

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

### **Council road scheme at Newham will cause ‘extreme danger’, says independent report**

An independent safety audit into the planned narrowing by Cornwall Council of a busy industrial estate access road in Truro has concluded that the controversial scheme will cause “extreme danger” to cyclists and pedestrians.

The damning report by leading UK transport consultants TPA, which was commissioned by the Newham Business Improvement District (BID), says the plans are “unsuitable and unsafe”.

Far from creating a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists, it would have the opposite effect, “putting those vulnerable road users at high risk”, the report says.

Newham BID, which promotes Newham as a business location, is now looking at a potential judicial review into the Council’s decision-making process, or even a High Court injunction to stop it going ahead.

Cornwall Council has said it plans to press ahead with the scheme, which would see a 350m section of Newham Road from the entrance to the Newham Industrial Estate narrowed to 6.5m to allow for the creation of a wider pedestrian and cycleway next to the road.

But transport experts TPA say the plans mean that two heavy good vehicles travelling in opposite directions would barely be able to pass, adding: “it is likely that one vehicle would often be forced to mount the new shared foot/cycle path in order to pass comfortably, causing extreme danger to any cyclist or pedestrian using the path.”

TPA add that the plans do not appear to have been the subject of any safety audit by the Council when they were first drawn up.

And when the Council did finally do an audit – only following a raft of objections from local businesses concerned about safety – it used its own contractor CORMAC rather than an independent auditor. TPA describes this as “highly irregular” and a failure to follow national guidance for highway design.

Cornwall Council insists the scheme is safe because it classes the road as ‘minor’, claiming that the majority of businesses at Newham are classed as B1, which is office use. But an audit of Newham’s 180 businesses by the BID shows that industrial and distribution businesses outnumber office users three to one by rateable value.

Many of them run fleets of large vehicles including waste trucks, delivery lorries, buses, and mobile cranes. TPA believe it should be classed as a major industrial access road, which would mean under the Council’s own guidance it should have a minimum width of 7.3m.

Now the Newham BID is looking at legal action to prevent the scheme going ahead and has petitioned every Councillor urging a halt to the project, which the Council has said it wants to start from this week.

BID Manager Mel Richardson said: “The independent safety assessment we commissioned confirms our worst fears that this project will cause extreme danger to cyclists and pedestrians along Newham Road.

“It also suggests that the Council has followed a highly questionable design process in drawing up this scheme, which we believe flies in the face of best practice, and the data it has used to justify narrowing the road is in our view demonstrably flawed.

“We are urging the Council to drop this dangerous scheme before someone is seriously injured or even killed.”

One of the 45 businesses on Newham that has opposed the scheme – which also include Aldi and Tesco – is crane hire company Macsalvors. It recently set up a photo at its Newham depot with the BID to illustrate how two of its cranes would be just centimetres apart if passing each other on the narrowed road.

Managing director Cameron MacQuarrie, who employs 65 people at Newham, said: “Apart from the safety question, if this road is narrowed then it will put additional strain on local businesses and it really begs the questions about how serious the Council is about supporting a major employment site not just for Truro, but the county.”

**Copy ends – 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2023**

**Caption:** BID Manager Mel Richardson with Macsalvors’ managing director Cameron MacQuarrie, showing how little space there would be between two cranes on Newham Road if Cornwall Council’s controversial road narrowing project goes ahead.