

Response to Tottenham Court Road and Covent Garden Plan from London Borough of Camden



GMB Professional Driver's Branch

Our membership is made up of both private hire, Hackney drivers as well as delivery, ambulance drivers and those who drive professionally for a living. We also have a number of small private hire operators within our membership.

We have a close working relationship with TFL and have been responsible for working to help create and work on the legislation in place today from work on sight and diabetes for drivers to the bus lane signs available for Private hire vehicles in London.

Our membership is substantial and growing.

We have links with many safety groups and other trade bodies.

Our branch maintains cordial relations with many licencing authorities.

We meet with both enforcement and ground transportation officials on a frequent basis at TFL.

The GMB has had recent contact with most assembly members and the Mayor in relation to the needs of both Passengers and drivers in London and its environs and this submission is a further clarification of our concerns and suggestions.

Tottenham Court Road and Environs Proposals Response

GMB Professional Drivers branch have spent a substantial period looking at your proposals for the project based on the redevelopment of the traffic and pedestrian infrastructure of Tottenham Court Road and its surrounding area and cannot draw many conclusions on how these proposed changes will improve life in our great capital.

In our review we will comment on the individual areas on location by location basis.

Past works and Planned Proposals

Work's at the junction of Tottenham Court Road and Euston Road have only recently been completed and some of that worked involved widening of pavements by outside UCH now according to your proposals pavements are to be narrowed in this vicinity.

What added expense will this create bearing in mind the cost of the previous works in that area is that included in your current costing's on the new development?

Has this been pointed out to your rate payer's we feel that the Local Government Ombudsman would take a dim view of this as would your own constituents.

Attractive pavements look agreeable for the first few years and then degrade.

Why is not the same energy not been put into the large amount of potholed and decrepit roads within Camden which seem to be left or if repaired the works are completed cheaply and as only a short term fix.

Tottenham Court Road is a major transport thoroughfare for road transport as well as a main artery within London.

Are Camden suggesting this traffic will simply disappear and the remainder will not be causing congestion in Gower St which will have 1 lane of traffic in a southerly direction and two heading north, for all private cars HGV's private hire and taxis.

Why have you ignored Private Hire when looking at vehicles and access?

Do you consider Private hire drivers to be second class citizens?

Where are you suggesting private hire pick up their prebooked customers from on a narrow road which is a mixture of business, Education, Medical, Residential, Retail and hotels. This problem is naturally enhanced when you include the Elderly, Those with Disability or Perhaps other issues.

Pedestrian Flow

Looking at Camden's Plans for Tottenham Court Road. We as professional drivers have never seen pavements overcrowded with pedestrians as you suggest. It is our opinion that others would not either.

Can we as organization with a vested interest see these figures Or complaints?

We can only assume you need more pedestrian crossings as TFL own figures show many accidents are caused by the London busses and that this flow will only cause further delays.

Perhaps pedestrian underpasses would make more sense for all your road planning to avoid the danger you perceive.

There is no doubt this would increase vehicle flow as well as improving safety.

As most individuals are already aware the diagonal crossing at Oxford circus is a very different location to Tottenham Court Road.

In view of the existing subways there is no earthly reason to add such as white elephant to London especially in view of the cost of this bauble alone.

The crossing at Oxford Circus has created more traffic traveling South as the bus lane was removed and has forced all other road transport to converge onto one Lane after crossing Oxford Circus. These works were completed at a huge cost to the tax payer of over £5 Million but actually what has it achieve?

Camden's answer would be interesting reading.

In your presentation it is stated that bus passengers will be able to leave and arrive at Tottenham Court Road by bus. Is that not already the case?

It seems much of this traffic will have no choice but to use Euston and Marylebone Road which figures already suggest is one of the highest polluting in London and in fact Europe additionally causing more delays and chaos to what is already a troubled section of London.

Is that a sensible approach when London is receiving colossal fines from Europe?

If we are already getting fined by Europe for not reaching emission standards we cannot see how this will improve the matter by squeezing the same amount of traffic onto less road space.

Will Camden be prepared to meet the increased emission costs from its own budgets?

