

## **LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984**

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

### **BLOOMSBURY CONSERVATION AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE PROOF OF EVIDENCE**

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Advisory Committee was established by Camden Council in 1968 following the passage of the Civic Amenities Act of 1967, which first established the concept of conservation areas. It advises the council on major proposals affecting the character and appearance of this unique area and its setting as well as those of the numerous listed buildings it incorporates

#### **CONTEXT**

The quality of conservation areas varies considerably and there can be no question that the townscape and historic value of Bloomsbury as an example of urban planning is of outstanding national, if not international value and repute. This fact must be recognised by the inquiry in accordance with relevant legislation and the NPPF.

#### **IMPACTS**

##### **VISUAL IMPACTS**

This proposal would be visually very disruptive in an area with a long established and settled high quality character. It would sever the southern sides of two important squares Tavistock and Gordon. The route would in effect result in also visually severing the conservation area in two. The uncharacteristic physical manifestation of the scheme, a plethora of signs bollards, road markings and so forth, would be seriously harmful to and disruptive of, the settings of numerous statutorily listed buildings flanking the proposed route. In addition, it would be within the settings of the numerous listed buildings beyond the route forming the famous squares and well as that of the historic gardens themselves and similarly detrimental to their setting and special interest.

The negative visual impact would also be very evident, especially in winter months, when the current trend to have intense flashing warning lights often on cycling helmets would have a very marked effect on an historic area of subdued lighting with little light pollution.

At the 'public' meeting organised by Transport for London and the council via email invitation only, no mention whatsoever was made of the fact that the route would dissect a major heritage asset, namely the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. Cllr Jones appeared to be quite intent in attempting to push through this proposal in the face of fierce local opposition and to unilaterally approve the scheme without proper democratic scrutiny.

##### **PHYSICAL IMPACTS**

The proposed layout would involve speeding cyclists being immediately adjacent to the pedestrian pavements. One of the rationales of the scheme, according to Cllr Phil Jones the then Cabinet member for planning, now employed by Turleys planning consultants, is to enable cyclists to overtake each other, In other words, to travel at some considerable speed forming dual race tracks with lycra clad boy racers, hunched and helmeted. Quite an intimidating sight for pedestrians.

Indeed, they group at the lights as though it was the starting point of a road race. This very unpleasant, aggressive movement would of itself be seriously disruptive to the relative calm and tranquillity the area currently enjoys and would be potentially dangerous to pedestrians. This fact has been recognised only this week by the calls for new legislation relating to deaths caused by cyclists on our highways.

A fact recognised by the Royal Parks Agency, who much to their credit have introduced a 10 MPH speed limit on the new route across the parks. Were Camden to institute a similar and very sensible speed restriction, it would of itself negate the need to accommodate overtaking and thus the whole rationale for the scheme starts to fall apart. Where the route cranks at Byng Place, there is no delineation of the cycle lane, on a large expanse of rather naff shared surface paving.

In assessing these impacts, the fact that the council chose, somewhat arrogantly, to provide us with a full-scale working model of the proposal. It has nonetheless been most informative and has confirmed our very worst fears. The Inspector will be able to see this for himself and assess these harmful impacts against the statutory heritage protections provided by Parliament.

### **OTHER MATTERS**

The other parties have fully covered the procedural issues involved in this case and BCAAC would wish to adopt the evidence in particular that of BRAG and therefore would not intend to waste inquiry time on repeating their well-founded arguments.

In addition, the council has prayed in aid the support of the University. This is hardly surprising as this would appear to be part of their seemingly sinister 'master plan' to further colonise, institutionalise and unbalance Bloomsbury to the serious detriment of its underlying historic and residential character.

Reference may be made to the NPPF, related policies of the Royal Parks Agency, plans showing the conservation area boundary and the designated listed buildings together with photographs.

### **CONCLUSION**

This proposal has caused a considerable disquiet, discomfort and disruption for this well-established residential community, many of whom are in the autumn of their lives. The detrimental impacts on the numerous high quality heritage assets far outweigh and claimed benefits of the continuation of the 'temporary' traffic scheme. It should therefore be curtailed with immediate effect.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Were the Inspector minded to confirm the temporary order, then BCAAC would urge him to ask the Secretary of State and or the council to impose a 10mph speed limit on this route to lessen the visual and physical detrimental impacts on pedestrian safety and the environmental amenity of the conservation area.

BCAAC Sept 17