‘You Said, We Did’ – Movement Strategy Phase 3: Portland Place Informal Public Consultation.

Introduction

The Portland Place Movement Strategy Phase 3 proposals aim to enhance and make permanent the temporary cycles lanes installed by the council in 2020, as an active travel response to the covid pandemic. The Portland Place cycle lane scheme starts on Park Crescent, from the junction with Marylebone Road, continuing along Portland Place to Langham Street. This scheme encourages active travel by developing safer and permanent cycle lanes.

Westminster City Council is working closely with Howard de Walden Estate to ensure proposals align with their longer term vision for the public realm of Portland Place.

The consultation was initially set to run from 7th May to 7th June but was extended following an email on 14th May 2024 highlighting an error in the way parking numbers were displayed on the consultation plans. This was corrected and on 17th May 2024 the consultation deadline extend until the 23rd June 2024, an additional 16 days.

The consultation activities and materials were available on the council's Consultation Hub, including FAQs and a link to an online survey. A letter drop was made to 837 addresses (Properties within 50m of the route), and emails were sent to statutory consultees, ward members, and resident groups. A drop-in event was also held on 21st May to allow people to ask questions on the scheme to Council Officers and a member of the design team. Feedback was gathered through the online survey and emails received during the consultation period.

Consultation Results

Commonplace contained a survey that sought people’s views on what effect the proposals will have on the way people choose to travel with an option to comment.

Overall responses showed that the scheme was expected to have a very positive effect on walking and cycling numbers, and that there would be a corresponding but less significant drop in private motor vehicle usage. Responses for public transport usage were also generally positive, with most respondents stating that the proposals would either have a positive effect, or none at all. The perceived change in how people travel through Portland Place generally aligns with the goal to make cycling a more attractive alternative.

Extracting the underlying themes of the responses via the open text comments and emails received provided a stronger understanding of concerns and suggestions raised from the public consultation. This allows the Council to address the concerns and progress the scheme in an informed and targeted way.

Main objection & suggestion themes

1. **You Said (Total 77 Respondents):** Support proposals with no further comments

   WCC Response: Support noted

2. **You Said (Total 15 Respondents):** Satisfied with crossing locations

   WCC Response: Support noted

3. **You Said (Total 21 Respondents):** Request for the pedestrian crossing proposed to be reallocated to the eastern side of Park Cresent to address concerns with vehicles taking this corner at speed.

   WCC Response: The crossing is proposed on the west side of the Park Crescent junction to improve the pedestrian safety while also facilitating a safe cycle route for those wishing to turn right. We have investigated the requested location on the eastern side of the junction; however, it is not feasible due to its close proximity to the proposed crossing on the east side and the limited carriageway width available in this area. The proposed cycleway designs and the additional traffic island on the eastern corner will help reduce the carriageway width, thereby slowing down the speed at which vehicles can navigate the bend.

4. **You Said (Total 50 Respondents):** Satisfied with proposed segregated cycle lane.

   WCC Response: Support noted

5. **You Said (Total 52 Respondents):** Support layout but suggest improvements to level of cycle lane segregation such as the installation of wands.

   WCC Response: Based on feedback received designs have been reviewed to incorporate additional segregation in the form of traffic wands in areas where floating parking is not acting as a means of segregation.

6. **You Said (Total 9 Respondents):** Not satisfied with proposed segregated cycle lane due to loss of carriageway width hindering motorcycle traffic filtering as a result increasing congestion.

   WCC Response: Road widths within the proposals have been designed in accordance with national infrastructure guidance to allow vehicles to travel safely. Due to the width of the buffer strip, designed to ensure sufficient space for pedestrians to safely enter and exit parked vehicles, and the cycleway already being at a minimum width, there is insufficient room to widen the carriageway to accommodate motorcycle filtering along this corridor.

7. **You Said (Total 8 Respondents):** Not satisfied with the proposed segregated cycle lane due to reduced kerbside accessibility, needing to cross the cycle lane from the floating parking to reach the pavement.

