

APPENDIX C: Consultation Responses

Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association

- a. Supports pedestrian improvements at Margaret Street/Great Titchfield Street and Mortimer/Great Titchfield Street junctions, with a request for pedestrian flow measurement and the maximisation of pedestrian space.
- b. Support for measures to increase pavement area and minimise clutter.
- c. Concerns about expanded road areas and reduced cycling space in Fitzrovia due to traffic flow changes.
- d. A general concern of The Fitzrovia Partnership is the proposals parking provisions (cycle and cycle hire), particularly that they don't seem to differentiate between the two. The Partnership suggest an increase in both types of cycle parking be implemented to reduce the amount of abandonment currently seen in the area.

The Licensed Taxi Driver Association (LTDA)

Welcome measures that give taxis the same access as buses and cyclists between Cavendish Square East and John Princes Street.

Marylebone Association

It is recognised that the changes to Mortimer Street will make traffic routes more organised, especially around Cavendish Square. However, they feel it will also serve as an alternative route for non-bus traffic from Oxford Street. If this route gets congested, it could cause issues.

Pavements

Looking at the plans supplied, the two bus stops at Marble Arch end N/S, appear to be sufficient for 3 buses, the next one north side, for 1 bus, the rest appear to be about 2 buses long. They are all marked on the carriageway. There are a total of 6 bus stopping areas between Marble Arch and Oxford Circus eastbound, and 5 going west. That will involve a lot of stopping - and a lot of delayed traffic. The delay will be to other buses behind, but also to taxis and other vehicles permitted there, which unlike the buses can and will divert. Our concern is that this will be displaced onto already cluttered side streets if there is a significant delay or increase in traffic.

WCC Response

The two bus stops at Marble Arch end N/S are sufficient for 4 buses, the next one north side, for 2 buses and the rest are sufficient for about 3 buses. There are only 3 bus stops in each direction between Marble Arch and Oxford Circus that do not allow

traffic to pass. These are in the restricted section of the street with sufficiently low traffic. The traffic modelling and experience on street demonstrates that there will be no journey time impact, and therefore no reassignment or displacement onto side streets. Bus stop lay-bys on Oxford Street will be removed allowing buses to stop in-line with other vehicles which enables wider footways, increased passenger waiting areas and greater safety for pedestrian crossing movements.

West of Oxford Circus, almost all of the bus stop laybys were removed in 2021 and monitoring has suggested no negative impacts on bus journey times. This proposal is not expected to lead to increased congestion or queuing as the number of bus services has reduced. Furthermore, bus, taxi and cycle only restrictions, from 7am to 7pm, are planned to be introduced 7 days a week between Portman Street to Stratford Place, New Bond Street to Great Portland Street and Rathbone Place to Tottenham Court Road in an eastbound direction. In a westbound direction the restriction would apply between Tottenham Court Road, to Rathbone Place, Great Portland Street to New Bond Street, and Stratford Place to Orchard Street. This proposal is not expected to lead to increased congestion or queuing and traffic will be able to pass stopped buses due to the removal of the central reservation in the eastern section of Oxford street.

It is clear from WCC's own figures produced during the consultation that existing pedestrian comfort levels to the west of Oxford Circus are not a cause for concern. There further appear to be a variety of planters, trees, and benches ready to go into the extra pavement space gained - indicating its primary use is not to increase comfort levels anyway. It therefore seems to be an overreaction and inadvisable to remove or fail to reinstate bus lay-bys where required.

WCC Response

The Oxford Street project objectives include footway widening to better provide for pedestrian comfort and safety and create an improve attractiveness and overall experience. This involves improving pedestrian crossings, enhancing greening and climate resilience, lighting and seating.

The view that the present level of traffic will cope with this, remains to be seen. The proposals appear to be entirely based on the idea, or hope, that the present reduced traffic levels are here to stay. Yet we are already seeing a gradual increase in traffic back up from post-Covid lows. The further proposed lane restrictions will mean that any further increase in traffic will rapidly result in major queuing behind constantly stopping buses which will in turn see traffic diverting through residential streets. We would strongly urge that the scheme allows for the restoration of all bus lay-bys in areas where there are to be bus stops.

