



## ***Transformation of Oxford Street consultation***

### **About Living Streets**

We are Living Streets, the UK charity for everyday walking. We want to create a walking nation, free from congested roads and pollution, reducing the risk of preventable illnesses and social isolation and making walking the natural choice. We believe that a walking nation means progress for everyone. Our ambition is to enable people of all generations to enjoy the benefits that this simple act brings and to ensure all our streets are fit for walking.

#### **Question 1**

***Our consultation explains why we believe it is necessary to transform Oxford Street. This would mean however potential changes for buses, taxis, cyclists and vehicles making deliveries or servicing businesses. Bearing in mind the changes we would need to make, do you agree with the transformation of Oxford Street in principle?***

Yes. Living Streets supports the transformation of Oxford Street into a safe and attractive pedestrian environment. We are comfortable with the changes that would be necessary to make this possible. We believe that for the Mayor of London to successfully implement the manifesto commitment “***to turn one of the world’s most polluted streets into one of the world’s finest public spaces – a tree-lined avenue from Tottenham Court Road to Marble Arch***”, the following principles should underpin the transformation:

1. Make Oxford Street a world-class visitor and business destination - a great place to be and walk
2. Removal of all motor traffic with access to buses and taxis a short walk away
3. Accessible to all, regardless of age or disability
4. A safe environment, day and night
5. Provision of a parallel high quality east-west cycle route
6. Careful consideration of the impact on the wider West End
7. Consolidated deliveries limited to off peak times

## Question 2

***Our consultation materials describe the various challenges we would need to address to achieve our vision for the transformation of Oxford Street. We have described possible changes to access arrangements for buses and taxis, and we have explained what the transformation of Oxford Street might mean for cyclists and for freight and servicing. If you have any detailed comments about these or any other issue, please record them below. We have listed, in the following bullets, some potential topics you might wish to consider when responding to this question.***

### **Pedestrian crowding and general experience**

Oxford Street is a dangerous, overcrowded and unpleasant location for everyone, including people arriving at London Underground stations and waiting for/getting off buses. Once a week on average a pedestrian is involved in a collision on Oxford Street.<sup>1</sup> The annual collision rate on Oxford Street is 80 times higher than the London average.

The New West End Company estimates that 60 million more people will visit the West End once the Crossrail Elizabeth line opens, an increase of 30%.<sup>2</sup> Bond Street station, one of the primary central London Elizabeth line stations is roughly midway through the section of Oxford Street being consulted on. New housing around suburban Elizabeth line stations such as Woolwich advertise the short journey time to Bond Street as part of their marketing, demonstrating the increased catchment area of Oxford Street with the arrival of this service in 2018. It has been estimated this will result in an additional 150,000 more visitors to the area each day, further exacerbating issues of overcrowding.<sup>3</sup> This confirms the statement in the documentation for this consultation, "Taking into account increases in visitor numbers, unacceptable levels of crowding on Oxford Street will increase by 72 per cent by 2021 and 100 per cent by 2031 (compared to 2015)."

### **Accessibility**

Currently Oxford Street is a no-go area for many disabled and older people who find it very challenging to use because it is so crowded. Although benefiting from recent improvements, the quality of the public realm and pavements is not adequate for the level or diversity of demand to use the space. Uneven surfaces, narrow sections of pavement and poor quality pedestrian crossings all contribute to an unpleasant and inaccessible place.

Within the last decade retailers have incorporated Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliance into the design of their shop fronts with wide, open entrances and level access. It is a scandal that this investment cannot be fully utilised by people with mobility impairments because of the poor quality of the street and pavement. The pavements are filled with a proliferation of street clutter, including redundant public telephone kiosks, which further reduce accessibility. The transformation of Oxford Street is an opportunity to increase

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<sup>1</sup> [http://questions.london.gov.uk/QuestionSearch/searchclient/questions/question\\_285455](http://questions.london.gov.uk/QuestionSearch/searchclient/questions/question_285455)

<sup>2</sup> [http://newwestend.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/NWEC\\_AnnualMemberReview\\_brochure\\_210417\\_Fenwick\\_Artwork\\_2\\_lowres.pdf](http://newwestend.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/NWEC_AnnualMemberReview_brochure_210417_Fenwick_Artwork_2_lowres.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.arup.com/~media/Files/PDF/News\\_and\\_Press/2014\\_01\\_January/New\\_Crossrail\\_Report.ashx](http://www.arup.com/~media/Files/PDF/News_and_Press/2014_01_January/New_Crossrail_Report.ashx)

accessibility by levelling the surface, reallocating space away from motor vehicles to pedestrians and reducing street clutter.

### **Access to public transport**

Transport for London have invested in improvements to London Underground stations on Oxford Street to provide step free access, including Bond Street which is due to become step free in 2017/18. New Elizabeth line stations will all have step free access. Research shows that the quality of pedestrian access between public transport and retail centres has an impact on shopper perceptions, dwell times and spending.<sup>4</sup> Unless the transformation of Oxford Street into a safe and attractive pedestrian environment takes place, all the benefits of this new step free environment will end at or near the stations. The transformation of Oxford Street is an opportunity to fix this link.

For some people, including those with mobility impairments, door-to-door journeys will be desirable or essential. We would like to see all taxis and private hire vehicles restricted from accessing Oxford Street so that space can be used by people walking and enjoying the new public space. However adequate access and taxi ranks should be provided a short walk away from Oxford Street, utilising the many side streets.

