

# Gordon Mansions Residents Association

From: Clive Henderson, Chair, Gordon Mansions Residents Association

## STATEMENT OF CASE from Gordon Mansions Residents Association: September 2017

### Re: Public Inquiry for Camden's Torrington Place/Tavistock Place Traffic Order

#### The Camden (Torrington Place to Tavistock Place) (Prescribed Routes, Waiting and Loading Restrictions and Loading Places) Traffic Order [2017]

Planning Inspectorate Reference: DPI/X5210/17/8

1. Introduction:

I am making this Statement of Case on behalf of Gordon Mansions Residents Association (GMRA).

2. Location of Gordon Mansions:

Gordon Mansions consists of two blocks of flats (77 in total) that are located in Torrington Place at the junction with Huntley Street, and with many of the flats (including mine) overlooking Torrington Place. We are situated in the stretch of Torrington Place between Gower Street and Tottenham Court Road (i.e. the "western" section of the Torrington Place/Tavistock Place Corridor route).

3. GMRA's response to Camden's Torrington Place/Tavistock Place Traffic Order; and reasons for supporting the Traffic Order:

Our overriding reason for supporting the Traffic Order is because it will prevent the predicted 200% increase in traffic in Torrington Place when the Camden's West End Project (2-way Tottenham Court Road & 2-way Gower Street) is completed.

In response to Camden's Public Consultation in October 2016, and as stated in our covering letter of 20<sup>th</sup> October 2016, our main reasons for supporting this Traffic Order was because, in preventing the west-bound traffic from east of Gower Street into our part of Torrington Place (between Gower Street and Tottenham Court Road):

(a). there has been a very considerable reduction in traffic (compared with previously over many years), and thus reduction in pollution and noise in our part of Torrington Place. It has been much quieter and healthier for our residents (a long term benefit, for children and older people, both of whom whose health can be badly affected by pollution).

It has also benefitted the very large numbers of pedestrians and cyclists who use this part of Torrington Place.

(b). most importantly, and above all, this Traffic Order will prevent the predicted 200% increase in traffic in Torrington Place, when the West End Project (2-way Tottenham Court Road & 2-way Gower Street) is completed in 2018/2019.

4. Camden's West End Project; the "traffic trial", and the Torrington PI/Tavistock PI Project:

For us and the neighbouring blocks of flats and residents, the Torrington Place/Tavistock Place corridor proposals are inter-related with Camden's West End Project traffic scheme. Both these projects, and their impact, overlap in this "western" stretch of Torrington Place between Gower Street and Tottenham Court Road.

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Diary of events:

(a). West End Project consultation: 2014:

(1). GMRA strongly objected on several grounds to various aspects of the proposals that would be detrimental to residents and the residential amenity, and especially to the doubling of traffic volumes (from an already existing high 200 vehicles/hour to 400 vehicles/hour). We had a GMRA meeting, open to all residents, with Camden officers. GMRA's subsequently submitted its detailed letter of 10<sup>th</sup> August 2014 and petition, in response to Camden's consultation.

(2). GMRA's made a Deputation to Camden Council's Cabinet Meeting of 21<sup>st</sup> January 2015 to reiterate our objections, but cautiously welcomed the "traffic trial" (whereby traffic from east of Gower Street would be prevented entering the "western" section of Torrington Place), intended to mitigate the predicted 400 vehicles/hour in this part of Torrington Place.

(b). "Traffic trial" and Torrington PI/Tavistock PI Project.5. Pattern of traffic previously, now, and in future in Torrington Place ("western" section):

In our Proof of Evidence, I would like to set out the patterns of traffic, as well as the type of traffic, related to three time periods, which are summarised as follows:

(a). Previously (before 2014/"traffic trial"):

This part of Torrington Place already had a high volume of weekday daytime traffic of 200 vehicles/hour. This usually meant tail-backs along the street (in front of the residential) from Tottenham Court Road to Gower Street junctions. Traffic into this part of Torrington Place was the west-bound traffic from east of Gower Street, plus Gower Street traffic turning right into Torrington Place.

(b). Now/during "traffic trial":

Although the "traffic trial"/current Traffic Order has resulted in a very considerable reduction in traffic. More recently, there has been some increase in daytime traffic, which we think is partly due to people re-finding this route; and partly due to construction traffic due to the 3 or 4 on-going major construction sites in the immediate area.

(c). Future/Camden's West End Project (expected 2018/2019):

Nonetheless, the current reduction in traffic in Torrington Place is "deceptive" for the future. We think that much of the previous traffic volume will return, (and also that there is likely to be more commercial traffic).

