

## **London Cycling Campaign**

13 June 2017

### **Westminster Oxford Street**

<https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/roads/oxford-street/>

This consultation response is on behalf of the London Cycling Campaign (LCC), the capital's leading cycling organisation with more than 12,000 members and 30,000 supporters. We welcome the opportunity to comment on these proposals.

Overall, LCC wishes to see the maximum possible transformational change to this iconic street to make it an exemplar of the Mayor's new Healthy Streets approach. This is vital, given current unsatisfactory conditions, such as congestion and high levels of air pollution and the likely future exacerbation of these with developments such as the arrival of the Elizabeth Line.

The best result would be for motor vehicle traffic to be completely removed at all hours from the street, with major public realm interventions to dramatically improve the street for pedestrians, businesses and those cycling in the area – reducing air pollution and creating a landmark destination fit for the future.

Whatever the precise solution adopted, that transformation is only likely to be successful if the following issues are fully addressed:

#### **High quality east-west route(s)**

Cycling numbers on Oxford Street itself are fairly low currently. But they are much higher to the east. And there is clear evidence those cycling in the area currently divert away from Oxford Street to avoid it. There is high latent demand to cycle through the area and to destinations on and very near Oxford Street too.

Therefore a direct and very high-quality route for commuters must be provided. If this is not provided many people already cycling in the area will divert to use Oxford Street, regardless of a lack of appropriate cycling facilities on the street – as it will offer better cycling conditions than current alternatives. The solution would be to guarantee very high-quality, direct and high-capacity east-west cycling routes as part of the scheme.

It is likely that siting such a route in parallel nearby, rather than along Oxford Street itself, will enable the most transformational scheme; it would be the easiest way to avoid those commuting by cycle from interacting with large numbers of pedestrians in the evening peak. However, if it is not possible to provide a sufficiently high-quality, direct and high-capacity route very close nearby, then Oxford Street must be considered for that route – particularly if carriageway is left in place for deliveries, or for use outside scheme operating hours. This would require careful design to reduce the risk of collision between people walking and cycling.

Any parallel route will need to be:

- Very close nearby (<200m away)

- Very direct, with few deviations from desire line
- Very high quality (TfL Cycling Level of Service score >70%, no “critical fails”), with all junctions treated to be appropriately safe and comfortable, with priority given to cycle flows
- Feature traffic volume and speed restriction for motor vehicles to ensure low flows (<2,000PCUs, 20mph or less) along the entire route and/or segregated space for cycling
- Feature sufficient capacity to carry current cycling flows through the area plus a high proportion of future potential growth

If the option to create a high quality cycling route parallel to (rather than on) Oxford Street is adopted then cycling access to Oxford Street should be designed in. This will ensure that shops and businesses on Oxford Street are easily accessible by cycle, and that the street can be crossed safely while cycling. This is particularly important to the elderly, those cycling with children or heavy loads, and for those cycling with mobility impairments. High-quality cycle parking should therefore also be designed into the scheme – with secure provision for business visitors and commuters in the area and to offices above Oxford Street, as well as appropriate provision of on-street stands and hire docks on and near Oxford Street – to facilitate cycling and leisure shopping journeys.

### **North-south linkages for cycling**

There are several cycling schemes already planned in the area. And there will be many people cycling who want access to Oxford Street and the immediate surrounds, or to cross Oxford Street safely to get from one area to another, while cycling. For this reason, it’s imperative that north-south linkages across Oxford Street are improved for cycling – with particular emphasis placed on current or planned schemes and safer and more comfortable junctions.

### **Improvements across the area**

Whatever design moves forward on Oxford Street it will likely mean major changes to traffic flows in the surrounding areas. This must not make walking or cycling worse in those areas.

The Oxford Street scheme should be brought forward in parallel with further schemes to appropriately treat the areas surrounding Oxford Street by restricting and reducing motor vehicle movements, speed and aggressive driving (removing through traffic, for instance, using “modal filter cells”). This will ensure that the pollution, noise and collisions currently suffered on Oxford Street aren’t simply displaced to other, nearby streets that already suffer high volumes and speeds of motor vehicle traffic, poor air quality and congestion.

Soho and Bloomsbury, as well as other neighbouring areas, already exhibit high cycling and walking volumes. Narrow pavements, difficult junctions and high motor traffic speeds and volumes are the norm in these areas, however, with very little cycling provision – people walk and cycle here despite the conditions, and there is potential for high growth in these active travel modes in these areas, and not just on Oxford Street. Schemes to improve conditions in these areas, rather than just maintain them, could help ensure parallel and north-south cycling routes are sufficiently high-quality.

Bus, taxi, and delivery access routes across the area also need to be considered very carefully. A large number of people will still travel to and within the Oxford Street area by bus and there is an opportunity with the Oxford Street scheme to implement radical changes to maximise the efficiency

of the central London/ West End bus network – for instance, replacing through London routes with a network of low emissions, smaller buses operating in central London only, and connecting to traditional bus routes at the periphery.

Similarly, taxi access to key locations obviously should be carefully planned – but the unfettered access of through routes by taxis in areas such as Soho must be designed out, to ensure taxi access is retained, but that taxi movements do not dominate the areas around Oxford Street and the roads crossing it.

Smarter ways of managing deliveries, including “consolidation” and use of e-cargo bikes and smaller electric vans for the “last mile” should also be urgently considered to ensure the needs of businesses are met, at the same time as motor vehicle volumes and speeds are reduced across the area.

#### **General points about cycling schemes:**

- LCC advocates that schemes must be designed to accommodate growth in cycling. Providing space for cycling is a more efficient use of road space than providing space for driving private motor vehicles, particularly for journeys of 5km or less. In terms of providing maximum efficiency for space and energy use, walking, cycling, then public transport should take priority over private motor vehicle movements.
- As demonstrated by the success of recent Cycle Superhighways and mini-Holland projects, people cycle when they feel safe. For cycling to become the norm for everyday journeys, a network of high-quality, direct routes is required to/from all key destinations and residential areas in an area. These routes should physically separate cycling flows from high volumes and/or speeds of motor vehicle traffic on main roads and/or use appropriately calm and quiet streets (that feature below 2,000 PCUs daily traffic volumes and 20mph speeds). Schemes should be planned, designed and implemented to maximise potential to increase journeys – with links to nearby amenities, residential centres, transport hubs considered from the outset.
- Spending money on cycling infrastructure has been shown to dramatically boost health outcomes in an area. Spending on cycling schemes outranks all other transport modes for return on investment according to the DfT (<http://bit.ly/dftstudy>) . All street redevelopments must score highly on TfL’s “Healthy Streets” checklist for both walking and cycling so as to make them places where people readily chose to cycle.
- LCC wants, as a condition of TfL funding, all highway development to be designed to London Cycling Design Standards (LCDS), with a Cycling Level of Service (CLOS) rating of 70% or above, with all “Critical Fails” eliminated.
- All schemes should be designed to enable people of all ages and abilities to cycle, not just for the current narrow demographic that often characterises cycling in London.