### **Cycling**

The limited number of cyclists currently using the direct east-west route suggests it is not considered by many to be a viable route. Those streets running parallel to Oxford Street, particularly Brook Street, Grosvenor Street and Wigmore Street tend to be preferred routes for people cycling. There is a clear need for a high quality east-west cycle route through central London and it is essential that during the transformation of Oxford Street, that this demand is addressed.

High volumes of pedestrians would be expected on Oxford Street, so it would be sensible to provide a parallel east-west cycle route nearby so that conflict between people walking and cycling is minimised, as well as convenient cycle parking throughout the area.

Pedestrianisation of Oxford Street would impact on a number of cycling schemes already in train, including the proposed cycling quietways as part of the central London grid to the north and south of Oxford Street;<sup>5</sup> the Baker Street two-way project;<sup>6</sup> and the West End Project.

### **Traffic congestion and parking**

Despite restrictions on the types of and times motor vehicles can access Oxford Street, the street remains heavily congested. Driving to and parking in Central London should be, and is, discouraged by policies including the congestion charge, the upcoming T-Charge and parking bay charges.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/research-files/13.11.04.fixing-the-link.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/plugin-central-london-grid.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.bakerstreettwo-way.co.uk/>

## **Buses**

The bus is a hugely important and easily accessible means of transport in central London. But currently Oxford Street is effectively acting as a bus station where lots of services from the suburbs meet (over 24 bus routes and 300 buses an hour still pass along the street at peak times). The planned 2017 reduction of bus services on Oxford Street is welcomed.<sup>7</sup> However, in order to provide a safe and attractive pedestrian environment on Oxford Street motor vehicles must be eliminated completely, including the further phased removal of buses from the street. Removing buses from Oxford Street should be done as part of a comprehensive review of routes in central London. Combined with the one-hour Hopper fare, changes must provide a good level of service to bus users, retain journey opportunities at no additional cost and not negatively impact on those living and working on surrounding streets.

## **Impact on side streets**

The length of Oxford Street being consulted on includes junctions with six side streets (Duke Street, James Street / Gilbert Street, Stratford Place / Davies Street, Vere Street / New Bond Street, Hollies Street / Harewood Place, John Princes Street). Of these, only Stratford Place / Davies Street would be essential as a through route in order to provide vehicular access to Stratford Place. Consideration should be given to pedestrianising Stratford Place in order to avoid conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles.

## **Air pollution**

Nearly 9,500 people die early each year in London due to long-term exposure to air pollution. Oxford Street exceeds the annual limit for nitrogen dioxide within a few days of the start of each year. Neighbourhoods in the area report similar levels of air pollution, several blocks from the street including around primary schools.<sup>8</sup> High levels of air pollution are known to impact on the growth of children's lungs. The removal of all motor traffic, including taxis and buses, with careful selection of new routes, can contribute to reducing the level of air pollution on Oxford Street and the wider West End.

## **Wayfinding**

Changes to bus routes to facilitate removing motor vehicles from Oxford Street are welcomed. However, high quality wayfinding, similar to the Legible London signage system must be introduced to ensure wayfinding to transport options, including relocated bus routes, is made easier. Introduction of new street signage should be carefully considered as part of a holistic approach to street furniture and not contribute to clutter.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2017/april/tfl-confirms-changes-to-bus-routes-in-central-london>

<sup>8</sup> <https://communitymaps.org.uk/project/air-quality-monitoring?center=51.5144:-0.1248:15>

## **Deliveries and servicing to businesses**

We understand the importance of businesses continuing to be serviced and receive deliveries following any transformation of Oxford Street. Because of advances in consolidated delivery, through a programme of reduction and re-timing it is possible to service Oxford Street during a shorter delivery window. This should be timed when pedestrian flows are likely to be at their lowest and should be combined with the use of low emission vehicles.<sup>9</sup> Such schemes have already been successfully implemented in the West End.<sup>10</sup>

## **Night time experience**

Careful consideration must be given to the design of Oxford Street and how it will operate at night. With the removal of all motor vehicle traffic there is potential for creating an important night time walking route. However, care must be taken to ensure plans design out any potential for crime to take place and enhance the perception of Oxford Street as a safe night time walking route.

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[http://transact.westminster.gov.uk/docstores/publications\\_store/3.20\\_wcc\\_west\\_end\\_partnership\\_delivery%20programme\\_aw\\_web.pdf](http://transact.westminster.gov.uk/docstores/publications_store/3.20_wcc_west_end_partnership_delivery%20programme_aw_web.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/regent-street-case-study.pdf>

### Question 3

***We have described how we might improve the look and feel of Oxford Street, and other streets in the district, in both the short and long term. If you have any comments about this aspect of our proposals, or any aspiration for the look and feel of Oxford Street you would like us to consider, please consider them below.***

The transformation of Oxford Street into a safe and attractive pedestrian environment is an opportunity to reimagine it as a destination place and not merely a thoroughfare. The design must be accessible to all, regardless of age or disability.

Notwithstanding the importance of creating safe, and perceived to be safe, space especially at night, the design should include the opportunity to stop, sit and linger. There should be places with shade and shelter. The heritage of buildings should be enhanced and showcased. Interventions to “green” the West End should be extended to Oxford Street.<sup>11</sup>

Any locations where there could be potential for conflict between pedestrians and motor vehicles, such as side streets, should be subject to careful attention. Oxford Street should be an exemplar for the Healthy Streets for London approach, drawing on best practice from around the world, and become a first-class public space.<sup>12</sup>

The demand for increased space for walking has been shown by the popularity of weekend closures of major streets in the West End around Christmas time. Temporary closures of streets, such as around Hanover Square for the Crossrail project, also show demand for increased pedestrian space and where possible should be retained.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.wildwestend.london/about/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/healthy-streets-for-london.pdf>