

Westminster Strand/Aldwych

11 March 2019

<https://strandaldwych.org/>

About the London Cycling Campaign

London Cycling Campaign (LCC) is a charity with more than 20,000 supporters of whom over 11,000 are fully paid-up members. We speak up on behalf of everyone who cycles or wants to cycle in Greater London; and we speak up for a greener, healthier, happier and better-connected capital.

This response was developed with input from LCC's borough groups.

General comments on this scheme:

These proposals are opposed.

The principle of removing through motor traffic from The Strand in this area is supported. However, this scheme risks locking in motor traffic dominance on Aldwych and ensuring cycling in this area remains an utterly hostile, dangerous experience for decades.

Specific points on this scheme:

- The scheme documents are unclear and contradictory with regard both to parking/loading and provision for cycling. It is difficult to assess the scheme fully from the documents provided.
- The same is true of the cycling routes proposed, which required further questions to Westminster Council officers to clarify the proposals. As far as we can best assess, the scheme does not propose to ban cycling from The Strand here, but to access the scheme from, for instance Waterloo Bridge riding east, one must cross to Wellington Street, then wait for a "toucan" crossing (with space shared with pedestrians) to ride back nearly on oneself towards The Strand, then ride into and through pedestrian priority space likely to be thronging with pedestrians, then into carriageway and then out of the scheme via another toucan. Officers replied to concerns regarding this arrangement as follows: "In terms of the route through the public space on Strand, we believe that this will not be a key commuter route for cyclists and so it is not proposed to be designed as such. For this reason, we propose a Pedestrian and Cyclist Zone accessed at each end using a shared use footway. This means that cyclists will be permitted to cycle into and through the area, but priority will be for pedestrians. Cyclists will need to cycle with care, and so may find it more comfortable to dismount and walk with their bike. This same principle is to be applied at the signal controlled crossings each end of Strand (at Aldwych/Lancaster Place and Aldwych/Arundel Street junctions). The potential conflict between pedestrians and cyclists, especially during busy periods of the day, will mean that it might be more convenient and comfortable for cyclists to dismount and walk with their bike over the crossings." Similarly Norman Rourke Pryme's Strand Aldwych

Project TNO7 Scheme Design Summary document, provided as part of the consultation

(https://strandaldwych.org/assets/Documents/36fe7d3051/TRAFFIC_NRP_Strand-Aldwych_Scheme-Design-Summary_V2.2_Consulation.pdf) says in point 4.4.4. “The space has not been designed to facilitate cyclists to use it as a through route, as this tends to be associated with higher than average cycling speeds. Due to the anticipated high number of pedestrians using the public space, a conflict between users is not desirable.”

- This is an area with a large number of existing trips, with a poor safety record, and is on one of the highest potential corridors for future cycling. The midpoint of The Strand section south of Aldwych saw over 2,500 cycle journeys along it according to the DfT in 2014. In 2012, Aldwych just west of Drury Lane saw 2,372 and in 2016 nearly 1,800 cycle journeys were counted on Aldwych just east of Melbourne Place. This indicates that a significant proportion of those cycling in the area travel along the entire east-west length of the scheme. This tallies with observations LCC staff have made while flying repeatedly at the north end of the bridge.
- The scheme lies directly on one of the highest potential corridors for cycling growth identified in TfL’s Strategic Cycling Analysis running from Marble Arch, through Soho and on towards Bank.
- Immediately to the north (Holborn gyratory, Camden Liveable Neighbourhood scheme) east (Fleet Street, City of London core cycling network phase 2) and south (Waterloo roundabout, TfL) of the scheme, large-scale changes are planned to improve conditions for cycling – the likely result will be even more people cycling into, out of and through this area. The area to the north east of the scheme is also highlighted in TfL’s Strategic Cycling Analysis as a zone of “highest cycle demand & growth” while the scheme is ringed by zones of “highest cycle demand”. Again, the scheme is in one of the parts of London most crucial to enable safe, comfortable cycling in, to and through.
- Aldwych and The Strand in this section featured numerous fatal or serious collisions for those cycling here in the last five years (six serious, one fatal directly on or near junction, 2013-17). Conditions here are currently dangerous and hostile for cycling.
- Given high flows through the scheme already and given the very high potential to grow those flows, given the Mayor’s Transport Strategy and Westminster’s own policies and ambition to grow cycling and reduce car use, then it is imperative that this scheme delivers an east-west route for cycling that both makes current cycling flows far safer and enables far more people to cycle here (the scheme should also ideally further improve the north-south route already available here, see below).
- This scheme asks those cycling to do one of two things:
Either cycle around Aldwych in four lanes of two-way motor traffic, and sandwiched between moving traffic and stationary and often large vehicles at bus stops, loading bays, parking bays etc. in both directions, with “Advanced Stop Lines” as the only

cycle infrastructure here, with several junctions facing significant “hook” risks. And likely having to stop at four signalised junctions.