Loading Bays & Buses

We deduce there will be less loading bays in the area than prior to your proposed redevelopment we cannot see a clear practical provision.

Will there be less deliveries in your figures or the same level?

If the levels are same how you do expect goods to be delivered on a day to day basis?

With the pressure of traffic deliveries to pedestrian areas become more problematic for drivers who not only need to find bays but face the risk of ticketing by overzealous wardens.

Could we have the estimated increased traffic figures for using Torrington place to access Howland street as we can't see how this will improve traffic traveling West one lane of traffic as opposed to two. Please can you explain how you achieved these figures?

Naturally we are confident that there will be a large increase in traffic as Traffic using Howland Street to travel West will only be able to access this route via Torrington Place.

We cannot see how this will improve traffic flow and reduce Emissions?

Clearly maximum speed limits in these areas will drop to 20mph.

Please can you provide the current accident figures for the area which have been caused by private vehicle taxi and private compared to bus accident figures?

Based on current data we expect bus accident rates to go up with Tottenham Court Road when pedestrian treat the new space as a piazza.

What health and safety provisions do you intend to put in place to mitigate?

We appreciate the need for improved cycle routes across London for the safety of riders but feel Tottenham Court Road could have a safe separated Cycle lane in the same vain as Torrington Place with all Traffic still traveling North.

We don't understand if these proposals go ahead we need an improved cycle lane on Gower Street when cyclists have a safe route on Tottenham Court

Road. Perhaps Cyclists should not be on Gower Street as space for traffic will already be limited due to the greatly increased volumes with traffic moving in both directions.

In Your view how many actual parking space will we be losing which includes resident and disabled bays and business parking. Where are you suggesting these needed spaces go so not to inconvenience residents etc. Who live/ run businesses.

Gower Street

Firstly could we see your figures for the said speeding problems of the area. Again as professional drivers we do not witness many police speed checks. Why has this data not been provided if there is ongoing ignorance of speed restrictions?

What are the casualty figures for this road?

Why have no electronic signs been installed to warn of restrictions?

The street has many residential and business properties on it there a modicum of allocated parking spaces. What provision has been made for these groups? Where are the bays for the Mayors electric smart cars allocated pick/up drop off points. Are these in your plans?

Why do we need cycle lanes on Gower Street when there is already provision in Tottenham Court Road?

Are the loading bays heading North sufficient for the amount of business in the area.

As there will not any disabled bays how are suggesting disabled people get to their properties or appointments if they have.

Where are the available spaces for taxi or private hire to collect pre-booked passengers?

You are proposing that there will be two lanes for traffic heading north and one south how will the road cope given the displaced volume of traffic.

Your proposal does not seem to mention the amount of traffic lights in either Tottenham Court Road or Gower Street.

What are the numbers and where do you propose them to be situated.

What are your figures for increased emissions on Gower Street as a result of these changes?

What is the proposed speed limit?

In relation to hospitals how are you suggesting the infirm are picked up/
Dropped off if parking is removed?

Will there be right/left turn onto Gower St from Chenies Street. What provisions are in place for Store Street?

The same issue will exist with regard to traffic traveling in either direction on Gower Street.

Green Spaces

We cannot see the reason for more green public space when we have Regents Park in walking distance and again the loss of parking in Alfred Mews, Surely Alfred Mews is a viable area for public hire and private hire to await their prebooked customers.

What is the actual volume of traffic per hour in the St Giles Junction of Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street?

Denmark Street is already a narrow one way street and your proposing to increase pavement size with deliveries alone this will make this already underutilized street inaccessible.

What are your figures for the speed of traffic in Denmark Street? More often than not when our members are on Denmark Street traffic is obstructed by lorry's delivering.

Surely a sensible way to alleviate some of the high volumes of traffic is to impose rules on HGV s so they they do not pass through this part of London at peak times and delivery's only during off peak periods.

We would recommend a 7.00 AM to 7.00 PM blanket ban in this area.

This would reduce congestion, emissions (TFL own figures show bus and HGV account for 27% of emissions) Cycling would be safer as figures suggest the majority of serious or fatal accidents occur with these larger vehicles.

