

LB Camden – Consultation Response

Cycle Superhighway 11 (CS11) between Swiss Cottage and Central London

Introduction

The Council welcomes the opportunity to provide comment and feedback on the proposals for Cycle Superhighway 11 (CS11). CS11 is an ambitious project that seeks to improve conditions for existing cyclists and help make cycling attractive to users of other transport modes, in addition to improving health and reducing congestion. The Council shares this vision and welcomes Transport for London's commitment to providing a safe and attractive route that reduces conflict between motor vehicles and cyclists, whilst at the same time improving facilities for pedestrians. The Council backs the principle of CS11 and will make every effort to support Transport for London in delivering its objectives where they align with our own. However, we are concerned by some aspects of the scheme, in particular the potential impact of additional traffic flows on residential borough roads, and therefore propose that more work is done to address these issues. Investment in cycling infrastructure will encourage more people to cycle and reduce traffic congestion and overcrowding on public transport as the population of London expands. The biggest challenge in delivering on this vision is achieving the right balance between the competing demands for finite road space. This is a particular challenge on TLRN roads which are considered more appropriate for carrying high volumes of traffic. It is not possible to provide optimum solutions for all road users and inevitably, this will result in tough decisions about impacts on traffic capacity and delays to certain journeys. Camden's Transport Strategy prioritises walking, cycling and public transport above other road users and Camden would encourage TfL to adopt a similar approach.

On 15th February 2016, TfL provided the Council with the latest designs and updated modelling results relating to proposed changes on the CS11 route. This follows an extensive design process whereby Council officers have been included in development of the current proposals which are being consulted upon, although it is understood that the predicted impact on residential streets further away from the project area has been reported more recently. The consultation also includes some banned turns which again are a recent addition to make the junctions operate better, which has led to further predicted impact on residential streets.

Advantages

Camden officers have reviewed the material provided and discussed with me in my capacity as the Council's Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Transport and Planning, demonstrating the proposed changes to Swiss Cottage, Avenue Road and Regent's Park; highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of the scheme. Significant improvements have been noted such as: additional pedestrian crossings,

improvements for cyclists at a number of signalised junctions and a significantly improved public realm at Swiss Cottage due to the removal of the gyratory.

The improvements at Swiss Cottage are particularly important in seeking a better balance between the “place” function and the “movement” function at this important location. Swiss Cottage is currently an extremely unattractive and unpleasant road environment where traffic dominates and air pollution breaches safe limits. The Council strongly supports removal of the gyratory and reallocation of road space to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport in line with our transport strategy. This will help improve the road environment and reduce the impact of poor air quality on our residents. In addition, we strongly support the provision of a new strategic cycle route into central London to serve Camden residents, including the changes proposed on Avenue Road and the timed gate closures at Regent’s Park. We know that the current traffic arrangements facilitate excessive domination by motor vehicles and discourage people from choosing the healthier and more environmentally sustainable option of cycling. Provision of a safe and direct cycle route into central London will encourage more people to cycle, thereby relieving pressure on congested roads and public transport services. Our experience is that modal shift can be achieved by providing better cycling infrastructure and we have evidence from elsewhere in the borough of how provision of substantially segregated cycle routes encourages new individuals from previously under-represented groups to take up cycling.

Disadvantages

Unfortunately these improvements are accompanied by a number of disadvantages to the public highway that will require more work to be done to avoid unacceptable impacts on some Camden residents.

Traffic reassignment

One of the Council’s primary concerns for the scheme relates to the reassignment of traffic onto Borough roads, with the below locations (not exhaustive) being of particular concern;

Hampstead Heath area (West Heath Road, Pond Street, Agincourt Road, Fleet Road, Parkhill Road etc.): Traffic reassignment modelling predicts significant volumes of additional traffic using this area as a result of the proposals. The area is currently recognised by officers as being extremely sensitive in terms of traffic congestion surrounding the Royal Free Hospital, and any additional traffic flow could be detrimental to daily operations of the network. The Council is currently working on an area-based improvement scheme, funded by TfL, to remove an existing gyratory and ease congestion, although these plans are at a very early stage. Having considered in detail the impact on these streets, we cannot support the predicted traffic increases on this part of the network and ask that appropriate mitigation is proposed prior to the implementation of the CS11 scheme, should the scheme be

approved. The limitations on the modelling undertaken to date seems to stem from the traffic flows used by TfL, which differ from the traffic counts we have undertaken on some of our streets.

If real time traffic flows were used to validate the information used for the model, the predicted reassignment may change and we would therefore understand the impact more accurately in order to form an opinion. This may even mean less traffic reassigning to the streets noted; however equally this could indicate traffic reassigning to streets not mentioned in the modelling output. Residents as well as officers need to see the accurate reassignment information in order to fully understand how the project will affect them including the benefits it would yield in order for them to provide an informed opinion on the project.

Arkwright Road: The junction of Arkwright Road and Finchley Road is a particular concern for Council officers, as this area has been consistently highlighted as posing a risk for conflict by residents (including school children) as there are a number of schools on Arkwright Road itself, and nearby Fitzjohns Avenue. High volumes of traffic reassigned into this area are likely to result in queuing and increased pressure on the junction with Finchley Road. Camden officers have been informed that a pedestrian countdown unit is likely to be installed, however the Council has concerns that this is unlikely to mitigate the potential effect at this junction. Once the impact on Arkwright Road was made known, officers requested that this junction be investigated closely with a view to providing crossing facilities where currently they do not exist. This should include key locations on Arkwright Road and across Finchley Road on the southern arm of the junction. The Council suggests that formal east – west pedestrian crossings also be investigated, noting that the ability to provide such facilities is heavily impacted by site constraints.

