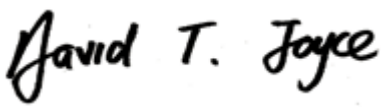


<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> Bloomsbury Holborn and Covent Garden
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> Holborn junctions road safety and public realm proposals (SC/2018/30)	
<b>REPORT FOR</b> Director of Regeneration and Planning	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b> Cabinet Member for Improving Camden's Environment	<b>DATE</b> 13 <sup>th</sup> June 2018
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b></p> <p>The purpose of this report is to provide details of the proposals consulted upon to improve road safety, walking, cycling and streetscape at two key junctions within the Holborn Area. The junction of Theobalds Road, Southampton Row and Bloomsbury Way; and the junction of High Holborn, Kingsway and Southampton Row.</p> <p>The report discusses the responses to the consultation including officer views taking into account Camden's transport objectives and finally provides recommendations for approval by the Cabinet Member.</p> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b> Responses to the public consultation from households, businesses and stakeholder groups</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Anthony Christofi/Kieran Ward Principal Design Engineer / Public Realm and Planning Team Manager Transport Strategy Service, 5 Pancras Square, London N1C 4AG Telephone:020 7974 5298/6516 e-mail: anthony.christofi@camden.gov.uk/kieran.ward@camden.gov.uk</p>	
<p><b>WHAT DECISIONS ARE BEING ASKED FOR</b></p> <p>That the Cabinet Member for Improving Camden's Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notes the results of the public consultation.</li> <li>2. Notes the assessment of the effects of the scheme.</li> <li>3. Having considered the Council's duties as set out in Section 9 of the report, gives approval to proceed with the implementation of the scheme as recommended in Option 2 (Paragraph 3.1.1) of this report, subject to detailed design and compliance with statutory processes.</li> </ol>	

Signed: 

David Joyce, Director Regeneration and Planning  
Date: 25/05/18

## **1 WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT?**

- 1.1.1 The report discusses the responses to the consultation for proposals for road safety and public realm improvements in two locations in the Holborn area, which were subject to public consultation during February and March 2018.
- 1.1.2 The report provides officer views on these proposals, taking into account Camden's Transport Strategy objectives, and provides recommendations for approval under Camden's remit as highway authority.
- 1.1.3 The proposals consulted upon are summarised below with further details and a plan provided in Appendix B.

### **1.2 Bloomsbury Square and Vernon Place junction with Southampton Row**

- 1.2.1 A key aim of these proposals is to significantly improve the public realm around Bloomsbury Square. These changes will improve the pedestrian environment including the routes between the British Museum and Holborn Underground station.
- 1.2.2 The left turn movement from Vernon Place to Southampton Row would be prohibited for all vehicles except cycles and the existing bus lane extended to mitigate bus journey time delays and disincentivise left turn contraventions.
- 1.2.3 The closure of Bloomsbury Square at both southern accesses where it joins Bloomsbury Way. Bloomsbury Square would only be accessed by motor vehicles from the north and by foot and bicycle from both ends; creating a more pleasant route to walk between Holborn and the British Museum. The closure will be imposed by lockable, folding bollards placed in the centre of the road at each side of Bloomsbury Square where it joins Bloomsbury Way. As the southern end will be closed, all vehicles entering the square must turn around and exit onto Bloomsbury Place. For this reason, it is proposed to prohibit vehicles over 7.5 Tonnes, as vehicles over this limit will not be able to turn in the space provided. The exception to this will be emergency and refuse vehicles who will be permitted to enter the square via a lockable bollard from Vernon Place to avoid turning around.
- 1.2.4 The above proposals will require changes to be made to the parking and waiting and loading provisions at both sides of Bloomsbury Square, resulting in the loss of one residents' parking bay. The immediate access to the private car park below Bloomsbury Square remains unaffected, although motor vehicles will have to follow an alternative route to access from Bloomsbury Way. The loss of parking will be compensated by converting two paid for parking bays on Bloomsbury Place into shared use (resident/paid for) bays.

### **1.3 Southampton Row / Kingsway/ High Holborn junction**

- 1.3.1 The proposals aim to significantly improve the public realm around the Underground station providing much needed space to safely accommodate the existing high numbers of pedestrians and the expected future increase of pedestrians in this area and using the underground station. The proposals

deliver these benefits in advance of the proposed Holborn Underground station upgrade.

- 1.3.2 Installing diagonal crossings to make it quicker, easier and more convenient to cross the road in all directions.
- 1.3.3 Removal of the right-turn traffic lane on the eastern approach to the junction allowing the footway on both sides to be widened.

