

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: Bloomsbury and King's Cross
REPORT TITLE Torrington Place to Tavistock Place Experimental Traffic Changes (CENV/2015/25)	
REPORT OF Director of Culture and Environment	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Transport and Planning	DATE 1 July 2015
SUMMARY OF REPORT <p>This report gives background information on the proposed experimental traffic changes on Torrington Place / Byng Place / Gordon Square / Tavistock Square / Tavistock Place. It sets out the rationale for the trial, and makes recommendations for the proposals to be implemented.</p> <p>The proposals are recommended for approval as they meet the objectives of the Camden Plan, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating conditions for and harnessing the benefits of economic growth, by supporting growth in cyclists and pedestrians resulting from both local development and institutional expansion, and growth in the wider Borough; and • investing in our communities to ensure sustainable neighbourhoods, by improving the corridor for existing cyclists and pedestrians and encouraging new cyclists and pedestrians. The experimental changes will address a poor casualty record, providing benefits to both pedestrians and cyclists. <p>Contact Officer: Rebecca Powell / John Futcher Principal Transport Planner / Public Realm and Planning Team Manager Transport Strategy Service 020 7974 2309 / 8804 rebecca.powell@camden.gov.uk / john.futcher@camden.gov.uk</p>	
WHAT DECISIONS ARE BEING ASKED FOR? That the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Transport and Planning: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Gives approval to proceed with the implementation of the experimental traffic changes as set out in this report, subject to detailed design and compliance with statutory processes. 	

Signed by Assistant Director:



Date: 23rd June 2015

1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT?

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed experimental traffic changes on Torrington Place / Byng Place / Gordon Square / Tavistock Square / Tavistock Place between the junctions with Tottenham Court Road and Judd Street. For the purposes of this report and for ease of reference, these streets are referred to as 'the corridor'.
- 1.2 The trial has been proposed in order to tackle issues related to high through motor traffic, cycling and pedestrian levels on the corridor. In addition, the Council has been looking at ways to provide more space for cycling and a safer and more attractive environment for people on bikes and on foot.
- 1.3 The proposed trial would operate for a period of twelve months with a target commencement date of August 2015 or soon afterwards (depending on approval from Transport for London). The trial would be introduced using an Experimental Traffic Order which would be advertised in the local press in the same way as a permanent Traffic Order. If the trial is approved by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Transport and Planning, then the Council would progress with advertising the Experimental Traffic Order and detailed design.
- 1.4 Two weeks prior to commencement of a trial, an information leaflet would be distributed to all residents, businesses, local groups and statutory groups to explain the changes and the rationale. The information leaflet would also include a contact email for people to provide comments during the trial. During the trial period and once the arrangements were well established, there would also be a formal consultation period (likely to be in early 2016). The details of public consultation would be clearly explained in the information leaflet.
- 1.5 Public consultation would seek the views of residents, local groups, institutions and statutory groups to help inform a decision on whether the changes should be made permanent or not. The consultation material would include survey information obtained before and during the trial as well as inviting a formal response. The Council would also undertake a representative survey to capture the views of residents, businesses, visitors, students and those using the route.
- 1.6 If the trial is approved and showed that positive impacts outweigh any adverse impacts, and that there was support for the changes, then the Council could consider making the traffic arrangements permanent. As part of a permanent project the Council could look to make further improvements to the corridor, including wider pavements and improved pedestrian crossings (these changes would be subject to public consultation and securing the required funding).

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY?

