TEAM LONDON BRIDGE

Response to Consultation

Walking and Cycling changes in Tooley Street and Duke Street Hill

Team London Bridge, September 2021

Introduction

Team London Bridge (TLB) is a Business Improvement District representing over 300 businesses in the area between Tower Bridge in the east and London Bridge in the West. The District includes a network of quiet, historic streets and larger strategic roads. Notwithstanding the pandemic, about 50,000 people are employed in the area, which is also one of the UK's busiest transport interchanges.

We have a vision to make London Bridge one of the most sustainable, culturally innovative and compelling places for business and tourism in the world. In common with many BIDs, we have a strong mandate to deliver a green and healthy street environment that puts walking and cycling first, providing an exemplar for London. This is just one of a number of commitments recently supported by 97% of businesses in our BID ballot.

TLB's role in promoting the inward investment that gives London Bridge its vibrancy and vitality has never been more important given the global pandemic. We want people to have the confidence to safely return to work and to travel there on foot, cycle and public transport rather than driving.
At the same time, we are very much aware of Transport for London's tight financial position and believe that active travel offers the most cost-effective way of continuing to invest in the transport network in difficult times whilst delivering significant environmental, social and economic benefits.

The London Bridge Cycling Strategy was launched by Will Norman in November 2019. It sets out a vision that cycling will play a major part in the ongoing transformation of London Bridge as a globally significant place of modern commerce, enterprise and creativity, and in creating one of the UK's flagship transport hubs. Our strategy has gained added importance in the context of the pandemic and offers a way towards delivering excellent accessibility at low cost. In this light, our achievements are significant. So far, we have:

- Worked successfully as a stakeholder with Transport for London to transform Tooley Street into more of a place for people.
- Established a thriving cargo-bike logistics offer, introducing cycle logistics companies to businesses and organisations in the district, many of whom are now taking up their services on a permanent basis.
- Seen the introduction of many more cycle parking spaces on the TLRN in particular.
- Established the principle of introducing e-scooter hire for which we are currently looking for suitable docking station locations.
- Worked with Network Rail to identify a suitable location for a large secure cycle parking facility and identified a supplier. Meanwhile, Transport for London has considerably increased public cycle parking on St Thomas' Street.

Work that remains to be done includes:

- Ongoing work to implement scooter hire, expand Santander docking stations and build the Network Rail cycle storage facility.

- Enabling two-way cycling on the TLRN (Crucifix Lane, Bermondsey Street and Tunnel) and Borough-owned one-way streets. This includes working with TfL to improve the means of control at the Bermondsey Street / St Thomas' Street junction, taking advantage of the reduced traffic flows.

We welcome the work that has been undertaken so far to transform Tooley Street into a place of reduced motor traffic and cycle and pedestrian priority using trial measures. These really positive measures have produced a transformation from a situation of congestion and pollution to one of very substantially reduced motor traffic and safer, healthier and more pleasant conditions for walking and cycling.

We can see in place many of the improvements we suggested in the previous consultation (Tooley Street Healthy Street, January 2019). We are pleased to say that, as a result, our comments and suggestions in this consultation response are minor in nature, although there remain some significant, challenging to resolve safety concerns at the London Bridge and Tower Bridge ends of the scheme.

The result of work so far completed, including low traffic levels and low speeds, is that very little needs to be done to support cycling and to extend Cycleway 4 westwards. With tweaks, the measures being trialled so far are broadly 'about right' in terms of quantity, location and quality. We suggest that a future permanent scheme can learn from the temporary measures.

Detailed appraisal and suggested improvements for implemented trial schemes

Tooley Street junction with Queen Elizabeth Street: ongoing conflicts.
Eastbound at this junction, a segregated track has been provided to provide access to Cycleway 4 which commences on Jamaica Road. The track bends away from the main carriageway and loops towards a formal crossing on which cycles have priority over traffic turning in and out of the side road.

Our observations over about 20 minutes were that the majority of the few motor vehicle drivers turning into the street had disregarded the left turn ban. All except for one taxi driver crossed the track without slowing to look for cyclists. Several local cyclists have contacted us to report the problems they experience when using the junction. Our observations are that:

- Motorcycles parked on the corner obscure the view of the cycle track and cyclists from the drivers' position until it's too late.
- Signage clutter may be leading to some drivers failing to register the no-left-turn sign.
- The blacktop cycleway leading to the crossing may not be noticed by drivers.
- The bellmouth is quite wide on the western side of the junction, encouraging faster turning speeds.
- Once 'inside' the junction bellmouth, drivers may not be able to straighten up enough to see cyclists approaching from their left 'and behind' due to the curved cycle track.
- The speed table has very shallow ramps and is virtually undetectable.

For solutions, two options seem possible, the first of which we believe would be the most effective:

- Close the existing track west of the junction, and start it immediately to the east of the junction instead. This would place cyclists in a better position to avoid 'left hooks' by drivers entering the side street. Meanwhile, tighten the junction entry radius to enforce slower turns, or
- Convert the 'bent out' give-way lines to a parallel pedestrian and cycle crossing combined with steeper ramps onto the raised table. Remove the motorcycles to another location and cut down the signage clutter. Perhaps put a 'yellow board' on the reverse of the no left turn sign. Colour the cycle track blue from where it leaves the main carriageway so this track is more immediately visible to drivers in advance of the junction, given this is the beginning of Cycleway 4.