WCC Response: *The proposals look to improve safety for cyclist by providing segregated cycleways on both sides of the road. In order to maintain parking facilities alongside the segregated cycle way design we are proposing floating parking. Where there is disability parking bays or loading zones we are proposing dropped kerbs to ensure accessible access to the pavement.*

8. **You Said (Total 22 Respondents):** Risk of collision between cyclists and pedestrians ie; school children on Portland Place

   WCC Response: *Whilst the Council is proposing to retain floating parking on Portland Place, it will work directly with affected local schools to mitigate impacts on school travel.*

9. **You Said (Total 37 Respondents):** Improvements to signal phasing i.e., cycle 'early release' signals

   WCC Response: *Following feedback, we have explored the potential for implementing cycle early release at all junctions along Portland Place. However, the signal infrastructure at the Weymouth Street and New Cavendish Street junctions is outdated, and any modifications would require full intersection upgrade which is beyond the scope of the current scheme. Improvements for pedestrians and cyclists at these locations will be considered as part of future upgrade plans.*

   We do, however, intend to include cycle early release on all approaches at the Portland Place/Devonshire Street junction as part of this scheme.

10. **You Said (Total 5 Respondents):** Improved enforcement i.e., wardens & cameras

    WCC Response: *Council works with the Police to identify and enforce in areas where there is an issue and also has an team of Parking Marshals who enforce parking offences. Whilst additional initial enforcement activities are anticipated following implementation, it is not expected that there will be a greater enforcement requirement once the scheme is bedded in.*

11. **You Said (Total 1 Respondents):** Fix potholes/ existing carriageway surface.

    WCC Response: *There are reactive and planned preventive maintenance programmes to ensure carriageway conditions are maintained to an acceptable standard across the borough. If there is a particular issue we encourage residents to report it on the WCC website: https://www.westminster.gov.uk/report-it*

12. **You Said (Total 10 Respondents):** Lack of consideration for those less able/ with mobility issues.

    WCC Response to Issue: *To ensure that the proposals do not adversely affect people with disabilities or other protected characteristics under the Equalities Act, an Equalities Impact Assessment is undertaken at the early and detailed design stages to consider potential impacts and mitigate them. Specific and sensitive issues raised at public consultation will be addressed via a detailed evaluation of responses flagged as accessibility issues and the Council encourages residents to write to us directly via AskHighways@westminster.gov.uk to discuss the concern in detail.*

13. **You Said (Total 2 Respondents):** Improve access to Portland Place from Regents Park

WCC Response to Issue: The proposed pedestrian crossing and cycling facilities will improve accessibility to Portland Place via Regents Park.

14. **You Said (Total 18 Respondents):** Support for floating bus stops

WCC Response: Support noted.

15. **You Said (Total 19 Respondents):** Against the inclusion of floating bus stops, due to concerns for increased collisions between pedestrians and cyclists.

WCC Response: A bus stop bypass is proposed to maintain a continuous, segregated cycle lane, reducing conflict between cyclists and buses. Proposals are designed in accordance with national and TFL infrastructure guidance, informed by site surveys, and road safety audited to ensure they are safe. The proposals insure there is sufficient traffic island widths for passengers boarding and alighting, as well as a flush pedestrian zebra crossing to ensure priority for pedestrians crossing the cycle track. We acknowledge that these layouts may raise concerns for individuals with disabilities, particularly those with visual impairments, and will ensure appropriate mitigation measures are implemented where possible.

16. **You Said (Total 9 Respondents):** Improve cyclist protection approaching all junctions on Portland Place.

WCC Response: Please refer to no.9

17. **You Said (Total 19 Respondents):** Improve cyclist protection between Devonshire Street (CS27) and junction of Portland Place.

WCC Response : Proposals at this junction look to improve the connection to (CS27) by providing new secondary signals to facilitate a two-stage right turn for cyclists. We are also investigating installing cycle early releases on all approaches at this junction.

18. **You Said (Total 7 Respondents):** Consider alternative carriageway arrangement to ASL's for waiting cyclist such as a Dutch style junction.

WCC Response: Please refer to no.9

19. **You Said (Total 39 Respondents):** Increased protective measures for cyclists navigating turns across junctions.

