

Gordon Mansions Residents Association

From: Clive Henderson, Chair, Gordon Mansions Residents Association
5 Gordon Mansions, Torrington Place, London WC1E 7HE

PROOF OF EVIDENCE 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:

My name is Clive Henderson, and I am presenting this Proof of Evidence on behalf of Gordon Mansions Residents Association (GMRA), of which I am currently Chair. I have lived in Gordon Mansions for some 45 years in a flat overlooking Torrington Place. In addition, for many years I have been on the Charlotte Street Association committee, the local amenity group which covers planning, licensing, environmental matters in Fitzrovia. I was previously on the board of the the long-established Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association/Centre
Thus I am familiar with Torrington Place, its traffic patterns and the local community.

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. "western" section of Torrington Place/Tavistock Place Corridor); **[please see Appendix A: GMRA's MAP 1: Residential]**

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 is completed.**

In response to Camden's Public Consultation in October 2016, in our letter of 20 October 2016 to Camden **[please see Appendix B: for copy of GMRA'S letter and Newsletter]**, our reasons for supporting this Traffic Order were because, **in preventing the west-bound traffic from east of Gower Street into our part of Torrington Place:**

(a). there has been a very considerable reduction in traffic (compared with previously over many years), and thus a reduction in pollution and noise in our streets. 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.
[please see Appendix E: Camden's Traffic Impact Table re. Torrington Place]

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

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.

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). GMRA's submitted a detailed letter of 10th August 2014 and petition, in response to Camden's consultation. **[please see Appendix F: GMRA's letter].**
- (2). GMRA's made a Deputation to Camden Council's Cabinet Meeting of 21st January 2015 to reiterate our objections, but we 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.
[please see Appendix F: for GMRA's deputation statement to the Cabinet]

5. Pattern of traffic "before", "now", and in the "future" in Torrington Place ("western" section):

In order to appreciate the severe impact on, and change to, our residential amenity if this Traffic Order is not confirmed in its entirety, I would like to set out the patterns of traffic "before"; "now" and in the "future":

(a). "Before": Previously before 2014/before Camden's "Traffic Trial":

[please see Appendix C: Photograph; and Appendix D: our Map 2]

In the many years that I and others have lived here, this part of Torrington Place had a high volume of weekday daytime traffic.

Traffic pattern:

- Monday to Friday, daytime: high volume of traffic; 200 vehicles/hour. This usually meant tail-backs along the street (in front of the residential) from Tottenham Court Road junction to Gower Street junctions.
- In the evenings: relatively light traffic.
- Saturdays: relatively light volumes of traffic.
- Sundays: virtually no traffic until midday;
after midday, volumes similar to weekday due to Sunday shopping.
- Bank Holidays/Public holidays: similar to Sunday.

Traffic flow/where coming from:

- mainly west-bound traffic from east of Gower Street, to go north up Tottenham Court Road; or west along Howland Street (via Tottenham Court Road);
- plus some from Gower Street, turning right into Torrington Place.

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(b). “Proposed”: West End Project as proposed WITHOUT this Traffic Order (where vehicle traffic from east of Gower Street would enter “west” Torrington Place): [please see Appendix D: our Map 3 and Appendix E: Camden's Traffic Impact Table]

As a result of this Project, there will be a 200% increase in traffic volumes in this part of Torrington Place (ref: Camden Traffic Impacts Table:), resulting in 414 vehicles/hour.

Traffic pattern:

- This impact will occur not only Monday to Friday daytime, but also additionally daytime Saturday, and daytime bank/public holidays.
- This will also result in more commercial/heavy vehicle traffic.

Traffic flow/where coming from:

- as before west-bound traffic from east of Gower Street, to go north up Tottenham Crt_Road; or west along Howland Street (via Tottenham Crt Rd);
- plus a lot of north-bound traffic in Gower Street, turning into Torrington Place, in order to go west along Howland Street via Tottenham Crt Rd; (traffic which currently comes up Tottenham Crt Rd in order to go west).

