

MAYOR OF LONDON

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Thank you for your letter of 5 September regarding the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street. I am sorry for the delay in replying.

I agree that the status quo is unsatisfactory, unsustainable and needs improvement. The current situation in terms of crowding, road safety, air quality and poor urban realm is not characteristic of a world-class retail centre.

Although, as highlighted in your letter, proposals for pedestrianising Oxford Street have been put forward over the years, I am convinced that the opening of the Elizabeth line provides a once in a generation opportunity to transform Oxford Street, its surrounding district and the West End more broadly.

There is an urgent need to improve air quality across London and that is why I am bringing forward a comprehensive set of proposals. These will bring about real change in the capital and include the introduction of an emissions surcharge, bringing forward the requirement for buses in central London to meet Euro VI hybrid standards, an earlier, more extensive Ultra Low Emission Zone and the introduction of zero emission taxis.

I appreciate that some stakeholders will be concerned about the proposals for pedestrianisation and I do not underestimate the complexity of the task ahead. However, there is a compelling case that the 'do-nothing scenario' is not tenable. Any proposal of this scale in central London will require detailed study and comprehensive engagement and consultation. It will be vital for Westminster City Council and Transport for London (TfL) to consult with stakeholders including residents, businesses, workers, travellers and visitors as the proposals are progressed. I will provide further details about the engagement and consultation later this year.

I can assure the Committee that the proposals are being developed in the context of the other borough, TfL and third-party schemes already underway or proposed across central London. The co-ordination and cumulative impact of these schemes will be key considerations in pedestrianising Oxford Street.

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I agree that it is important to develop a shared vision. I understand that simply transferring all of the traffic and bus routes onto parallel streets is not the solution so all options are under consideration to reduce traffic levels. I have also instructed TfL to look at ways of further reducing traffic and not merely shifting it to other areas. This will include looking at how the bus network operates in the area, providing more ranks for taxis and coordinating the timing of freight deliveries. I recognise that it is essential any scheme that comes forward carefully considers possible knock on effects and has a package of mitigation measures to deal with any negative impacts.

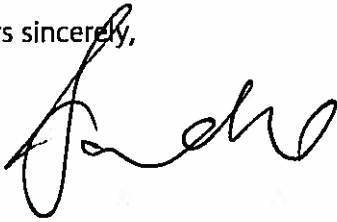
Considering the needs of all of London's residents and visitors, including those with reduced mobility, is essential. An Equality Impact Assessment will be commissioned to assist with the development of the proposals. The levels of crowding currently experienced on Oxford Street and street clutter are significant deterrents to visiting the area for people with reduced mobility. The new, accessible Elizabeth line stations at Bond Street and Tottenham Court Road will improve the overall accessibility of the district, however I accept that access for those who arrive by bus, taxi or car via a Blue Badge must be considered as well. As mentioned, effective wayfinding from these new stations will also need to be carefully developed.

TfL will investigate and work with stakeholders on possible improvements to the pedestrian link between the western end of Oxford Street and Hyde Park at Marble Arch as proposals are developed.

It is true that there is much more to be done to improve conditions for cyclists in central London. This will include the ongoing delivery of a safe, convenient and comprehensive network of improved routes for cyclists. The proposals for Oxford Street will be developed to advance these plans and ensure that cyclists have excellent access to Oxford Street and a quality parallel east-west route.

I would like to thank the Committee for its interest and support for this key proposal. I want a scheme that brings benefits to all stakeholders. This project is complex and challenging, but it is achievable. London deserves and needs a world class retail district and the removal of traffic from Oxford Street is vital to achieving this.

Yours sincerely,



Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London