

26/2 BEDFORD ESTATES

Good afternoon, my name is Simon Elmer, I am the Steward of the Bedford Estate, and we have owned and managed large tracts of Bloomsbury for over 300 years. Our Estate is bounded by Euston Road to the North, Great Russell Street to the South, Southampton Row to the East and Tottenham Court Road to the West

The London portfolio comprises around 200 properties, 825,000 sq ft of office space, 100,000 sq ft of retail space, over 1,000 hotel bedrooms and some 550 residential apartments. It also includes two public garden squares -- Russell Square and Bloomsbury Square -- and several private gardens. Over the next 10 years it is our intention to invest over £50 million in the Estate.

In our view, and it is fair to say that collectively my Board has well over 100 years experience in moving around our Estate, it has never been harder to drive within and in and out of our Estate. In particular the ability to travel east to west, towards Mayfair has never been harder and traffic congestion and the impact on air quality has never been worse.

The Estate whole heartedly welcomes the changes to Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street but understandably has some concerns over the impact on our Estate, and on our occupiers, which will never be fully understood until they are in place. That is accepted. However, the ability to witness the Experimental Traffic Order on Tavistock Place has illustrated to us that the plan is ill conceived and has a further detrimental impact on the ability to travel east to west in Bloomsbury. Our much preferred option would be a return to East to West traffic only and two way cycles in order to alleviate this issue but as a secondary preference, move to two way traffic and cycles.

We are firmly of the view that changes of this nature and magnitude, including the West End Projects changes on Tottenham Court Road, Gower Street which impacts Bedford Avenue, Bailey Street, Bedford Square and Bloomsbury Way

to name just a few, should be phased in order to understand the full impact of each one. It therefore seems sensible that any changes to Tavistock Place should be delayed until after the impact of West End Project is fully understood, and Tavistock Place should return to one way, westbound, until that is the case.

We would therefore politely ask the inspector to make the following recommendations to the London Borough of Camden:

- 1. Encourage the London Borough of Camden to consider a westbound only car traffic scheme in the Tavistock Place/Torrington Place corridor.*
- 2. Commit to conducting air quality tests in at least five other locations (aside from Gordon Square, Russell Square and Tavistock Place) in Bloomsbury to give a more accurate picture of the position on air quality throughout Bloomsbury.*
- 3. Take more time to evaluate the full impact of the West End Project on traffic, before implementing permanent changes on Tavistock Place.*

The built environment of Bloomsbury is an eclectic mix of residential, academic, healthcare and business communities, which is loved by many people from across the world. It is clear from this inquiry that a large number of local residents, businesses and institutions have serious concerns that the current traffic order is not working as intended. Through this inquiry, the Bedford Estates hope a sensible compromise can be reached to ensure that the future prosperity and health of Bloomsbury is not put at risk by well-meaning policies which have damaging unintended consequences.

Thank you.

Simon Elmer
Steward