# BLOOMSBURY RESIDENTS' ACTION GROUP

# PROOF OF EVIDENCE 11

## BRAG's proposal to reverse the trial, but with modifications

# SUMMARY

## NICKY COATES

***NB BRAG's commentary on the Council's critique of BRAG's proposal appears as a separate Proof of Evidence, and shows that minor adjustments could be made and the BRAG plan would still stand as valid in the face of that criticism***

### 1. Introduction to the plan for the trial to be reversed, but with modifications

a) Having researched the problem and consulted local people, businesses and cyclists, BRAG has identified an alternative 'compromise' approach which would meet the aims of the trial in providing wider and safer cycle lanes and making roads easier to cross, without causing any of the attendant problems of diverting traffic on to unsuitable and inappropriate local streets, increasing and extending congestion and air and noise pollution, blocking emergency routes and worsening access for disabled people.

b) The purpose of this section is to present an alternative plan for the consideration of the Council, residents, cyclists, the emergency services, disability groups and local businesses. ***Essentially this plan is for the trial to be reversed, but with the modification*** of replacing the single bidirectional cycle lane with two unidirectional cycle lanes, which is how the road used to be, prior to 2005.

c) The plan would accommodate cyclists' preferred solution of separate unidirectional cycle lanes, as recommended for instance by the Cambridge Cycle Campaign. Discussions with local cyclists indicate that the widths in this plan would be acceptable. Cyclists from the group Camden Cyclists have stated that their own preferred width for separated cycle lanes would be 2.2m, which is higher than that set out by the Department of Transport. However, the preferences of this group could in fact be met on more than 60% of the proposed route, without imposition of unacceptable inconvenience and damaging consequences for other road users and residents.

### 2. The detailed proposal

2.1 RECOMMENDED STANDARDS FOR WIDTHS OF PEDESTRIAN FOOTPATHS, CYCLE LANES AND VEHICLE LANES.

a) National standards for lane widths have been adopted for the BRAG alternative plan.

b) From these documented national standards the following widths for footpaths, cycle lanes and practicable vehicle lanes have been derived and adopted in the BRAG alternative plan:

i) Where the proportion of HGV and public service vehicles is lower than 10%, as in Tavistock Place, *'motor traffic lane widths may be reduced to between 2.5m and 2.9m'.* In view of the low level of delivery lorries in the area, and with professional advice, the minimum width for a single traffic lane in the plan is accepted as 2.75m.

ii) The Department of Transport Manual for Streets (2007) does not state a minimum width for pavements but the consensus view of 1.5m is accepted, with the adoption of the ideal 2m wherever possible. Where existing historical pavements are around 1.85m, these are assumed to be close enough to be acceptable as achieving desirable ideal standards, without any need to extend them further.

iii) It is understood that Camden Council's own preferred minimum widths are 3m for a traffic lane, and 2m for a unidirectional cycle lane.

**c) So, based on existing national standards, the <u>minimum</u> right-of-way (RoW) width, to accommodate two one-way cycle lanes, two pavements and two-way traffic is 11.5 metres, with the <u>preferred</u> width being 13.5 metres.**

**d) On the Tavistock-Torrington route, this minimum width is met on 100% on the route, and in large part significantly exceeded.**

2.2 WIDTHS OF ROADS FROM JUNCTION OF TAVISTOCK PLACE AND JUDD STREET THROUGH TO THE JUNCTION OF TORRINGTON PLACE AND GOWER STREET

a) The east-west roads between have been measured between the junction of Tavistock Place and Judd Street through to the junction of Torrington Place and Gower Street (Waterstones). Road widths (Right of Way/RoW) vary between sections and within sections. The measurements set out in the Full Version have been independently checked and are sufficiently robust to support the arguments which follow:

2.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR POTENTIAL SHARE OF SPACE

a) As the right-of-way width ranges from 12.3m to 22.7m, all of the route under consideration meets and exceeds the minimum requirement of 11.5m. Furthermore, approximately 60% of the route comfortably exceeds the ideal requirement of 13.5m.

b) This would be sufficient width for two traffic lanes and two cycle lanes, in total compliance with national standards, meeting and exceeding the minimum widths, and meeting ideal widths in large part, ie: two traffic lanes of at least 2.75m throughout, and pavements of 2m and cycle lanes of 2.2 m for 60% of the route. This layout is illustrated in the Full Version.

c) On this factual evidence, BRAG's conclusion is that the planned changes that would follow the trial are unnecessary, and excessive for an area that cannot

easily accommodate idealised and generous widths, which are out of line with national standards. Dismissal of this alternative plan would reinforce the widely held local view that the current plan is ideologically driven, regardless of costs to the local community and the environment.

d) BRAG's view is that this conservation area, which comprises buildings, parks and gardens, and its historical floor-scape, should all be preserved and protected for the entire community that live and work here, and not sacrificed to external commuter traffic demands.

e) Free or easy circulation within this area is important to its livelihood and vibrancy. Diverting traffic elsewhere, restricting access, and egress, will stifle cultural and commercial prosperity, and turn the area into a ghost town, as has happened in many provincial town centres because of poorly considered traffic restrictions.

f) Therefore, consideration should be paid to the needs of local businesses, including the many hotels in the area, especially Cartwright Gardens and Tavistock Place, that rely for business on convenient taxi access for delivery of their guests and luggage so that they are able to continue to thrive, and whose presence contributes to the local economy.

