



Marylebone Association

C43 Cycleway – Response to City of Westminster Consultation

The following representations are made on behalf of the Marylebone Association. The Association is the recognised amenity society for all that area of Marylebone between Oxford Street to the south and Euston Road to the north. As such, the comments below are directed at the part of the scheme within our area of interest, i.e., George Street.

The Association supports proposals that embrace safe cycling within Marylebone and create safe cycling routes in a coordinated way. However, these must be sensibly balanced with the needs of other highway users, and we do not feel that this scheme in its present form manages to achieve this.

Feedback the Association has received so far from residents and local stakeholders has expressed a large variety of concerns with the current scheme, these are listed under the headings below:

Reduced road widths - the narrow lanes left available for motor traffic will cause congestion and result in traffic displacement to other residential roads. Although this is not on a regular bus route, it is a route often used when Oxford Street is closed and although buses could get through the narrowed lanes, this will inevitably result in further congestion.

Loss of parking spaces - the loss of 26 resident parking spaces (we understand) will cause severe disruption. Further, it is contrary to previous WCC practice which was to ensure alternative places would be found for all resident spaces removed in any road scheme. We are disturbed to find that this appears to no longer apply. We have been told that 'some' alternative spaces could be found. This is not really acceptable.

Loss or complete removal of delivery and drop-off areas. This will result in vans and lorries having to deliver from side roads, causing much inconvenience to them, and nuisance to the residents there. Alternatively, a number of vehicles will end up just stopping in the middle of the road to deliver (as they are not allowed to unload on the cycle lanes), holding up all the traffic behind, causing tailbacks, congestion, and displacement onto other residential streets in the area.

Wetherby School - the scheme will result in major issues for this prominent boys' school situated on George Street, particularly with school bus pick-ups and drop-offs. We are aware this has been dealt with in depth by the school.

Deliveries and Drop Offs elsewhere - it is apparent that the scheme will cause significant upset to the servicing of the series of major residential blocks situated along George Street which include:

George Street Mansions 139-147 George Street	39 Flats
Bryanston Court 1&2	115 Flats
Cumberland Mansions	60 Flats
Fusecroft	80 Flats
Stourcliffe Close	60 Flats
Portman Towers	85 Flats
Total	439 Flats

All these blocks are heavily reliant on vehicles, vans and taxis being able to pull in outside or nearby. This will no longer be possible.

Road capacity issues - the scheme appears to place maximum emphasis on accommodating the small number of cyclists presently on George Street, rather than the existing busy traffic flow, the many pedestrians, the school, the elderly and the disabled - who will all experience many problems. For instance, under the proposed scheme pedestrians will be required to cross over 4 separate lanes, lanes at different levels, involving 4 level changes.

Following from this the questions we have are listed below:

Is this really necessary? Observations show that on average George Street sees approximately 1 cyclist a minute during daylight hours, and less at night. To propose such elaborate infrastructure changes to accommodate that, even on projections of a 100-200% increase, appears financially wasteful and completely out of proportion to the major inconvenience it would impose. Is this because it is hoped it is going to be nearly all TfL funded? Has WCC actually got a budgeted figure for their costs?

Cost. The costings on this are rather opaque. We understand that this is a 50-50 venture between TfL and WCC, with TfL to fund the "majority" of the costs - if it's a scheme which meets their approval- i.e., segregated cycle lanes. If there were to be a variation on this proposal, then what would the funding obligations be for WCC? Has WCC actually got a budgeted figure for their costs

Conflict of Interest. The consultation is being run by FM Conway, the very company that will benefit from carrying out the expensive infrastructure work if it is successful. We, and indeed the Westminster Amenity Societies group, WASF, have pointed out many times that employing the contractor to carry out the consultation results in an obvious conflict of interest and a tendency to attempt to read the consultation in the most positive way possible for the contractor. What efforts have been made to supervise and build out bias in the system?

Wider impact. Although we have only dealt with objections to the scheme as they directly affect George Street, it should be pointed out that the scheme is likely to produce increased congestion around Connaught Square and this, in turn, would likely result in the displacement of traffic from Seymour Street to George Street in order to cross Edgware Road further north at Kendal Street to attempt to avoid this. This would put even more pressure on the narrowed lanes on George Street.

However, as no traffic modelling has been undertaken, or is to be undertaken before the scheme in its present form would go live, the actual outcome can only be surmised. The proposed scheme therefore is somewhat in the nature of a live experiment with Marylebone's traffic. Does the team regard this as satisfactory, have they any concerns on this score?

Parking - how much attention has been paid to the large-scale cull of residents parking on George Street proposed here? Have the major problems and knock-on effects this will cause to residents been considered, and if so, how? Also, bearing in mind the extreme density of on-street parking already in the area, how many spaces is it intended to reallocate and where?

Consultation weighting- we are aware that these consultations attract a large number of responses from various lobby/interest groups. We do not think that it is right that these should be given the same weight as those directly affected by the scheme, i.e., those that live, work, or go to school in the area. What efforts are being made to ensure that the voices of the latter are not drowned out by the coordinated responses from the outside interest groups, and how is the weighting exercised?

Area of Consultation - in the previous consultation on the, then Quietway, proposals for a cycle lane in this area WCC notified residents 100 metres back from the proposed cycleway- is it correct that the distance has now been halved to 50 metres? Further, is it correct that the actual requirement is now only to go back 25 metres from the proposed cycleway?

Summary

Whilst recognising that it is desirable to have safe routes to guide cyclists through Marylebone, it appears that the level of disruption to all other carriageway users that this scheme entails is entirely out of proportion to the relative increase in the utility offered to a relatively very small user group- i.e., those cyclists.

To achieve a nominal improvement for this one group, it is proposed to significantly disrupt the lives of all surrounding residents, of whom there are thousands; of the many pedestrians - of whom there are many hundreds; to disrupt the motor traffic that will be corralled into narrow lanes; to inconvenience vans and vehicles that will be unable to drop off and load/unload without finding an available space down side roads- to the further inconvenience of the residents there. On top of this, there will be major

problems for the school and the loss of a significant number of resident parking spaces.

Life in a busy international city must involve a series of compromises with regard to the use of its infrastructure. There must be a sensible balance achieved between the many different carriageway uses and users. This scheme does not appear to achieve that.

For all the reasons listed above the Association is not able to support the scheme as presently drafted.

Marylebone Association

24th June 2023