- 2.1 The corridor forms part of an important east / west cycle link connecting Marylebone, Fitzrovia, Bloomsbury, Kings Cross and Angel. The existing protected cycle lanes (there is a two-way cycle track on the northern side of the street) were some of the first to be installed in the UK and have helped to significantly increase cycling levels on the street. The latest surveys in 2015 recorded 1,009 cyclists during the morning peak hour and 880 in the afternoon peak hour. These figures demonstrate that the corridor is the busiest street for cycling in Camden and one of the highest in London and the UK.
- 2.2 Cycle demand on the corridor has now grown to a point where the existing cycle track does not provide sufficient capacity for the levels of people that wish to cycle, and during peak times there are regularly queues of cyclists that extend between junctions. In addition, the narrow cycle lanes make it difficult to safely overtake and there have been instances of collisions between cyclists trying to overtake each other. The cycle track is less than 2.5 metres wide in sections and only 1.75 metres at its narrowest point. Based on existing cycling levels, the cycle lanes would be recommended to be a minimum width of at least two metres in each direction. It is likely therefore that the existing width of the cycle track is a constraint on encouraging more people to cycle.
- 2.3 Torrington Place is at the heart of one of the UK's most important university and hospital campuses. It is estimated that 50,000-60,000 students are based at the University of London Bloomsbury colleges, who generate a large number of walking and cycling journeys. Due to the colleges, a large residential population, adjacent tourist attractions and a nearby employment centre, the area is extremely busy with pedestrians (over 1,800 pedestrians were counted on Torrington Place between Gower Street and Malet Street during the morning peak hour, rising to over 2,580 between 1pm and 2pm). With the planned expansion of institutions and other development in the area, the proportion of people walking and cycling will inevitably increase.
- 2.4 The current road layout with a two-way protected cycle track and a traffic lane in each direction does not provide a safe and attractive environment for the large number of people walking in the area. There are areas where the current pavement is very narrow and is not comfortable for the numbers of pedestrians e.g. adjacent to Tavistock Square the pavement is less than two metres wide. Because of the width of the road on the corridor it is not possible to provide more space for walking and cycling without significantly reducing the space available for motor traffic.
- 2.5 Unfortunately, the corridor also suffers from a poor casualty record and in the last three years to November 2014 there were 64 casualties. Around half of the collisions were between motor vehicles and cyclists, and these resulted in five serious injuries and 21 slight injuries to cyclists. Nearly one-third of all cycling casualties took place at the Gordon Square (west) junction, which is one of only two locations where motor vehicles are allowed to turn across the cycle track from the main corridor.

- 2.6 Collisions between motor vehicles and pedestrians resulted in 18 slight injuries and six serious injuries to pedestrians. Over sixty percent of the casualties involving pedestrians occurred at two junctions: Upper Woburn Place and Marchmont Street (the latter junction was improved in 2012 to address pedestrian and cycling casualties). The majority of pedestrian collisions are due to pedestrians stepping out into the road in front of vehicles. Site visits have highlighted that there is a lack of space on the pedestrian islands and that pedestrians frequently wait on the narrow segregation between the traffic lanes and cycle track. Residents have also raised concern that crossing the cycle track and then two traffic lanes can be difficult and confusing. Recent consultations on the West End Project and Royal College Street have also highlighted strong support for the introduction of separate protected cycle lanes on each side of the street.
- 2.7 A number of local groups, residents and institutions have asked the Council to look at ways of reducing the impact of through traffic in the area. Consultation for the West End Project highlighted concerns from residents in Torrington Place about the potential increase in traffic in the section between Gower Street and Tottenham Court Road. As part of the approval for the West End Project, the Council agreed to bring forward proposals for a trial to reduce the impact of through traffic on local residents.
- 2.8 Officers therefore consider it desirable to implement the experimental traffic changes to reduce through vehicular traffic on the corridor, and address current capacity and safety issues for pedestrians and cyclists.

3. OPTIONS

3.1 Option 1 - Do nothing

3.2 Option 2 – Experimental Traffic Changes

- 3.3 The trial would include a number of changes to the corridor and are set out in the plan in Appendix A. The changes would include:

- A. Between the junctions with Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street (as approved in the West End Project):
- Implement a westbound cycle lane on the south side of the carriageway by narrowing the existing traffic lane and installing light-segregation.
 - Maintain the existing one-way for westbound traffic.
 - Convert the existing two-way protected cycle track to operate as a one-way eastbound cycle lane.
 - Implement a new pedestrian (zebra) crossing on the western arm at the junction of Torrington Place and Huntley Street.
 - No parking or loading allowed (loading would be allowed on Huntley Street adjacent to Torrington Place and on Tottenham Court Road outside Habitat).

