

**The Camden (Torrington Place to Tavistock Square) (Prescribed Routes, Waiting and Loading Restrictions and Loading Places) Traffic Order [2017]**

**PLANNING INSPECTORATE REFERENCE: DPI/X5210/17/8**

**Proof of Evidence - Camden Cycling Campaign**

**Witness: Helena Azzam**

My name is Helena Azzam. I live in Huntley Street and work for the NHS in Tottenham Court Road. My work sometimes takes me also to Queen Square and Great Ormond Street. I have Osteoarthritis in my knees and back and have a lot of difficulty walking. This disease caused me to have to give up using my normal bicycle 6 years ago, because I could not trust my knees to balance the bike when I stopped.

After two years of feeling a loss of freedom, I decided I needed to do something. One option was to get a mobility scooter but I was not prepared to sacrifice my overall health and fitness. So, in order to keep active, look after my heart and generally try to remain as fit and mobile as possible, I decided that I would continue to cycle, so I bought my recumbent mobility trike 4 years ago. This also gives me again the pleasure and freedom which cycling has brought me over the years.

I use my trike, which is 103cm wide including the wing mirrors, daily for work and at the weekends for pleasure (going to the park, to restaurants and visiting friends, etc.). It makes life a lot easier for me as I have difficulty walking. Without it my life would be seriously limited.

The new cycle tracks along Torrington & Tavistock Place are a huge improvement over the previous scheme, although even that segregation was better than mixing with traffic!

Under the old bi-directional scheme (which in places had “lanes” only 100cm wide), the width of the track was an issue with my trike being wider than “my” lane. Even when cycling closer to the kerb than I would like (what with potholes, drains etc.) and allowing only 10cm clearance from the kerb, this means that I was dangerously close to the oncoming track – and in many instances overlapping it. I felt that the oncoming bikes sharing the bi-directional track were dangerously close (both for them and for me). This was a particular problem in peak hours, given the volume of cycles using the track but even at less busy times, I felt vulnerable. You can see the problem in the photo.



Another problem with the bi-directional track for me was that, travelling at a slower speed than others, I felt I was causing an obstruction and holding people up – no one could overtake if there were cycles coming in the other direction. They either went into the road or waited behind me. On occasions I was verbally abused, although most cyclists were kind enough to say nothing and just grit their teeth at the delay. Where it was possible, at cross roads for instance, I would pull over and cycle slowly to allow them to pass.

But now, I love the wider track and use it a lot on my trike. I feel much safer and less as if I am holding everyone up. This is particularly important when, for my work, I have to travel between Tottenham Court Road and Queen Square or Great Ormond Street. Getting there by trike is very efficient and I feel much safer using the new track.

Another thing that I have noticed, living just off Torrington Place, is that Torrington Place has become a lot more pleasant with less traffic and less noise and pollution. Gordon Square too has become much more of an oasis of greenery, peace and birdsong. I am amazed at just how more peaceful the whole area around Torrington Place, Huntley Street, Byng Place and Gordon Square has become.

In summary, I urge the Inspector to recommend that Camden should continue with its plan to implement a permanent improved version of the trial scheme.