

NICKIE AIKEN MP
CITIES OF LONDON AND WESTMINSTER



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London
SE1 2AA

24th June 2020

Dear Sadiq,

Concerns over Temporary Traffic Management and Disruption

I think we would all agree that we currently have a golden opportunity to ensure we encourage more cycling and walking following the COVID-19 lockdown. The improvement in our air quality during lockdown has been dramatic and I am sure you share my view that we must do all we can to protect it. I have long cared about this issue as you will know from my #DontBeldle campaign during my time as the former Leader of Westminster City Council. I certainly support your ambitions to increase the capacity on our roads for increased cyclists. Sadly however, I must express my frustration with how Transport for London (TfL) has handled the recent consultations with my constituents on its temporary traffic measures.

From what I have seen myself walking in the constituency, and from what my constituents have highlighted to me in huge numbers, is that TfL seems to have given no thought to individual schemes and rather a 'one size fits all' solution has been the approach. This is not the way to ensure cyclists and walkers remain safe and that traffic continues to flow in a vast and diverse city. I am, therefore, disappointed that TfL officials have failed to consult properly with locals, even when they have been keen to discuss and have made numerous sensible and workable suggestions which seem to have been ignored. One area of contention where both constituents and visitors have highlighted to me is Park Lane, where following TfL's introduction of new traffic measures has seen congestion and air pollution now at levels worse than at pre-lockdown levels.

Converting road lanes for cars into segregated cycle paths, creating new one-way systems, blocking left or right bound turns and widening pavements are all part of road reallocations that have been introduced in inappropriate places and made traffic congestion worse. Though these changes are 'temporary' your guidance suggests this means up to 18 months with an expectation to be made permanent, and

emplacements like bollards seem to be extraordinarily expensive 'temporary' measures for a cash-strapped organisation.

Allow me to provide some examples of inappropriate temporary measures with counterintuitive consequences including traffic congestion, air pollution, making safe taxi travel far more difficult for those who need it, excessive deviations, rat running through residential areas, contradictory signage, severely reduced parking space, and dangerous new risks of collisions between drivers and cyclists. All of which have been highlighted by constituents who have also provided sensible solutions:

Hyde Park, Park Lane, and Edgware Road

- Traffic congestion has increased substantially on both Park Lane and Edgware Road because of temporary segregated cycle paths creating a bottleneck. This is causing a major headache for private, commercial, and service vehicle movement along a major arterial route with noticeably worse air pollution. They are also hardly used and cyclists could easily be diverted through the cleaner and safer Sussex Gardens into and along Southwick Street into Hyde Park Crescent, which leads into Titchbourne Row, down Albion Street and onto North Carriage Drive, which is already a preferred cycle lane.

London and Waterloo Bridges

- If licensed Black Cabbies are banned from using these bridges, it would be detrimental to their trade and the critical workers and vulnerable residents using their services. They are the only form of transport in the Capital that allows rigorous social distancing and should be allowed to continue to use bus lanes.

Pimlico, Grosvenor Road

- Drivers heading eastbound into Vauxhall Bridge Road have been forced to excessively deviate south over the river round the Vauxhall gyratory and back, or rat run up St George's Square or Aylesford Street, which are narrow residential areas to avoid the Congestion Charge zone as a result of the removal of the left turn. This could be solved with traffic lights for cyclists as well as cars allowing reinstatement of the left turn.
- The removed left turn for westbound vehicles onto Chelsea Bridge has forced lorries to excessively deviate to Battersea Bridge due to their heavy loads, and increased car traffic through the centre of Pimlico. This could also be solved with traffic lights for cyclists and cars.
- Contradictory signage as you approach the junction to Vauxhall Bridge Road is dangerously confusing drivers. Most directional signage has been covered and road markings painted straight, but some remain visible and there is no signage

at the junction itself to indicate there is no left turn. Signage must remain consistent and especially clear at key points after changes.

- Road measures between the crossing of Lower Sloane Street and Vauxhall Bridge Road have taken away a long length of single red line parking for residents overnight between 7pm and 7am. The area is a predominantly residential street with one shop and a garage, and residents who have not been troubled by traffic for over 40 years are reporting terrible congestion. Such dramatic changes to parking space must be justified and proportionate and suitable alternatives should be offered to residents.
- The new requirement for eastbound traffic turning up St George's Drive or Belgrave Road forces drivers to turn left across a line of cycles moving parallel at the same speed, yet there is no arrow to warn this might happen at the western interconnection with St George's Square. A red traffic light brings both lines of traffic to a halt at the now congested turn on Claverton Street blocking the road, and on top of this, many cyclists lack a front-facing light. This means even careful drivers have to be pay extra care to avoid colliding with oncoming cyclists. Claverton was a relatively wide street anyway and its closing off should be reversed for the safety of all its users.

These are only a handful of well-made points made by my constituents who were keen to share their wisdom from the early stages of TfL's so-called consultation process. Residents have far too frequently been made aware of new temporary traffic measures too late in the process to contribute. I fear that TfL has rushed through top-down decisions, spending resources fending off inevitable backlash. In my experience local people do know what they are suggesting when it comes to improvements to their neighbourhoods. TfL should work with them as an invaluable pool of enthusiasm, knowledge, and expertise about their local areas.

I do hope that you will recognise the concerns of those living in the Cities of London and Westminster and instruct TfL to reconsult with local people but really listen to what they say this time. We do need further and greater consultation on these temporary traffic management measures so that we can all work together to achieve our shared goals, with more coming from the bottom-up.

Yours sincerely,



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