Or mix with large numbers of pedestrians and those enjoying the new plaza on The Strand, and either ride on pavement or against buses to then reach a toucan crossing at the far end of the scheme going eastward etc.

- Proposals for cycling on Aldwych in the scheme proposed are poor, which will result in large numbers riding in the proposed pedestrian areas. This will lead to conflict as The Strand will be preferable to delays at lights and hostile motor traffic to many cycling. When complaints arising from conflict occur, one potential result could be that Westminster Council bans cycling from The Strand, leaving Aldwych under the current proposals as the sole cycle route into, out of, or through the scheme area – and one that remains hostile and dangerous.
- There is scope to provide continuous, protected, cycle tracks through consolidation of parking (including bus stands, pay-by-phone bays, diplomatic bays etc.) and a small reduction in motor vehicle capacity, in both directions around Aldwych, with appropriate junction treatments too. Such an approach would also ensure the scheme was more beneficial to the amenity of those walking, working, studying etc. on Aldwych, with motor traffic further from building frontages etc. Again, this would be more aligned with Westminster’s own official policies on road danger reduction, cycling etc. and with the Mayor’s Transport Strategy and Vision Zero.
- Covent Garden and Soho should become “low traffic neighbourhoods”. This would prevent traffic displacement from the scheme, which we understand (from officers during consultation event) was one of the reasons why cycling infrastructure on Aldwych has not been provided, and such an approach would enhance Soho and Covent Garden. It is our contention that a) given the above, safe cycling should be a non-negotiable for this scheme/area and b) that the answer to issues arising out of schemes such as this is not to fail to provide safe cycling, but to mitigate displacement of traffic while providing safe cycling (and walking). Covent Garden and Soho have both long been recognised to carry far too much through motor traffic – and should be considered for further “low traffic neighbourhoods” interventions, restricting such traffic from passing easily through the areas. Without such measures, and the political will to deliver them, motor traffic in central London will remain, as at present, heavily congested, and a huge cause of inactivity, climate-changing emissions, road danger and associated loss of life etc. In the context of this scheme, further restrictions to streets such as Drury Lane and Bow Street for motor traffic could mitigate potential displacement. And such approaches could also enable simpler signals on Aldwych, positively impacting the scheme also. Given approximately 70% of households in the wards around the scheme have no access to a motor vehicle (2011 Census), such moves are also unlikely to impact on residents significantly (as access for necessary servicing, resident vehicles etc. is retained in such approaches).
- Even disregarding the strong arguments on cycling facilities, the current scheme will result on Aldwych becoming even more congested, polluted and less pleasant than it

was before. Kingsway also may well be worsened too. This will reduce the amenity and overall benefit of the scheme.

- On a more detailed level, the proposals to link from The Strand to Cycle Superhighway CS3 do not appear to be of high-enough quality, again, to enable safe cycling to and from the scheme area to this high-quality facility. Nor does the scheme link appropriately to Waterloo Bridge. And there remains an urgent need for safe cycling across the bridge in a manner that corresponds with TfL's proposals for Waterloo roundabout – this means both cycle tracks across the bridge, but further work to the junction at Lancaster Place (and taking in the crossing in both directions from Wellington Street also). Similarly, The Strand west of this location remains deeply hostile for cycling (and walking), as does Kingsway to the north.
- The scheme also means that while students and staff walking and cycling to King's College sites benefit, there is nothing to help those cycling reach the LSE sites in Houghton Street etc.
- Whatever happens with Aldwych, cycling should not be banned on The Strand – to ensure those accessing the new plaza, King's College, Somerset House etc. can do so by cycling.

General points about infrastructure schemes:

- The Mayor's Transport Strategy relies on a growth in cycle trips to keep London moving. This means infrastructure 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 are key.
- As demonstrated by the success of recent Cycle Superhighways and mini-Holland projects etc., people cycle when they feel safe. For cycling to become mainstream, a network of high-quality, direct routes separate from high volumes and/or speeds of motor vehicle traffic is required to/from all key destinations and residential areas in an area. 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 a DfT study. Schemes which promote cycling meet TfL's "Healthy Streets" checklist. A healthy street is one where people choose to cycle.
- All schemes should be designed to enable people of all ages and abilities to cycle, including disabled people.

- Evidence from TfL and from many schemes in London, the UK and worldwide shows the economic benefits, including to businesses, to be found from enabling a wider range of people to cycle more. Further evidence shows how cycling schemes also benefit air quality and reduce climate changing emissions, as well as improving resident health outcomes and reducing inactivity, as mentioned above.
- LCC wants, as a condition of funding, all highway development designed to London Cycling Design Standards (LCDS), with a Cycling Level of Service (CLOS) rating of 70 or above, with all “critical issues” eliminated. Above 2,000 Passenger Car Unit (PCUs) motor vehicle movements per day, or 20mph motor traffic speeds, cycling should be physically separated from motor traffic.