2.4 JUNCTIONS

a) Careful attention would be needed in the design of junctions, to ensure sufficient space for turning for large delivery lorries, in a way which is safe for all road users.

b) With regard to one particular junction, and in addition to abandonment of the trialled plan, the BRAG plan also calls for consideration of the reopening of the left turn into Marchmont Street towards Cartwright Gardens and Mabledon Place from the eastbound lane of Tavistock Place, the closure of which occurred in 2011. Over the preceding years this turn provided direct access on to one of the very few routes for taxis and commercial vans heading towards St Pancras and Kings Cross Stations from Bloomsbury. Since 2011, this traffic has been unnecessarily diverted onto the east section of Tavistock Place then Judd Street, Leigh Street and Thanet Street in order to reach the Mabledon Place/Euston Road right turn only junction. The earlier this traffic is removed from Tavistock Place onto Marchmont Street the greater the benefits for cyclists and for residents, and air quality.

c) It is appreciated that the prohibition of this turn was in response to accidents occurring at that corner. However, these accidents occurred when the cycle lane was bidirectional, which has been widely acknowledged as confusing and increasing risk; BRAG's plan would eliminate the bidirectional cycle lane and so reduce risk on that corner.

## 3. Conclusion

a) There is sufficient width on this east-west route, between the junction of Tavistock Place and Judd Street through to the junction of Torrington Place and Gower Street, to accommodate both the two new single-direction cycle lanes which have been installed and also two-way motor traffic. This plan conforms to, and in parts exceeds, national standards. For 20% of the route, the minimum width requirements for pavements, cycle lanes and traffic lanes set out in national standards are met or slightly exceeded; for 20% of the route, minimum

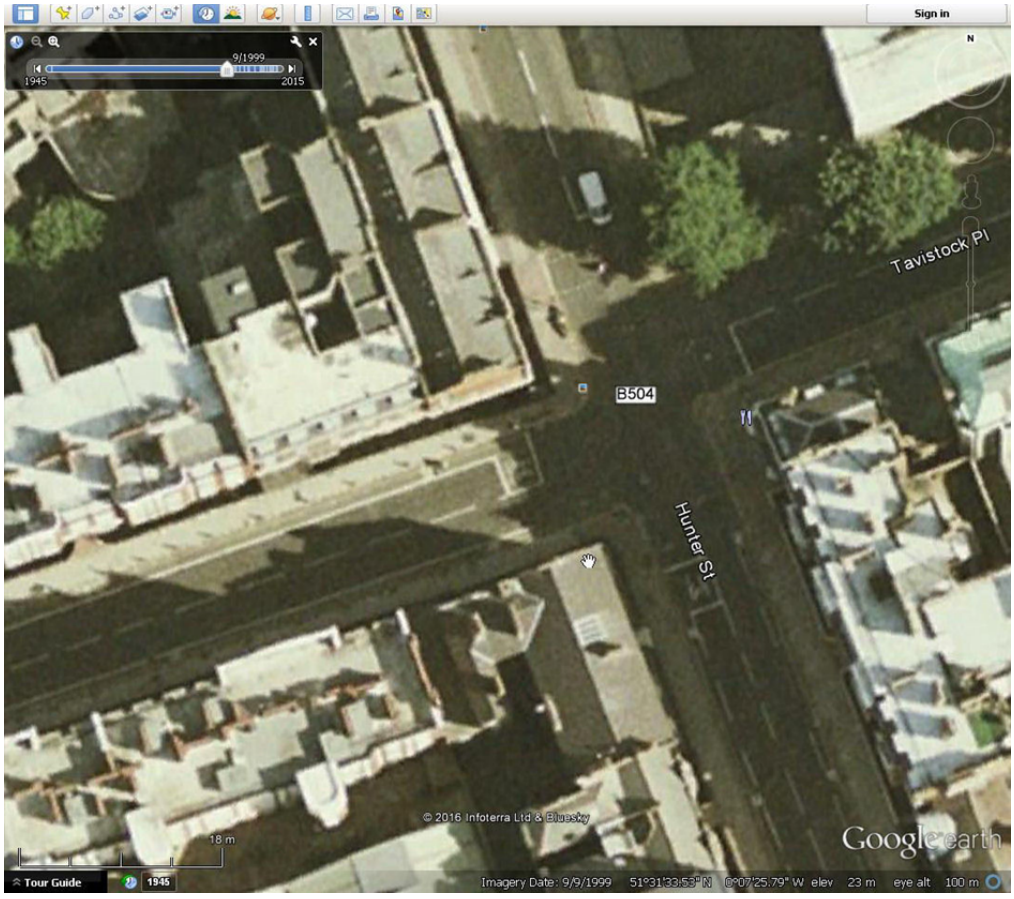
standards for pavements and traffic lanes are met, and the ideal width for cycle lanes set out in national standards is met. For 60% of the route, ideal widths for pavements and cycle lanes are met and in parts exceeded. It will also be seen, from the consultation with cyclists referred to, that this plan not only meets and largely exceeds national cycle lane standards but also, for 60% of the route, meets Camden Cyclists' additional preferred width for unidirectional cycling lanes of 2.2m.

b) It is therefore proposed that the new cycle lanes be maintained, at a width of 2.2 m for 60% of the route, 2m for 20% of the route, and 1.7m for 20% of the route – (this minimum of 1.7m for a minority of the route would still be wider than the 1.5 width currently set out on part of the trial route) - and that two way motor traffic be permitted again on that route.

4. **Additional information**

The Full Version of Proof of Evidence 11 presents a statement from local cyclist endorsing the proposal, in the light of his experience of the pre-2005 unidirectional cycle lanes on the corridor, as well as photographs of the pre-2005 layout, and a table showing lane widths under BRAG's proposal.

A.2) HISTORIC PHOTO SHOWING ROAD LAYOUT PRE-2005 WITH TWO CYCLE LANES AND TWO TRAFFIC LANES (SOURCE: GOOGLE EARTH)




Junction of Tavistock Place and Judd Street/Hunter Street (in 1999), showing two separate cycle lanes, – east- and west-bound, on Tavistock Place.