

Response from London Cycling Campaign to the Baker Street two-way proposals



July 2015

London Cycling Campaign is a charity with more than 40,000 supporters of whom 12,000 are full members. We speak up on behalf of everyone who cycles, or wants to cycle, in Greater London. Our aim is for London to be a world class cycling city. Founded in 1978, our organisation campaigns for every street in the city to be cycle friendly so millions more Londoners, whatever the age or ability, can enjoy the benefits of cycling, helping to create a cleaner, healthier and less congested capital.

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the proposed Baker Street two-way project, and the stated aim to reduce the dominance of traffic along Baker Street and Gloucester Place. However, we share Westminster Cycling Campaign's concerns that the proposals do not include a significant reduction in motor traffic capacity, and we have serious concerns that the plans will not offer the safe and inviting space for cycling that is needed at this location. Reducing capacity for motor traffic would enable safe cycling provision to be created, and make Baker Street a better place to live, work and shop – an objective which we do not believe can be delivered without a substantial reduction in motor traffic volumes. Improving Baker Street for pedestrians and cyclists would also benefit business: European cities that make it easier for people to travel by bike or on foot have proved to be more economically competitive and offer a better quality of life for their residents. Research commissioned by Living Streets found that making places better for walking and cycling can boost footfall and trading by up to 40%.¹

Baker Street

As this is a Mayor-funded scheme on the Strategic Road Network, we expect any scheme to achieve a Cycling Level of Service of 70+ with no critical failures. We share Westminster Cycling Campaign's concerns, however that there will be only a small improvement in the Cycling Level of Service from a very low level without suitable measures to address the following issues.

Junctions

Junctions along the route do not offer safe space for cycling. We are seriously concerned by the continuing risk of collision between cyclists proceeding straight ahead and other vehicles turning left at junctions for both cyclists riding along side streets as well as along Baker Street itself. The proposed Advanced Stop Lines along Baker Street do not provide an adequate solution as they do not eliminate the risk cyclists being hit by turning motor vehicles – and they do nothing to help cyclists arriving at the junction when traffic lights are green. Their effectiveness will also be limited by the lack of lead-in lanes. It will also be difficult for southbound cyclists in turning right from Baker Street at most junctions: it will be necessary to take the outside lane to do this.

¹ Living Streets, *the Pedestrian Pound: the business case for better streets and places*

Bus stops and stopping or parked vehicles

There is further risk of collision when cyclists pass buses at stops and other vehicles stopped at the kerb at the times and places they are allowed to do so. This risk occurs not only when the vehicles concerned are pulling in and out from the kerb but also when cyclists are pulling out to pass them. In the northbound direction, it is unclear whether there is enough space for cyclists – and indeed any vehicles – to pass buses in safety at most stops.

Volume of motor traffic

The overall volume of traffic is likely to remain above 10,000 motor passenger car units (PCUs) per day. The London Cycling Campaign believes that cyclists should not have to mix with motor traffic above 2000 PCUs per day, meaning that for this level of traffic segregated cycle tracks and separate phases at traffic lanes are required. A significant proportion of the traffic with which cyclists will have to mix will be large vehicles – buses, coaches and lorries.

Cycling access

Westbound cyclists will still be unable to ride across the north side of Portman Square. If they could, it would form part of a useful quiet route along Fitzhardinge Street and Upper Berkeley Street.

Gloucester Place

We share Westminster Cycling Campaign's concerns that, in choosing which original option to take forward, Westminster decided not to pursue Option C (full cycle segregation with 2m cycle lanes in each direction and separate control for cyclists at junctions), which achieved the highest Cycling Level of Service. Instead it chose Option D (wide mandatory cycle lanes).

Of even greater concern, the chosen option scored only 27 out of 48 for safety, compared with 45 for Option C. These figures are taken from SKM Colin Buchanan's Feasibility Report.

As this is a Mayor-funded scheme on the Strategic Road Network, we expect any scheme to achieve a Cycling Level of Service of 70+ with no critical failures. Only Option C reached that level.

The following issues illuminate the need to offer cyclists more protection on links and through junctions on Gloucester Place.

Junctions

Junctions along the route do not offer safe space for cycling. We are seriously concerned by the continuing risk of collision between cyclists proceeding straight ahead and other vehicles turning left at junctions for both cyclists riding along side streets as well as along Gloucester Place itself. The proposed Advanced Stop Lines along Gloucester Place do not provide an adequate solution as they do not eliminate the risk cyclists being hit by turning motor vehicles – and they do nothing to help cyclists arriving at the junction when traffic lights are green. It will also be difficult for northbound cyclists to turn right from Gloucester Place at most junctions: it will be necessary to take the outside lane to do this. It will be particularly difficult for northbound cyclists turning right from Gloucester Place from a left-hand lane at Ivor Place towards Regent's Park. This junction is not signal-controlled.

We support Westminster Cycling Campaign's suggested alternative route to Regent's Park via Melcombe Street.

Quality and operation of cycle lanes

There is a serious lack of continuity, especially in the northbound direction: bus stops and several blocks of car parking interrupt the cycle lane. This means that there is the risk of collision when cyclists pass buses at stops and other vehicles parked at the kerb on the sections where parking is allowed. This risk occurs not only when the vehicles concerned are pulling in and out from the kerb but also when cyclists are pulling out to pass them. There is also the danger of opening doors. Although this is mainly a problem northbound, it also occurs southbound in the section north of Marylebone Road.

We are seriously concerned that some of the mandatory cycle lanes will be in effect only between certain times. This means that, at other times, cyclists will have to share quite a narrow traffic lane with motor vehicles. As well as being intimidating for less experienced cyclists, this is likely to cause delay and frustration to following motorists who are unable safely to overtake a cyclist.

We do not believe that painted cycle lanes will not offer cyclists enough protection from the anticipated volume and speed of other traffic. The overall volume of traffic is likely to remain above 15,000 motor PCUs per day. We do not believe that cyclists should have to mix with motor traffic above 2000 PCUs per day, meaning that for this level of traffic segregated cycle tracks and separate phases at traffic lanes are required. A significant proportion of the traffic with which cyclists will have to mix at junctions and on links without mandatory cycle lanes is likely to be large vehicles – coaches and lorries.

Cyclists will still feel that they are in conflict with motor vehicles at junctions and on links where there is no mandatory cycle lane.

Other Locations

We welcome the proposal to allow cyclists to enter Regent's Park at Clarence Gate. However, we note that cyclists entering the park are not able to turn right along the Outer Circle in an anticlockwise direction. This severely limits the value of the proposed scheme. We support Westminster Cycling Campaign's recommendation to modify the design to allow this manoeuvre.

We also welcome the proposal to allow southbound cyclists to turn right from Park Road into Rossmore Road. Cyclists should also be permitted to turn into Taunton Place.

We would welcome the opportunity to input into revised proposals which address our concerns outlined above and offer safe space for cycling and walking.

London Cycling Campaign