WCC Response

Traffic flows appear to have stabilised for the two years however the operation of the street will continue to be monitored post implementation.

Cavendish Place - Mortimer Street two-way working

Under the present proposals, westbound traffic will have a ready option to Oxford Street through Marylebone and Fitzrovia (this is already the case for eastbound traffic) - on roads that are already about three times as congested as the present Oxford Street but are not held up by stopping buses.

WCC Response

There is an existing westbound route via Great Titchfield Street, Margaret Street and Henrietta Place. The proposals remove this large gyratory, one-way system and replaces it with more direct two-way streets, which provides more options to drivers and reduces the length of car journeys.

Also, the new west route on Mortimer Street, combined with the previous traffic direction reversal on Berners Street means that traffic coming from Soho via Wardour Street will now have a new route north via Berners Street then west, by turning left onto Mortimer Street and thorough into Cavendish Square. We have no idea how much traffic this will add – has WCC done any modelling on this?

WCC Response

The traffic modelling shows a reduction of traffic flow overall on Wardour Street and the Berners Street corridor. Furthermore, it is expected that Mortimer Street will see less traffic, and Cavendish Square will see no change.

Straight Across at Oxford Circus

Whilst accepting that other road alterations have created a need to free up traffic at Oxford Circus, and banning left and right turns at this junction should help, it is not entirely clear how this will affect the bus routes. Buses that turn left will now achieve this by running through John Princess/Holles Streets, Great Castle Street and Regent Street. This could be problematic having a busy turning junction that is so close to Oxford Circus. Further, there will be an obvious increase in bus journey times for all those buses diverted to avoid turning at Oxford Circus.

WCC Response

The adjusted routes for the current bus routes that turn at Oxford Circus have been carefully designed to ensure no impact on bus journey times and the wider operation of the network.

The buildouts at John Princess Street appear excessive considering the amount of turning buses that will need to negotiate this.

WCC Response

A single vehicle lane is sufficient for this flow even with the minimum permitted green time at the signals.

We are concerned by the proposed blocking at the Oxford Street end of James Street. At present this route allows traffic to cross Oxford Street into Gilbert Street. This closure will mean more pressure on Wigmore/Vere Street or Wigmore Street all the way down to Park Street - as these will be the only two options left for traffic in Marylebone to go south (other than Regent Street and Edgware Road on the borders).

WCC Response

Neither James Street or Gilbert Street are appropriate for through traffic as they are narrow and have pedestrians walking within the carriageway areas. The other southbound routes via Park Street and Bond Street are able to accommodate the very low levels of displaced traffic.

Similarly, the rerouting in Orchard Street would mean that traffic that now comes down Baker Street/Orchard Street, that presently can cross Oxford Street and get through into Mayfair will now need to turn right at Portman Square and left down Park Street to do the same thing. This seems to be a recipe for congestion – it will impose an awkward traffic manoeuvre and put further pressure on already very busy junctions.

WCC Response

Not all southbound traffic on Baker Street would wait until the last moment to move across to Portman Street. The modelling shows that most vehicles would already be southbound on Gloucester Place under the proposed scenario.

The Metropolitan Police

Requested “look both ways” markings are not permitted for use unless authorised by the Department for Transport. Noted their inclusion on the Cavendish Place/Cavendish Square/Wigmore Street diagrams.

WCC Response

This will be included in the next stage of design for these projects. A Road Safety Audit (RSA) will also be carried out.

General Comments

Opposition to the proposals to put a bus stand on Margaret Street because of the proximity to their residential building.

WCC Comments

WCC will review the location of the bus stand in the next stage of design.

Scheme will cause more traffic in the area / concerns around traffic diversion routes being unsustainable / businesses need to be able to move around London.

WCC Response

The proposals have been carefully designed to fully mitigate the impact on traffic. Detailed traffic modelling has been undertaken and this has been externally audited and approved by TfL.

Holles Street should be bus termination/start.

WCC Response

The existing bus termination point on Holles Street requires those two bus routes (55 and 73) to take long and circuitous routes through some sensitive streets and public squares. The stop is also not near to any underground ticket halls. The proposed operational plan includes the same stops near to Oxford Circus station.