

Developing carfree neighbourhoods in London

Carfree UK was formed about four years ago, inspired by the achievements in a number of European cities – Freiburg, Hamburg, Cologne and Amsterdam among others – where sizeable carfree residential neighbourhoods were created.

Although there is no single model for carfree development, 'Carfree oases' (according to CFUK):

- Are pedestrian, cyclist and child-friendly green urban neighbourhoods, where motor vehicles are only allowed in restricted areas for deliveries, picking up and setting down.
- Fully address the mobility needs of residents and visitors with high-quality sustainable transport provision, including the option of a car club for occasional use and deliveries.
- Are mixed-use unless the site is already in walking distance of a local centre.
- Provide a mixture of housing and tenures, bearing in mind the potential demand from households with children.
- Allocate limited peripheral parking for visitors, deliveries and car club vehicles.

With the aid of CFUK, we formed the London 'Carfree Association' (we are still debating our name!) in late summer 2009 to try to get some carfree areas going in London. We are supported

by CBT, the London Cycling Campaign, Living Streets, Sustrans London and Car Plus (the car club organisation)

We are interested both in carfree areas in new housing developments and in making existing areas carfree. The latter is known as 'retrofit' and most of our energies at present are going into exploring possible areas for 'retrofit' carfree neighbourhoods within central London: areas in which car ownership is very low and in which most of the traffic is through traffic – thus maximising the chances of local support.

One area that we are exploring is in Camden borough, south of the Euston Road. In this particular area car ownership seems to be already very low and there seem to be relatively few businesses of the kind that are likely to generate large amounts of traffic. Another very important criterion that seems to be met is a sympathetic borough council, and we hope that there will be support from residents' associations, local schools, GPs and other leading people in the local community. This area is not the only candidate; Soho has also been suggested and also possibly an area in Islington south of the Pentonville Road/City Road.

Inevitably there will be objections from some car owners, small in number

though they are. This is an issue that we are giving very detailed consideration to, and on which we need to get the 'presentation' right. Car parking and access are already quite restricted in Central London. How big a difference will a carfree scheme make for any particular individual? Exploring the options - and their presentation – are key elements of this project. One

suggestion is that existing car owners could maintain their existing access arrangements, but be obliged to keep to within walking speeds, i.e. less than 5mph, as would be the case for delivery and disability vehicles. This is the 'bottom line' carfree neighbourhood demand – and highlights the importance of campaigns like 20's Plenty which London CBT supports.

We could do with more people to help in the various aspects of our work. If you would like to become involved in any of the researching, networking, lobbying and other work that these developments require, or in any other way, please contact us.

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Our Newsletter is sent out to our London members and other contacts.

The group exists to campaign for sustainable transport solutions in London and to support the work of the Campaign nationally.

If you have not already done so we would be pleased if you would also join our group and take part in our London based activities.

To contact the group write to Chris Barker, Campaign for Better Transport, 46 Redston Road, London N8 7JJ. email: c.barker@lineone.net phone: 020 8347 7684.

Regular meetings of the group are held in central London. The Newsletter is edited by Chris Barker. Contributors are welcomed. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Campaign for Better Transport.

design: Eve Barker



Stellwerk 60 A car free development in Cologne

Shared space?

LIVING STREETS

To kerb or not to kerb - that is not the question



In a previous newsletter Sue Sharp of the Guide Dogs for the Blind tells us that **“the concept of shared space...causes problems for disabled people, particularly those who are blind or partially sighted.”** The article described **problems that are potentially posed by shared surfaces to blind and partially sighted people.**

Living Streets says we need to frame this debate in the context of the potential transformational impact of shared space, and not focus solely on issues related to shared surfaces.

Critically, the issue of good street design has become confused as a result of the plethora of expressions that have been used interchangeably to describe approaches that can have crucially different meanings. The range of expressions from ‘shared space,’ ‘shared surface,’ ‘single surface,’ and ‘shared use,’ to ‘shared streets’ too often cloud sensible discussions about the particulars of a given design proposal, and ultimately undermine the delivery of well-intentioned streetscape schemes.

