

London Living Streets

City of Westminster Strand/Aldwych Consultation, March 2019

1. Completing the survey as a Campaign Group

3. To what extent do you support the objectives for this project (listed below)? SUPPORT

4. Do you have any views on the overall concept designs?

London Living Streets is overall supportive of these proposals and in particular the Strand East closure to all through vehicular traffic. We believe this scheme has the opportunity to be a significant location for London both for those who work and study around this area and the huge numbers of visitors to Somerset House, St Mary-le-Strand, Covent Garden and the river. We are pleased that the City of Westminster has taken this opportunity to create a people friendly space and undertaken the removal of almost all vehicular traffic and access from the East Strand area. This has to be applauded as a major step forward not just for this location but in terms of how the City of Westminster views the locations of London-wide and national significance that it is home to. Our concerns about the scheme and the opportunities for improvement largely relate to the road around the Aldwych. We believe that there are opportunities to align proposals for those roads better with Vision Zero and Healthy Streets policies and most importantly to create a slower and safe environment for people on bicycles and on foot. The omission of a safe segregated route around the Aldwych for people on bicycles is regretted and we believe that with careful thought such a facility can be created; the omission of fully protected space for cycling on Aldwych has the capacity to seriously reduce the amenity of the scheme owing to the likelihood of building in potential conflict between people on foot and people cycling on Strand East.

5. Do you have any comments on any of the below themes in the draft concept designs?

Do you have any comments on getting around the area? N/A

6. Do you have any comments on air quality?

We are pleased to see the dramatic improvements to air quality as outlined in section 3 of the booklet and view this as a core part of the appeal of the proposals. It is clear that the reduction of vehicular movement and access when combined with changes such as ULEZ can have a major impact on this problem. This is again a potentially useful insight for other locations in the City of Westminster.

7. Do you have any comments on improving spaces and places?

A. We propose that the pedestrian crossings to the north of Waterloo Bridge are 10 metres in width rather than 6 metres to comfortably accommodate the large number of people walking along the Strand and into/out of Covent Garden.

B. Where car parking is proposed (and we would very much hope that it is minimised throughout the scheme) and when not in use, it should be able to function as footway for pedestrians. We feel that if this remaining parking is what is standing in the way of creating segregated and safe cycling provision, then it should be removed from the Aldwych itself.

C. Any designs for the public space should enhance and not detract from the great architecture, especially St Mary-le-Strand and Somerset House. We are very much in favour of the creation of more greenery but there is a tendency to plant trees where they will grow up to obscure fabulous buildings; this should be avoided in this location.

8. Do you have any comments on culture, education and innovation? N/A

9. Do you have any comments on supporting the local economy?

We feel strongly that these proposals will be a significant filip to the local economy, businesses across this area and a major boost for the City of Westminster overall (as it embraces people friendly environments). We would commend the recently updated Living Streets report *The Pedestrian Pound - The Business Case for Better Streets and Places to the City of Westminster* (<https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/3890/pedestrian-pound-2018.pdf>). This indicates that footfall and spending are likely to be boosted by a minimum of 30% in people friendly locations.

10. Are there any themes you would like to comment upon?

1. Impact on Designs of Modelling. We are concerned that the City of Westminster is being hamstrung by apparent TfL requirements to maintain traffic capacity and hence create two lanes of motor traffic eastbound and westbound through the Aldwych. The MTS envisages reductions in private motor traffic over time and this should be reflected in the capacity allocation through the Aldwych. Overall, we are concerned that the modelling a) is based on data that maximises the volumes of vehicle movements and b) does not take into account the potential changes to bus movements from the changes to bus routes that are proposed by TfL. We feel that there should be real ambition by TfL to support the City of Westminster in designing a scheme that benefits from a reduction in traffic levels over time and seeks to allocate space on that basis to better support the Healthy Streets and MTS principles.

2. Signal Cycle Times at Key Junction. We are concerned that this modelling is driving proposed use of the maximum signal cycle times at three junctions. From our conversations at consultation events we understand that the Waterloo Bridge/Strand junction will remain at 120 seconds and that for the Kingsway/Aldwych and Arundel St/Strand junctions the cycle time will increase from 60 to 120 seconds. This is a very concerning proposal as, at the same time as the scheme encourages pedestrian movement and envisages pedestrian priority, road danger is introduced and increased by increasing pedestrian wait

times and encouraging risky pedestrian behaviour. Policies of traffic reduction should be pursued that reduce signal cycle times at these junctions and reduce pedestrian wait times.

3. Safe Cycling Provision. As we have noted in our overall impressions, we are supportive of the need to provide safe provision for people cycling and the creation of a segregated cycling facility eastbound and westbound through the Aldwych. We are concerned that the lack of safe and segregated provision (through the Aldwych) will inevitably encourage people on bicycles to make use of the Strand East and that the current design thus builds in potential conflict between people cycling and those on foot. In relation to the pedestrianised area of the Strand we envisage that very low speed cycling (little above walking pace) remaining permissible (principally in order to access the institutions in the area) and that there is no requirement for people cycling to dismount. The location of two large and prestigious universities on the Strand and the Aldwych - King's College London, and the London School of Economics - makes serious and much improved provision for cyclists on the Aldwych, and also Kingsway that feeds into it, absolutely essential. Students are pre-eminent users of cycling as a mode of transport, and the experience of the City of Cambridge illustrates just how important low speed limits, infrastructure geared to the needs of cyclists for safe movement, and lots of cycle parking can make a huge and positive difference to a busy city area.

4. Deliveries. We support the idea of timed deliveries - timed entry works well in Leicester Square and in other locations so it should work well with deliveries being restricted to early morning only. We need to ensure that all vehicles move extremely slowly through this space and we propose a 10mph speed limit.

5. Vision Zero and Road Safety. The design of the Aldwych roads needs to do more to fit with Vision Zero policies. We would note the significant number of casualties on the Aldwych including a number of serious pedestrian casualties in recent years (www.crashmap.co.uk) All of the vehicular roads in the scheme should be designed to a maximum vehicle speed of 20mph. This could be achieved in a number of ways including a) some vertical calming such as having bus friendly tables where the signalised junctions/crossings are located to reduce vehicle speeds especially in free-flowing traffic, b) the use of speed enforcement cameras, c) the creation of segregated cycle lanes and d) the use of narrow lanes for vehicular traffic. Other initiatives such as centre white line removal may also be appropriate to contribute to the reduction in vehicle speeds. A 20mph speed limit should be introduced on all of the roads in this area. This will on its own reduce speeds of the numerous buses that pass through the area with the introduction of mandatory Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) on all London buses in the near future.

6. Cycle Parking. We propose more bike parking near the eastern and western entrances to the pedestrian area. This will serve both as an invitation to cycle to the area and also an invitation to get off your bike and walk through the space.

11. If you have any suggestions on the themes listed above, which you feel would improve the Strand Aldwych area, please write them in here. You can also leave any other ideas you would like to propose for the area here. N/A – all covered above