

20th December 2018

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Cc: Kieran Ward, Simi Shah, Alexis Bielich

Consultation on proposed changes to the Torrington Place / Tavistock Place corridor

This response to the consultation on the above proposal from Camden Council is from Camden Cycling Campaign, the local borough group of London Cycling Campaign. We represent the interests of cyclists living or working in the Camden and aim to expand the opportunities for all to cycle safely in the borough. We have discussed this consultation by with our committee, by email and online (using Cyclescape).

1. Our reasons for supporting eastbound motor traffic

The westbound option would provide a clear run for motor vehicles all the way from Grays Inn Road to Edgware Road, allowing them to avoid the Euston Road, using instead Sidmouth Street (part of the CS6 route) and the Tavistock Place corridor. The eastbound option was designed to eliminate this rat run.

With the westbound option, at peak hours there are predicted to be 300 – 400 extra motor vehicles on Tavistock Place between Gordon Square and Bedford Way. (This motor traffic will eventually reduce when HS2 closes the top of Gordon Street – maybe in 2022).

We have to say, also, that the significant differences between modelled and actual results in recently completed schemes lead us to lack confidence in the modelling. Intuitively and based on the modelling done at the time of the previous consultation, we believe that we may get a much greater increase along the corridor and, especially, on Torrington Place.

With the westbound option, there are critical safety disadvantages on the corridor at two of the junctions:

Gower Street junction:

In the existing eastbound option only cycles (no motor vehicles) cross Gower Street. But westbound motor flow introduces a very serious safety risk for cyclists. All that is offered for westbound cyclists at this junction is an ASL with early release, so anyone arriving during the green stage is at serious risk of a left hook by motors turning from Tavistock Place into Gower Street southbound.

Gordon Square (west) junction:

In the westbound option, right turning motor vehicles will cross the track; and there will be 100-300 more of them using the west side of Gordon Square, which must increase the likelihood of a collision.

There are difficulties joining the corridor at four other junctions:

Bedford Way and Woburn Place junctions:

In the westbound option, on each of them the current left or left+ahead cycle lane on the northbound approach is removed to provide a left-turn-only motor lane with no provision at all for cyclists. Very unpleasant for people joining the westbound cycle track.

Marchmont Street junction:

For the popular right turn out of Marchmont Street, cycles have to turn onto the track sandwiched between southbound and westbound motors – not safe or comfortable.

Judd/Hunter Street junction:

The westbound motor and cycle traffic is mixed but passes through a narrow funnel ensuring that each vehicle (motor or cycle) runs separately. The additional straight-ahead motors will make this junction far less comfortable for cycling. Many cycles will be turning right here to use the planned Judd Street/Midland Road route whereas most motors will go straight ahead so conflicts are likely to arise.

2. Stepped tracks and footway widening (Drawing 3)

Track width

The consultation appears not to specify a width for the cycle tracks. We have calculated one as follows:

- Table 1 in 'Cycle Info' shows AM westbound peak hour flows of 800+ and PM peak flows of 600+ at three locations;
- from LCDS Fig 4.11 (page 52), high flows are defined as 800-1200 in the peak hour; while Fig 4.12 states that for high flows, a width of 2.5m+ is recommended.

Therefore, the tracks should be at least 2.5m wide to allow for the increasing number of cyclists. In addition¹, for mobility impaired cyclists to feel unpressurised, enough width must be provided so that they can easily be passed in the track.

We are in favour of widening the footways where this can be done without compromising the requirement for the width of the cycle track.

There are opportunities to gain road space for cycling and walking. For example:

- the consultation leaflet (page 11) refers to reducing the width of the traffic lane for motor vehicles to improve safety;
- our suggestion for improving permeability for cycles at the Bedford Way junction has eastbound motors in a separate stage – perhaps the right turning motor lane will no longer be needed.

