

To Georgia Gould, Leader Camden Council

Copies to Councillors Adam Harrison, Party Leaders Oliver Cooper, Sian Berry, Flick Rea and Cabinet Members

Re-allocating Road Space During and after Covid-19 Emergency

This joint letter from Camden Cycling Campaign and London Living Streets (Camden) is in support of officers' work to re-allocate carriageway space from motor vehicles to walking and cycling. We urge you to do whatever it takes, politically and legally, to make this happen.

We think that measures are urgently needed now but will become even more important as and when restrictions are lifted. These measures should include removal of railings and street clutter; bans on parking and loading so that road space can be coned off for use by pedestrians and possibly cyclists; temporary walking and cycling lanes; retiming of pedestrian crossings and traffic intersections; closure of residential streets to through motor traffic.

In the longer term we note that:

Everyone appreciates the much cleaner air we are seeing and will want to keep it that way and lock in some of the widely-appreciated environmental benefits of the lockdown.

As the restrictions are lifted people will want to stay off public transport as much as possible. We are afraid that this may result in a large increase in the use of private cars as has already been witnessed in Wuhan (see Related Link 8). So we need to maintain the current increased opportunities to walk and cycle safely on main roads and residential streets.

Recreational walking and cycling for exercise have grown substantially during the lockdown, and it has been a joy to see so many people enjoying streets no longer dominated by motor traffic, including young families on bikes. We can lock-in some of that activity if we can maintain the protected space.

Specific Concerns and Suggestions

Current low levels of motor traffic on Camden's roads present a unique opportunity and we believe that measures are urgently needed for the following reasons (these echo many of the points made in London Living Streets' paper: 'Rethinking our streets: urgent policy responses to Covid-19' (See <https://bit.ly/2KrCrxD> or link 1 below).

1. Space for Pedestrians on Shopping Streets

Maintaining a 2m gap when walking (and even sometimes when cycling) in high streets is currently very awkward or impossible due to congestion on footways. Social separation is likely to be one of the last restrictions to be lifted so this issue will be with us for a long time.

2. Safe Crossings and Intersections

Reducing 'wait time' at busier crossings would reduce the build-up of people waiting at the crossing (both pedestrians and cyclists), enabling safe social distancing to be maintained. Wherever possible, operating signalised crossings with automatic pedestrian phases so that the 'call' button does not need to be pressed would reduce risk of Covid-19 transmission. We appreciate that this is a matter for TFL, but we urge Camden to continue to press on this issue.

3. Safe Space on Main Roads

The lockdown has brought about a boom in the use of bikes for travel, including for children. New safe space on main roads - temporary in the first instance - will enable more people to use cycling as a first choice for their urban journeys.

4. Making Residential Streets Safe for Recreation

There is a very notable increase in cycling and walking for exercise, including by family groups, often walking to parks. This should be encouraged and maintained by reclaiming the space that has been released as result of the removal of most commuting journeys in cars and closing streets to through motor traffic.

What we are doing

We are approaching our members and contacts for specific examples of where (a) there are demonstrable problems, such as overcrowded pavements, motor vehicle/pedestrian interactions and/or speeding traffic and (b) there is local desire for short- and/or medium-term changes. We will collate and pass these to officers, specifically Sam Margolis and his team.

We attach some relevant links.

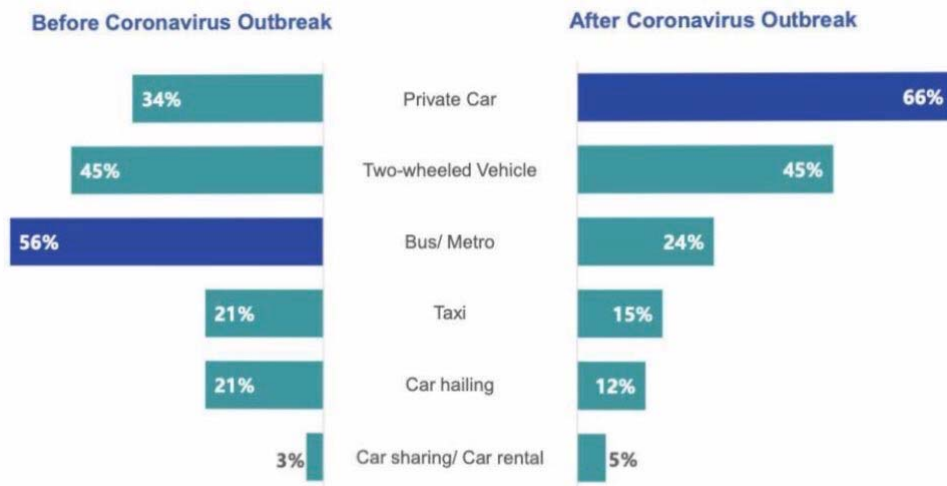
John Chamberlain
Coordinator, Camden Cycling Campaign

David Harrison
London Living Streets

Related links

1. London Living Streets: 'Rethinking our streets: urgent policy responses to Covid-19'
<https://londonlivingstreets.com/2020/04/16/rethinking-our-streets-urgent-policy-responses-to-covid-19/>
2. Coronavirus: 'Nature is sending us a message', says UN environment chief | The Guardian, 25 March 2020
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/25/coronavirus-nature-is-sending-us-a-message-says-un-environment-chief>
3. Transport in the time of the Coronavirus crisis: what we need to do NOW. | Road Danger Reduction Forum, 11 April 2020
<https://rdrf.org.uk/2020/04/11/transport-in-the-time-of-the-coronavirus-crisis-what-we-need-to-do-now/>
4. The Ranty Highwayman: It's The Least They Could Do, 18 April 2020
<https://therantyhighwayman.blogspot.com/2020/04/its-least-they-could-do.html>
5. Coronavirus: Banning cars made easier to aid social distancing - BBC News, 20 April 2020
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-52353942>
6. Milan announces ambitious scheme to reduce car use after lockdown | World news | The Guardian, 21 April 2020
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/21/milan-seeks-to-prevent-post-crisis-return-of-traffic-pollution>
7. Paris To Create 650 Kilometers Of Pop-Up Corona Cycleways For Post-Lockdown Travel | Carlton Reid, Forbes Magazine, 22 April 2020.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/carltonreid/2020/04/22/paris-to-create-650-kilometers-of-pop-up-corona-cycleways-for-post-lockdown-travel/#50cff1dd54d4>

8. Wuhan data (tweeted by Chris Boardman):



Modal share nella regione di Wuhan, prima e dopo l'emergenza Coronavirus. Ricerca Ipsos

<https://www.ilfoglio.it/userUpload/RMEPianodiazionemobiliturbanapostcovid.pdf>