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## ***Editorial***

Our lead story in this edition is the proposal to redesign the road network in the Tottenham Court Road area (otherwise known as the "West End Project"). It is interesting to note the way these plans were developed according to the London Borough of Camden. They claim to have worked with "Local Residents Groups and Local Businesses" and specifically with Transport for London, Crossrail, Camden Cycling Campaign, Inmidtown, The Fitzrovia Partnership, London First and the City of Westminster. Note the lack of reference to any group representing private car users or taxi drivers.

It is unfortunately all too often the case that these kinds of plans are developed and put forward as a fait accompli for public consultation (as a result of which few significant changes are ever made). The same happened to the Aldgate scheme in the City of London.

There really should be an obligation to consult the road users of all kinds before these plans are firmed up. It's also not at all clear from the consultation documents what the impact will be on traffic. They claim a reduction in "congestion", but will this be because of restricting vehicle movements in favour of buses and cyclists, or because of improved traffic flows?

The information made publicly available does not enable any analysis of this, but with road space being reduced it seems very likely that the effective traffic capacity will be reduced.

Your tax payments of course fund these schemes via the Mayor and Transport for London budget, but in reality the public get little say in the development of these proposals.

Roger Lawson, Editor

## **Tottenham Court Road Proposals**



Anyone who drives in London will know that Tottenham Court Road is a key and busy road. There are proposals developed by Camden Council (a notoriously anti-car body incidentally) to redevelop the whole road system in the Tottenham Court Road area.

That includes making Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street two way roads (they are presently one-way), and closing Tottenham Court Road to all traffic other than buses and cyclists.

Other measures include a number of road closures, more provision for cyclists, wider pavements and development of open spaces. In effect there is a major reduction in road space from these plans.

Camden Council claim that this will "reduce congestion and pollution, widen pavements and make bus journeys quicker". The project is being funded by £26m of cash, mainly from Transport for London, and would be delivered by 2018.

There is a public consultation being run on these proposals. See here for more information and to respond to the consultation:

<http://www.wearecamden.org/westendproject>.

The ABD has already submitted some comments, but readers of this newsletters are encouraged to submit their own views. PLEASE RESPOND NOW TO ENSURE YOU MEET THE DEADLINE.

*(Editor's comments: It is undoubtedly the case that some roads and the public realm in general could be improved in this area. But as the proposals make clear there would be "less traffic in the area". In other words vehicular traffic, other than buses, will be discouraged and life made more difficult for car users by road closures, reducing road space, removing parking and other measures. There have already been large numbers of road closures in past years in this area which have made life difficult for car drivers. It is not at all clear from the published information how the new road system is supposed to work or improve matters for road users. It looks more likely that the road network will be degraded. These plans just continue that process and should be opposed).*

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## Chislehurst Commons Roads

A proposal to close some roads, indeed to remove them altogether, that makes a lot more sense than the Tottenham Court Road measures has been developed for Chislehurst in the London Borough of Bromley.

There have been a number of problems with traffic congestion in the roads crossing the Commons, and a specific road safety problem has been the white spot roundabout on the centre of the Commons (the junction of Loop Road and Ashfield Lane). See photographs below (courtesy of Donald Drage and Christine Wearn) of the location. For example there have been 7 reported personal injury accidents in the last three years at this junction as drivers failed to see or give way to other vehicles approaching the junction at the same time.



This has been a problem for many years and despite several attempts to improve the roundabout the accidents continue to happen. A photograph of the scene after one minor such accident is shown above.



Another road safety black spot has been the white spot roundabout at the top of Summer Hill (Hangman's Corner) and a further issue has been the difficulty for pedestrians crossing at the war memorial traffic lights partly due to traffic jumping the lights.

The war memorial junction and the A222 which runs through it is also one of the most congested areas in Bromley (and a key route from the A20 to Bromley town centre).