Fairfax Road / Belsize Roundabout: Strategic modelling results have demonstrated that the proposed scheme is likely to result in significant reassignment of traffic into this area which could result in the feasibility of Camden's Quietway interventions at these locations being compromised. The proposed route runs from Fairhazel gardens, across Belsize roundabout and onto Loudon Road. The Council asks that TfL coordinate with Camden officers to ensure that proposals of the two schemes are in sync, to ensure appropriate interventions can be provided.

Avenue Road: As anticipated, Avenue Road north of Queen's Grove, shows a predicted reduction in traffic volume relative to the removal of general traffic from the eastern arm of the existing Swiss Cottage gyratory. However, south of Queen's Grove there is a predicted increase. This suggests a large quantity of reassigned traffic would use borough roads to access Avenue Road which does not appear to be captured in the traffic reassignment model. The Council asks that TfL clarify the potential routing of reassigned traffic in this area and employ appropriate measures to mitigate over-usage of borough roads for through traffic.

Prince Albert Road and Albany Road: Strategic modelling results indicate that the proposed CS11 scheme could result in reassignment of traffic in these areas, which are of particular concern to officers due to predicted impacts from HS2 and the Council's proposals for a cycle grid route on Parkway, Pratt Street and Delancey Street (which accesses Regent's Park via Gloucester Gate). A separate traffic modelling exercise is currently taking place for the cycle grid proposals. Officers would therefore request TfL develop proposals for CS11 to ensure neither scheme is compromised by the other. If an appropriate balance is not able to be achieved for the two schemes, formal discussions should be undertaken in order to agree which would provide the most benefit to road users.

Pedestrian wait times

The information provided by TfL relating to the changes in wait times at pedestrian crossings suggests some maximum wait times of 165-170 seconds. The Council acknowledges that these wait times include pedestrians who want to cross two arms of a junction; however concern still remains that these wait times are approaching the thresholds for which pedestrians are generally prepared to wait before crossing the junction in an unsafe manner. The Council asks that TfL provide further clarity regarding wait times in the first instance by clarifying exactly which pedestrian crossing they relate to, and secondly by detailing any mitigation techniques that could be used to reduce wait times at key locations.

Delays to buses

Whilst noting the improved interchange at Swiss Cottage, there is concern over the increase in bus journey times following the issue of the most up to date traffic modelling results. Increased bus journey times on Adelaide Road for routes C11 and 31 are of particular concern. The Council seeks further detail on the potential for mitigation of impacts to key bus routes.

Banned turns

The TfL proposals intend to ban three traffic movements in Camden around Swiss Cottage which are currently permitted. The right turn banned movement from Finchley Road southbound into Hilgrove Road bears significant concern due to the likely diversion route being on sensitive borough roads. Equally the right turn from College Crescent into Finchley Road will lead to more traffic using Arkwright Road, which has already been raised as a concern. The Council asks that TfL coordinate with Camden officers to provide more clarity on the quantified benefit of each of the banned turns in the before and after situation.

HS2

Camden Council remains opposed to the HS2 scheme, however we acknowledge its interface with CS11 and the likely impact of both schemes on borough roads. Officers ask that the predicted impact of HS2 must be factored in to any decision-

making and planning for CS11. As information regarding the construction programme for HS2 becomes available, this should be taken into consideration by TfL, as agreed at the Hampstead public meeting on 16th March 2016.

Air Quality

Camden Council recognises that the introduction of high quality cycling infrastructure is a step in the right direction towards reducing air pollution and providing a healthy environment for residents. Officers request that TfL continue to monitor air pollution levels following the implementation of CS11 at a range of relevant sites across the borough to judge any differential impacts of the scheme.

Conclusions

Camden Council is broadly supportive of the scheme including the proposed changes to the Swiss Cottage area, provision of a new strategic cycle route into central London and the part-time closure of the outer circle gates at Regents Park. However, we remain concerned about the impacts on borough roads as predicted through the traffic modelling conducted by TfL.

The Council's view is that the traffic modelling undertaken to date does not anticipate levels of traffic reassignment that would be acceptable for borough roads, nor does it appear to strike a balance in sharing predicted impacts with the TLRN. Furthermore, engagement with TfL officers has highlighted a lack of overall confidence in the traffic modelling, specifically concerning roads that are not part of the TLRN, due to a lack of available traffic data. Therefore a more accurate prediction of where traffic will reassign is required.

Additional traffic modelling would allow a greater understanding of the predicted impact on borough roads and how these impacts could be mitigated. Further detail on mitigation of impacts to bus journey times would also be welcomed. It is the view of the Council that these processes are essential in order to provide a scheme which delivers the expected benefits for pedestrians and cyclists, whilst minimising the impacts on residential streets across the borough.

It is therefore requested that TfL conduct further traffic modelling using the most up to date and relevant traffic data whilst working closely with the boroughs to address any concerns. Following this, any emerging results should be evaluated and if necessary mitigation measures should be proposed to address any unacceptable reassignment of traffic.