

Presentation to Inquiry

Mark Nash
Guilford Court Freehold

1. I am here today as representing , Guilford Court Freehold (GCF) 51 Guilford Street and in an individual capacity as a Camden resident living in Guilford Street.

2. The issues that concern residents of Guilford Street are the increase in traffic congestion in Guilford Street itself, with the accompanying additional pollution, and the dramatic increase in travel times north particularly along Russel Square and Woburn Place as a result of the closure of Gordon Square to westbound traffic.

3 As an individual resident – I walk, use public transport, drive and indeed take taxis. I also cycle. As a cyclist who has been knocked off my bike in the past I am aware of how dangerous cycling can be. I think we all support measures to make cycling safer, however this scheme already had a cycle lane which I used several times a week cycling to South Kensington where I worked at the Royal College of Art. I had no particular problems with the scheme. I am not convinced that the benefit of the additional road space allocated to cycles in the trial scheme outweighs the increased travel times and attendant pollution caused by the one way system.

4 Guilford Street has largely been left out of the council survey, yet it is considerably impacted by the change in the traffic. We don't think the Council has taken sufficient notice of these effects beyond the immediate trial area, pollution and traffic flows have not been measured with the same consistency.

There was always some congestion for traffic making the left turn into Southampton Row from Guilford Street. The trial one-way system however has resulted in severe congestion making the right hand turn from GS into Russell Square. It is difficult to estimate the time it can take to get out of what has been termed the 'Bloomsbury box". I drove a couple of times this week and counted times of 10 and 15 minutes to travel the less than half mile from Guilford Street to Tavistock Square. I am in no doubt that the eastbound one-way system is responsible for these increases in travel times.

5 I have suffered with asthma for the last two to three years. This condition was exacerbated in early 2016 when the new traffic scheme for Gordon Square/Tavistock Place was implemented. I cannot of course claim that the increase in traffic 'caused' my asthma. But it clearly is an aggravating factor. While the GLC is developing projects to reduce pollution generally in London I do not get a sense that this is a priority for this Administration.

6 I have found interpreting the mass of data and information rather challenging and would have welcomed a one page summary of the benefits and costs of the proposal. Obviously the Inspector is intended to draw his own conclusion about all these matters, but I would have expected a simple plain English statement answering a number of questions:
How does the council value the health of individual residents versus the convenience of mainly commuter traffic. There are ethical and moral issues to be considered. How to balance the improvement in facilities for cyclists and residents of Tavistock Place against the evident disadvantages to the wider neighbourhood? Do all views count the same? Does one cyclist equal one asthma sufferer for example?

7 I would also have expected a progressive council like Camden to have made an environmental impact assessment of the scheme including its carbon footprint – I traffic idling and travelling at slow speeds results not only in increased pollution but also increased fuel consumption. The implication from some of the Council documents is that the new scheme is a good thing but my point here is how does it stack up environmentally?

I am happy to answer any questions

Mark Nash
Guilford Court Freehold
26/10/17