

A Sustainable Transport Case Against One Way Streets, Paul Gasson, May 1999

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The Camden Cycling Campaign believe that one-way streets are intrinsically environmentally unsustainable traffic management measures, and is opposed to the creation of any further one-way streets in the borough.

One way working penalises benign transport modes in order to accommodate more destructive ones, and has an adverse effect on most local travel patterns, as destinations become further away and thus more difficult to get to. This distortion has an impact on local centres, and can lead to a significant decline in their use.

We consider the following impacts to be contrary to the spirit of sustainable environmental policies:

1. **Road Capacity & Speed:** the effective increase in road capacity leads to higher vehicle speeds as motorists do not expect to encounter threatening hazards (ie other motor vehicles which may cause them injury) travelling in the opposite direction.
2. **Junction Manoeuvres:** motorists tend to negotiate junctions incorporating a one way street with less care.
3. **Environmental Impact:** the local street environment often suffers, and there may also be higher noise levels and greater pollution. This can lead to the loss of local centres if they are also marginal.
4. **Parking Capacity:** One-way working is often introduced to allow the continuation or introduction of car parking on both sides of a street. This encouragement of car ownership is intrinsically unsustainable.
5. **Casualties:** 1 & 2 have major safety implications for pedestrians and cyclists, with the likelihood of more accidents, and higher severity of casualties.
6. **Sustainable Journeys:** pedestrians and cyclists will tend to avoid dangerous or unpleasant locations such as one-way street systems, leading to longer journeys, or even the decision to use less sustainable transport modes. If cycle contraflow facilities do not exist, then cyclists are legally obliged to detour. The time penalty for cyclists may be higher than for motor vehicles; for pedestrian detours it is often very great.
7. **Pavement Cycling:** where cycle contraflow facilities have not been provided, there is likely to be an increase in pavement cycling from less conscientious cyclists. In effect, one-way streets discriminate against cyclists who obey road traffic regulations; ie those that Camden presumably wishes to encourage.

The council's stated UDP & TPP policies in terms of encouraging cycling and walking and discouraging motor vehicle use, the draft Local Agenda 21 Plan, and Camden's Green Transport policies, all clearly discourage the use of measures which have the impacts listed above. The only exception is item 4, as it is with surprise that we learn that the council has no policy on discouraging car ownership, only on discouraging car use.

Every additional one-way street is a nail in the coffin for environmental sustainability, and is building up a legacy of increased motor vehicle use which will be difficult to overturn at a later date.

We urge the council to re-examine the true impact of one-way working, and consider greater use of alternative people-friendly traffic restraint measures. These should include road closures, and a reduction in parking supply, to lower motor vehicle use.