Infrastructure on Torrington Place west of Gower Street

The combination of tailbacks from TCR and both legal and illegal parking and loading make this section pretty horrendous for inexperienced cyclists, who are guaranteed to be present in quite large numbers at the start of each academic year. If Camden are going to live up to their promises in the new Transport Strategy they should look for a safer solution. This solution would involve separation of cycles and motor vehicles at TCR junction.

We support the stepped track on the north side of the road. Additional measures such as wands may be needed to prevent illicit parking here.

On the south side, we support the stepped track between Gower Street and Huntley Street. West of Huntley Street please see below (section 3) for what we have to say about the TCR junction.

¹ Helena Azzam's evidence at the Public Inquiry

Appearance of the stepped tracks.

We understand the reasons for Camden's use of conventional tarmac for the surface of cycle tracks. But we strongly suggest that a colour distinction is needed for the tracks on Tavistock/Torrington to deter parking and driving on the track by motors. A different shade of grey or buff colour would suffice, as used in other boroughs.

Byng Place

For the westbound (contraflow) cyclists, the edge of the cycle track should be marked clearly, for example with a line of metal or thermoplastic studs.

3. Permeability and other junction improvements in the eastbound option

Signalised junctions

Tottenham Court Road junction

A segregated lane and a separate signal phase for WB cycles at TCR is the only fully safe arrangement at the Torrington/TCR junction.

Gower Street junction

Under the eastbound motor arrangement the movements for cycles on the corridor are sound. However cyclists wishing to turn right from the tracks on Gower Street (both northbound and southbound) will find it very difficult in spite of the early release. Two-stage right turns would be the safest solution for this. In Figure 1.1 of the Traffic Impact document we suggest switching stages 2 and 3 so that cyclists are not held unnecessarily and won't interfere with pedestrians.

Bedford Way/ Tavistock Square junction

Cycles on the corridor:

Figure 2.1 proposes an extra signal stage in which westbound cycles are held while eastbound motors turn right. Although this will remove a conflict, it doesn't provide right turns for cycles.

We note from Figure 2.2 that in the westbound option, cycles on the corridor are given a separate stage in the signals which would enable them to make all available turns in a single stage. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 show that 57.9% and 79.1% Max Degree of Saturation (DoS) for the east and westbound options respectively.

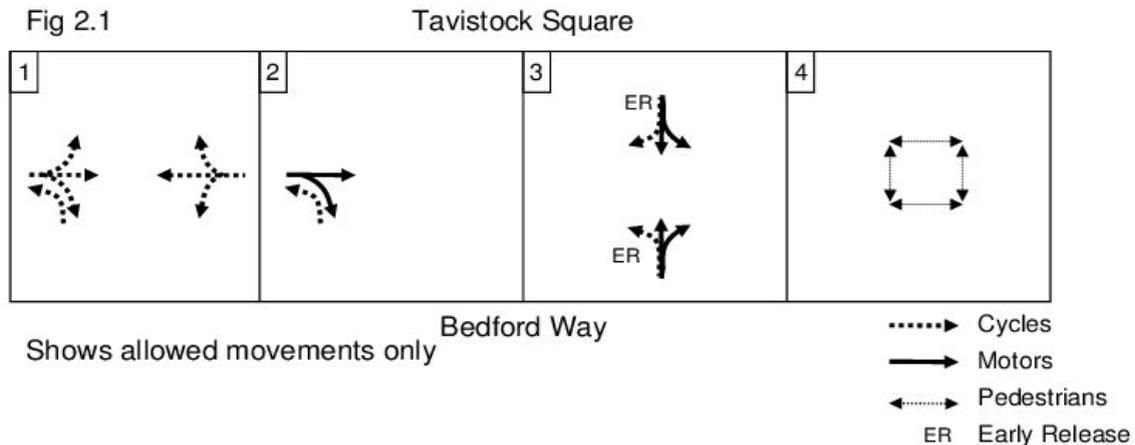
We therefore suggest that (in the eastbound option) cycles on the corridor are given a separate stage in the signals which would enable them to make all available turns in a single stage.