WCC Response: See comment 9 above, two-stage right turn for cyclists are proposed at each junction along Portland Place.

20. **You Said (Total 5 Respondents):** Improvements to signage to advise cyclists to stop and give way at pedestrian crossings.

WCC Response: Proposals are designed in accordance with national and TFL infrastructure guidance, informed by site surveys, and road safety audited to ensure they are safe and provide clear direction to all road users. The Council agrees some cyclists do not follow the highway code (and provides free cycle training to educate residents and help them cycle safety), but this is not true for the majority. The Council also works with the Police to identify and enforce in areas where there is an issue.

21. **You Said (Total 7 Respondents):** Additional cycle storage and parking along the route is required.

WCC Response to Issue: We are investigating additional opportunities for cycle storage and parking along the route and across the borough under a separate scheme.

22. **You Said (Total 23 Respondents):** Not satisfied with loading & parking proposals and the removal of spaces.

WCC Response to Issue: The Councils Fair Westminster policy and active travel goals, aims to increase the share of trips made by walking and cycling. This scheme encourages active travel by developing safer and permanent cycle lanes. Parking & loading along Portland Place has been retained or reallocated where possible, however to ensure a safe cycle route there has been a reduction in some parking spaces. A full kerbside parking and loading review has been undertaken to understand the impacts of the proposals.

23. **You Said (Total 16 Respondents):** Against scheme: Waste of Money

WCC Response: Cycling infrastructure can offer great value for money due to economic, environmental, and health benefits and are a cost-effective way of reducing traffic congestion and improve mobility and air quality. There are also long-term health benefits associated with increased cycling, such as reduced healthcare costs and improved wellbeing. By promoting a sustainable and environmental mode of transportation they also align with the Council's Fairer Westminster Delivery Plan. Relatively low construction and maintenance costs compared with infrastructure associated with other transport modes make cycling a cost-efficient investment, making it excellent value from both short-term and long-term perspectives.

24. **You Said (Total 19 Respondents):** Design will cause congestion and impact traffic flows.

WCC Response: Based on an Imperial College London study in 2021, it's considered that cycling infrastructure does not generally cause congestion; instead, contributing to the overall reduction in traffic. By providing a dedicated space for cyclists, cycleways encourage people to choose sustainable and space-efficient modes of transportation, so decreasing reliance on motorized vehicles. This leads to a more efficient use of road capacity and a reduction in traffic volume, particularly for short journeys. There is evidence to suggest that cycleways can lead to a reduction in roadside concentrations of nitrogen dioxide

(NO2) by 10-25% based on traffic reduction (traffic evaporation) and modal shift as they can encourage people to switch from cars to cycling, which also helps reduce pollution.

25. **You Said (Total 14 Respondents):** Against scheme: Risk of collision between motorists with both cyclist and pedestrians

    WCC Response: See comment 5 above.

26. **You Said (Total 3 Respondents):** Against scheme: Increases in Pollution

    WCC Response to Issue: See comment 24 above

27. **You Said (Total 6 Respondents):** Against scheme: Scheme viewed negatively

    WCC Response: Noted.

28. **You Said (Total 2 Respondents):** Declutter the scheme area of unnecessary signage and street furniture

    WCC Response: Where possible we have reduced the number of signs and wands to limit any visual pollution. We also propose to use a brown, buff colour strip through this area.

29. **You Said (Total 17 Respondents):** Support floating parking but demand physical segregation to protect cycle lane

    WCC Response to Issue: Support Noted. See comment 5 above regarding physical segregation.

30. **You Said (Total 1 Respondents):** Allow access via gate at Park crescent.

    WCC Response: The council will seek where possible to provide a similar level of access to the park.

Next Steps

Following the feedback from public consultation, the Council will continue to develop and refine the permanent proposals for Portland Place Movement strategy Phase 3. The team will incorporate the feedback received, where applicable, into the updated proposals and they will be presented to the Cabinet Member for City Management & Air Quality for agreement to proceed to detailed design.

Subject to agreement with WCC Cabinet Member for City Management and Air Quality, statutory Traffic Management Order (TMO) consultation will be carried out at the end of the next design stage

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