

TfL proposal for Old Street between Shoreditch High Street and Pitfield Street

Comments by London Cycling Campaign in Hackney February 2005

1. Introduction

With over 800 members in the borough, the London Cycling Campaign in Hackney (LCCiH) is the largest local group of the 9,000-member London Cycling Campaign, the largest urban cycling organisation in the world. LCCiH seeks to represent the interests of all who use this mode of transport in the borough.

We very much appreciate the efforts of TfL Street Management to improve conditions for cycle traffic in the Shoreditch area, and we thank the Area Team for consulting us on the proposals for Old Street.

Cycling conditions on this and surrounding TLRN streets have already been vastly improved by TfL's far-sighted traffic reform in 2002. This transformed the Shoreditch Triangle from a one-way racetrack into a normal two-way system on which motor traffic generally travels at moderate speeds, facilitating relatively comfortable mixing of cycle traffic with motorised modes.

2. General character of this section of Old Street

This section of Old Street is characterised by frequent deflections, a constant variation in carriageway width (including pinch points), numerous loading bays and bus stops in use at all hours of day and night, unlawful parking (mostly out of hours), and a number of junctions of varying importance.

To negotiate these features safely and effectively, cycle traffic needs to be positioned at an adequate distance from the kerb and from any kerbside obstructions (including the sweep of parked vehicles' doors), and must often take the 'primary' riding position, preventing traffic behind it from overtaking until a safe passing width is available. Only in exceptional circumstances would a cyclist be able to stay within 1.5 metres of the kerb for the duration of the journey between Shoreditch High Street and the Apex (the junction with Great Eastern Street/Pitfield Street/Tabernacle Square) in either direction.

We believe this section of Old Street to be an ideal candidate for the application of a 20mph speed limit in line with Proposal 4G.9 of the Mayor's Transport Strategy.

3. Overview of current TfL proposal

The current proposal comprises:

- new advanced stop lines at the junction with Rufus Street/Charlotte Street
- adjustment of existing westbound ASL at junction with Curtain Road
- marking of cycle symbols at various locations on the carriageway
- new kerbside advisory cycle lanes, apparently with a maximum width of 1.5 metres, mostly stopping before loading/bus bays.

We approve of some of the proposed measures, and suggest a number of further measures to improve conditions for cycling. We do not, however, see any advantage in cycle lanes here, and we are concerned that in places they might make matters worse, potentially leading cycle traffic into unnecessary difficulties.

4. Specific current issues: eastbound

| <i>Problem</i> | <i>Suggested action</i> |
|---|---|
| Kerblines of Old Street curve excessively gently into Pitfield Street, exposing straight-on cycle traffic to left-turning motor traffic for an unnecessarily long period, and permitting excessive entry speeds into Pitfield Street. | Shorter term: adjust kerblines to 'square off' this curve as much as possible, possibly in conjunction with banning of right turn from Great Eastern Street. Longer-term: review whole Apex junction to simplify and prioritise cycle movements. |
| Position of splitter island at junction with Curtain Road causes awkward pinch point. | Review positioning options for splitter island. |

5. Specific current issues: westbound

| <i>Problem</i> | <i>Suggested action</i> |
|---|--|
| The westbound lane of Old Street after the junction with Shoreditch High Street is regularly entered in error by eastbound motors. This phenomenon has been confirmed to us by Clive Treacher of the Met area traffic police, and attention was even drawn to the problem by graphic artist Banksy, with his prominent 'Keep Left' message on the railway bridge. | Apply several more direction reminder arrows on the westbound lane of the carriageway to remind eastbound motorists of two-way working. Also consider the installation of two-way, no-entry and other direction signage in appropriate positions – possibly including on the bridge. |
| The buildout outside 374 Old Street ahead of the two loading bays is abrupt, giving potential for conflict between cycle traffic and motor traffic preparing to bear left around the curve leading to the junction with Curtain Road. | Consider shortening the bus box (which is longer than its eastbound counterpart) and adjusting kerblines and hatching to facilitate gentler approach angle for cycle traffic. Consider removing one of the two loading bays to form a single bay. |

6. The appropriateness or otherwise of cycle lanes for Old Street

UK traffic law is, of course, clear that cycle lanes, whether advisory or otherwise, are intended to encourage motor traffic to keep out, rather than to encourage cycle traffic to keep within the lane. However, the perception by many road users is otherwise. Naïve cyclists tend to think that it is in all circumstances safest to keep to marked lanes. Many motorists, meanwhile, believe that cyclists are not permitted to stray from marked lanes – a belief which some unfortunately take it upon themselves to spell out to cyclists, whether verbally, by gesture, or in the worst case by intimidatory behaviour.

We are therefore concerned that the cycle lanes proposed for Old Street would:

- discourage cyclists from taking the correct riding position, which, due to the features of Old Street described in sections 2, 4 and 5 above, would usually be outside the marked lanes; and
- encourage motorists to assume that correctly positioned cyclists are straying from their proper place.