As you state Huntley Street is an area full of hospitals and your proposing to remove parking which is often used by family's collecting and waiting for their relatives.

Where will these people be able to wait to collect their sometimes very ill relatives, many of these patients are having cancer treatment and as such need to be in a vehicle to avoid infection and cannot often mix in public areas as their immune system is low which means they are more prone to other illness which in those conditions could prove fatal.

The hospitals themselves have plenty of open space internally so the need for further outside rest space is negligible if not unnecessary.

Whitefield Gardens

As you suggest a site where anti-social behavior is prevalent. Is there going to be increased CCTV and currently how often do the local Safer Neighbourhood Team walk the area as police presence usually reduces the impact.

Should we assume more funds will be spent on Warden Patrols?

Can we based on your own evidence assume that foliage, Signage and Equipment will be damaged by those people with anti-social behavior on their minds.

Perhaps you can divert this element too perhaps your park in Alfred Mews?

New Oxford Street

Your own figures show that traffic on Bloomsbury Street junction of New Oxford Street is heavy and often congested but you are suggesting Bloomsbury Street as a two way street.

Is it not logical to assume this and your other proposals will create more congestion, but are we being cynical if we suggest that your actually moving the problem into the London Borough of Westminster to reduce Camden's emission and congestion.

Could it not be that some of the increased traffic now seen on Tottenham Court Road be down to the fact that Camden High Street is now a 20mph max speed limit and the road itself is now narrower.

As one can witness with Parkway the flow of traffic has deteriorated since the

implementation of reduced lanes here and other areas of your borough.

This has clearly increased vehicle displacement and is a dangerous route for cycles negotiating the vehicle's.

Southampton Row

At present the traffic flow approaching Southampton Row creates consistent delays from the edge of Covent Garden past the museum area and on to the junction of Southampton Row.

Buses, Taxis, Private Hire and Commercial vehicles as well as cycles jostle for position and space.

The flow of traffic is slow to stationary and will only be exacerbated by further road closures in the vicinity.

Unless a practical plan to alleviate this issue further congestion and gridlock will ensue.

Covent Garden Environs

Covent Garden is unique as it allows travelers access to various locations such as Strand and Across the Waterloo Bridge to access to the Trafalgar Square area.

To cut roads out will force traffic on to Holborn and Charing Cross Road the result being further Gridlock as traffic flow in to Trafalgar Square from Charing Cross alone is unable to feed more than a few cars at once in to the square.

The ongoing Chaos will spread to the Soho district and therefore on to Shaftesbury Avenue.

To create further delays in an already overcrowded city will not as you foresee force individuals on to public transport it will increase as more road users seek side routes.

This will in turn slow public transport more.

As London grow traffic flow increases.

The GMB Bus /Tram Terminus Plan

GMB have what we think is an interesting suggestion.

We Suggest West of Oxford Street by Marble arch a Bus/Tram terminus where buses started/ended their journey and a similar Terminus on the junction New Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road and have a tram system on Oxford Street itself running between the terminuses.

This would reduce emissions and congestion of which the London bus is a large contributor of and indeed as figures show a large purveyor of serious injury or death.

Summing up

In your proposal what are your figures with regard to loss of physical road space, parking space and amounts of revenue lost in terms of increased journey time spent in traffic.

London itself has the largest population in Europe and is a major working city to the envy of the world.

Turning London into a city of piazza's and further green space when we already have more than most European cities is a folly.

We either want to be at the forefront as a major contributing capital city in Europe or would we rather be a major holiday destination without much commerce as many much smaller lower populated capital cities in Europe.

We conclude that there is no real improvement economically and a feel good project is not practical in a living breathing and evolving part of London.

We can only draw our conclusions that rather than invigorate business and improve conditions these plans will stifle business and create congestion and ecological issues elsewhere as the traffic is pushed elsewhere creating further delays and disruption.

Camden is a custodian of only part of London and it cannot impose its will to support a few when many others use the city and create a script of our daily lives within its environs.