Camden Cycling Campaign, 23 Torriano Cottages, London NW5 2TA
30th September 2013

Response to: Consultation on Cobden Junction

To Anthony Bailey, John Futcher and Simi Shah

I am writing on behalf of Camden Cycling Campaign, the local borough group of London Cycling Campaign. We have over 600 members and represent the interests of cyclists living or working in the borough of Camden. We consulted our members by email and on CycleScape about the Cobden Junction consultation and this response has been agreed by the committee and reflects the views of the membership.

The proposals for Cobden Junction are presented as part of the wider Camden Town Project. Unfortunately when that project started there was no overall vision for cycling in the Camden Town area, which is illustrated by the lack of consideration of cyclists in the 2011 Britannia Junction scheme. The Cobden Junction consultation is an improvement in that it mentions an awareness of the lack of west-east routes for cyclists across the Camden Town area.

The preliminary work on the Cobden Junction scheme showed an enthusiasm to provide an eastbound route for cyclists across the junction. But the scheme was not allowed to go ahead due to assumptions which we don't accept about the needs of competing road users.

There are also serious safety issues for cyclists with the proposed design. It is not good enough to "make the junction as safe and attractive as possible for pedestrians and cyclists within the normal constraints of managing the road network". It is only by breaking the normal constraints that 'Space for Cycling' can be acquired.

Because of the failure to increase permeability and the safety issues, we cannot support the scheme as proposed.

Our comments on the proposals

The proposed upgrade to Cobden Junction should improve the public space and conditions for pedestrians, but unfortunately it will fail to provide a high quality experience for anyone cycling through the junction.

The route northbound up Hampstead Road into Camden High Street and the westbound link into Mornington Crescent are improvements on the existing situation. But northbound cyclists leaving the ASL in Hampstead Road are at risk from motor vehicles encroaching on the cycle lane which should at least be mandatory and ideally should be protected.

Westbound on Crowndale Road retains three motor vehicle lanes on the approach to Eversholt Street. Space has been found for an advisory cycle lane inside a left turn only lane on the approach to a new ASL box. This arrangement exposes cyclists going straight ahead to unacceptable left hook risks.

Eversholt Street retains a single motor lane in each direction, but space has been found for a new northbound advisory feeder lane and ASL box. Cyclists going straight ahead into Camden High Street are at risk of left hooks – is this left turn for private motors necessary?

The westbound road between Eversholt Street and Hampstead Road retains three motor lanes, one left turn only and the other two for right turns (with no provision for cyclists). This is probably the worst part of the junction for cyclists with risks of being squeezed from both sides due to not having an allocated part of the road to occupy.

West-east permeability

We were enthusiastic about the carefully considered design for contraflow cycling on Crowndale Road and very disappointed that it was rejected by TfL's NMG due to what they said at the time were unacceptable delays to buses. Although other east-west options are under consideration, this one should not be dropped. Cyclists require maximum permeability as well as safety at this important junction on Camden High Street. We are not convinced that bus priority strategies have been thoroughly examined and we have serious reasons to believe that the traffic models grossly over-estimate delay predictions.

Modelling issues at Cobden Junction

As far as we are aware, the traffic modelling at Cobden Junction made assumptions based on the existing flows of buses and other motor vehicles. That is, it did not allow for any reduction in private motor vehicles through the junction.

We ask Camden to challenge current modelling techniques and request that the contraflow cycling scheme be implemented now, rather than at some unspecified time in the future.

We therefore ask the following questions:

1. Did the traffic simulations allow for an elasticity in demand? By this we mean the ability for models to represent traffic induction or traffic evaporation. If yes, we'd be keen to learn precisely how. If not, we would like to see the results of a test in which car, taxi and van traffic is reduced by 10% whilst the number of buses remains the same.
2. Did the model used account for the reassignment of motor vehicles on alternative routes? For example, is it really necessary for private motor vehicles to use Crowndale Road between Bayham Street and Camden High Street? What is the precise extent of the network used in the Cobden junction local simulation?
3. Can you provide a map of the model zoning and indicate where on the network the traffic is injected?
4. We understand that further work was also undertaken to see if bus priority could be introduced to mitigate these delays but that the delays could not be reduced to an acceptable level. Could you provide us with the precise bus priority scenario which was simulated?

