

Dear

[Greenbank Living Streets](#) is a resident-led group based in Greenbank in Bristol. We are writing in support of the proposed closure of Rosemary Lane to motorised traffic. We would like to see the road closed to test its impact, and the local community given the opportunity to develop an alternative vision for Rosemary Green.

Below we outline the reasons why we support this, and also some concerns which we hope can be overcome. We hope that the consultation process will attempt to capture all residents' opinions, and not just of those (including ourselves) who proactively contact the council.

Safety concerns

The most pressing argument for closure is improved safety. Rosemary Lane is heavily used by rat runners. It's a popular cut through with motorists who want to get from Stapleton Road to Whitehall Road, using East Park, Rosemary Lane, Emlyn, Hinton and Devon Roads, all of which are unsuitable for high volumes of fast moving traffic. These are also key routes to both May Park and Whitehall Schools.

As a demonstration of the safety issues, the residents of Hinton Road have kept a log of incidents. These include four significant incidents since April 2020 alone:

- A car flipped onto its side in April 2020 after crashing into a resident's parked car
- A crash on the junction of Greenbank and Hinton Roads also in April 2020
- A 7 year old was knocked down by a car in July 2020 (no images)
- An aggressive stand-off between two motorists at the junction of Greenbank and Hinton Road in September 2020

[See this link for images from these incidents](#). These incidents don't include the many other stand-offs, near misses and unwitnessed events that will also have happened during that time.

Our recent survey of Greenbank residents found, when asked about things that made travelling through the area difficult for them, a quarter mentioned dangerous driving and speed issues, and this was unprompted. This rose to 57% who mentioned any kind of traffic issues.

An active travel route

By closing Rosemary Lane to motorised traffic, the streets around May Park primary school and those currently used as a rat run (which, for many families, form part of the route to Whitehall primary school and Greenbank Masjid's evening school) would become quieter, enabling active travel to school.

It could also be a key piece of active travel infrastructure, giving cyclists and walkers ready access to both Stapleton Road and the Greenbank area, including the Bristol-Bath Railway Path.

Addressing residents' concerns

We know some residents have concerns that the closure will displace traffic onto Belle Vue Road and Robertson Road, from the response to Easton Safer Streets where Rosemary Lane's closure was also proposed. **While these concerns may prove true in the short term, we expect that some ['traffic evaporation'](#) will happen over time, as people learn to avoid the route and switch to other modes. However, this will take time so the longer the trial closure, the more likely we are to see this benefit.**

In the shorter term, Robertson Road may see more residential traffic, as those who live in or visit the area who currently use the Rosemary Lane cut through will be forced to use this route instead. However, closing the rat run should benefit Robertson Road, particularly those near the Rosemary Lane junction. Much of the existing traffic won't be residents or visitors to Greenbank, but those driving through it, and that traffic may well be displaced locally for a time, rather than using more suitable roads such as Easton Way. Hopefully over time they will instead use the Easton Way major routes and local residents may be encouraged to cycle or walk to make journeys that may otherwise have involved driving through Rosemary Lane.

Belle Vue Road may end up with more of the displaced rat running traffic. Its width means it is marginally more suited to traffic, but the road is still mostly residential, with some key businesses along it. Traffic calming measures for Belle Vue may need to be reviewed to determine if they are effective.

To address these concerns, the trial closure will need careful monitoring, with actual traffic movements being a preferable measure of success than a list of complaints. What plans does the Council have for assessing the effect of the closure?

A longer-term mitigation for the displacement of traffic would be to create a proper Liveable (low-traffic) Neighbourhood for the area, which would reduce the number of car trips overall by making it impossible for out-of-area traffic to use it as a shortcut, whilst maintaining car access for all properties.

We would like to see further measures that create a truly low traffic neighbourhood so that all the residents in our community can benefit equally. Devon Road, for example, is unsuitable for the high volume of through traffic it sees, and closing Rosemary Lane may not address this. Such work needs to be carried out across the city in order to spread the benefits equitably.

Low traffic neighbourhoods rely on main roads to carry through-traffic. With the Rosemary Lane closure, Stapleton Road would be a key alternative route. Stapleton Road already has poor air quality and noise pollution, affecting the health of its residents. It is not very pleasant to walk, cycle or drive along. We therefore feel that consideration should be given for better infrastructure along Stapleton Road. Better provision for cycling and walking along this route would encourage more people to consider alternative forms of travel, something people were willing to do during lockdown when roads were quiet. Are there plans to monitor air quality on main roads such as Stapleton Road? Although as main roads they are designed for through traffic, they still have people living and working on them who equally need to be protected.

Some residents have also expressed concern about access to the GP surgery by car, which in some circumstances is necessary. Looking at Google's driving directions, on average this will add an extra minute onto journey times. This will also be true of journey times into the neighbourhood, for example to the Mosque and Church on Greenbank Road. While the traffic on Stapleton Road can be bad at peak times, this seems a small sacrifice when weighed against the safety and health of all residents.

When Rosemary Lane was proposed for closure as part of Easton Safer Streets, some residents were also concerned that shutting the road off at one end would attract van dwellers like the encampment on Greenbank View, and/or fly tipping. The road is already being used in this way, so if this is a concern of some residents then both ends of the short stretch between the areas of green need to be closed to motorised traffic. This would then link the woodland area with the other end of Rosemary Green, and create a space better joining the community of East Park and Greenbank/Easton.

An alternative vision for Rosemary Green

In the last few years, Rosemary Green has benefitted from a new playground and community woodland project. It was also a key green space for residents during the recent COVID-19 restrictions. With its rich history and potential as a wildlife corridor if sympathetically connected with Greenbank Cemetery, Rosemary Green could become even more of a community asset. The closure of Rosemary Lane would then link the woodland area with Rosemary Green, and create a space for everyone in the community of East Park and Greenbank/Easton to enjoy.

We would like to see an alternative vision presented for Rosemary Green that is shaped by local residents.

We believe the proposal will, on the whole, benefit residents in terms of safety, noise pollution and air pollution, and will improve a community green space. We hope our views are useful in your decision making process.

Yours sincerely

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On behalf of Greenbank Living Streets