

## Response to Consultation on Safety improvements in King's Cross for cyclists, March 2014

To: [consultations@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:consultations@tfl.gov.uk), copy Joanne Elmer, John Futcher and Andrew Gilligan

### 1. Introduction

We are writing on behalf of Camden Cycling Campaign (CCC), the local borough group of London Cycling Campaign (LCC). 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](#) on this issue and this response reflects the views of the membership and others who cycle through the area.

The consultation notes that the proposals are for interim changes to improve facilities for cyclists. But it does not say anything about the full solution that we await. We are aware that removal of the gyratory is currently being studied but not expected to happen until 2016-18. We also understand that Gray's Inn Road / York Way is the currently preferred alignment for the proposed major north-south cycleway which is intended to be superior in capacity and safety to the current cycle super highways. These factors lead us to conclude that the present proposals are insufficient to ensure capacity and safety for the large volume of cycle traffic that will be using the junction in the near future.

### 2. Summary of our response

CCC cannot agree that the interim proposals for this routing will bring a net increase in safety for vulnerable road users of this junction, the cyclists and pedestrians. We are therefore unwilling to accept this very poor interim solution.

#### We have two main objections:

- The proposals take cycles onto the footway at an extremely pedestrian-busy junction. This would bring cyclists and pedestrians into conflict and quite likely, into collision.
- Cyclists unwilling to enter this on-footway zone would continue to travel in Grays Inn Road where no improvements have been made.

We have organized the remainder of this response in sections numbered as follows:

#### 3. Major issues:

- LCDS
- Junction safety
- Permeability

#### 4. Detailed objections:

- Separation of cycle track from traffic
- Separation of cycles from pedestrians,
- Time for crossing
- Junction capacity Gray's Inn Road to York Way

#### 5. Our preferred interim solution for Gray's Inn Road to York Way:

- Junctions with Protection for Cyclists
- Lane changing
- Protected Cycle lanes
- Bus contention on York Way: island bus stops

#### 6. Additional proposals

#### 7. Other considerations

Appendix A shows that the worst-case waiting times for cyclists using the carriageway would be considerably less than for those using the parallel on-footway crossings. Also the latter would have insufficient capacity to take all the people that currently travel this route on bicycles. And there will be many more of them, once the new construction is completed on the railway lands is and the North-South Cycleway is opened.

### Supporting information

See our Google map: <http://goo.gl/sV64cO> where the pedestrian crossings are numbered 1-5 for reference.

### 3. Major issues

#### London Cycle Design Standards

LCDS 2005 (Fig 4.1) recommends cycle lanes/tracks where the vehicle flow is above 10,000 vehicles per day. According to DfT's traffic counts for 2012, the average daily traffic flow is well above 10,000 vehicles per day on Euston Road (54,946), Pentonville Road (21,912), York Way (14,252), Gray's Inn Road (24,951) and Kings Cross Road (11,854). At the 2013 AGM, London Cycling Campaign resolved that for flows above 2,000 PCUs per day or speeds above 20 mph, cycles must be segregated from motor traffic. These proposals do very little towards addressing this requirement.

#### Junction safety

Another issue is with the safety of the junctions: not one of them is sufficiently calm for safe passage by cyclists and safe crossing by pedestrians. At major gyratories like this one, people on bicycles are particularly vulnerable when changing lanes. They can be cut off on their right by motors moving to the left or cut off on their left by motors moving to the right. This applies in two situations on the north-south alignment:

- Cycles on Gray's Inn Road heading northbound past Kings Cross Bridge need to get over to the fourth lane and are likely to be cut off on their right by motors turning across their path towards Euston Road. They could also be cut off on their left by motors coming up from behind and trying to get into the lanes ahead of them.
- Cycles on Kings Cross Bridge heading up Gray's Inn Road, towards York Way need to stay on the left of the two lanes heading that way while motors, also from Kings Cross Bridge, heading for Euston Road cut across them from their right side.

In addition there are two junctions where cycles are subjected to a risk of being cut off by motors on their right turning across their path (commonly referred to as 'left hook') at the following places:

- Euston Road eastbound at York Way. If cyclists can manage to move to the straight-ahead lane before the junction, they avoid the situation. But this is an awkward manoeuvre that many cyclists would be unable to perform.
- Caledonian Road southbound at Pentonville Road.