This confusion is perhaps demonstrated most vividly by the wording of Guide Dogs for the Blind’s campaign: ‘say no to shared streets.’ For Living Streets this call is problematic because we believe that all streets are, and should be, shared. Pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicles all have a right to use our public space with respect and courtesy to other road users, and the design of our streets should reflect this. We want to be able to achieve some consensus in how we design pedestrians back into our street environment, -using innovative approaches to redesigning our streets

In particular, we collectively need to find solutions to the genuine concerns of blind and visually impaired people in terms of their right to access all public space, in order to achieve the positive outcomes on safety with a transformation in our attitudes to sharing and the segregation of people and vehicles. Critically, ‘naked streets’ do not necessarily involve ‘shared surface’ schemes (where kerb demarcation can be absent), but rather “use of shared

DfT backs Portsmouth style 20 mph limits

An initial evaluation of the implementation of a 20 mph default in residential streets in Portsmouth has now been made. Overall average speeds have fallen only by about 1 mph. In 110 out of 159 streets, average speed was already below 20 mph, but in streets where average speed before the new limit was 24 mph or above a reduction of 7 mph was recorded. This would suggest that imposing the limit within a large zone has a greater impact on driver behaviour than confining it to a few streets.

People report less noise and a calmer street atmosphere but the really good news is that accidents fell by 13 per cent and casualties by 15 per cent.

A really positive result is that the Department for Transport has now revised its guidance on 20 mph limits and now accepts that the installation of 20 mph limits without traffic calming measures is possible on ‘streets that are primarily residential in nature and into town or city streets where pedestrian and cyclist movements are high’.

Crossing the road in comfort

Oxford Circus has always been a nightmare for pedestrians. The pavements are far too narrow for the number of people and the ornate balustrades on the four corners hemmed them in and made crossing the road an ordeal.

All this has now been swept away and a grand diagonal crossing has been installed giving pedestrians freedom of the whole road during the pedestrian phase of the lights. Early reports suggest that the new arrangement brings a great relief for pedestrians whilst having no effect on the traffic flow.

Are there too many traffic lights?



A recent report from GLA Economics, ‘Economic Impact of Traffic Signals’, studied the affects on traffic speed if traffic lights in some locations were removed. Contrary to the views of some motorists, the effect was minimal. In general speed was better with the lights during peak hours and better without at other times.

But the crucial effect on safety and on pedestrians, who lose their green men, was not studied. This was purely about the economic impact on drivers. It might well be the case that traffic management without lights, such as in ‘shared space’ situations, might be advantageous to pedestrians. Perhaps this is not the concern of economists but would clearly need to be studied before any action is taken.

Less Diesel

The recent rejection by the EU of the UK Government’s application for a delay in compliance with the air pollution laws adds urgency to the need to take action on London’s pollution. London has one of the most intensive public transport networks of any major city in the world. But unlike most comparable cities its road services are operated entirely by diesel buses and it is diesel fuel which, according to the Campaign for Clean Air in London, ‘has been a significant cause of poor quality in our biggest cities’. The time has surely come for TfL to be urgently considering replacing its diesel buses and at least be prepared to discuss the potential of electric vehicles, trams and ultra light rail for meeting this need before London is fined for breaching the laws.

Shared Streets, Shared Surfaces, Naked Streets. Terms which describe new ways of looking at interaction between road users – drivers, people, cyclists. But not everyone is happy with the concept. Two organisations which have been active in the debate, Living Streets and Guide Dogs for the Blind, put their arguments.

surfaces is one specific technique sometimes used in naked street schemes.” Ideally we’d like to focus planners and engineers on the benefits of using wider naked streets principles, without shared surfaces dominating the debate.

Another way to reach some consensus will be to open up a constructive dialogue about how best to deliver naked streets schemes while improving accessibility. Living Streets strongly believes that in the delivery of shared surface schemes the needs of all users must be taken into account. We are looking at new and planned schemes carefully around the UK and have raised concerns with local authorities if schemes do not satisfy this precondition. As we set out in our naked streets policy briefing, naked streets schemes should incorporate ‘adequate tactile clues for visually impaired people.’ In addition, we make clear our call for Government investment in further research into evaluating what would be appropriate in terms of ensuring that everyone feels safe in schemes that include a shared surface. Finally, we stress the importance of consulting relevant local groups about given schemes.

For Living Streets, this final point about consultation is key and highlights why we don’t support calls for a blanket moratorium on shared surface schemes. We say that local authorities should exercise caution in considering shared surface schemes, but their suitability is entirely contextual and so should be decided at the local level. We want our streets to be accessible and welcoming to everybody, and

this means that we need to get concerned organisations together to discuss how best to deliver naked streets schemes, and why we hope all interested organisations can engage constructively to set out minimum standards and expectations for such schemes.