This causes some vehicles to divert either north (via Heathfield Lane and Prince Imperial Road), or south (via Bull Lane, Watts Lane), which is clearly not ideal for road safety.

A historic difficulty with tackling these issues has been the reluctance of the Commons Trustees to give up any land. The Commons are regulated by a separate Act of Parliament which means they can block any changes.

But Bromley Council have now come up with some proposals for a "land swap" that would simplify the roads over the commons and actually release land to the Commons. As a result it has received support from the Commons Trustees, the Chislehurst Society, local ward councillors and others. In addition there would be improvements to the War Memorial junction for pedestrians, and perhaps even a widening of the roads to improve traffic flows.

The proposals are still only in outline form and subject to change and wider consultation (search the internet for "A222 Chislehurst Common Improvements" for the details). However £60,000 of funding to develop the proposals further has been approved by the Council. Traffic surveys are one of the first steps to be undertaken and this may be a lengthy and expensive project before it is complete.

*(Editor's Comments: These proposals will improve road safety, improve the Commons and reduce traffic congestion. Indeed the idea of a single road between Heathfield Lane and Centre Common Road was put forward by the Chislehurst Society in the past, but we would prefer a somewhat different crossing point. The War Memorial and Hangman's Corner junctions also do need tackling although I am not clear that introduction of a "flare" lane on the A222 would significantly improve matters).*

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## **Consultation on Parking**

The Government is considering the responses to the public consultation on local authority parking enforcement. That included a proposal to ban the use of CCTV (i.e. fixed cameras and mobile camera cars).

Many local authorities strongly opposed an outright ban and wished to retain it for areas such as outside schools and on bus lanes.

The Government intends to push ahead with a ban but may allow their use outside schools, on red routes and bus lanes.

*(Editor's Comments: I am not at all clear why there should be any exceptions. The argument for outside schools is apparently that people stop to drop off or pick up children and depart before a traffic warden can issue a ticket, i.e. enforcement is impractical particularly where "grace" periods are permitted. But stopping on a yellow line is not parking, so it would seem that tickets are being issued by camera systems (remotely and after the event of course) that the drivers do not challenge when they could do so. Stopping on a yellow "zig-zag" outside a school for as short a time as 10 seconds is however a different offence and might be more difficult to enforce, but surely not impossible by conventional means. But the key question is whether such zealous enforcement is necessary on road safety grounds and whether it actually makes any difference in practice. Is there any evidence that the number of accidents outside schools has fallen as a result? I doubt it and it is well known that few accidents involving schoolchildren take place immediately outside schools anyway. Has compliance improved as a result of the use of camera cars, or actually reduced as they are so easy to spot that those who would infringe move on when they are there, but ignore the law when they are not? As usual with parking enforcement, there may not be any measurement of its effectiveness - all that is considered is the revenue raising capability. A camera system is just more convenient for councils to use and potentially raises more revenue. You can see the financial incentive for councils to retain these measures.*

*At a council meeting that discussed the proposals on Chislehurst Commons mentioned above, the proposed new parking regulations were also discussed. Councillor Colin Smith said it would be a major concern if the proposals from the Government meant a total ban because it would mean a loss of £80,000 per annum in revenue. He made it very clear that he had more concerns about the budget implications than the principle of the matter. Bromley Council does of course currently use both mobile camera cars and fixed cameras for parking enforcement despite them being contrary to the guidelines laid down on camera use).*

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## Mayor Ignores Opposition to Congestion Charge Tax Rise



As mentioned in our last newsletter, the Congestion Charge (a.k.a. tax) is to rise to £11.50 per day. This has now been confirmed - see more details here:

[www.tfl.gov.uk/ccyourviews](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/ccyourviews)

Transport for London (TfL) got over 11,000 responses to the public consultation on the changes. 11% supported the proposal to increase the charge but 77% opposed it. Their views were ignored.