#### Permeability

The gyratory causes a severe lack of permeability for people on bicycles. And the proposal does nothing to address this, for example, it is impossible to cycle southbound from York Way to Gray's Inn Road on the proposed alignment of the major north-south cycleway.

#### Highest priority junction: cycling northbound from Gray's Inn Road into York Way

The main issue at the gyratory is related to cycling northbound from Gray's Inn Road into York Way: the route that cyclist Deep Lee was attempting to follow when she was killed in 2011. This route is used by cyclists going to King's Cross Station as well as the University of the Arts and will be used in the near future by staff working at all the major new developments to the north of Kings Cross station and those using the proposed north-south cycleway.

### 4. Detailed objections to the proposals

#### Separation of cycle track from traffic

- The plan has sections of hard separation between the cycle track and the road. In York Way on the north side of the junction buses at and waiting to reach the bus stops will often block cycles exiting from the separate track. The hard separation of the cycle track going west along Euston Road may prevent cycles from gaining the cycle track after having to overtake all the buses at, and pulling away from, the bus stop just preceding the cycle track. Both of these separations are needed to keep motors out of the tracks but they should be permeable for bikes.
- The mandatory eastbound cycle lane in Pentonville Road should have hard separation from the traffic and be at least 2 metres wide.

### **Separation of cycles from pedestrians**

One specific example of why we think the volume of pedestrians makes this solution unworkable: Pedestrians (on crossing 5) going from the footway on the south to the Lighthouse building (soon to contain a Co-op supermarket) will have to cross the north-bound cycle crossing. Same for any pedestrians starting on the King's Cross Station pavement (via crossing 3).

If, despite our objections, these proposals are implemented all the cycle routes need to be clearly marked as such. Pedestrians will be totally oblivious to the difference between cycle crossing and footway unless the markings are extremely clear.

### **Keeping the bike routes clear of traffic**

Traffic at this junction is often jammed. The drivers normally respect the yellow boxes but are quite happy to block the pedestrian crossings and, from evidence elsewhere, we are sure they will treat the cycle routes across the roads with equal contempt. These crossings must be kept clear, with robust enforcement (we suggest cameras and penalty notices). It is possible for fit and able pedestrians to wiggle between jammed vehicles but those in wheelchairs etcetera and those with bikes cannot do this. If the tracks are allowed to jam up people on bicycles will give up trying to use them. We also know that (with or without a bike) crossing in front of stationary HGVs in traffic is very dangerous. Lisa Pontecorvo died walking her bike through jammed traffic –<http://www.londonremembers.com/subjects/lisa-pontecorvo>.

### **Time for crossing**

The tables in Appendix A and B give crossing times for cyclists and pedestrians at the parallel crossings involving (1) and (2) and times for pedestrians at the other three.

There are other consequences of these waiting times:

At crossing (1) the cyclists will get two periods of 8-9 seconds in each 96-second cycle in the AM period and a little less in the PM period. With the proposed design bikes will be almost single file and having to make a right-angled turn, so very few will get across on each green phase. This will encourage risk-taking by those left behind.

- Since at certain times in the signal cycle, crossings (1) and (2) do not allow a continuous journey for cyclists travelling north there will be a build-up of cyclists on the island. This could become so blocked that there is no room for arriving cyclists and they are left queuing in the road when the lights change.
- Pedestrian volumes through crossings (4) and (5) are currently very low but this will change when the planned Co-op supermarket arrives. This will also significantly increase the pedestrian volumes across all the other junctions as well, and across the bike crossing on the island.

### **Junction capacity Gray's Inn Road to York Way**

See these two videos taken at 6pm on Thursday 6 March 2014, which show that the traffic which has two lanes on Gray's Inn Road, enters York Way in single file.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9oVE7q\\_guc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9oVE7q_guc)   <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IG4z1rqw1GM>

Despite the road being sufficiently wide to allow two lanes of vehicles to cross the junction, this does not happen. The main reason being that vehicles in the left lane tend to move across in front of those on their right so vehicles go across the junction staggered into a single file. We believe there are a number of reasons for this:

- Vehicles on the left just cut the corner.
- Drivers of vehicles on the left can see the blockage ahead caused by the buses pulling into the bus stops so they pre-emptively move out to avoid getting stuck behind the busses.
- Pedestrians here have to wait 90 seconds for a 6 second green man. Not surprisingly they are running across whenever they spot a gap so the drivers probably don't want a vehicle on one side obscuring their view and just feel it's safer to go across single-file, as indeed it is.