A vision for Cycling in Camden Town

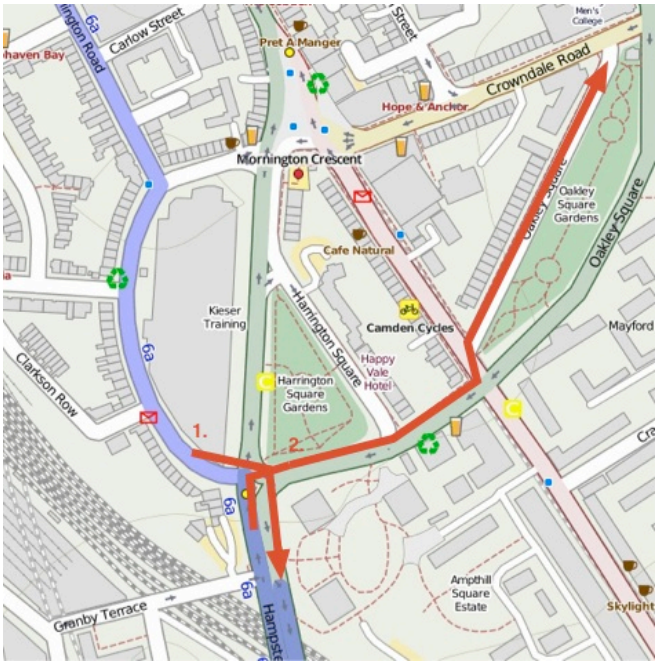
Without a vision for cycling in Camden Town, there is a risk that any or all of the alternative west-east links may fail in the same way as the one at Cobden Junction. We challenge Camden to devise a Camden Town Project that provides a high quality experience for cyclists in all of the roads around the town centre. When a big scheme like Cobden junction comes up, it would then have a role to play in implementing that vision.

We would expect that such an approach would result in re-allocating more road space to cycling and walking. As a result, journey times would be increased for general traffic and as people adapt by changing mode of transport or travelling at different times, a reduction in private motor traffic is inevitable.

This would require the use of traffic models that account in a positive way for a shift towards more efficient modes of transport.

Potential West East links

The consultation document states that alternative options for providing a west to east link are being explored at both Delancey Street / Pratt Street and Oakley Square. We briefly discuss these links and one other that has been considered in the past.



Link via Lidlington Place and Oakley Square

The quiet route labelled 6a on the map requires a right turn into Hampstead Road (red arrow 1). Note that the need for this turn was identified in the CRISP Report on Link 27 (CCS 2007). This should be included in the design of the link on red arrow 2.

Pratt – Delancey link

This link is important for the canal alternative route as well as being the most central one across Camden Town and would be a great addition to cycling permeability.

Plender – Miller link

This link should not be forgotten. It links well with quiet route 6a and a contraflow has already been built in Plender Street. It could be an opportunity to improve Miller Street. One member has suggested that since the council owns the disused land behind the railings, it would be of great community benefit if it was used to create a quality bike route.

Answers to the Questionnaire

We are not going to answer the following questions because they are not relevant to cycling issues.

- Overall do you agree with the principle of upgrading the junction by Mornington Crescent station?
- Do you agree with the proposal to extend the public space on the east side of Camden High Street outside Koko's and Sainsbury's? This would require the removal of one traffic lane on Camden High Street.
- Do you agree with the proposed changes to loading for vehicles and taxis on Camden High Street?
- Do you agree with what is proposed for the new public space and widened footways?

More meaningful questions would be:

'Do you agree that the design for the junction will ensure the safety of cyclists?'

'Are you satisfied with the improvements to permeability for cyclists?'

Jean Dollimore, Coordinator, Camden Cycling Campaign.