

APPENDIX B - CONSULTATION RESPONSES AND OFFICERS' COMMENTS

1 Consultation Summary

- 1.1 The consultation period ran from 5th February 2018 to 3rd March 2018.
- 1.2 A total of 25,376 consultation letters were distributed to residents, businesses, local and statutory, groups and Ward Members. The extent of the area of consultation is shown in Appendix B.
- 1.3 The consultation was also available online at WeAreCamden.org where respondents could submit their views via an online questionnaire. The consultation questionnaire requested feedback on proposed improvements outlined in the consultation leaflet, and asked for alternative suggestions.
- 1.3.1 In total 465 online and postal responses were received, representing a response rate of 3%, which is below the average response rate received for other traffic schemes.
- 1.4 We asked respondents for their comments and suggestions on the proposal. Of the 465 total responses received to the consultation, 297 (64%) left a comment about the proposals.

2 Bloomsbury Square and Vernon Place junction with Southampton Row

Consultation Question	
Question 1	<p>Do you agree with the proposed changes at Bloomsbury Square/Vernon Place?</p> <p>This includes the following key changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing the southern access of Bloomsbury Square at both ends of the square to create an improved public space and to prevent rat running. • Banning the lightly used left-turn from Vernon Place to Southampton • Row to all vehicles except cyclists to improve safety of cyclists travelling ahead • Extending the bus, taxi and cycle lane to the junction to reduce the journey time for buses and taxi travelling eastbound. • Improved parking and loading provision around Bloomsbury Square for residents and businesses.

<i>Total Responses</i>	465	
Yes	237	51%
No	217	47%
No Opinion	11	2%

<i>Residents Responses</i>	160	
Yes	120	75%
No	35	22%

No Opinion	5	3%
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<i>Business (including taxis drivers)</i>	282	
Yes	101	36%
No	175	62%
No Opinion	6	2%

Local Groups	18	
Yes	14	77%
No	4	22%
No Opinion	0	0%

2.1 Stakeholder Responses for the proposed changes at Bloomsbury Square and Vernon Place junction with Southampton Row.

Camden Cycling Campaign (CCC)
CCC strongly support the changes at Bloomsbury Square and Vernon Place
CCC's response to specific proposals are detailed as below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the banning the left turn from Vernon Place into Southampton Row to all vehicles except cyclists. • Support extending the bus lane on Bloomsbury Way-Vernon Place to the traffic signals with Southampton Row although would like this to be a 24/7 restriction. • Support closing Bloomsbury Square to motor vehicles at both junctions with Bloomsbury Way-Vernon Place. • Support providing two-way access by motor vehicles to both sides of the square from the north side. • CCC object to its use of the bus lane by taxis since they form a significant proportion of the traffic and it would be more pleasant and safer to cycle without sharing with taxis.
Officer response: The extended bus lane is proposed to operate for 24 hours per day. Officers appreciate that it would be more comfortable for cycling if taxis were exempt from using the bus lane, although traffic modelling showed that this would cause an unacceptable queue length downstream of the junction; which would cause delays to buses and cycles travelling through the area.

Metropolitan Police
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.
Officer Response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers recognise the concerns of offending and road rage, however consider the benefit of progressing the proposals and reducing the risk of collisions to be greater.

- Although journey times for general traffic is expected to increase at the junction, officers anticipate bus journey times to decrease due to the extended bus lane. This is expected to benefit emergency services using the bus lane.

RMT Taxis

RMT do not support the ban of taxis turning left from Vernon Place to Southampton Row

RMT ask that taxis be exempt from the ban on Vernon Place to Southampton Row and cite that in other locations in London a supplementary exemption plate is used beneath the 'no left turn' sign. This can be written into the traffic regulation order as stated within the Traffic Signs Manual Chapter 3 Regulatory Signs 4.14.

Officer response:

Officers understand RMT's concerns and endeavoured to maintain the left turn movement for taxis as part of the design process. Although physically possible to achieve, the results of the traffic modelling showed that it was not possible to maintain the movement without severe impact on the junction operation. It is also important to remove the left hook conflict with cyclists completely.