So, the capacity of this double-width junction is actually much closer to that of a single lane of traffic. Thus one lane currently dedicated to traffic could be converted to a cycle track (and a wider pavement than in the proposal) without any detrimental impact on throughput.

## **5. Our preferred interim solution for Gray's Inn Road to York Way**

As hinted above, we need protected junctions, protection from lane changing motors, protected cycle lanes and elimination of contention with buses in York Way.

### **Junctions with Protection for Cyclists**

The 'Cycle Segregated Junction' design was conceived for eliminating the possibility of cyclists going straight ahead being cut off by motors turning left. We expect this to be fully documented in the forthcoming LCDS version 2. It could be applied very effectively to provide a safe passage for cyclists going to York Way either from the southern part of Gray's Inn Road or from Kings Cross Bridge. With this design at a normal junction, a cyclist crosses the junction and reaches a protected kerbside lane well before any left-turning motors get a green signal.

### **Lane changing**

Currently and in the proposed junction layout vehicles on Gray's Inn Road can change lanes at any point in the 80-90m between the stop line south of Kings Cross Bridge and the separating traffic island on the approach to Euston Road. This distance needs to be reduced to a length such that cyclists are in a wide cycle lane protected on both sides before any conflicting motors catch up with them.

### **Protected Cycle lanes**

We would like to see a wide (at least 2 metre) cycle lane running up Gray's Inn Road from the junction with Kings Cross Bridge, marked across Euston Road with elephant's footprints and then continuing up York Way. The lane in Gray's Inn Road needs to be segregated by a kerb on each side.

### **Bus contention on York Way: island bus stops**

As mentioned above, numerous buses stop or wait outside King's Cross Station. In addition there are very large numbers of passengers. We estimate that the carriageway is over 11m wide, which leaves ample room for two 3 metre wide motor lanes, a 2 meter wide cycle lane and a long island bus stop. We suggest that the bus shelters and waiting places stay where they are: on the footway. The island bus stop is an additional place for passengers to get on and off buses and only crossing the cycle lane when it is clear. If passengers are occasionally impeded and have to wait for cycles to pass, the driver should wait for them.

## **6. Additional proposals**

Three other, additional, proposals for safe bike routes through, or avoiding this junction have been proposed to us. The first would enable cyclists coming from Pentonville Road to reach Euston Road and York Way without going near Gray's Inn Road, the worst road for cyclists and the other two would provide southbound routes. The lack of which is a major flaw in the proposed design.

### **Pentonville Road contraflow – red line on map**

The western-most section of Pentonville Road could have a cycle contraflow on the south side, making use of the space currently occupied by the delivery bay. This would take cyclists safely from the westbound Pentonville Road bus lane, through the junction and into Euston Road. We request that this option be studied as it has the potential to remove a significant number of people on cycles from the Gray's Inn Road section of the junction.

### **Northdown Street – orange line number 6 on map**

Some cyclists could avoid the King's Cross junction altogether if they could cycle south down Northdown Street and then cross Pentonville Road and turn left into King's Cross Road. This could be achieved by a two-stage turn, in which cyclists cross from Northdown Street into the westbound ASL on Pentonville Road; and then use a left turning cut through for cyclists into King's Cross Road after the pedestrian crossing. This option looks very feasible to us and would remove more people on bicycles from the danger of the main junction roads

### **Bypass via St Chad's Street – orange line 5 on map**

It should be possible for cyclists coming down King's Cross Bridge to escape into the back streets via St Chad's Street. That would mean they avoid the crush on Gray's Inn Road completely. This would require use of the wide pavement south of the Scala, providing a contraflow on Gray's Inn Road between Kings

Cross Bridge and St Chads Place. Again, we request that this option be studied as it has the potential to remove a significant number of people on cycles from the Gray's Inn Road section of the junction.

