 150 residents will go down in the legends of Addiscombe for all the wrong reasons – anyone remember??), and the general consensus was that the only sensible thing to do would be to

at least reverse the changes made to Canning Road. The Council won't consider this and have not been willing to give a valid reason for their refusal. Have they lost their marbles?

So, enough background; big question is,

How do we move forwards and get a FAIR sharing of traffic between the roads?

The answer to this is staring everyone in the face (and it's cheap, always an advantage) – start by opening Canning Road again to northbound traffic and consider reversing either Addiscombe Court Road or Lebanon Road. This would enable residents in Addiscombe West to travel a much shorter route back home, and help reduce pollution and petrol consumption because all the delivery vans would have shorter journeys too. HOME roads would still have more traffic than any of the roads in Addiscombe West as the routes are straighter and shorter, but it would help to re-balance the traffic across the area.

If traffic numbers were still too high, then further mitigation would be required in different stages.

Were things different in the lockdown?

A camera set up on 2nd April 2020 for 24 hours (after lockdown had begun) recorded 1,441 vehicles using Elgin Road. That was a smaller number per day than prior to the lockdown, but it is still a significant

number considering many other roads were virtually empty. As lockdown is relaxed, more people will travel by car – who will be using public transport if they have a choice? Until there is a vaccine, there will even more traffic using the road networks, including the HOME area.

We look with incredulity and green eyes at neighbouring areas where the Council have introduced multiple road closures to stop rat running (e.g. Dalmally Road) because, apparently, they believe in 'liveability'. Please sir, could we have some?

In short, HOME are fed up to the back teeth of being treated as second class citizens. It's not just the foundations of our homes that have been shaken to the core by the traffic displacement schemes! We are being denied our right to liveability, to breath fresh air, to be able to cross the road without fear and quite simply to have a bit of peace and quiet at the front of our homes. HOME is the heart of Victorian Addiscombe, springing from the site of the mighty Addiscombe Academy, whose bricks and fireplaces still grace many a local building; we deserve to be treated with dignity and fairness just as much as the 'newer' areas – between-the-wars Addiscombe and all the more modern areas that have sprung up since. We even had our own railway station back in the day on the Lower Addiscombe Road, Addiscombe Station. Now all we have is traffic, traffic and yet more traffic.

Give us a break and your support!