## **2 WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY?**

- 2.1.1 There have been a high number of serious traffic collisions at the Vernon Place/Southampton Row/Theobalds Road junction. A total of 54 collisions were recorded in a three year period between 2013 and 2016, 24 of which resulted in injury to a pedestrian or cyclist and 6 resulted in a person being killed or seriously injured. 2 cyclists, 1 pedestrian and 1 bus/coach passenger were seriously injured and two collisions resulted in the death of a cyclist.
- 2.1.2 One cyclist fatality occurred where a motor vehicle was turning left from Vernon Place to Bloomsbury Square and one where a motor vehicle was turning left into Southampton Row from Vernon Place. The latter was subject to a prevention of future deaths report from the Coroner's office on 14.04.2014 (Appendix A).
- 2.1.3 High volumes of traffic use Bloomsbury Square, especially the west side (over 200 vehicles per hour in the morning and evening rush hour) making the public space less attractive and generating noise from motor vehicles waiting and queuing on Bloomsbury Square. This southbound traffic often backs up to Great Russell Street causing further impact on residents and traffic flow.
- 2.1.4 The area is unpleasant for pedestrians and cyclists with 700 cyclists traveling through the Vernon Place / Southampton Row junction in the morning peak hour. The Friends of Bloomsbury Square residents group and Camden Cycling Campaign have continually requested that the Council address this issue since 2013.
- 2.1.5 In the peak hour there are 292 buses passing through the junction which experience delays at the eastbound approach to the junction with Southampton Row, due to the volume of traffic of other motor vehicles, which also create congestion and air pollution.
- 2.1.6 The Vernon Place junction is dominated by traffic with around 3000 private motor vehicles (mainly cars, taxis and light goods vehicles) travelling through the junction in the morning peak hour.
- 2.1.7 The junction of High Holborn/Kingsway suffers from a poor casualty record with a total of 28 collisions in a 36-month period between 2013 and 2016, 21 of which resulted in injury to a pedestrian or cyclist and 3 resulted in a person being killed or seriously injured. 1 pedestrian and 1 car passenger were seriously injured and one collision resulted in the death of a cyclist.

- 2.1.8 The narrow pedestrian crossings and cluttered footways cannot adequately and safely accommodate demand at peak times, with thousands of pedestrians exiting the underground station in the morning rush hour. Pedestrians are often observed spilling out onto the carriageway as the footway outside the station is too narrow for the large number of pedestrians waiting to cross.
- 2.1.9 There will be a significant increase in people coming to the area with the opening of the Crossrail Station in 2018 at nearby Tottenham Court Road and a 50% predicted increase in the number of passengers using Holborn underground station by 2026. A new second entrance to Holborn underground station is planned to be built in Procter Street by London Underground, between 2021 and 2025, with a planned opening date of 2026.

### **3 OPTIONS**

- 3.1.1 Having analysed the results from the public consultation, officers consider that there are two options available, these being:
1. Approve the proposals for both junctions as consulted upon.
  2. Do Nothing
- 3.1.2 Officers recommend that the Cabinet Member for Improving Camden's Environment approve the proposals for both junctions to achieve all benefits.

#### **3.2 Do Nothing**

- 3.2.1 Camden as Highway Authority are obligated to improve road safety in locations identified as having unacceptable levels of collisions. By doing nothing Camden would not be acting upon the issues set out in section 2.
- 3.2.2 Doing nothing at the High Holborn/Kingsway junction would not allow for future pedestrian increases predicted for the area in the coming years. This option would maintain the uncomfortable and unsafe environment for pedestrians using the area, especially around Holborn underground station.

### **4 WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS?**

- 4.1.1 The recommended option would contribute to achieving the aims and objectives of the Council's approved plans and strategies, particularly the Camden Transport Strategy (CTS) by providing additional space and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. The CTS seeks to encourage sustainable and active modes of transport and reduce impacts of motor traffic on the environment. Policy 1.3 of the CTS adopts a road user hierarchy. This is used as a tool in developing projects and identifies pedestrians and cyclists as the priority road users.
- 4.1.2 The proposals contribute towards creating a healthy streets environment within the Holborn area, thereby contributing to delivering the Mayor's Transport Strategy (2018), which sets out the Mayor's intention to encourage cycling and walking on 'Healthy Streets'. Healthy Streets aim to "reduce traffic, pollution and noise, create more attractive, accessible and people-

friendly streets where everybody can enjoy spending time and being physically active, and ultimately improve people's health".

