

**The Camden (Torrington Place to Tavistock Square) Traffic Order**  
**PLANNING INSPECTORATE REFERENCE: DPI/X5210/17/8**  
**Camden Cycling Campaign**

Proof of evidence - Simon Munk, London Cycling Campaign

### **Introduction**

I am the Infrastructure Campaigner for the London Cycling Campaign (LCC). LCC is a charity with 12,000 members and over 30,000 supporters.

LCC supports Camden's proposals and ambitions for the Tavistock Place - Torrington Place scheme as proposed in the Consultation Leaflet.<sup>1</sup>

As Infrastructure Campaigner, my role is to campaign for physical infrastructure improvements for cycling in London. On the Tavistock Place trial scheme, this has involved liaising with infrastructure experts internally at LCC and the local borough group, providing advice to Camden Cycling Campaign and liaising with borough Councillors and officers over the scheme. I spoke publicly in favour of the scheme at the Camden Cabinet decision meeting, February 2017.

It is not for LCC to provide technical details of the scheme and its results – Camden Council has done a sterling job of that, including in its exhaustive officer's report. What I, on behalf of LCC, can provide is evidence on the benefits to the cycling community and evidence on the concerns of some of those opposed to the scheme.

### **Why the Tavistock Place scheme should be supported**

The scheme was needed and it works.

Over 1,000 cyclists an hour in peak used this route before the scheme went in: "Surveys in 2015 recorded 1,009 cyclists during the morning peak hour".<sup>2</sup> This means the route was already one of the more popular cycle routes in London. But existing narrow tracks were over capacity. This can be demonstrated by the fact the trial layout introduced double digit percentage growth in cycling journeys along the route.<sup>3</sup>

The current layout is also not just of benefit to those already cycling. With several other schemes coming to the area that would connect to the route, this would be likely to increase cycling participation beyond those who already cycle.

The scheme is set to connect directly to the Camden Council "West End Project" scheme at Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street and to the extension of the North-South Cycle Superhighway at Judd Street.

TfL's new Strategic Cycling Analysis has identified journeys currently done by motorised transport that are most likely to be potentially cycleable in the future. These "are predominantly short trips, with an average length of 3.15km."<sup>4</sup> The Tavistock Place route and its connections is then ideally placed to enable many people to switch motor vehicle journeys in Bloomsbury, the City and the West End, to cycling and walking journeys.

From Camden Council's monitoring, we can see the scheme has reduced pollution levels in the area<sup>3</sup>. And from the work of Lucy Saunders at TfL and City Hall and others we know any increase in cycling and walking journeys, particularly when those journeys were previously done

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<sup>1</sup> [Consultation Leaflet 2016](#). (Core Document CD6/9)

<sup>2</sup> Camden Council Experimental Traffic Order (Core Document CD6/4)

<sup>3</sup> Detailed information with the consultation 2016. (Core Document CD6/9)

<sup>4</sup> TfL's Strategic Cycling Analysis (Core Document CD2/10) Section 1.1.2.

by motor vehicle, is very beneficial for public health, tackling inactivity levels as well as pollution and other detrimental effects.<sup>5</sup>

### **Why some residents oppose Tavistock Place**

Some local residents (e.g. Bloomsbury Residents Action Group) oppose the scheme on the grounds of displaced traffic – and this appears to relate mostly to increased motor vehicle traffic on Judd Street. From Camden Council’s officer’s report it is clear some streets are suffering extra traffic. However, these rises are, in the context of overall traffic levels, not so severe that they should derail the scheme – rather, the reverse.<sup>6</sup>

Camden Council has an ongoing programme in the area of schemes designed to restrict through motor vehicle traffic and reduce traffic levels, for example, the schemes for Brunswick Square and at the Judd Street/Midland Road junction that have been through public consultation. Camden Council should also be encouraged to work with local residents on any other streets suffering increased traffic.

### **Alternative proposal of westbound motor vehicle flow**

Taxi drivers and the Imperial Hotels group appear primarily to seek to reverse the direction of motor vehicle travel from eastbound to westbound.

Reversing motor vehicle traffic flow would enable easier loading to the Imperial Hotel site on the route, and some believe would enable easier access to the Euston Station taxi rank. But based on the Camden officer’s report this approach would increase motor traffic along the route – increasing pollution and creating a barrier to more walking and cycling (walking and cycling rates tend to decrease as motor vehicle traffic increases and vice versa)<sup>7</sup>. It would also increase the amount of motor traffic turning across the cycle tracks into Gordon Street.

Imperial Hotels “wish to see a permanent solution which prioritises safety for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists while minimising congestion and improving air quality” (letter from Alex Walduck, Director, Imperial Hotels to Ashok Sinha, LCC, 3 August 2016). This is not what would happen with the westbound proposal.

### **Alternative proposal of reverting to bidirectional track and two-way traffic**

The pre-trial layout had two-way motor vehicle traffic and a “bidirectional” cycle track (two-way track on one side of the road).

Firstly, reverting to this layout would clearly, based on Camden’s officer’s report data, result in increased pollution and lower cycling rates. In reducing width available for both walking and cycling, and returning both to approximately what was available before, it is not unreasonable to expect walking and cycling levels to similarly reduce to approximately what they were before, given track capacity limitations that were already clearly evident in the morning and evening peaks.

On top of this, the cycle track would have to be, at most, the narrowest possible width recommended by TfL’s London Cycling Design Standards<sup>8</sup> – for a track that was already one of the more popular cycling routes in London.

Finally, of the schemes that have been proposed as alternatives, those that approximate the original layout fail to provide any detail on junction treatments. As the London Cycling Design Standards show, bidirectional cycle tracks suffer specific safety issues at junctions.

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<sup>5</sup> Healthy Streets Policy (Core Document CD2/3) – Chapter 2

<sup>6</sup> Consultation Report (Core Document CD6/2)

<sup>7</sup> International Cycling Infrastructure Best Practice Study (Core Document CD5/4)

<sup>8</sup> London Cycling Design Standards (Core Document CD2/12)

Junction design for bidirectional tracks is of paramount importance to avoid collisions as drivers are not necessarily expecting cyclists going against the dominant flow of motor vehicle traffic and on the “wrong” side of the road. Bidirectional tracks are commonly found to have increased collision numbers. And this was the case prior to the trial scheme on Tavistock Place.

None of the schemes proposed as alternatives that revert to a bidirectional track have provided appropriate and detailed junction designs to avoid risk of increased collisions.

It is my opinion that the alternative designs put forward have not appropriately considered track capacity or junction collision risks, and have primarily been advanced to enable easy taxi or resident access by motor vehicle through the area.