## 7. Other considerations

- The historic mile stone on the south side of Euston Road/Gray's Inn Road must be rescued and if necessary relocated close to its current location.
- Similarly Deep Lee's ghost bike, at the same location, must be retained and relocated at this junction.

## Appendix A: stages at the junction Grays Inn Road/Euston Road/ York Way

Joanne Elmer has kindly provided us with the details of the signal stages and the waiting times to be expected by cyclists on the parallel crossings.

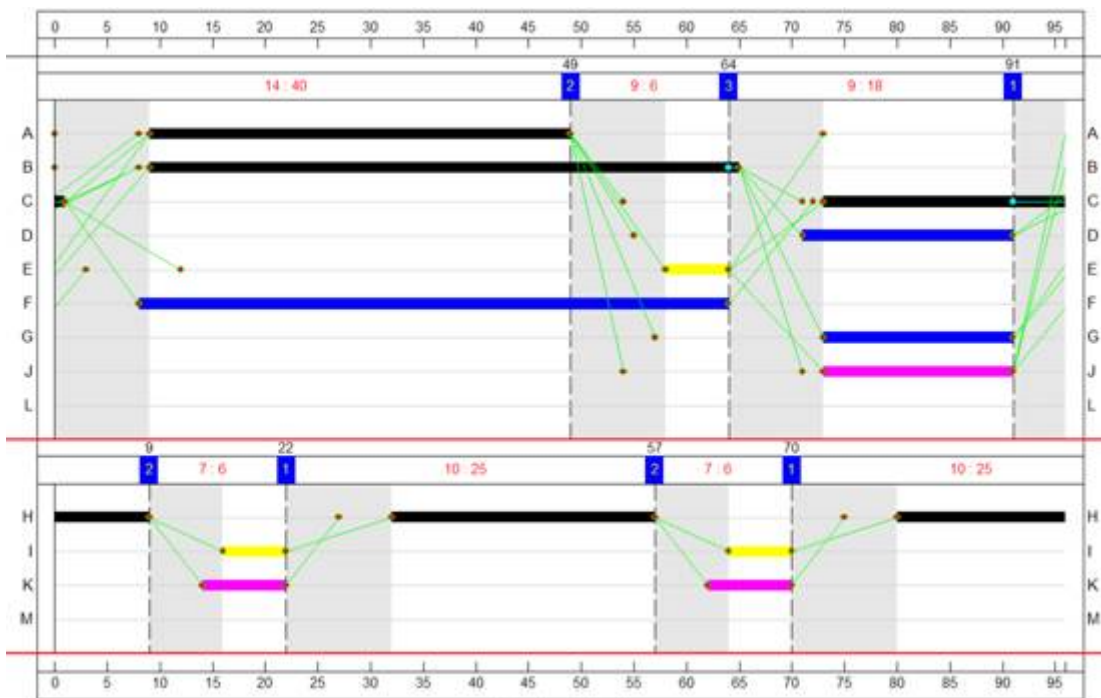
### AM and PM peak operation

In each of the two diagrams below, green times for cyclists are shown in pink and pedestrians in yellow. The top section shows crossing (2) when cyclists cross into York Way. The bottom section shows crossing (1) when cyclists cross on to the island.

Overall comment:

- Pedestrians are shown to be politely waiting to start their crossing a few seconds after the cyclists go. That's not going to happen – as soon as they see the green bike light, they'll start to cross (if not before)!

### AM peak



Looking at the entire crossing journey for cyclists:

*Using the parallel cycle crossing:* In the morning in each 96 second signal cycle, cyclists at crossing (1) have two green periods of 9 seconds (seconds 13 to 22) and 8 seconds (seconds 62 to 70). At crossing (2) cyclists have a single green period of 19 seconds (seconds 72 to 91).