- B. Between the junctions with Gower Street and Judd Street:
- Convert the existing westbound traffic lane to a one-way westbound cycle lane.
 - Maintain one eastbound motor traffic lane - westbound motor traffic would not be permitted on the corridor.
 - Convert the existing two-way protected cycle track to operate as a one-way eastbound cycle lane.
 - No parking or loading allowed (loading would be allowed on Malet Street, Herbrand Street and Marchmont Street South).
 - Retain the existing taxi rank outside Tavistock Hotel (taxis would only be able to access the rank in an eastbound direction).
- C. Gordon Square, to reduce conflict between cycles and vehicular traffic:
- Convert Gordon Street (west) to one-way northbound (excluding cycles) from Torrington Place to Endsleigh Gardens.
 - Convert Gordon Street (east) to one-way southbound (excluding cycles) from Endsleigh Place to Torrington Place.
- D. Across the full corridor (Tottenham Court Road to Judd Street):
- Parking and loading restrictions are required to keep traffic moving and prevent cyclists being obstructed.
 - Banned turns for vehicular traffic would be introduced at all junctions in the westbound direction, as shown in the plan in Appendix A. These banned movements will be enforced by temporary barriers to discourage vehicular traffic from driving westbound along the corridor.
 - Intermittent light-segregation would be provided to minimise the risk of eastbound traffic diverting into the path of westbound cyclists.

3.4 It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Transport and Planning approve Option 2 for progression to detailed design and implementation.

4. WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS?

4.1 With no action, the corridor will continue to suffer from significant capacity and road safety issues that make cycling and walking unattractive and could prevent further increases in active travel. With the implementation of the West End Project, motor traffic levels are predicted to increase on Torrington Place (between Gower Street and Tottenham Court Road), which could exacerbate the existing issues on the wider corridor to an unacceptable level. As part of the Cabinet approval for the West End Project (January 21st 2015 <http://democracy.camden.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=16860>), a separate approval was granted to progress a trial of traffic management changes to reduce the impact of through traffic on residents. Therefore taking no action on this corridor is not a viable option. Because of width constraints on the street there are no suitable options that would provide more space for cycling and walking without significantly reducing the available space for motor traffic. The existing carriageway width varies between 5.8m and 7.8m and therefore can't be narrowed without removing one of the two traffic lanes.

- 4.2 Option 2 would not permit westbound traffic on the corridor between Gower Street and Judd Street, requiring vehicles to take alternative routes and thereby reducing traffic levels on the corridor significantly. The existing westbound traffic lane would be converted to cycling in a westbound direction and the existing protected cycle track would be converted for cycling in an eastbound direction. These changes would provide a safer and more attractive cycling facility with more capacity to accommodate existing and future levels. As such, the trial would improve conditions for existing cyclists, while also encouraging new cyclists. Removing westbound traffic would also make the corridor a more pleasant environment for pedestrians, with improved air quality and streets that are easier to cross.
- 4.3 This option could also allow further improvements to be made at a later date for residents, businesses and visitors, if the experiment is made permanent. Further improvements could include widened pavements and improved crossings (these changes would be subject to further public consultation and be dependent on securing funding).
- 4.4 The trial would contribute to achieving the objectives of the Camden Transport Strategy (2011), as summarised below:

1. **Reduce motor traffic levels and vehicle emissions to improve air quality, mitigate climate change and contribute to making Camden a 'low carbon and low waste borough'** - restricting westbound traffic would significantly reduce traffic levels on the corridor, improving local air quality.
2. **Encourage healthy and sustainable travel choices by prioritising walking, cycling and public transport in Camden** - reallocating carriageway to cyclists would improve conditions for existing users and encourage new cyclists. Reduction of traffic on the corridor would also improve the environment for pedestrians, encouraging walking.
3. **Improve road safety and personal security for people travelling in Camden** - reducing traffic flows would decrease collisions between cyclists and vehicles and the two, separate cycle lanes would reduce collisions between cyclists overtaking and head-on. Conflicts between cyclists and vehicles at Gordon Square would also be reduced through introduction of a one-way system. Converting the bi-directional cycle lane to eastbound only would make the corridor less confusing for pedestrians crossing the street, minimising collisions with vehicles and cyclists.
4. **Effectively manage the road network to manage congestion, improve reliability and ensure the efficient movement of goods and people** - approval of the West End Project required a trial to be brought forward on Torrington Place to mitigate against greater traffic levels on the corridor in the future.
5. **Develop and maintain high quality, accessible public streets and spaces and recognise that streets are about more than movement** – the trial would improve the quality of the corridor for pedestrians and cyclists, and allow for further improvements if the changes are made permanent.

6. **Ensure the transport system supports Camden's sustainable growth and regeneration as well as enhancing economic and community development** – the changes would support an increase in pedestrians and cyclists that would result from local development and the planned expansion of institutions.
7. **Ensure the transport systems supports access to local services and facilities reduces inequalities in transport and increases social inclusion** – the experiment supports the most socially inclusive means of transport, as walking and cycling are the lowest cost modes. By providing more cycling capacity on the corridor, people will be better able to access services.

5. WHAT ARE THE KEY IMPACTS / RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?

- 5.1 The proposed traffic arrangements would not prevent residents or businesses accessing any part of the area. However, westbound traffic would not be permitted on the corridor, requiring traffic to take alternative routes to reach its destination (these routes would be highlighted in the information leaflet). Over the last few years there have been full closures of both Tavistock Place and Byng Place for utility works. The traffic impacts of these closures were monitored and none of these closures resulted in unacceptable traffic impacts in the local or wider area. Given that the trial would not close the corridor to all through traffic the traffic impacts are predicted to be less than the recent full closures.
- 5.2 The busiest section of the corridor for vehicular traffic is between Upper Woburn Place and Gordon Square (west) with 1,057 vehicles an hour during the morning peak (1,098 in the evening peak). Of these vehicles approximately 40% are eastbound and 60% are westbound in both peak periods. Traffic surveys indicate that much of the traffic on this section is used by vehicles going to or from Euston station. Indeed, officers have some concerns that traffic, and particularly taxis, currently use the corridor as an alternative to the prescribed and more appropriate route along Euston Road. Alternative routes to Euston station for westbound traffic will be maintained via:
 - Euston Road
 - Upper Woburn Place (and Endsleigh Gardens)
 - Russell Square (and Bedford Way, Tavistock Square and Endsleigh Gardens)
- 5.3 The impacts of the trial on traffic, cycling, pedestrians, air quality and road safety in the area would be monitored during the twelve month period. The Council would also seek the views of the local community during the trial to assist the decision on whether the changes become permanent or not.
- 5.4 Implementing the trial and the associated traffic changes could cause some confusion or criticism while road users adjust to the changes. If the trial is approved, the Council would undertake targeted publicity to advise drivers

and other road users of the changes in advance of the changes being introduced. The publicity would include explaining the changes and rationale, along with press and social media activity, and informing relevant industrial organisations. In addition, all banned movements and any advisory diversion routes would be clearly marked and signed. At the start of the trial, water-filled or other barriers would be introduced at key junctions on the corridor to prevent traffic inadvertently turning onto the westbound cycle lane (these could be removed or minimised as behaviour becomes established). Unlike the eastbound cycle lane, the westbound cycle lane will not benefit from a raised kerb for protection from the eastbound traffic lane. Protection for cyclists would therefore be achieved with intermittent light segregation.