This is because the current daytime traffic that comes up Tottenham Court Road to turn west along Howland Street, will not be able to do so, because the West End project will restrict Tottenham Court Road in the daytime Monday to Saturday to buses and cycles only; (even taxis will not be allowed). Thus, the "west bound" traffic, instead, will come up 2-way Gower Street, via Torrington Place, to go west along Howland Street. Thus, we think that traffic volumes could then approach the previous 200 vehicle/hour.

Thus, it can be seen that if traffic, in addition, is allowed to come again from east of Gower Street and across into this "western" section of Torrington Place, then the traffic volumes in this part of Torrington Place will be 400 vehicles/per hour.

Much of this is set out in our GMRA's letter of 10<sup>th</sup> August 2014, in response to Camden's consultation on the West End Project.

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6. Other aspects of both projects:

This part of Torrington Place ("western" section), and including the segregated cycle lane on both sides of the street, is common to/shared by both the West End Project and on Torrington Place/Tavistock Place Route. In both consultations, we raised and objected to other aspects of these schemes (in addition to the traffic volume implications) which affect residential amenity.

These included issues of access, setting-down and picking-up locations, and delivery bays.

7. Residential context of Torrington Pl/Huntley St/Ridgmount Gardens/Chenies Mews:

To appreciate the residential context, please see our Map Showing Residential, which shows the large Residential footprint and context in Torrington Place ("western" section) and the immediate side streets of Huntley Street, Ridgmount Gardens, and Chenies Mews.

It is made up of a series of blocks of residential flats of differing character. In addition, there are the terraced houses/flats (owned by UCH; with 3 used by a child cancer trust as a "home from home" during treatment) in Huntley Street next to Gordon Mansions; and the terraced houses & flats in Chenies Mews.

The large blocks of flats alone have 326 flats with an estimated population of over 1,000 people. Four of the blocks are owned by Camden: Gordon Mansions (2 blocks) on Torrington Place and Huntley Street; Woburn Mansions on Torrington Place; and Chenies Chambers on the corner of Huntley Street and Chenies Street.

This is not just a collection of flats. There is very much a community here. In Gordon Mansions itself there is a long established settled residential community here whose diversity very much reflects that of Fitzrovia/Bloomsbury, with a mix of tenancies (tenants & leaseholders), different income groups, a range of different cultural and ethnic groups, and including many families with young children and elderly people.

We estimate there are some 40 to 50 children under the age of 16 in Gordon Mansions.

A very high proportion of residents have lived for here for 20, 30, 40 and 50 years, reflecting the stability of the community here. Our block of flats could be considered the "ideal" thriving central urban community that everyone is wanting to encourage.

Thus, it is vital that the residential amenity is protected to enable this permanent residential community to continue to live here as a whole. If anything the amenity should be enhanced, but certainly not made very considerably worse by increased traffic volumes and thus increased noise and pollution if this Traffic Order does not go ahead.

8. Conclusion:

Although there are other aspects of both projects that we objected to, and have given cause for concern, our overriding reason for supporting the Traffic Order is because it will prevent the predicted 200% increase in traffic in Torrington Place when the Camden's West End Project (2-way Tottenham Court Road & 2-way Gower Street) is completed. We think that the clear benefit of not having the large increase in traffic compared with previously, (and thus not having the further increased pollution, noise and disruption), greatly outweighs the disadvantages.

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**List of documents/references:**

GMRA would like to submit the following documents (and/or relevant extracts from them) with our Proof of Evidence:

- (1). GMRA's letter of 20<sup>th</sup> October 2016, in response to Camden's Public Consultation on the Torrington Place/Tavistock Place route.
- (2). GMRA's Newsletter of October 2016 (item: "Traffic Routes; traffic trial).
- (3). GMRA's Map showing the residential in the vicinity of Torrington Place (between Gower Street and Tottenham Court Road).
- (4). GMRA's series of Maps showing the traffic routes and implications via Torrington Place (the "western" stretch between Gower Street and Tottenham Court Road):  
before/now/future:
  - (a). Prior to the 2016 "traffic trial".
  - (b). Currently.
  - (c). When the West End Project is implemented/completed 2018/2019.
- (5). GMRA's photograph showing degree of traffic in Torrington Place ("western" section) prior to 2014 and 2016.
- (6). Camden's Torrington Place/Tavistock Place Trial documents - relevant extracts.
- (7). Camden's West End Project documents - relevant extracts, including references to traffic numbers.
- (8). Re: Camden's West End Project: relevant extracts from:
  - GMRA's letter of 10<sup>th</sup> August 2014, in response to Camden's consultation; and GMRA's petition of August 2014.
  - GMRA's letter of 16<sup>th</sup> December 2014.
  - GMRA's Deputation to Camden Council's Cabinet Meeting of 21<sup>st</sup> January 2015.