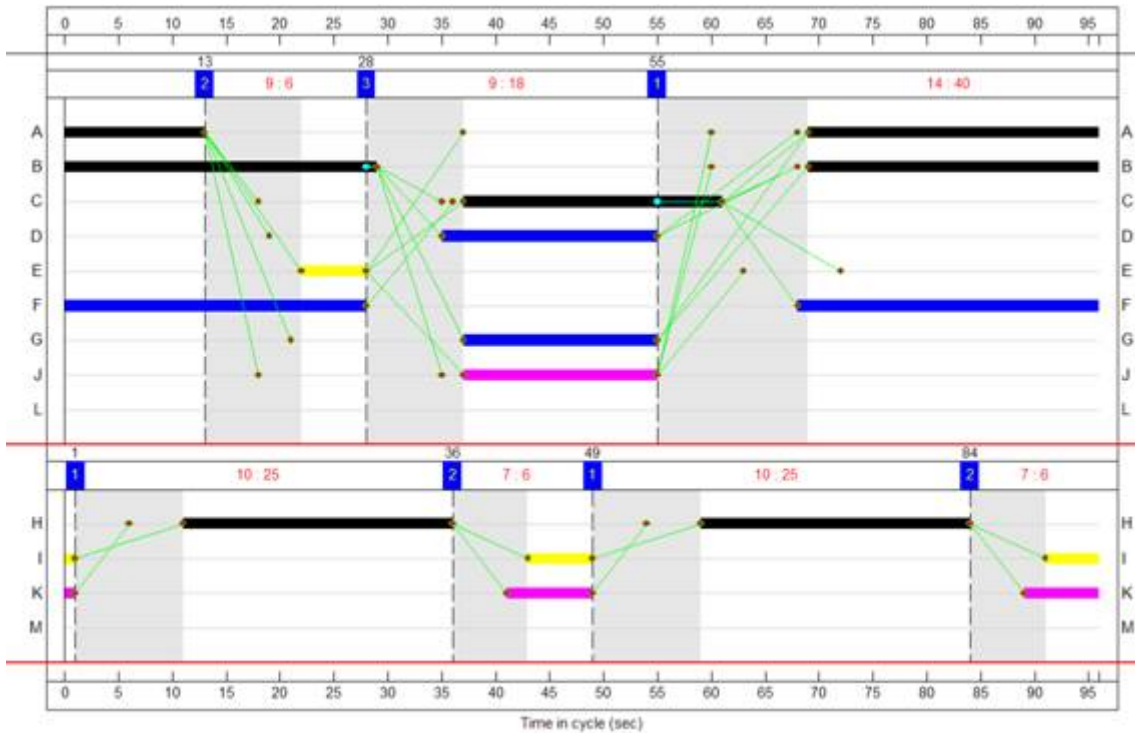
*Capacity of waiting places may be exceeded:* before crossing (1) cyclists may have a wait up to 41 seconds; and on the island before crossing (2) they may have to wait up to 77 seconds.

*Longer waits for cyclists:* in the worst case, a cyclist arrives at 70 seconds into the cycle when all cyclists have gone onto the central island and they must wait 98 seconds before they can complete the whole crossing to York Way. Using the carriageway: The longest wait would be 72 seconds.

**PM peak**

As before, cyclists' green times are shown in red and pedestrians' in yellow. The top section shows crossing (2) when cyclists cross into York Way. The bottom section shows crossing (1) when cyclists cross on to the island.

In the evening in each 96-second signal cycle, cyclists at crossing (1) have two green periods of 6 seconds (seconds 41 to 47) and 7 seconds (seconds 89 to 96). At crossing (2) cyclists have a single green period of 18 seconds (seconds 37 to 55).



*Capacity of waiting places may be exceeded:* depending on arrival time, cyclists may have a wait up to 41 seconds before crossing (1) and up to 86 seconds on the island crossing (2).

*Longer waits for cyclists:* in the worst case, a cyclist arrives at 56 seconds into the cycle when all cyclists have gone onto the central island and it would then take them another 77 seconds before they can start the crossing to York Way and complete the whole crossing. On carriageway the worst case is for a cyclist arriving as the traffic light goes red, waiting 72 seconds until the next green for traffic.

**Appendix B:**

The following table shows timings observed (at 18.00 on a weekday) for pedestrian signals at the crossings 1-5.

Crossing	Green	Non-Green
1	6	41
2	22	73
3	6	90
4	20	75
5	53	41

