

London Cycling Campaign Consultation Response to the West End Project

24 July 2014



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.

London Cycling Campaign welcomes the opportunity to present our views on the plans for revising the road layout in the West End to reduce congestion and pollution on the road network while accommodating the dramatic increase in pedestrian movements generated by the new Crossrail Tottenham Court Road station.

We note that Camden Council has set a target for 8% of all resident's trips to be by cycle by 2025-6. This is more than double the most recent measure of cycling in the Borough. We urge the Council to be more ambitious and recognise that cycling is the most efficient choice for the majority of non-walk trips.

London Cycling Campaign is committed to lobby for 'safe and inviting' cycling environments that do not compel cyclists to share space with high speed or high volume motor traffic.

We approve Camden Council's overall vision for the West End with the reallocation of carriageway space for walking, cycling, green areas and new public space on Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street and for fewer buses on New Oxford Street.

We welcome the increased permeability planned for cyclists in the area through two-way access to many side streets as well as on Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street. These are important for the two planned east-west Quietways.

However, the West End Project plans do not provide adequate space for cycling. On neither the planned north-south routes is there sufficient protection from motor traffic for people who cycle. Although the 2000 people who currently cycle daily in Tottenham Court Road may experience a faster and more comfortable journey the impact of 900 buses per day on TCR in each direction will do very little to encourage new cyclists.

We note that during the construction phase of the Crossrail projects cycling use has increased in the area while travel by all other modes has declined. We expect this increase in cycling to continue. It will be further stimulated by new destinations being developed on both north-south routes as the construction barriers are removed.

During the consultation period many people who currently cycle in the West End commented on the negative experience of cycling on roads with high bus flows. People experience fear and intimidation

by being in close proximity with large vehicles and are deterred from stopping or shopping by the desire to get through safely. Even more importantly, people who do not currently cycle through the area are not attracted by what is currently on offer, especially those who are seeking a safe route for family cycling to and from the centre of London.

The proposed lightly-segregated cycle lanes in Gower Street at 1.5 metres wide are not up to the current minimum standard. Anything less than 2 metres wide would not allow people on bikes to pass each other and would encourage faster cyclists to risk riding in the main carriageway. While the narrower protected space may appear attractive to new users, it will not be adequate to cater for them as well as the current 1700 people who cycle daily in Gower Street.

London Cycling Campaign notes the adoption of a 20 mph speed limit on all of Camden's roads in the area. We consider this to be too high if it is planned to allow cycle and bus traffic to mix on Tottenham Court Road and provide a safe, attractive environment for the four-fold increase in pedestrian traffic. In line with best European practice this street should be engineered to maximum design speed of 15 mph.

What needs to be improved

In order to give our support to the West End Project we would expect all of the following seven criteria to be met:

- A minimum of 4 metres width of "protected space for cycling" in either Gower Street or Tottenham Court Road. This could be provided in one of the following ways:
- filtering of Gower Street so as to eliminate all through motor traffic
- a pair of one-way two metre wide protected cycle tracks in Gower Street - Bloomsbury Way - Shaftesbury Avenue, for example implemented as stepped cycle tracks. Our survey suggests there is sufficient width for this arrangement and it would facilitate implementation of a new crossing over Euston Road to and from North Gower Street.
- a pair of one-way two-metre wide protected cycle tracks in Tottenham Court Road, for example with island bus stops or a wide protected median track.

We believe that the provision of one of the above alternatives will increase cycling numbers to a level where it may become politically feasible to reallocate further road space to people using cycles.

- The restrictions on the end-to-end access to Tottenham Court Road and the local access cross routes need to be backed up by appropriate filtering so that:
- any additional motor flow on Tottenham Court Road is due to truly local traffic. No motor vehicle rat-running should be possible via the side streets such as Howland Street to Marble Arch.
- the motor vehicles that would otherwise use Tottenham Court Road or Gower Street are not redistributed onto roads on the proposed Central London Cycle Grid routes or on to what should be quiet local streets with a view to keeping flows below 2000 pcus per day; including:
- GNS1: Gordon Street, Malet Street, Montague Place
- GEW5: Howland Street, Torrington Place

- GEW6 (also QW38): Bedford Square (N), Russell Square
- local streets: Cleveland Street, Charlotte Street.
- Under no circumstances could we support the scheme were the restrictions on access to Tottenham Court Road for taxis to be relaxed.
- Tottenham Court Road to be two-way for buses and cyclists only all hours, every day, with exceptions for loading at those premises without rear access between 11pm and 7am. Vehicles of 18 tons and over should apply for night time access using the normal London Lorry Control Scheme permit process.
- For the Seven Station Link (ie. the Tavistock - Torrington Route GEW5): the junction of Capper/Tottenham Court Road/Howland Street should be modified to allow this route to avoid TCR by using Huntley Street and Capper Street with a possibility of future two-way working in Howland Street
- All the major junctions on Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street down to and including Princes Circus to be designed to eliminate left hook collisions and to provide a direct and convenient route for cyclists. Endell Street will allow two way cycling but the current alignment to Endell Street is very poor. There should be a straight line for cycling between Shaftesbury Avenue and Endell Street that also integrates with the curved part of Shaftesbury Avenue and avoids turning conflicts.
- Cycle parking: the consultation documents just note "New cycle parking" but at the meeting on 30th June, Councillor Phil Jones said: "More cycle parking on side streets so as not to clutter up TCR". It is essential to provide cycle parking that is conveniently close to the many destinations in TCR and is visible and overlooked. This to include some cycle parking on the widened pavements in TCR.

London Cycling Campaign looks forward to working with Camden to achieve these essential enhancements to the West End Project.