Cycles crossing the corridor:

The situation is as now, with a separated left turn from Bedford Way onto the corridor and all other movements made with motor vehicles. We suggest:

- adding an ASL on Bedford Way and providing early release for cycles both north and southbound
- and allowing cycles to turn left from Bedford Way during stages 1 and 2 of the signals.

We therefore suggest the following signal stages:



To summarise our suggested signal stages:

- Stage 1: east and westbound cycles with the ability to turn left, right or go ahead, while cycles turn left out of Bedford Way;
- Stage 2: eastbound motor vehicles ahead and right, while cycles turn left out of Bedford Way;
- Stage 3: as in Figure 2.1, plus early release for cycles;
- Stage 4: pedestrian all-green stage.

Woburn Place / Tavistock Square junction

Figure 3.1 shows an arrangement apparently the same as the current situation. This junction is close to the previous one (Bedford Way) and with a Max DoS 93.3% (Table 3.1) we will therefore refrain from suggesting anything too ambitious.

Cycles on the corridor:

Enable the left turn into Woburn Place for eastbound cycles².

Cycles crossing the corridor:

The situation is as now, with a separated left and ahead lane for cycles from Woburn Place south.

Marchmont Street junction

Table 4.1 shows a 39.1% Max DoS on Marchmont Street southbound, allowing plenty of scope for improvements.

Cycles on the corridor:

Figure 4.1 shows an arrangement that improves on the current situation by allowing five instead of four out of the six possible movements, although the right turn into Marchmont Street for westbound cycles is difficult in the face of oncoming motor traffic. The two solutions that occur to us are either:

- a protected right-turn pocket;
- or a separate signal stage for cycles as in Figure 4.2 (westbound alternative);
- or a priority junction with zebras on all arms.

We would like to discuss the pros and cons of this issue.

² Figure 3.1 doesn't show westbound cycles turning left, as in current situation but pedestrians have an all green stage so don't really need this extra opportunity to cross.

Cycles crossing the corridor:

The current arrangement is fine apart from the fact that southbound cyclists at the front of the ASL box cannot see the signal head. Low-level signals would solve this problem.

Judd Street/ Hunter Street Junction

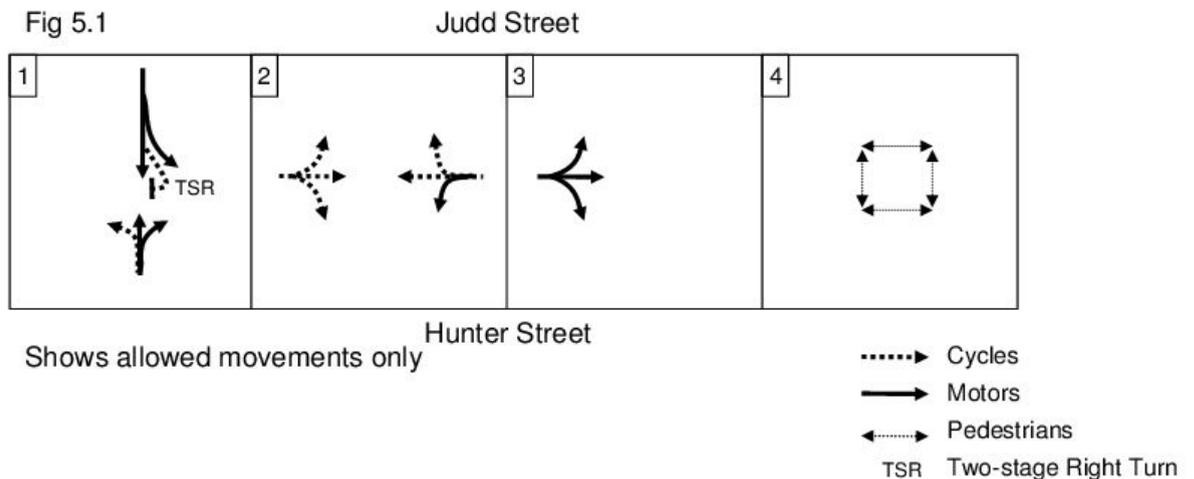
This junction is very important, as it is at the intersection of three cycle routes:

- the Tavistock Place corridor which is on the former LCN0 east-west route;
- the CS6 route which runs up Judd Street and soon will run northbound via Midland Road;
- The north south route via Lamb's Conduit Street to Holborn.

It is therefore essential that cycles should be provided with all possible turns.

Figure 5.1 indicates that all westbound traffic will now be allowed to turn right, which caters for cycles on CS6 needing to turn right into Judd Street. However, we would prefer that only cycles be allowed to make this manoeuvre (i.e. 'Left Turn Only — Except Cycles')³. This would enable the signalling solution that we suggested in our response to the 2016 consultation and we will outline below. Permitted turns for motors would be as now so would not need re-modelling.

In stage 2 of Figure 5.1 all vehicles exit Tavistock Place (west) eastbound and can make all turns and (as is the current situation) straight ahead cycles are at risk of left hook. Since the cycles are in a separated lane, they can be provided with a separate signal stage. We therefore suggest the following stages:



- Stage 1 as in Figure 5.1 but with the addition of a two-stage right turn for cycles southbound on Judd Street turning west into Tavistock Place;
- Stage 2: east and westbound cycles run together with the westbound motors (motors turning left and cycles making all movements);
- Stage 3: eastbound motors on Tavistock Place all movements;
- Stage 4: pedestrian all-green stage.

For this to work the right turn for westbound motors into Judd Street must continue to be banned.

³ With Judd Street closed at Euston Road, this will not put many motor vehicles on the diversion via Wakefield Street, Handel Street and Hunter Street.

Huntley Street contraflow

We support the northbound contraflow on Huntley Street (north of Torrington Place) up to Capper Street, with two-way cycling to Tottenham Court Road (where Capper Street is closed).

We also would like the contraflow to continue further north on Huntley Street up to University Street.

Low-level signals for cyclists

These are needed at Marchmont Street where there is no second signal (currently cyclists in the ASL cannot see the signal). Low level signals would be desirable elsewhere. If funds allow, they would really improve the experience for the people riding the route, particularly those with limited mobility.

Priority junctions

Blended junctions. The consultation in 2016 mentions ‘blended crossings’ – junctions where both footway and cycle track are marked across the side road, the ‘Give Way’ marking on the latter being before the footway. We want to see the ‘blended crossing’ treatment at all of the ‘priority junctions’. That is at:

Huntley Street; Ridgmount Gardens– Chenies Mews; Malet Street;
Gordon Street; Woburn Square (west and east); Gordon Square (east)
Herbrand Street and Kenton Street.

4. Other issues

Loading bay outside Planet Organic.

We are strongly against putting a loading bay in the cycle track. We have seen primary school age children using these tracks. Although motor traffic flows have reduced since the introduction of the trial, they are still too high for people on bikes to share the road with motor vehicles (AM peak hour 274, lunchtime hour 993 and PM peak hour 246)⁴ and they are expected to increase under the West End Project.

In the case that there is a loading bay, the hours should be kept to a minimum and avoid the lunchtime peak (i.e. 10am-noon and 2-4pm) and they must be properly enforced. Loading and parking outside the loading bay should be discouraged by the use of wands.

Cycle counters

At least one set of cycle counters is needed. The two counters in Royal College Street and the one in Pancras Road have enabled us to report on the usage of these two routes, in particular we were able to show a 20% increase in the number of cyclists following the opening of the northern extension of Royal College Street.

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⁴ Figures from 2016 consultation since none are supplied with the 2018 consultation