The recently published TRL report, *Review of procedures associated with the development and delivery of measures designed to improve safety and convenience for cyclists*, casts the following doubt on the value of cycle lanes from the point of view of safety:

“Interestingly the presence of a cycle lane does not have a statistically significant effect on the level of cyclist casualties, although a number were not provided to recommended standard.”
(section 6.13.18)

The other major argument for cycle lanes is that they may be worthwhile if they encourage more people to cycle. We have already observed a large increase in cycling on Old Street since it was made two-way, and TfL figures no doubt confirm this. The extent of the potential additional 'draw factor' of cycle lanes is unknown, but our view is that any cyclists so attracted would likely be less skilled and experienced, and more prone to be led into danger by following the cycle lanes slavishly rather than taking a safe line according to conditions.

7. Detailed comments on proposal: eastbound

| <i>Proposed feature</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
|---|--|
| Large cycle symbol in the middle of the 'left' filter lane in advance of the junction with Pitfield Street. | We like this very much. It would encourage straight-on cycle traffic to adopt the primary position in the approach to the junction, and legitimise this behaviour in the minds of motorists. |
| Advisory cycle lane passing mouth of Pitfield Street | <p>As discussed above, the kerblines at this junction are most unhelpful, exposing straight-on cycle traffic to left-turning motor traffic for an unnecessarily long period.</p> <p>If the kerblines remain unadjusted, a lane in the proposed position would encourage cyclists to stay too far to the left when they should be taking the lane in the primary position to stop left-turners trying to overtake. Impatient left-turning motorists would still have an opportunity to overtake a straight-on cyclist riding in the early part of the proposed lane.</p> <p>We therefore advise against such a cycle lane, and request TfL to take the earliest opportunity to cure the problem with a suitable kerblines adjustment.</p> <p>We also suggest that in any case a cycle symbol combined with straight-on arrow should be applied centrally to the eastbound carriageway as it passes the junction with Pitfield Street.</p> |
| Advisory cycle lane passing in front of Holiday Inn | Unnecessary and potentially unhelpful. Carriageway is very wide at this point, permitting cycle traffic to take a line wide of the kerb with plenty of room for vehicles to pass. The proposed cycle lane would encourage cyclists to stay close to the kerb, placing them in the extreme of the cone of vision of coach drivers leaving the Holiday Inn drop-off lane. |

| <i>Proposed feature</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
|---|--|
| Advisory cycle lane stopping at bus box | Cycle traffic is well within its right to overtake stopped buses, but the existence of the proposed cycle lane would discourage naïve cyclists from correct positioning for overtaking stopped buses, and make some motorists less prepared to accept overtaking of stopped buses by cyclists. |
| Advisory cycle lane continuing across junction with Coronet Street | Appears relatively wide, but would be of questionable utility and may encourage cyclists to stay too far towards kerb, especially in the approach to the loading bay outside 295 which is occupied at least 12 hours a day. Again, the existence of the proposed lane would make some motorists less prepared to accept cyclists positioning themselves to pass the loading bay. |
| New ASL at junction with Rufus Street/Charlotte Road | Appears satisfactory and is welcomed. We assume that the lead-in lane is at least 1.5m wide. |
| Advisory cycle lane continuing across junction with Rufus Street/Charlotte Road | Narrow and not on natural line of cycle traffic. Would encourage cyclists to stay too far to the left, especially on approach to the pinch point ahead. |
| Narrow 'ghost' lane approaching and continuing through junction with Curtain Road | May discourage cyclists from taking the primary position, which, depending on the width, length and speed of vehicle(s) behind, is usually the correct position in the approach to this pinch point. The London Cycling Campaign has a policy of opposition to all ghost lanes. |
| Advisory cycle lane hugging kerb between pedestrian crossing and bus box, passing junction with Hoxton Street | Motors emerging from Hoxton Street often overhang the give-way markings, and in our opinion would be likely to be continue to do so. The proposed kerb-hugging cycle lane would therefore encourage naïve cyclists to take a line which comes into conflict with such vehicles. Also a cycle lane would discourage some cyclists from correct positioning for overtaking buses stopped outside the former magistrates court, and make some motorists less prepared to accept such overtaking. |
| Cycle logos painted near the kerb on the left filter lane | Approaching the junction with Shoreditch High Street, many cyclists are heading straight on into Hackney Road or right into the High Street, so it is misleading and unhelpful to have cycle logos painted only near the kerb on the left filter lane. We suggest adding 'and cycles' to 'Except buses' in the left filter lane, together with a smaller straight-on arrow associated with a cycle symbol, as suggested above for the junction with Pitfield Street. Consideration could also be given to placing large cycle logos centrally in both lanes 1 and 2. |

