

St Albans School bus and coach Safety Report

APRA members would very much favour exclusion of heavy commercial traffic from the narrow streets of the Conservation Area between the cathedral and Verulam Road (notwithstanding access for emergency services). Buses and coaches serving St Albans School are a major part of this problem due to their size (double-decker buses and touring coaches) and the scale and frequency of operations (at least ten, and 2 to 3 times daily). The School has attempted to improve previous bad relations with neighbours in recent years through regular meetings with representatives of local residents associations and has declared the intention of reducing the size and number of heavy vehicles, but we feel that this process appears to have stalled.

The safety concerns raised in the private action by Mr Keenan are shared by APRA committee and we emphasize that the safety of pedestrians and other road users is equally at risk as that of pupils. Other aspects that we have often stressed in the past are:

1. The dangers of extreme traffic congestion during the School drop-off pick-up, exacerbated by vehicles stopping or waiting outside permitted areas. This would certainly be relieved by the alternatives proposed, even if only partially implemented.
2. The associated pollution caused by such intensive movement of large diesel-powered vehicles. Some progress has been made with engines switched off while waiting, although idling still occurs (and is cumulative over the extended periods of both drop-off and pick-up) – we also note that it worsens significantly in cold weather when engines are used for vehicle heating. Private vehicles waiting for pupils at the end of the school day are just as problematic: both the School and Council Parking Wardens should be much more effective in preventing this.
3. Car parking for residents, tourists and local shoppers (e.g., in George Street) is also severely restricted at these times.

Thus we support and endorse the initiative to move School buses and coaches into more varied locations as advocated in Peter Brett's report. We hope that this can be considered through logical and respectful exchange of points of view and we very much want to see the continuance of amicable dialogue between the School and local residents. It is in everyone's interest to work towards a sustainable long-term solution which will benefit both the School and residents by reducing safety risks, congestion and pollution

Robert Pankhurst
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