- 4.1.3 Holborn is home to a large number of businesses and residents; and as such the Underground station is heavily used by commuters and visitors to local attractions (both inbound and outbound). Increasing footway space between Holborn station and Procter Street, as well as providing a new pedestrian crossing will help meet anticipated demand for the coming years, helping people to do business and facilitating economic growth within the area.
- 4.1.4 There would be an improved and more pleasant environment around Bloomsbury Square making the green space more attractive and accessible to those both visiting the square and walking between the British Museum and Holborn Station. The proposals compliment forthcoming improvements to the green space which are being undertaken separately as part of the greenspace investment programme.
- 4.1.5 The proposals address the councils concerns regarding the safety of the 2 junctions and are informed by the prevention of futures deaths report (Appendix A). The proposals would reduce the risk of left hook collisions between motor vehicles and cyclists, which have been identified as a contributing factor in the deaths of 2 cyclists over the last 5 years.
- 4.1.6 The extension of the eastbound bus, cycle and taxi lane on Vernon Place would allow cyclists and buses to approach the junction more easily, decreasing journey times for these modes.
- 4.1.7 It is important to close the eastern access at Bloomsbury Square at the same time as revoking the left turn movement at Vernon Place to ensure traffic does not reassign to Bloomsbury Square; which is both unsuitable for the current levels of traffic and has suffered from historic road safety issues.
- 4.1.8 It is important to close the Western access of Bloomsbury Square and Bloomsbury Way in order to reduce the ongoing noise and air pollution concerns faced by residents. The road is not appropriate to manage the demands imposed by the volume of through traffic, which should be kept on more suitable roads. The volume of vehicles often queuing Bloomsbury Square often results in anti-social driver behaviour. It is also important to make the road more attractive to non-motor traffic and make Bloomsbury Square more accessible.
- 4.1.9 Removal of a traffic lane on High Holborn between Procter Street and Kingsway reduces conflict for cyclists who currently have to cross up to 3 lanes to enter the right turn lane.
- 4.1.10 As part of the design process, officers considered providing dedicated cycle signals (allowing general traffic to left left) and cycle early start facilities at the junction of Vernon Place and Southampton Row, although it was not possible to provide these due to space constraints and unacceptable impact on the operation of the junction.

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

- 5.1.1 Transport modelling was undertaken for the proposals at both a local level (micro simulation using Vissim software) and at a London-wide level (strategic model using Transport for London's (TfL's) ONE model) to look at the both how traffic would behave around the immediate area and further afield.
- 5.1.2 Traffic Modelling was undertaken following TfL modelling guidelines. TfL's sign off of the Scheme Impact Report (SIR) document can be found in Appendix D.
- 5.1.3 No significant effect on traffic reassignment was observed using the strategic model outside of the Bloomsbury and Covent Garden Wards.
- 5.1.4 Vissim modelling results for the peak hour (AM) show any delays to buses are under 1 minute, although there are anticipated journey time savings on 9 out of 16 routes travelling through the area. Services travelling southbound on Southampton Row (Routes 59, 68, 91, 168, 188, X68) may be delayed by between 30 seconds and 1 minute. Routes 1 and 171 (Eastbound/Southbound) may also be subject to a delay of between 30 seconds and 1 minute. All other services are expected to have an under 30 second increase or a decrease in journey time.
- 5.1.5 The evening peak hour largely shows a decrease in average journey times, with a savings of up to a minute for route 512 southbound and for routes 8, 25, 242 and in the westbound direction. However, Routes 59, 68, 91, 168, 188, X68 travelling southbound on Southampton Row show an increase in journey times of between 30 seconds and 1 minute. A full breakdown of journey time delays or savings are set out in the SIR document in Appendix D.
- 5.1.6 There would be no direct access from Bloomsbury Way via the western side of Bloomsbury Square, meaning that motorists approaching from this direction would be expected either take an alternative route, or use Drake Street to approach from the south via High Holborn.
- 5.1.7 Vissim modelling predicts that some private motor vehicle journeys (such as from the West End to Euston and the West End to Farringdon) may result in delay of around 5-10minutes in the morning and evening peak hour. However it considered that the changes are necessary to improve safety in key areas, to make the area more pleasant to walk and cycle in and therefore encourage use of those modes of travel. A full breakdown of journey time delays or savings are set out in the SIR document in Appendix D.
- 5.1.8 The closure of the eastern access of Bloomsbury Square may disrupt regular loading to the businesses at Victoria House. To mitigate this, a loading bay would be provided on Bloomsbury Way to ensure that the loss of loading access on the west of the building is mitigated.
- 5.1.9 There would be a net loss of one residents parking bay on Bloomsbury Square. Residents parking loss has been mitigated where possible by the conversion of 2 dedicated paid for parking bays on Bloomsbury Way, to shared use (residents-paid for) bays.

