

An unfiltered response on the safety of our streets.

To Richard Leese, Tracey Rawlins, our councillors and the project team at MCC,

Your latest response regarding the Levenshulme and Burnage active neighbourhood is simply not good enough. You are ruling out adding filters which have received widespread community support and suggesting that the current watered down active neighbourhood might be weakened even further. Unless you immediately take more positive action, the scheme will not succeed in its objectives, and another setback to their decarbonisation agenda would be profoundly embarrassing for the council. However, the people who will really suffer are those who will continue to face increasing traffic and pollution every day, the poorest of whom rely on active travel.

You still don't understand that the point of the active neighbourhood is not the effect of *individual* filters, but the networks of low-traffic streets they create *together*. You still refuse to acknowledge that improved main roads and filtered side streets must *both* be addressed, and inflame tensions between residents by ignoring this. You still claim crossings and calming couldn't have been part of the trial when other schemes within Greater Manchester include them. You still say school streets are "separate", yet the school run is a major source of local traffic putting local residents at risk every day.

We have tried to politely make these arguments before, but your latest communication makes it clear that you've not been listening.

We have repeatedly pressed the council to show any leadership through the initial stage of this project to make our streets safer and our air cleaner. At every stage they have come second to the work of local volunteers, both ourselves and many others, who are doing a far better job advocating and explaining why we need these changes. People who've given up days of their time to try and make your scheme a success, because they see we are desperately in need of a rebalance, to prioritise people over cars.

We are still hearing about the threat of the removal of filters, filters that have ALL been received positively at recent and past consultations. We remain deeply sceptical this consultation will be respected, especially now you've just told us we won't be receiving any of the positively received 'paused' filters at all. It seems there is always willingness to discuss reducing the scope of the scheme, but never to increase it, even if the residents are in favour. Why is this?

You say increased traffic on adjoining roads is a reason for removal, yet have presented no data for this argument, which runs against the experience of many low traffic neighbourhoods in the UK, which show a reduction on filtered AND surrounding roads. You also seem to ignore the fact that nationally, road traffic continues to increase, and the effect of satellite navigation means that this increase is disproportionately moving onto side streets. Without infrastructure to prevent and reverse this trend, you are damning people to increased pollution and danger. Why is pollution and road safety given as an unproven reason for removing filters, but is ignored when we provide it as a reason for maintaining them, or adding more?

You are still biased towards the unsustainable status quo.

These measures could have worked as a vaccine, protecting us from continuing increase in pollution and accidents. You removed plans for many of them without even testing them, claiming increases in traffic you couldn't have seen yet, and removing individual filters at random leaving incomplete networks.

Can you tell us, if these filters are removed, and data shows an increased numbers of cars, accidents, and pollution, or even no change at all, will they be reinstated? We're doubtful of this.

Because of a complete bias by the council towards an unsustainable status quo.

A status quo where our most vulnerable are put at risk to satisfy those taking short car journeys, the very reason these measures are required in the first place. A status quo where the poorest in the community who contribute the least to dirty air are still forced to breathe it. A status quo where car dependency is not just normalised but championed.

Residents have been given a broken shield, and even with that, we tried our best to defend ourselves from the onslaught of traffic, to walk more and cycle more, but now you are threatening to take even that away from us, with no guarantee that anything will take its place.

Rather than take this first step towards clean air for all, you risk deciding that dirty air and unsafe roads for all is "equality".

It's a decision we will not tolerate. People are currently safer on the streets of Levenshulme, and by removing what little progress has been made, you will be actively putting people at risk. When someone gets hurt as a result of your actions, we will hold you accountable, because you will be responsible.

We invite Richard Leese, Tracey Rawlins, and the project team to come to Levenshulme and Burnage, and explain to residents why we should continue to put ourselves at risk by travelling around our neighbourhood because of your disregard for consultation results, lack of understanding and communication, and most importantly your lack of action.

Yours,

Streets for People – Levenshulme and Burnage.