Summary of concerns

- 2.1.1 The majority of objections were regarding the left turn ban from Vernon Place citing 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 the benefits of the proposals are considered to outweigh the inconvenience for users of private motor vehicles.
- 2.1.2 Concerns were raised from some residents of Bury Place, stating that traffic that currently uses Bloomsbury Square (west) would reassign to the already congested Bury Place; causing increased pollution and anti-social behaviour. Officers consider that traffic reassignment to Bury Place is unlikely given the option for vehicles to continue on Bloomsbury Place; before turning right on Southampton Row. Traffic modelling supports this view, although should increases of traffic be observed on Bury Place, officers view that the benefits of the scheme would outweigh this issue.
- 2.1.3 Two residents of Bloomsbury Square expressed concern at the loss of single yellow line outside of their property, used for unloading goods such as groceries before finding a space to park their car; although the residents still supported the proposals. An existing section of single yellow line a short distance to the north has been maintained to allow for this and other loading requirements.

3 Kingsway Junction with Southampton Row and High Holborn

Consultation Question	
Question 2	<p>Do you agree with the proposed changes at the junction of Kingsway/Southampton Row/High Holborn?</p> <p>This includes the following key changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installing a diagonal pedestrian crossing to reduce crossing times and footway congestion. • Widening the footways to provide more space for pedestrians between Holborn Station and Procter Street by reducing the lightly used right-turn lane. • Re-arranging the street furniture outside the station entrance to create more space.

<i>Total Responses</i>	465	
Yes	221	48%
No	237	51%
No Opinion	7	1%

<i>Residents Responses</i>	160	
Yes	106	66%
No	52	33%
No Opinion	2	1%

<i>Business (including taxis)</i>	282	
Yes	100	35%
No	178	63%
No Opinion	4	1%

<i>Local Groups</i>	18	
Yes	13	72%
No	4	22%
No Opinion	1	6%

3.1 Stakeholder Responses for the proposed changes at the junction of Kingsway/Southampton Row/High Holborn

Camden Cycling Campaign (CCC)
CCC strongly support the changes at Kingsway/Southampton Row/High Holborn
CCC acknowledge that is strong demand for pedestrian improvements at Holborn station and therefore support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installing a diagonal pedestrian crossing. • Widening the footways using space gained by removing one lane of motor traffic on the eastern approach to the junction

CCC support the proposals provided that any changes to the operation of the gyratory provide space for cycling, especially in regards to the new station entrance, or any future gyratory removal schemes. CCC note that that consideration should be given to the proposed GRID route on Theobalds Road.

Officer response:

Whilst improvements to cycling on Theobalds Road are outside of the scope of this scheme (which is to improve safety at the two junctions), during the design process officers ensured that the scheme allows for future improvements as part of the GRID route.

4 Responses for both junctions

Summary

- 4.1.1 Ward members provided no objection to the proposals except for the loss of residents parking bays at Bloomsbury Square. The proposals were subsequently amended to mitigate these concerns by providing a
- 4.1.2 BeeMidtown are supportive of the proposals put forward which align with their recent stakeholder engagement on the public realm in the local Holborn area. BeeMidtown appreciate that the proposals indicate a strong priority towards walking and cycling and align with BeeMidtown's corporate principles.
- 4.1.3 The proposals are strongly supported by The Friends of Bloomsbury Square residents group; as well as over 70% of local groups including St Joseph's school (located on Macklin Street).
- 4.1.4 General 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 officers consider the benefits of the proposal to outweigh the impact on taxis. The possibility was considered to provide an exemption to the left turn ban for taxis at Vernon Place 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.
- 4.1.5 There were a number of objections to providing improvements for cycling, citing contributions to taxation and the view that motor vehicles should take precedent over cycling. Funding of road maintenance is derived from general taxation paid by all tax payers, rather than from revenue generated from Vehicle Excise Duty, which is paid to the treasury. Prioritising motor vehicles does not align with Camden's objectives as outlined in the Camden Transport Strategy nor the current Mayor's Transport Strategy. Priority is given to those modes which are the most sustainable, addressing the multiple transport challenges of deteriorating air quality and impacts on health, carbon emissions and climate change, congestion and delays and road safety.
- 4.1.6 To assist with analysis, comments were categorised into three broad categories: comments that were positive, negative and further comments. Most of the latter related to the subject of the consultation. However, some were more general comments on cycling and traffic and a few were outside the scope of the scheme.

4.1.7 Positive Comments

Positive Comments

These are good proposals to cut off a rat run and make Bloomsbury Square a pleasant place for pedestrians and cyclists

I agree with the proposed changes to High Holborn, greater pedestrian space would make this area safer for pedestrians and users of Holborn station.

I am in huge support of these very positive changes to improve this hugely congested area. As a local resident, I hope this scheme goes ahead.

