

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO THE CAMDEN (TORRINGTON PLACE TO TAVISTOCK PLACE) (PRESCRIBED ROUTES, WAITING AND LOADING RESTRICTIONS AND LOADING PLACES) TRAFFIC ORDER [2017]

STATEMENT OF CASE FROM TAMAR HOUSE RTM CO LTD, 13 TAVISTOCK PLACE FREEHOLD LTD AND SOME RESIDENTS AT 11 TAVISTOCK PLACE

Summary

1. These comments relate to three buildings on Tavistock Place containing about 60 flats but they probably apply to other residential buildings along the corridor as well as to hotels and other businesses. We are all greatly inconvenienced by the ban on loading and unloading and the difficulty of picking up and dropping off for cars. There are particular difficulties for people with disabilities. Prior to the trial, loading/unloading was much easier.

2. We have read Camden's Statement of Case of August 25 and agree that there is a need for better cycle tracks and air quality. We are not able to judge whether the scheme as a whole has delivered this or to assess displacement effects but we recognise that the corridor itself is now quieter and less polluted than before. However, inconveniences for people living or doing business on the corridor have not been recognised so this statement describes them. They will be explained further at the inquiry by Dr Peter Riach, a director of Tamar House RTM Company and a long-term resident of Tavistock Place. Our statement was approved by the directors of the companies managing two of the blocks and by a group of residents at 11 Tavistock Place who offered support but too late for their block directors to be consulted.

3. Although our proposals leave the cycle lanes intact, this should not be taken as support for the ETO. We are simply limiting our submission to the specific issue of vehicle access. We want people living along the corridor to be able to lead normal lives - for example, bringing home a large shop by car once a week, accessing taxis, taking delivery of materials/equipment for home maintenance, taking delivery of large purchases, making use of ever-expanding delivery services, moving house. These are surely reasonable expectations, for a group of people who are less likely than most to own cars and more dependent than most on delivery services and taxis.

Delivery/unloading problems

4. A word search of Camden's Statement of Case (the main document, not the annexes which we do not have electronically) shows cyclist (31), resident (10), disabled (6), with 'unloading/loading' and 'delivering' barely getting a mention except in the title of the ETO. But the ETO's ban on unloading and delivering outside our blocks is a real problem. The loading bay offered in Herbrand Street is too small and is often occupied for long periods by lorries which on their own more than fill the bay – Figs 1 and 2.



Fig 1



Fig 2

5. Sometimes, the space is occupied by ambulances because the parking area allocated to them is limited – Fig 3. We asked the London Ambulance Service to avoid parking in the unloading bay but sometimes the ambulances have no alternative. The ambulance station is one of the busiest in London – Fig 3 shows three of the station’s four ambulances. There is a small single yellow line parking area opposite the unloading bay but this is also often occupied.



Fig 3

6. The ambulance station is not going to move so more unloading space in Herbrand Street is not an option. But even if more unloading space could be found there, it would not be a solution. 11 and 13 Tavistock Place are on the other side of the street. Use house removal as a test. It is not reasonable to require furniture to cross a road to a removal van– Fig 4 – or to be trundled long distances down the street. There has to be a road layout which allows vans to unload and deliver on both sides of the street.



Fig 4.

7. Some road users ignore the unloading rules, of course. Fig 5 shows a daily delivery on the north site of Tavistock Place, the lorry parked for 10 minutes or so on the cycle track. It does this outside peak hours and causes no problems. One might say – why don’t residents simply do the same? But telling people to break the law is also not a solution.



Fig 5

8. Another less than ideal solution is to park in the car lane temporarily. Veolia's lorries do this when rubbish is collected. The dustmen dance across the cycle lanes, working as fast as possible so that the lorry can move on quickly, but there will still often be a build-up of traffic behind the lorry.

9. Herbrand Street unloading also uses road space inefficiently. A resident at 6 Tavistock Place had to empty a relative's house, bringing heavy crates by car. The front door of 6 Tavistock Place is about 50 yards from the unloading bay. Each unloading took about half an hour. Parked outside the front door the unloading would have taken 5 minutes and the car would have been off the road quickly and into an RCP car park.

10. Our concerns are not just about inconvenience. By making it more difficult for plumbers, electricians, builders, decorators, white goods servicing, carpet cleaners and many others to work in our blocks, the ETO pushes up the price of these services. A north side resident taking delivery of a barbecue was told that if it couldn't be delivered to the door a two man van would be needed at an extra charge of £60. A company quoting for the job shown in Fig 4 asked for photographs of the parking area and access before quoting a plainly silly price of £600. There are hidden costs in this scheme, which we, not cyclists, are paying.