For Living Streets, the essence of naked street design is about redressing this imbalance between

pedestrians and motor vehicles. It’s about making drivers take more responsibility and care as they move around places where people live, shop, work and play. To kerb or not to kerb is not the question. Rather we should be asking, and collectively seeking to answer, how best to reverse conditions that enable motor vehicles to dominate our

experience of streets, to benefit all users.

Alasdair Jones

If you would like to know more about Living Streets’s work on naked streets then please contact their Head of Policy and Communications, Phillipa Hunt: phillipa.hunt@livingstreets.org.uk tel: 020 7377 4920.

GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND

Detecting the kerb



The shared space concept aims to create shared ‘social areas for all users, reducing the dominance of motor vehicles and making streets more people-friendly. Laudable aims, but problems arise when it results in shared surface designs where the kerb is removed and road users are expected to negotiate priority through making eye contact.

The absence of a kerb means that blind and partially sighted people lose an essential warning and navigational clue that they rely on to negotiate the pedestrian environment. Making eye contact to establish priority is also impossible for those pedestrians. The result is a street design that is hazardous for blind and partially sighted people, undermines their

confidence to get around independently and creates “no-go” areas denying them access to shops and other services.

But the shared surface design is not only of concern to blind and partially sighted people and the organisations which represent them. Guide Dogs “Say NO to shared streets” campaign is supported by over 30 national disability organisations representing people with physical, sensory and cognitive disabilities who have joined with Guide Dogs in calling for a stop to shared surface streets, at least until the outcome of the Department for Transport’s research on shared space is known.

In the meantime Guide Dogs, too, has been looking at how the shared space concept can be delivered in a way that can also meet the needs of blind and

partially sighted people. While we have not been able to identify an effective delineator which could replace the kerb, we have been able to demonstrate in laboratory trials that a kerb of as low as 60mm can be reliably detected.

In London the Mayor has defined shared space in his Transport Strategy Public Draft as “An area of road where equal priority is given to vehicular traffic and pedestrian traffic (taking into account the needs of disabled people)”. The acknowledgement of disabled people in this statement is welcome and Guide Dogs has been happy to work with Transport for London as they take forward their own research to look at alternative delineators.

It is a concern, however, that the Mayor has already contributed £13M to the Exhibition Road scheme despite the protests of disability organisations who are concerned about the design proposals. We would remind the Mayor of the legal requirement for his Transport Strategy to have policies for the “promotion of safe transport” and include proposals for ‘providing transport which is accessible to mobility impaired people.’ The Mayor has also set particular goals for the Strategy which include enhancing the quality of life for all Londoners, improving the safety and security of all Londoners and improving transport opportunities for all Londoners – shared surface streets would not meet those goals.

Nicholas Russell

UK Parliamentary Officer, The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association





More journeys with Oyster

Travel throughout London was transformed for the better for many passengers this month with the long awaited extension of the Oyster pay-as-you-go (PAYG) ticketing system to the capital's National Rail network on 2nd January.

Although travellers in south London (where National Rail tends to dominate) are likely to be the among the main beneficiaries, along with those who do not commute on a daily basis (so do not already have a Travelcard season ticket on their Oyster), the arrival of a fully multi-modal pre-paid smartcard could be the beginning of a ticketing and travelling revolution.

One obvious advantage of PAYG is time saving, through not having to buy a ticket at the point of travel. As a result, travel becomes less complicated and the risk of missing a train is reduced. With many National Rail stations in London only offering a train every 30 minutes, this is a significant bonus.

More importantly though the decision as to what is the best ticket, or mode, for a particular journey is now far less of an issue, because the overall fare paid during the day is capped. Consequently the possibility of paying more than is necessary for a sequence of journeys is diminished. So, if your first trip of the day is by bus and the last by rail, if you intend to make one trip or twenty, you just use the Oyster. Quite simply, the ability to use a smartcard for all modes brings

ticketing for public transport users closer to the equivalent freedom that motorists experience when they reach for their car-keys.

For one group of travellers, Oyster PAYG on National Rail is not all they had hoped for. Oyster season ticket holders wishing to use PAYG to travel to a station outside their zone are still required to register their intention beforehand if travelling on a National Rail service. This process, of obtaining an Oyster Extension Permit (OEP), has caused some disquiet by users. They had had the expectation that the removal of the limitation of not being able to use Oyster PAYG on National Rail would also remove the requirement for an OEP on National Rail, and so bring it in line with the Underground, Overground, DLR and tram. Unfortunately it doesn't.

