

The Marylebone Forum

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON TRANSFORMATION OF OXFORD STREET WEST

The Marylebone Forum is a designated business area forum under the terms of the Localism act 2011 and covering the Marylebone Area.

This response is submitted by the Marylebone Forum committee of 22 members equally split between business and non business members. Business members include the Howard de Walden Estate, the Portman Estate and the 3 Business Improvement Districts that the area covers. Non business members include the Marylebone Association, the St Marylebone Society and the Harrowby and District Residents Association.

The Marylebone Forum has the following concerns with the proposals as stated:

- 1. Displacement** - buses, taxis, lorries, vans, private and private hire vehicles (noting the latter can use Oxford Street after 7.00pm), and pedicabs - resulting in increased pollution, noise and congestion in surrounding local streets.
- 2. Lack of traffic mitigation in present proposals** - with the exception of a reduction/relocation of bus routes we are aware of no proposals to deal with actually reducing the traffic mentioned above that will be displaced by closing Oxford Street. It will all be left to find its own way through the surrounding Marylebone district.
- 3. Loss of Accessibility**- businesses and residents want to ensure that as many people as possible have access to the future Oxford St. The TfL scheme as it stands does not take sufficient account of current core bus users (young, old, infirm and those with much shopping amongst others) coming to and from surrounding areas, who would face complicated bus transfers at intersections such as Marble Arch. More detailed thought is needed here to ensure that easy accessibility is maintained for these constituents.
- 4. Impact on Conservation Areas**- turning the side streets into servicing areas for Oxford Street including taxi ranks, loading bays, new bus stands. This would result in disturbance to residents and businesses. In addition, new bus routes through residential areas 24 hours a day, new bus stops, and stands for other 24 hour routes located in these areas will result in the same. Further concerns with respect to new coach routes being established as a consequence of new bus routes.
- 5. Public Realm**- the proposals concentrate on Oxford Street and not the mitigation of the impact to the whole area. Adequate provision of public realm improvements should be part of the stage one proposals and should include the area of Oxford Street through to Marble Arch which is omitted from the stage one proposals.

6. Enforcement – concern that levels of thefts (bag-snatches, pickpocketing) and anti-social behaviour (begging, busking) will increase due to displacement from Oxford St into Marylebone. There should be a fully funded management and maintenance plan in place before works commence.

7. Future extension of bus routes and - there is a concern more bus routes will be added and frequency increased on the new routings in the future. A commitment from TfL is required that the bus frequencies on Wigmore Street and Orchard Street will not be increased.

8. Practicality- it is considered that the current programme is too rapid and in breach of Mayor's own commitment on gradual implementation. Implementation in the middle of other major road schemes which threatens to compromise them, including Baker Street 2 Way, Tottenham Court Road, Cycle Superhighway etc should be avoided.

9. Cost of maintenance and enforcement, - there is no commitment as to who is going to pay for this after the initial period, on a year to year basis, in perpetuity. Businesses will not commit to funding, the Mayor's position is that Oxford Street is a borough road and Westminster continue to make cuts to street management budgets. A long term appraisal of ongoing financial costs of the project needs to be carried out and funds secured in the long term with legal agreements accordingly. No legal agreement in place or seemingly contemplated to apportion agreed contributions from the various bodies and stakeholders.

**The Marylebone Forum
22nd December 2017**