Access to cars/taxis

11. Paragraph 5.10 of Camden's Statement of Case says that the scheme is *consistent with London Mayoral policies such as A City for all Londoners*. But in that policy the Mayor actually says (page 79):

I am fully committed to Dial-a-Ride (free door-to-door services to help disabled and elderly people who are unable to access other forms of transport when they need to travel). As the capital's iconic black cabs are fully accessible to disabled users, they are an extremely valuable resource, and I want to protect them - for example by opening up more bus lanes to black cabs and introducing an additional 100 taxi ranks.

12. Residents in our blocks cannot use dial-a-ride or other door to door services. A Tamar House resident is 92 and has regular outpatient appointments. To get to a hospital by taxi he now has to walk to Woburn Place, with considerable difficulty, and has to be dropped off in Herbrand Street

afterwards and walk back to 12 Tavistock Place. Before the ETO he could stand on the doorstep of the block and hail a passing taxi, and could be dropped off at the front door coming home. Herbrand Street is also the normal drop-off point for people taking taxis to the north side of Tavistock Place.

13. Another resident, who died before the ETO, was collected every day from Tamar House and taken to a day centre and brought home, helping him to continue living in his own home. This sort of care is now much more difficult to organise.

14. But the problems are not just for elderly and disabled people. Many residents here don't keep cars but they travel and need taxis to get their luggage to a station. Tourists stay in hotels on Tavistock Place. They come with heavy luggage and need to use taxis. We asked Camden about taxi access early in the trial and received this reply (email from torringontavistocktrial@camden.gov.uk on 31 March 2016):

I can confirm that under the experimental traffic order that is in place on Torrington Place / Tavistock Place, vehicles are permitted to pick-up / drop-off on the south side of the street. You are right that this would require drivers to stop in the cycle lane, but they are legally allowed to do this (whether they do it is a different matter). Some cyclists and other users of the street have asked that we provide wands along the southern cycle lane to increase the segregation between them and vehicles; however, we have not implemented this as the low barriers currently on the street allow vehicles to stop on the cycle lane, should they need to.

15. This may be the legal position but, as the answer accepts, the law is not observed. Cyclists will challenge parking on the tracks, for even a short time. Taxi drivers are reluctant to cross the orcas for fear of confrontation with cyclists.

16. Difficulties are magnified for people with disabilities who are having to find irregular solutions to the problems the ETO is causing.

- Until she died, the mother of a resident at 13 Tavistock Place visited from north London in a wheelchair, accompanied by a carer. A black cab with a ramp and fixing for a wheelchair would have cost £30-40 each way so she took a minicab. This invariably drove onto the north side pavement to unload, in order that the carer did not have to push the wheelchair across the road.

- We have seen a minibus delivering elderly people to the Camden Chinese Community Centre on the north side of Tavistock Place, parking on the south side of Tavistock Place but on a double yellow line to minimise shepherding to the Centre from the bus. It ought to be possible to park outside the Centre.

- The orcas are a hazard for anyone with poor sight. Last month a visitor to Tavistock Place with very poor mobility as well as poor sight was collected after dark by a car which parked temporarily on the car track while the visitor crossed the cycle track to reach the car. She very nearly fell over the orca and only steadied herself by grabbing the car door. Meanwhile, there were cars behind, honking, making her agitated and making tripping more likely.

17. We understand that orcas would be removed if the ETO becomes substantive. We would strongly support this. Kerbs and barriers should be kept to a minimum to improve access for wheelchairs, push chairs and motorised buggies. This would also make it easier for traffic to deal with blockages such as is shown in Fig 6 – an ambulance attending a patient on the north side of Tavistock Place. The traffic behind didn't know what to do – it only started to edge into the cycle track after several minutes.



Fig 6

Conclusion

18. To mitigate the effects of the ETO we propose the following:

- a. Outside peak hours (say 10am to 4 pm and after 7pm) parking to load and unload should be allowed on both sides of Tavistock Place for a defined period – we suggest 15 minutes.
- b. Picking up and dropping off by car, already legal, should continue but with street signs which make clear that this is allowed, along with loading/unloading as above.
- c. There should be a more space-efficient segregation of traffic. At present the barrier beside the old two way cycle track wastes half a metre of road width – see Fig 5.
- d. The orcas must be removed.
- e. There should be a 20mph speed limit on the corridor, for all vehicles including cyclists.

Statement of case approved by the Directors of 13 Tavistock Place Freehold Limited, Tamar House RTM Company Limited and residents of 11 Tavistock Place

8 September 2017