- 5.1.10 It is acknowledged that the proposals, if implemented, would have some negative impacts on some people with protected characteristics (e.g. people who rely on motor car or taxis to get around, and whose journeys could become less direct as a result of banning the left turn from Vernon Place to Southampton Row). However, the project seeks to minimise some of the potential impacts, by, for example, maintaining reasonable access by motor vehicle while introducing measures to reduce motor traffic and the associated negative impacts. This would benefit residents of all ages and abilities including wheelchair users and disabled cyclists by making the roads safer and less intimidating to cross.
- 5.1.11 The project has the potential to advance equality and foster good relations between protected groups and other groups in the local community by encouraging healthy travel amongst a wider variety of groups, including people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not. Reducing the dominance of motor traffic and improvements to the public realm are likely to encourage social interaction between all groups of people.
- 5.1.12 It is acknowledged that diverted traffic may increase air pollution on some alternative routes such as Grays Inn Road and Kingsway/Southampton Row. Whilst it is acknowledged that this is a negative impact, it is considered acceptable when considering the benefits that would be gained from the proposals; including the improvement of air quality that is likely to be achieved around Bloomsbury Square.
- 5.1.13 As with most construction projects on the public highway there are a variety of potential risks that should be considered and monitored. These include (but are not limited to) construction delays, unexpected costs, unexpected complications with utilities and the impact of temporary traffic management. These risks will be mitigated by careful project management at all phases as well as finance controls and the good risk management practice.
- 5.1.14 Overall, the project is considered to have a positive impact, and officers have sought to avoid or mitigate any negative impacts.

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

- 6.1.1 As High Holborn and Vernon Place are categorised as part of the strategic road network (SRN), support must be given by TfL ahead of implementation. TfL have provided initial support for the proposals as part of the SIR report provided in Appendix D, and will finalise this as part of its Traffic Management Act Notification (TMAN) process.
- 6.1.2 Officers will undertake detailed design and implementation of the scheme, working closely with Volker Highways (our contractor), traffic signals contractors, TfL, and the West End Project team to ensure minimal disruption to residents and businesses and to the network.

## **7 LINKS TO OUR CAMDEN PLAN OBJECTIVES**

7.1.1 Our Camden Plan (2018-22) is the borough's overarching strategy which sets a vision for Camden. Reducing inequality and improving health and well-being are central objectives. The proposals meet objectives in four of five focus areas delivering the Plan's strategic objectives:

- Delivering well-designed infrastructure that encourages integration, cohesion and active lifestyles.
- Strong growth and access to jobs depends on a high quality transport network.
- Clean, vibrant and sustainable places, addressing the serious challenge of air quality and carbon emissions; to which transport is a major contributor, while ensuring that its streets and public spaces are also clean, attractive and safe. The Council also commits to making it easier for people to travel more by foot or by bike, by prioritising pedestrians and cyclists above other road users.
- Healthy independent lives put health and wellbeing at the forefront of Council action, making it part of everything we do. This includes creating environments which make it easier to make healthy choices and do physical activity such as walking and cycling.

## **8 CONSULTATION**

8.1.1 A total of 25,376 consultation letters were distributed to residents, businesses, local and statutory, groups and Ward Members in Camden. The consultation period ran from 5th February 2018 to 3rd March 2018. The extent of the area of consultation is shown in Appendix B and a breakdown of the consultation results is shown in Appendix C.

8.1.2 In total 465 consultation responses (a 3% response rate) were received and these are summarised in Appendix C. Taking the two main proposals into account, the full or partial closure of Bloomsbury Square and the new diagonal crossing at High Holborn the responses indicate a majority support from those who reside in the borough.

8.1.3 The consultation indicates an overall 51% support for the proposals at Holborn Underground Station and an overall 51% objection the proposals at Bloomsbury Square/Vernon Place.

8.1.4 75% of residents support the measures proposed at High Holborn/Kingsway and 66% of residents supported those proposed at Vernon Place/Southampton Row.

8.1.5 Ward members provided no objection to the proposals except for the loss of residents parking bays at Bloomsbury Square. The proposals have subsequently been amended to mitigate these concerns.

8.1.6 The proposals are strongly supported by The Friends of Bloomsbury Square residents group and Camden Cycling Campaign; as well as over 70% of local groups. St Joseph's school (on Macklin Street) support the proposals.



