

LOUIE FRENCH MP
OLD BEXLEY & SIDCUP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mayor Sadiq Khan
City Hall
Kamal Chunchie Way
London
E16 1ZE

29 July 2022

Dear Mr Mayor,

I am writing in response to the consultation on expanding the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) to outer London, including my constituency of Old Bexley and Sidcup from August 2023. I would be grateful if this letter could be taken as my submission to the consultation.

4882 local residents have signed my petition against your plans to expand ULEZ which shows the strength of opposition towards these proposals and the significant impact the plans will have on local people, families and businesses. The level of local objection to these plans highlights again how the expansion to places like Bexley ignores the nature of the area, including the high levels of car ownership, the limited public transport connectivity relative to Central London and the strong economic and social ties Bexley has with neighbouring areas such as Dartford.

The expansion of ULEZ to Greater London would mean that local constituents have to pay £12.50 per day and £4,500 per year for driving anywhere in the constituency or anywhere in Greater London if they drive an older car or van. This is clearly going to have a devastating and regressive impact on communities in Bexley. This stealth tax will hit those on lower incomes and cannot afford to pay the charge or for a new car/van the hardest. This is acutely concerning at a time when there is already significant pressure on household finances due to inflation and rising prices, to the extent that the government will provide support worth over £37 billion in 2022-23 to families to help with cost-of-living pressures.

I am also very concerned over the impact the expanded ULEZ would have on key workers and the emergency services, given that many police officers and medical professionals in Bexley travel from Kent to serve our community. I have already received reports of nurses at local hospitals being negatively impacted by the latest ULEZ expansion, which leads to further workforce concerns for the hospitals, alongside the significant impact on patients and visitors to the hospitals, with no exemption in your plans to blue badge holders or older people.

Bexley and outer London boroughs do not have the same transport options and connectivity as Central London, for example there is no underground in Bexley. This duplication and 'one size fits all' policy is extremely unfair on outer London communities who often have no other option but to travel to work, school or visit family via car or van. This reflects the lack of consideration and attention you apply to outer London areas and the unique differences to inner London.



Whilst I believe that action must be taken to tackle pollution, there is also no clear evidence that the expansion of ULEZ will improve air quality in outer London boroughs like Bexley, which has been demonstrated by Transport for London's own figures.

The many millions of taxpayers' money required to be spent on installing cameras for the expanded ULEZ could clearly be better used to improve air quality. For example, by introducing a properly funded scrappage scheme and installing more electric vehicle charging points which would help drivers make the switch to lower emission vehicles rather than penalising drivers of older cars. This significant amount of money could also be better used if it was invested in improving public transport in Greater London, particularly at a time when you are implementing policies that will have a negative impact on air quality and cleaner methods of transport, such as removing children's cycle training funding in Bexley and cutting bus services across London. There should also be a review into the impact of your road closures on increasing traffic and potentially emissions across London, which is clearly at odds with your other plans, such as the Silvertown Tunnel.

I would also like to express my concern over future proposals for road user charges, which appear to be part of your plans but haven't been transparently explained, and the potential of ULEZ standards being tightened so that more vehicles will be included in this greenwashed tax raid on local drivers once the cameras are installed.

Lastly, I would like to express my strong concern over the consultation and rushed nature of these plans. There is a clear bias in the consultation with the survey questions being structured in a way that elicits support for the scheme instead of allowing respondents to record their opposition and outline the impact the proposals will have on them. The consultation is therefore likely to produce an unreflective and unfounded support for the proposals. The proposals have also been rushed with a lack of reasonable notice given to Londoners to prepare for the change which exacerbates the impact of the proposals. There has been no cost benefit analysis conducted for the proposal with little detail of the cost, revenue, economic impact and environmental benefits of the plans.

Overall, there is no clear evidence that the expanded ULEZ will improve air quality in Greater London and Bexley. On the contrary, these plans are yet another attack on outer London boroughs and a way to fill the black hole you have made in Transport for London's finances, despite £5 billion of bailouts from central government and an 8.8% increase in your share of Londoners' council taxes. I would therefore urge you to rethink the proposals to expand ULEZ and to listen to the concerns of people in Greater London areas such as Bexley.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Louie French'.

Louie French MP
Member of Parliament for Old Bexley and Sidcup