(c). “Now”: Current “Traffic Trial”/Traffic Order (where vehicle traffic from east of Gower Street does NOT enter “west” Torrington Place): [please see Appendix D: our Map 4]

The “traffic trial”/current Traffic Order has resulted in a 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 on-going major construction sites in Torrington Place and Huntley Street.

Traffic flow/where coming from:

- from Gower Street, turning right into Torrington Place.
- plus (more than previously) south-bound traffic from Huntley Street into Torrington Place.

(d). “Future”: Future WEST END PROJECT plus TRAFFIC ORDER (where vehicle traffic from east of Gower Street does NOT enter “west” Torrington Place): [please see Appendix D: our Map 5]

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 here is likely to be more heavy commercial traffic), but from a different direction.

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 (8am to 7pm) 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 approach the previous 200 vehicle/hour.

Thus, it can be seen that if, in addition, traffic is allowed to come again from east of

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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.

Thus, traffic pattern:

- This impact will occur not only Monday to Friday daytime, but also additionally daytime Saturday, and daytime bank/public holidays.
- This will also result in more commercial/heavy vehicle traffic.

Much of this is set out in our GMRA's letter of 10th August 2014, in response to Camden's consultation on the West End Project; **[see Appendix F: for our letter]**

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 for residents, being able to cross the road with the two cycle lanes; and delivery bays.

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

To appreciate the residential context, please see our Map 1 Showing Residential [see Appendix A] 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 and ownership (private, local authority/Camden, housing association). In addition, there are terraced houses/flats in Huntley Street (owned by the hospital) and Chenies Mews.

The large blocks of flats have 326 flats with an estimated population of over 1,000 people. 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), income groups, and 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. Thus, it is important that this Traffic Order goes ahead to prevent considerable increase in pollution and noise.

8. Conclusion:

Although there are other aspects of both projects that we objected to, and have given cause for concern to our residents, 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.

Continued to page 5 for List of attached documents in the Appendices

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LIST OF DOCUMENTS/REFERENCES:

The following documents are attached with our Proof of Evidence:

Appendix A:

A.1 GMRA's MAP 1 showing Residential in the vicinity of Torrington Place (between Gower Street and Tottenham Court Road):

Appendix B:

B.1 GMRA's letter of 20th October 2016, in response to Camden's Public Consultation on the Torrington Place/Tavistock Place route.

B.2 GMRA's Newsletter of October 2016 to all residents (item: "Traffic Routes; traffic trial").

Appendix C:

C.1 GMRA's photograph (May 2014) showing amount (& tailbacks) of typical daytime/weekday traffic in Torrington Place ("western" section) **before** the "Traffic Trial".

Appendix D:

D.1 GMRA's series of Maps showing the traffic routes and implications via Torrington Place (the "western" stretch between Gower Street and Tottenham Court Road):

- MAP 2: Situation previously BEFORE Camden's "Traffic Trial"

- MAP 3: Situation re. WEST END PROJECT WITHOUT Traffic Order
(where vehicle traffic from east of Gower Street enters "west" Torrington Place).

- MAP 4: Situation re. CURRENT "TRAFFIC TRIAL"/Traffic Order
(where vehicle traffic from east of Gower Street does NOT enter "west" Torrington Place).

- MAP 5: Future WEST END PROJECT plus TRAFFIC ORDER
(where vehicle traffic from east of Gower Street enters "west" Torrington Place).

Appendix E:

E.1 Traffic Impact Table: Predicted traffic impacts of the West End Project proposals from Camden's West End Project's public consultation document: 9 June-18 July 2014

Appendix F:

Re. Camden's West End Project:

F.1 GMRA's letter of 10th August 2014, together with GMRA's petition (text only) of August 2014, in response to Camden's consultation on the West End Project.

F.2 GMRA's Deputation to Camden Council's Cabinet Meeting of 21st January 2015.