- 8.1.7 Responses from the taxi trade represented 25% of all responses (118 in total). Objections cited that banning the left turn from Vernon Place would add journey time delays for their passengers and result in a loss of trade. It is accepted that journey time delays to taxis would increase under the proposals however there are alternative routes and so is viewed as acceptable when considering the benefits gained from the proposals. The possibility was considered to provide an exemption to the left turn ban for taxis however this would not permit the junction to operate effectively and the risk to cyclists would still remain from taxis turning left from the general traffic lane.
- 8.1.8 The Metropolitan Police's road safety officer's view is that banning the left turn movements would increase instances of offending and road rage. There were also concerns that increased journey times could impact emergency response times. Officers recognise these concerns, although consider the benefit of progressing the proposals and reducing the risk of collisions to be greater.
- 8.1.9 The majority of objections to the left turn ban from Vernon Place cited that it would make journeys to their property or business more difficult. It is acknowledged that journey times may be longer for those choosing to use a motor vehicle to make these trips. Access to these destinations is still possible via a different route and as such is viewed as acceptable for the benefits gained from the proposals when considered against the inconvenience for users of private motor vehicles.

## **9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1.1 Members when taking decisions, must when carrying out the Council's functions comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This is a personal duty which Members must consider.
- 9.1.2 The Council has a duty under section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 ("RTRA 1984"), so far as practicable, to exercise its functions under that Act to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway. In performing this duty the Council must have regard to:
- I. the desirability of securing and maintaining reasonable access to premises;
  - II. the effect on the amenities of any locality affected (including the importance of regulating and restricting the use of roads by heavy commercial vehicles), so as to preserve or improve the amenities of the areas through which the roads run;
  - III. the National Air Quality Strategy;
  - IV. the importance of facilitating the passage of public service vehicles and of securing the safety and convenience of persons using or desiring to use such vehicles; and
  - V. any other matters appearing to the authority to be relevant.
- 9.1.3 Under section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, the Council is required to prepare and carry out a programme of measures designed to promote road safety, to carry out studies into accidents arising out of the use of vehicles, to

take such measures as appear to the Council to be appropriate to prevent such accidents, including giving training and advice and other measures taken in the exercise of its powers for controlling, protecting or assisting the movement of traffic on roads.

9.1.4 A traffic regulation order may be made where it appears to the authority to be expedient to make it for one or more of the purposes set out in the RTRA 1984: please see the summary of those provisions below. Officers consider that, having regard to section 122 of the RTRA 1984, it would be expedient to progress the recommended Order for the following purposes set out or referred to in section 1 of that Act:

- for avoiding or preventing danger to persons or other traffic using the road;
- for facilitating the passage on the road of any class of traffic (including pedestrians);
- for preventing vehicular traffic using the corridor, or using it in a manner, which is unsuitable having regard to the existing character of the road;
- for preserving the character of the road where it is specially suitable for use by persons on foot;
- for preserving or improving the amenities of the area through which the road runs; and
- for improving air quality in the borough by, among other measures, implementing the Council's Clean Air Action Plan.

9.1.5 The Council also has a responsibility under the Environment Act 1995 to take steps to reduce air pollution. As in much of central London, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and EU Objectives for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) are exceeded within Camden. Although currently meeting the EU objective levels for particulate matters (PM), Camden is working to reduce PM levels to WHO objectives. Closing Bloomsbury Square is anticipated to improve air quality around the green space where people are likely to congregate.

9.1.6 As a result of failing to meet these Objectives within Camden, the whole of the Borough has been designated an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) since 2000. This requires the Council to take action to reduce air pollution levels, and to monitor pollution levels across the Borough. As a result, the Council has a regularly updated Clean Air Action Plan which currently has over 60 actions aimed at reducing pollution levels. The Council also has a monitoring network capturing AQ data from across the borough.

## **10 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (finance comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services)**

10.1.1 This paper seeks approval from the Cabinet Member for Improving Camden's Environment to proceed with the implementation of the scheme, subject to detailed design and compliance with statutory processes.

10.1.2 The estimated cost of this proposal is £431,334 and would be funded from both Local Implementation Plan (LIP) and Section 106 funding in year 2018/2019.

10.1.3 Should the scheme not proceed, or the cost is lower than anticipated, the funding will be reallocated to other projects. Costs will be monitored closely during implementation to ensure that costs do not exceed the budget.

## **11 APPENDICES**

Appendix A – Prevention of Future Deaths report.

Appendix B – Public Consultation.

Appendix C – Results of Public Consultation

Appendix D – SIR Report

**REPORT ENDS**