



From: Councillor Robert Davis MBE DL

**Deputy Leader of Westminster City Council
and Cabinet Member for the Built Environment**

**Westminster City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QP
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14th July 2016

Via email

Dear Michael

Re: Reports on Oxford Street 'pedestrianisation'

Thank you for your note expressing concern at reports carried by several media outlets overnight and this morning, regarding an apparent announcement by Deputy Mayor of London for Transport Val Shawcross CBE that the GLA would seek to pedestrianise Oxford Street by 2020.

I would like to take this opportunity to reassure you that I and all of my colleagues at the City Council completely understand and appreciate local residents' concerns over the potential impacts of any wholesale pedestrianisation of the thoroughfare. The effect any such move would have on traffic movements across the surrounding streets is an issue that has been at the very forefront of our minds, as the various options for improving Oxford Street's public realm have been discussed.

News stories following the remarks made to the London Assembly's Transport Committee yesterday by Ms Shawcross appear to suggest that full pedestrianisation is the single preference for any scheme to improve Oxford Street. This is not a view that is shared by the City Council. Whilst, as mentioned by Ms Shawcross, it is true that we remain in discussions with the GLA, pedestrianisation is only one of a number of options that are being considered. Moreover, any option that is identified by all partners as being the most practical way forward would of course have to be presented to our residents and businesses as part of a comprehensive public consultation.

The protection and enhancement of Oxford Street is at the heart of the City Council's commitment to safeguarding the West End's position as one of the most celebrated and exciting places in the world. As you will be aware, the West End Partnership, which is chaired by the Leader of the Council, has been shaping a clear vision to make Oxford Street the world's best outdoor shopping experience, with cleaner air, first class public realm and an unrivalled mix of flagship and branded stores. That effort has centred on the work to identify those numerous options which I mentioned above, collaborating with all of our partners to set out how we can reduce traffic and create modern retail spaces.

I must reiterate that pedestrianisation is only one option that is being considered. Significant work is now underway with our partners, including Transport for London and the GLA, which will report back in the autumn. The key to delivering any improvements for Oxford Street is a substantial reduction of buses that move through the area and we need to ensure that traffic is not displaced, creating congestion and air pollution elsewhere in the local area. For the City Council, nothing has changed in this regard and we will continue to engage with the GLA and other stakeholders as we move towards that reporting stage, covering all available options, in the autumn.

Both Cllr Acton and I also attended the London Assembly Transport Committee on 15th June to discuss the progress being made in working through these options. We were both able to put forward a clear case covering the main obstacles to any scheme proposing full pedestrianisation, including bus movements and the issues posed to the local network by curtailing north to south traffic flow across Oxford Street.

We were therefore surprised to hear Ms Shawcross' comments yesterday. Based on many years' experience of managing the road network in the area, along with a wealth of research and modelling of traffic movements there, the City Council's view is that full pedestrianisation is, at present, simply not practicable and would produce too many adverse impacts on surrounding residents and businesses. The fact also remains that Oxford Street is the City Council's responsibility and so no changes can be implemented there without our agreement. This point will be reinforced to the GLA as we continue to work through options for Oxford Street that, as I described, substantially reduce the number of buses in the area and do not simply transfer traffic elsewhere.

I do hope that the above goes some way to reassuring you both of the City Council's position on this issue.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RD', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Councillor Robert Davis MBE DL
Deputy Leader of the Council
and Cabinet Member for the Built Environment