The number of people responding to this consultation shows how much opposition there still is to the Congestion Charge. The Mayor will surely find he will be losing public support if he continues to ignore his electorate in this way. One example of continuing objections to this tax is the note recently received below from someone who had difficulty in paying it:

"Hi Mr Lawson,

*After searching for 2 days to find somewhere to pay the ridiculous charge that does nothing to ease congestion, I have now found out that it can only be paid online. After calling TFL and explaining that I do not have money in my account but have cash, they suggested I 'ask a friend or buy a prepay top-up card from Tesco'.*

*I'm not going to waste your time with my rants on this charge or why I think it needs to go but this obvious attempt from TFL to impose fines on people who are unable to pay the charge due to their ridiculous payment options is the proverbial straw that has broken the camels back.*

Kieran Bailey"

Mr Bailey also mentioned a petition against the tax on [change.org](http://change.org) that readers may care to sign.

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## Public Consultation on Cycle Safety



Another recent public consultation from the Mayor of London has been on a "Cycle Safety Action Plan". Cover photo from the document is above, which is available in full on the internet.

The ABD has submitted a response which was as given below, but readers may care to respond directly also. The document does give some useful information on cycling safety issues. This is what we said: "There is not a lot that affects private motorists directly in this document but there are no apparent proposals to improve the behaviour of cyclists in London.

*For example, on page 19 it is reported that in half the collisions with HGVs that took place in darkness the cyclist did not have lights, but no specific action is suggested to improve the usage of lights. In addition it is well known that cyclists often ignore traffic lights, ride on pavements and otherwise ignore the Highway Code and traffic regulations but there are no specific recommendations put forward to improve that.*

*If the standard of cycling was improved, and the aggressiveness of some cyclists to other road users tempered, they might get more consideration from car users. Although there are some proposals (Actions 25 and 26 in the consultation document), these seem to be the usual education and exhortation measures and the latter even applies to "all road users" rather than targeting the specific culprits.*

*We also note your support for fitting Autonomous Emergency Braking Systems to all new cars. There is little experience of such systems and surely little evidence that they might contribute substantially to road safety, while adding significantly to the cost of vehicles. We would like to see more specific evidence of the benefit before they are mandatory and therefore we do not support that recommendation."*

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## News Snapshots

Sundry news in the last few weeks that is worth a mention is as follows:

+ Lambeth Bridge is to close for three months from the 14th July for maintenance work. Only pedestrians and dismounted cyclists will be able to use it.

+ The RAC Foundation is promoting the idea of a new scrappage scheme to remove old diesel vehicles from the roads. Diesel vehicles generate a lot more pollutants even if they are more economical to run than petrol engines and the rising number of diesels are creating problems in solving London's air quality issues. *(Editor's Comments: This is an eminently sensible idea which is not always the case in recent pronouncements from the RAC Foundation).*

+ The London Borough of Lambeth has the most bus lanes in the capital according to an article in Local Transport Today based on a TfL Report - it has 30km in total and Southwark has 20km. Meanwhile Bromley is in the bottom six but Kensington is the winner at less than 1km. A spokesperson for that borough said *"The most telling fact in the report is that despite Westminster and Camden having significant lengths of bus lanes in their boroughs, their mean bus speed is the same as the Royal Borough"*.

+ The Department for Transport (DfT) have commissioned a three year research project on the effects of 20 mph speed limits. It should surely be wise to await for the results of this research before anyone jumps to conclusions on their benefits?

+ The City of London Corporation is pushing ahead with the redevelopment of the Aldgate highway system as covered in a previous newsletter. Total estimated cost is now £17.1m to £19.5m depending on options taken. There has still not been a proper public consultation so that the road users could understand the impact and give their views.