The issue of OEPs could be resolved perhaps if PAYG became the default mechanism for Oyster with capping extended to include weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual travel. PAYG would require users to touch in and out for all journey stages, either at barriers or, if not available, at Oyster readers. This slight inconvenience would be greatly outweighed by potential marketing and user benefits. These could include schemes such as enabling family members and partners to link their Oyster cards so that appropriate discounts could be provided when they travelled together, promotional offers for other rail journeys, or reduced admittance to galleries or theatres. The world could be your Oyster!

There is no doubt that the arrival of Oyster PAYG on National Rail in London was a great start to 2010 and a very welcome, if slightly late, Christmas present! Further development of such schemes is potentially substantial, exciting and important. A card that effectively replaces the car keys is a smarter way to travel and definitely worth having.

Charles Martin

Thoughts on the Mayor's Transport Strategy

The big problem is that the strategy is trying to have it both ways. It's trying to promote sustainable transport and achieve a range of environmental improvements but at the same time it is unwilling to reduce the volume or the speed of car traffic. On the contrary the strategy has numerous policies which will increase traffic volumes.

Most of the policies are unobjectionable. For example the Mayor will promote healthy travel options such as walking and cycling. He is in favour of capacity increases in rail and coach services. He favours locating high trip generating development near public transport and ensuring that it is accessible on foot and by bicycle. Unfortunately these proposals are not supported by the transport proposals that follow.

Some elements of the Strategy are welcome. For example most of Livingstone's plans for the expansion of public transport have been retained and the recent transformation of the bus network is hailed as an achieve-

ment to be protected. But plans for future increases in public transport capacity are unfunded or appear to have been included in the Strategy with minimal planning.

A major difficulty with the Transport Strategy stems from its willingness to tolerate traffic growth. Compared to the previous Mayor, Boris Johnson is proposing a much larger share of travel by car and a smaller share by public transport. The Mayor has a target for a 60% reduction on 1990 levels in London's carbon dioxide emissions by 2025. As ground transport accounts for a significant 22% of London's CO2 emissions (of which 49% is from cars and motorcycles) it is difficult to understand how this reduction is to be achieved without plans to substantially reduce traffic. Proposals to smooth traffic flow, to dismantle the western extension of the congestion charge zone and to dismiss proposals for road user charging will all add to the difficulty of achieving the target.

Passengers say 'yes' to double deckers

The London Campaign for Better Transport carried out a survey of passengers on route 38 shortly after the bendy buses were replaced by double deckers. The survey aimed to find out what passengers thought of the change. Researchers asked passengers waiting at various stops for the service towards Victoria during the rush hour one weekday morning. The sample size was small – only 47 people were approached – so the results have to be treated with caution.

The survey found that 66 per cent of people approached were in favour of the change and thought that the double deckers were an improvement. They liked them because they could now get a seat (59 per cent said this), because they were more frequent and cleaner and newer. Only 18 per cent would like to see the bendy buses brought back.

From the passenger point of view this

survey seems to suggest that bendy buses get the thumbs down and this is born out by other surveys. Towards the end of last year GLA assembly member Jennette Arnold conducted a survey of 116 users of route 38 and found 53 per cent looked forward to the change. London Buses' own consultation in December 2008 found institutional respondents including assembly members, boroughs and the police, were against the change whilst individuals (19 against 10) looked forward to the new buses.

So passengers are pleased. What has not been taken into consideration is the cost of the conversion (offset, perhaps, by the reduction of free travelling – not yet quantified), increased difficulties for people with mobility problems because of the limited number of seats on the lower deck of double deckers and the effect on congestion and road safety.

Letter to the editor

Legible London is an excellent initiative, which offers the prospect of a vast improvement in the quality of wayfinding on London's streets. There is, however, unconscious irony in the illustration of Kasper de Graaf's article in Newsletter 7 with a photograph of a sign at Liverpool Street.

The sign in the picture is not part of the Legible London project, but of an entirely separate scheme commissioned and implemented by the City of London. In itself, the sign has much merit. But parts of the map which it carries are paler and can just be seen to be relatively devoid of detail.

The reason for this, though it would not be apparent to a casual user, is that these areas are outside the City's boundary, and therefore treated as terra incognita. Such frontiers have no practical relevance to passers by, but they are all-important to local councils, who will not volunteer information about geographical features in neighbouring authorities' jurisdiction.

John Cartledge