- 5.5 There is insufficient road width to provide formal loading facilities on the corridor as well as a westbound cycle lane between Upper Woburn Place and Judd Street. The section of the corridor between Gower Street and Tottenham Court Road is also narrow and if a loading bay is provided in this section there would only be space to provide a narrow 1.5 metre cycle lane, which is unlikely to be sufficient to cope with demand. To address these issues the corridor would become a no loading / parking area (taxis and other vehicles would still be allowed to pick up and drop off passengers and the taxi rank by the Tavistock hotel would be maintained). Three formal loading bays would be introduced on Huntley Street, Herbrand Street and Marchmont Street to allow businesses to continue to be serviced without impacting on traffic / cyclist movements. Relocating loading away from the corridor is likely to lead to a small increase in servicing traffic on these streets, which may be a concern to local residents.

6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN AND WHEN FOLLOWING THE DECISION AND HOW WILL THIS BE MONITORED?

- 6.1 Following the decision, an information leaflet would be distributed to local groups, residents, businesses and institutions to inform them of the changes (scheduled for early August 2015).
- 6.2 The experimental trial is planned for implementation in late August 2015 and will remain for twelve months.
- 6.3 During the trial, the Council would undertake monitoring of cycling and pedestrian flows on the corridor, as well as traffic counts and speeds on the corridor and alternative routes. Monitoring of local air pollution would also take place.
- 6.4 The information leaflet would include a contact email for people to provide comments during the trial. Public consultation on the changes would be undertaken in early 2016 to seek views from residents, local groups, institutions and statutory groups. The public consultation responses would help inform a decision on whether the changes should be made permanent or not. A representative survey would also be undertaken to get the views of residents, students, visitors, businesses and those using the route.

7. LINKS TO THE CAMDEN PLAN OBJECTIVES

- 7.1 The proposals are recommended for approval as they meet the objectives of the Camden Plan, including:
- Creating conditions for and harnessing the benefits of economic growth:
 - The experimental traffic changes would support local development and expansion of institutions surrounding the corridor by accommodating the resultant increase in pedestrians and cyclists.
 - Journey times would be reduced for cyclists by providing more cycle lane capacity on the corridor. This benefit could extend to new cyclists and pedestrians that start to use the corridor due to the changes.
 - The changes would improve safety on the corridor reducing the cost of accidents in the Borough.
 - Investing in our communities to ensure sustainable neighbourhoods:
 - The experimental traffic changes would improve cycling capacity and safety on the key cycling corridor, which would be a benefit to existing cyclists and would encourage new cyclists in the Borough.
 - The changes would also improve the pedestrian environment, encouraging more people to walk and making what is a key pedestrian corridor a safer place for pedestrians.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Consultation is not proposed prior to implementation of the experimental trial. Instead the experimental scheme would be used to inform and stimulate a consultation during its operation, once new movement patterns had established themselves. An information leaflet would be circulated to the local community prior to the trial setting out the changes and the rationale. Views of the community would be sought during the trial to help inform a decision on making the changes permanent or not.
- 8.2 The proposals have been developed with the support of Camden Cycling Campaign (CCC), London Cycling Campaign (LCC), Living Streets, University College London (UCL) and the University of London.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (comments from the Borough Solicitor)

- 9.1 The Borough Solicitor has no further comments to make.

10. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (comments from the Director of Finance and others as appropriate such as AD (HR))

- 10.1 This proposal is to deliver Option 2 as described in Section 3 of this report and in more detail in Appendix A. The estimated cost of this option is £127,622. This work has been planned and £1,377,000 has been set aside from the TfL funding as part of the Central London Cycle Grid programme for the entire

scheme (the trial and the permanent scheme, should this be decided to go ahead).

- 10.2 As the trial will be funded from the £1,377,000 of funding received from TfL there are no immediate financial implications as a result of this proposal.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Proposed Design, Option 2

REPORT ENDS

Appendix A - Proposed Design Recommended for Approval (see attached pdf file)