

Transport for London & Islington Council's Proposals for Highbury Corner

The rationale for The Canonbury Society's Objection

Background:

Transport for London (TfL) is currently consulting on the details of a proposal to pedestrianise the western arm of Highbury Corner roundabout (see the attached map). TfL is relying on a 2007 consultation in which 51% of respondents favoured this option over closure of the eastern or southern arms. The 2007 option was however significantly different from what is now proposed; it featured a bus interchange immediately outside Highbury and Islington station and bus priority lanes passing through the pedestrianised area. This facility is no longer on offer despite the fact that Highbury Station has been transformed by the new Overground railway. Another major difference is that the road layout now provides extensive cycle lanes which require land to be taken from the central island with the loss of several important trees.

It is the Committee's view that the current consultation is flawed and that all three options need to be revisited and a fresh consultation launched

Detailed Comments:

1. TfL forecasts that traffic will slow further, with several new sets of lights incorporating pedestrian and cycle phases. This may cause traffic to divert to other roads.
2. TfL and the Council should be asked to produce estimates of the likely diversions to other roads in the area (including Canonbury Park North, Canonbury Square and Canonbury Lane) and of the effect of the proposals on air pollution levels.
3. The loss of the 277 bus route is unacceptable. Increasing the frequency of buses on the 30 bus route does not compensate for those travelling beyond Dalston Junction to Canary Wharf and Mile End.
4. The 2-3 minute delays to the 271 bus and 1-2 minute delays to other bus services are a major disadvantage and do not encourage people to use public transport instead of the car. The number of people delayed on buses is much greater than the number of cyclists using Highbury Corner. TfL claim that cyclists make up some 22% of traffic at peak times but they are basing this on 'units of transport' so one bicycle equals one bus which is an absurd analysis. If it was measured by numbers of people, cyclists would represent a small minority – at the peak a bus may carry 80-90 passengers.
5. The proposed cycle lanes seem over-elaborate and take too much land from the central island, requiring several large and important trees to be felled.
6. The route for cyclists between Holloway Road and Upper Street is very circuitous and we think cyclists will simply cycle through the proposed pedestrian route on the West side. (TfL's figures show that journey times are longer for cyclists than now, though we cannot believe that it currently takes 8-10 minutes for a cyclist to travel from Holloway Road to Canonbury Road.). If the scheme does go ahead in its present form, it might be better to design the pedestrianised area to accommodate a segregated cycle lane rather than carve off a strip to the right of the area of trees.
7. We understand that TfL and the Council want to make safer provision for cyclists when a major roundabout is redesigned, following the number of fatal accidents in recent years. Yet the cycle lanes peter out on all ingoing and outgoing roads including Holloway Road

and St Paul's Road. Would it not be better for cyclists to use routes avoiding Highbury Corner? (Cyclists from St Paul's Road can get to Canonbury Road via Canonbury Park North and Canonbury Grove, where there are special lanes and traffic light phases).

8. The proposed closure of Corsica Street is not acceptable because it will simply force traffic onto St Paul's Road and Baalbec Road to gain access to Highbury Fields.

Conclusions:

1. It is disappointing that since Highbury Station is a major transport hub and more heavily used by pedestrians and bus passengers than ever, there is no proper interchange between buses and the station.
2. The plans put before us seem to give precedence to cyclists but make no improvements for bus passengers. Given the difficulties cyclists encounter on the approaches to and exits from Highbury Corner, we believe it would be better to encourage cyclists to use the many alternative routes available.
3. There is no advantage for pedestrians from the proposals. TfL's figures show that at peak times (when they may be hurrying to catch a train) they will have to wait much longer to cross the road than now and at several points their route crosses a cycle lane which could be dangerous (cyclists are not well known for obeying red lights)
4. We don't believe that the additional amenity space is worth the potential downsides, (displaced traffic, longer journey times, additional pollution) none of which seems to have been properly quantified?
5. The current proposals are distorted because they rely on the prevailing opinion from the consultation conducted 9 years ago when a bus interchange with the station was proposed. This is no longer on offer.
6. This is surely a good opportunity to reconfigure a junction to be fit-for-purpose for the next 50 years? As such, all options should be revisited and long term detailed proposals produced for a more informed rational consultation.

All members and non-members are urged to check out the website – www.tfl.gov.uk/highbury-corner-roundabout

and to send comments to consultations@tfl.gov.uk by Sunday 20th March 2016