Great to see these plans are putting the needs of walkers and cyclists first.

This is a really great scheme - particularly the changes at the Holborn Junction. Well done.

I live outside the area but when I cycle through, I feel very unsafe on Bloomsbury Way and look forward to these changes being made.

4.1.8 Negative Comments

Negative comments

General negative comments: I am opposed to these proposed changes and wish to see the road and street layout unchanged

Officer Response:

The scheme seeks to address current and future safety risks associated with an unacceptable number of collisions, including the deaths of 3 cyclists. Whilst it is acknowledged that the scheme would inconvenience motorists, the benefits achieved for people walking and cycling through the area are considered to be greater.

There is an anticipated 50% increase in pedestrians using the area over the next 5 years and it is important that the Council (as highway authority) prepare for this.

There is significant support from residents for these changes and officers consider the changes vital if we want to achieve a modal shift from the use of private motor car to more walking and cycling, which will help reduce congestion and improve pollution; whilst also improving the look and feel of the area and making it more pleasant to walk and cycle.

These ambitions are consistent with both Camden's Transport Strategy and The Mayors Transport Strategy; both of which give priority to the most sustainable and least polluting modes of transport.

Negative comments

General negative comments: It will take me longer to drive to my house in my car

Officer Response:

Officers agree that if driving in a private motor car from Vernon Place to a destination to the north, there will be an increase in journey time. Considering the benefits achieved from the scheme for all other road users, officers consider that the benefit that will be achieved by implementing the proposals will outweigh any journey time increases to users of private motor vehicles.

Negative comments

General negative comments: I am a taxi driver and it will make it more difficult to get to Euston and King's Cross

Officer Response:

Officers acknowledge this concern and anticipate journeys in Taxis to take longer when driving from Bloomsbury Way to Euston/King's Cross. However, we expect Taxi's to either avoid the area (using Woburn Place) unless collecting a passenger locally, when they would use Grays Inn Road to reach destinations to the North. The benefits the proposals are expected to achieved are considered to outweigh any inconvenience to taxis.

Negative comments

General negative comments: I can't believe you're intending to refurbish Holborn junction without installing segregated cycle tracks, and are just offering those unuseable advanced stop lines usually ignore by drivers. Is there an early start at the signal?

Officer Response:

Officers acknowledge that cycle lanes on the approach to Holborn Station would be beneficial. We investigated providing cycle lanes as part of the design and modelling process (as well as early start facilities), however it is impossible to install these at this stage due to insufficient capacity at the junction. Camden continue to investigate providing improved cycle facilities through the area with a long term ambition to redevelop the wider Holborn area (and gyratory); to make it better for walking and cycling. It is also important to prioritise pedestrians in this location given the increasing numbers expected in the area in the coming years.

Negative comments

I would suggest that Taxis are NOT allowed to use the bus lane in Bloomsbury Sq/Vernon Place, or use southbound in Southampton Row. Taxis are not a form of public transport (they are effectively private car hire with a driver).

Officer Response:

Officers considered all scenarios during the design process, including making the bus lane for bus and cycles only. However, the outcome of the traffic modelling predicted that by banning taxis from the bus lane, queues along Bloomsbury Way would become unacceptable and cause blocking of junctions downstream.

4.2 Suggested Improvements, Some concerns and General Comments

4.2.1 The majority of comments were received that did not fall into the positive or negative categories. These respondents generally supported the scheme but had concerns about some aspects of the proposals or had suggestions for improvement.

Consider pedestrianising part of Bury Place; this was done some years ago for Museum Street, to very good effect.

Officer Response:

Whilst outside of the scope of the project, which is to make safety improvements at the two key junctions; officers continually monitor roads within the borough. Whilst we have no plans to pedestrianise Bury Place at this stage, we appreciate that there is significant demand for pedestrian space in the vicinity of the British Museum.

At Vernon PI / Bloomsbury Way: remove the medians and use the extra width to widen the bus lane (from Bloomsbury Sq west to Southampton Way)

Officer Response:

Officers explored this possibility during the design process, however it was not possible to achieve without compromising the safety of Eastbound cyclists.

Could the new diagonal crossing be painted green to add more greenery to the area or be painted by local artists to reflect the pioneering scientific or artistic organisations in the area?

Officer Response:

It is appreciated that there is a lack of Greenery in the area. Whilst we would not paint the crossing green to due to maintenance costs, we will look to provide new vegetation as part of the detailed design process, should the scheme proceed.

