

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

Camden Cycling Campaign

Proof of evidence of Isabelle Clement

1. Personal details

My name is Isabelle Clement. I am the Director of Wheels for Wellbeing, a charity based in Brixton, south London, that supports disabled people to discover or rediscover cycling. We work with around 1,300 disabled and older people each year, supporting them to discover that they can cycle and helping them grow their cycling ambitions. I am also a disabled cyclist myself.

I have been invited by Camden Cycling Campaign to give evidence today on the Torrington Place to Tavistock Square trial scheme.

2. The negative impact of the pre-trial layout on disabled cyclists

Many disabled people can, and do, cycle. Indeed, according to Transport for London (TfL), in London alone 15% of disabled people sometimes use a cycle to get around, compared to 18% of non-disabled people.¹ Whilst most disabled cyclists use a standard two-wheeled bicycle to get around, many also use non-standard cycles, such as tricycles and handcycles, which have larger dimensions. For example, tricycles are much wider than a standard bicycle.

Therefore, my main concern with the pre-trial layout was that it was too narrow for people using non-standard cycles to be able to cycle safely within the cycling infrastructure (which, incidentally, does not only restrict disabled cyclists, but also parent and freight cyclists too - anyone using trailers and cargobikes). This is particularly problematic at peak times, in the morning and evening, when there are lots of people commuting by cycle.

What is more, *even if physically possible*, being constricted within a narrow cycle track excludes people who use larger cycles because it creates anxiety about becoming stuck, being unable to avoid pot holes or debris, or just getting in everyone's way.

In either circumstance, the effect of narrow cycle tracks is to exclude many disabled (and parent and freight) cyclists from traveling actively. For many disabled people,

¹ *Travel in London: Understanding our diverse communities* (Transport for London, 2015), p. 223. See <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/travel-in-london-understanding-our-diverse-communities.pdf>

cycling is the best, sometimes the only option they have for physical activity as well as for door to door, accessible transport.

3. Current guidance and legislation

To ensure cycling infrastructure is made accessible to all, I would refer any local authority to Highways England's Interim Advice Note 195/16 or to the London Cycling Design Standards (Chapter 3), in which the infrastructure needs and requirements of non-standard cycles in relation to cycling are defined - in the form of the "cycle design vehicle" and "inclusive cycle" concepts respectively.

With the high numbers of cyclists using the Torrington Place/Tavistock Square tracks LCDS (chapter 4) specifies at least 2.5m for a 1-way track and 4m for a two-way track.

Any failure to ensure that cycling infrastructure is constructed to such guidelines, in my opinion, would result in the Council failing to meet its obligation to disabled people as people who cycle, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and Equality Act 2010.

4. Benefits for disabled cyclists of making the trial layout permanent

I believe it is in the interests of everyone – disabled people, local authorities, the NHS, and society as a whole – that cycling is as inclusive as possible. The reasons for doing so are clear:

- First, there is the fact that disabled people are half as likely as non-disabled people to be physically active,² resulting in shorter average life expectancies;
- Then there is the issue that disabled people are more likely to be elderly (and therefore at greater risk of developing health conditions), with the number of people aged 65+ expected to increase by 12% between 2015 and 2020;³
- Only 70 out of 270 tube stations are step-free, very few of them situated in central London and tubes and buses are routinely overcrowded at peak times. Pavements and cut curbs are frequently of woeful quality, again, especially in central London, rendering walking or pushing very difficult and stressful for many people with mobility impairments. For all these reasons cycling is a far superior option for many disabled people;
- Disabled people also tend to be more reliant for day-to-day travel on driving or being driven, adding to the problems of inactivity and air pollution;

² *Everybody Active, Every Day: An evidence-based approach to physical activity* (Public Health England, 2014), p. 9. See https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/374914/Framework_13.pdf

³ *Political challenges relating to an aging population: Key issues for the 2015 Parliament* (House of Commons Library, 2015). See <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/key-issues-parliament-2015/social-change/ageing-population/>

- 'In the 2011 Census, cycling accounted for 3% of commutes to work made by disabled people in London, while 1% used taxis and 1% used 'other' modes (e.g. demand responsive transport)';
- And, finally, with reduced travel mode choices, disabled people are much more likely to be socially isolated and have smaller support networks than non-disabled people.⁴

Cycling vastly improves the independence, health and quality of life of disabled people. Good, accessible cycling infrastructure is key to this becoming the case for many more disabled people.

I therefore strongly support Camden Council's proposals to implement a permanent, improved version of the trial scheme. This design, as opposed to the pre-trial layout, will encourage more and different kinds of people to cycle through the area by increasing cycling capacity and improving safety for cyclists, as well as having the additional benefits of reducing noise and traffic pollution.

As already stated, it will also be more likely to encourage under-represented and less confident groups of cyclists, including disabled and older cyclists, to cycle along this busy road.

Building cycle infrastructure that accommodates the needs of users of non-standard cycles, by its very nature, accommodates all other types of cyclist too - making it the most inclusive approach possible. This is an outcome I believe every local authority should be striving for.

5. Taxi access

Whilst I appreciate there will be disabled people who may require taxi access direct to the front door, I do not accept that limiting taxi access along the cycle track side would mean excluding all disabled people from travelling to and from the area. It is very important that taxis are able to stop in adjacent streets however, and that high quality pavements and cut curbs at all road junctions are provided so people needing to get into a car/cab can travel round the corner or across the street to get into it (with or without assistance as appropriate). The provision of regular pedestrian crossings across the cycle track are also needed in order to facilitate this.

I have no doubt that many disabled people use taxis and private car hire only because walking and cycling infrastructure in their area is inadequate; they may also have never considered themselves as having the option to cycle. Either way, both are symptoms of the fact that without inclusive cycling infrastructure two things happen: (1) disabled cyclists continue to be put off cycling for fear of safety and lack of accessibility; and (2) disabled people continue to see themselves primarily as car drivers, taxi and private car hire users - anything but cyclists. It is a 'chicken and egg' scenario: where cycling infrastructure is inaccessible there will be fewer disabled

⁴ *Disability and domestic abuse: risk, impacts and response* (Public Health England, 2015), p. 12. See https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/480942/Disability_and_domestic_abuse_topic_overview_FINAL.pdf

cyclists, but make it inclusive and far wider variety of cyclists, including disabled cyclists will come.

6. Conclusion

Camden Council has a fantastic opportunity to ensure that this piece of cycling infrastructure is made inclusive to all types of cycles and cyclists. I urge the Council to do just that.