+ There was another bout of road closures on the 6th and 7th July for a sporting event that affected roads in the boroughs of Redbridge, Waltham Forest, Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets, City, Westminster, Lambeth and Southwark. This was for the Tour de France. Such closures are now very regular in London despite the many objections they create from local residents and businesses that are affected. Apparently the Mayor spent £6m of his cycling budget for hosting the event, which even cyclists are objecting to - they think it should be spent on other things. That's apart from the cost of temporary signage, road closures and policing the event which must have been considerable.

+ TfL has issued consultations on a redesign of the "Oval Triangle" which will include banning left turns for vehicles from Kennington Road to reduce "conflicts" with cyclists going straight ahead. In addition there is a consultation on the route of Cycle Superhighway 5 between the Oval and Belgravia via Vauxhall Bridge. It also includes banned left turns and says *"Road space would be reallocated from general traffic and buses to create improved conditions for cyclists and pedestrians, with connections to other local cycle routes"*. Those who wish to object can find these consultations on the internet. The ABD has submitted some comments. Of course it's always helpful to issue consultations in mid July when a lot of people are just going away on holiday. TfL have been promoting the redesign of the Vauxhall gyratory system which is dangerous for cyclists and not easy to use by other road users either - indeed it is a mess altogether. The new design will include segregated paths for cyclists, and is covered in the above consultation, but it is not clear whether any improvements will be made to the junction for other road users.

## Contact Information

This Newsletter is published by the London Region of the Alliance of British (A.B.D.), PO Box 62, Chislehurst, Kent, BR7 5YB and is distributed free of charge to ABD Members in the London area and to those Members of BBKAG who formerly received the Bromley Borough Roads Action Group newsletter. All material contained herein is Copyright of the A.B.D. or of the authors and may only be reproduced with permission. Any opinions expressed herein are solely those of the author of the article or that of the Editor which do not necessarily represent the official policies of the A.B.D.

A.B.D. London Region Co-ordinator and Editor: Roger Lawson (Tel: 020-8467-2686, Email: [roger.lawson@abd.org.uk](mailto:roger.lawson@abd.org.uk) ). Contact the above for information on the aims and objectives of the A.B.D. or for membership information (membership costs £25.00 per annum). The A.B.D. would be happy to advise or assist anyone who is concerned about any traffic, transport or road safety issues in London. Complimentary subscriptions to this newsletter are available on request to elected politicians or those with a professional interest in transport matters.

Our internet web address is: [www.freedomfordrivers.org](http://www.freedomfordrivers.org) (or [www.abd.org.uk](http://www.abd.org.uk) for the national ABD web site). This newsletter is supplied in electronic form which can be displayed and printed via the free Adobe Acrobat Reader. The Adobe Acrobat Reader can be downloaded from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat> . All past copies of our newsletters can be obtained from the [www.freedomfordrivers.org](http://www.freedomfordrivers.org) web site.

### About the Alliance of British Drivers (ABD)

The Alliance of British Drivers was formed from a merger of the Association of British Drivers and the Drivers Alliance. The ABD is the leading independent organisation which represents the interests of private motorists in the United Kingdom. We campaign to protect the rights of individual road users and believe that road transport is a beneficial and essential element in the UK transport infrastructure. We oppose excessive taxation of motorists and are against tolls and road usage charging. We also campaign for more enlightened road safety policies. The Alliance is a "not for profit" voluntary organisation which is financially supported primarily by its individual members. More information on the ABD is available from our web site at [www.abd.org.uk](http://www.abd.org.uk)

### Registering to Receive This Newsletter

This newsletter is free of charge and is sent approximately bi-monthly to anyone who cares to request a copy. It is sent via email (as a link to a web page from which you can download it). To register for a free copy simply go to this web page: [www.freedomfordrivers.org/Newsletters.htm](http://www.freedomfordrivers.org/Newsletters.htm) and fill out the box to be added to our mailing list.

Note that the ABD maintains a list of members who are familiar with individual London boroughs and may be able to help with information on local issues in those boroughs. The current list is below. If any other members would like to keep an eye on local news and advise on local transport issues then please let me know. Roger Lawson

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