8. Detailed comments on proposal: westbound

| <i>Proposed feature</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
|--|--|
| Four cycle symbols abutting hatching and loading bay markings | Would encourage naïve cyclists to pass vehicles parked in loading bay without due clearance for sweep of doors ¹ . Suggest adjusting position of symbols approximately one metre to the right. |
| Short left-bearing section of advisory cycle lane before bus box | Would discourage cycle traffic from making correct overtaking approach if bus(es) at stop, and cause some motorists to be less prepared to accept cycle traffic making such a manoeuvre. |
| Advisory cycle lane past loading bays | If buildout ahead of loading bays remains, we suggest either widening the advisory cycle lane to at least 2m or removing it altogether. A narrow lane as proposed would tend to persuade motorists that the width of the lane is sufficient passing width. A vehicle passing with its left wheel up against the dashed line at this point would probably hit a cyclist in that lane. |
| Staggered/'advanced' ASL | Looks like a good idea. Would need to see overlay of current and proposed positions before giving definitive judgement. |
| Advisory cycle lane running past junction with Curtain Road | Would encourage cycle traffic to take a position much too far to the left on the approach to the pinch point. Cyclists need to be at least one third the way across the lane (permitting overtaking by two-wheelers only), if not taking the middle of the lane completely. |
| Advisory cycle lane approaching loading bay outside 352/348 | Would discourage cycle traffic from taking correct overtaking position when loading bay is occupied. |
| New ASL | Appears satisfactory. Welcomed, assuming that lead-in lane is min. 1.5m. |
| Advisory cycle lane across Charlotte Road junction and following pedestrian crossing | Would encourage cyclists to stay too far to the left when loading bay outside 334 is occupied (probably at least 12 hours per day). |
| Long section of advisory cycle lane following the loading bay | Rather narrow and of questionable value on this relatively wide section of Old Street. There may be value in installing a short two-metre-wide section of advisory lane where the westbound carriageway artificially narrows to cater for the loading bay opposite. |

9. Summary: elements of the proposal welcomed by LCCiH

- ✓ Large cycle symbol in the middle of the 'left' filter lane in advance of the junction with Pitfield Street.
- ✓ The proposed installation of advanced stop lines at the junction with Rufus Street/Charlotte Road
- ✓ Adjustment of westbound ASL at junction with Curtain Road

¹ London Accident Analysis Unit briefing July 2001 states that 10% of London cyclist deaths and serious injuries were due to the cyclist hitting an open vehicle door

10. Summary: additional measures suggested by LCCiH

Eastbound

- ✓ Kerbline adjustment to junction with Pitfield Street, in conjunction with right-turn ban from Great Eastern Street. Longer-term Apex junction review.
- ✓ Cycle symbol with straight-on arrow centrally on eastbound carriageway at junction with Pitfield Street.
- ✓ Approaching Shoreditch High Street, the addition of 'and cycles' to 'Except buses' in left filter, plus cycle symbol with straight-on arrow central in lane. Large cycle logos in the middle of both lanes 1 and 2.

Westbound

- ✓ Move proposed cycle symbols abutting hatching and loading bay markings under railway bridge approximately one metre to the right to give clearance from door sweep.
- ✓ Consider installing a short two-metre-wide section of advisory cycle lane on westbound carriageway where it narrows to cater for the loading bay outside 295/297.

Global

- ✓ The marking of mid-carriageway lane cycle symbols could usefully be extended to include all locations where cyclists may need to take the primary position, and must in all cases be located to give ample clearance from the sweep of doors of parked vehicles.
- ✓ Consider applying a 20mph speed limit to this section of Old Street, in line with those being considered for other TLRN streets such as A10 Bishopsgate, A214 Streatham High St and A2 New Cross
- ✓ To serve the interests of less confident cyclists and those who would like to take a quieter route, we favour an east-west link between LCN+ routes 9 and 10 based on Rivington Street. This is currently the subject of a variation proposal submitted by LB Hackney to the LCN+ project team.

11. Conclusion

This opportunity to comment is welcomed. We trust that TfL Streets will value our response as the considered opinion of road users deeply familiar with this section of Old Street. It would assist in future if proposals could be discussed with stakeholders at an earlier stage, enabling the examination in outline of all options before engineers proceed to detailed design of a single option.

This consultation presents an opportunity to revive the dialogue between TfL Streets, LB Hackney, stakeholders and the wider community concerning traffic reform in the area. Now that Congestion Charging and the 2002 reforms have had a chance to bed in, we believe that it is time to study options for further improvements to the street scene in Shoreditch, for instance removing Curtain Road from the TLRN and generally improving the walkability and cycle permeability of streets adjacent to the Shoreditch Triangle.

Trevor Parsons and Oliver Schick, on behalf of the London Cycling Campaign in Hackney, February 2005