Wand protected sections

A number of short sections of wand protected mandatory (solid line) cycle lanes have been provided along the length of Tooley Street. The overall width of the lane (kerb to line) is generally about 2.0m, but the wands reduce this to an effective usable width of approximately 1.75m. The protected lanes are mostly situated on the inside of long left-hand bends where they protect cyclists from close passing. On Duke Street Hill, a protected lane provides uphill access to an ASL, whilst downhill cyclists share the nearside lane with all other vehicles. Conflicts with junctions and side street entrances is minimal.

Cycle lanes appreciated on insides of bends

- Given the 20mph speed limit and reduced traffic we believe TfL has got the balance of protection and road cycling about right. Protected infrastructure is not needed along most of Tooley Street, but it is most helpful where there would otherwise be a higher risk of close-passing – notably on the inside of long left-hand bends.
- The width of the mandatory cycle lanes appears to be 2.0m but the wand protection reduces the effective width to approximately 1.75m. This restricts the ability of cyclists to overtake within the lane.
- Placing the wand protected lanes on the inside of left-hand bends makes sense as it means motor vehicles will overtake safely.
- Incursion on the mandatory lanes by taxis occurs where protection is weak, for example between the westbound bus stop cage at the bottom of Duke Street Hill and the uphill protected cycle lane.

Lane segregators on London Bridge allow cyclists to overtake in the main traffic lane.

- Car parking within inset bays introduces car-dooring risks as well as creating a ‘canyon’ effect between parked vehicles and buildings that reduces pedestrians’ amenity.

Potential solutions to the issues identified above could include:

- Where possible, widen the cycle lane between the kerb and the line of bollards (rather than the white line) to 2.0-2.3m; or

- Add more space between stronger protective features, as has been done on London Bridge using Orca ‘kerbs’ and wands. This would improve the ability of faster cyclists and e-bike riders to overtake via the general traffic lane.

- Prevent taxi drivers from dropping off passengers at the bottom of Duke Street Hill by extending the pedestrian crossing zig-zags up to the westbound bus cage markings.

Right turn pocket into Bermondsey Street (movement from west to south)

We welcome the right turn pocket into Bermondsey Street as it enables and protects right turn movements. Introducing any traffic island creates a risk of close-passing except where the traffic lane either exceeds 4.5m or is narrower than 3.0m.

The right turn refuge island has been positioned to leave the eastbound lane approximately 3.0m wide. Emphasis should be given to the cycle route by placing pairs of Diag 1057 cycle logos centrally in the lane.

The approach to the cycle right-turn pocket needs some attention because it appears past the stop line and encourages cyclists to unlawfully cross the stop line. Options for improvement may include:

- Providing a dedicated cycle lane for right turning cyclists to the right of ahead traffic, leading to the stop line. This would be followed by the existing right turn pocket, or

- Providing the existing right turn pocket in the form of an ‘extended ASL’ with changes as necessary to the signal heads.

Tooley Street junction with Tooley Street West (minor street passing under London Bridge)
We welcome the closure of part of this junction (where the TLRN becomes Southwark Council highway) and creation of an effective pavement space using wands. It has reduced speeds through this junction and supports a change of priority to walking and cycling. While this is a temporary measure, a permanent solution could be made possible through the potential redevelopment of Colechurch house. We have already been in discussion with TfL about the space as a potential site for e-scooter trial, and also for us to contribute planters and greening.

Duke Street Hill to London Bridge / Borough High Street
We would like TfL to ensure that proposals and ongoing schemes for London Bridge, Borough High Street (London Bridge corridor) and Duke Street Hill are fully integrated, especially at the junction of Duke Street Hill / London Bridge where safety is critical.

Our on-site observations were that most cyclists arriving at the ASL stayed on the left, resulting in conflicts as drivers turned left as cyclists sought to turn right. Most drivers also crossed the first stop line as shown.

The junction of Duke Street Hill and London Bridge is very complex. We welcome the expanded ASL. The removal of the short cycle lane from the right turn island encourages cyclists to take a central position through the junction. The general reduction in traffic from this junction has made a significant improvement and has not led to any obvious issue for business logistics.

However, the junction still presents a significant risk of 'left hook' collisions occurring as motor vehicles cross the path of the majority of cyclists who set off from the nearside to turn right. On our recent site visit, we noted that, due to traffic restrictions on London Bridge, most motor vehicles turn left towards Borough High Street whilst most cyclists turn right towards London Bridge.

Meanwhile, we also noted a high level of non-compliance with the extended ASL, as shown in the image above. Although drivers tended to occupy the first half of the ASL this still restricts access for right turning cyclists and discourages correct positioning.
Options for improvement may include:

- Installing a low-level advance signal for cyclists that would show green for longer than five seconds to ensure the junction is cleared of most cycles. However, in common with many similar junctions in London, this would not address the left turn hook conflict for cyclists arriving after the main (motor vehicle) green light aspect shows.

- Providing a dedicated 'Cyclops' phase for cyclists to negotiate the junction at the same time as an all-green pedestrian phase. This would require substantial re-engineering of the junction and re-signalling, as well as design decisions about how to optimise the use of space. Such a design may be possible if low traffic conditions are maintained but it may not work if London Bridge reverts to a primary route for all traffic (which should not be the case following the previous Healthy Streets consultation).

Adjusting the nearside kerb to allow two traffic lanes as previously suggested. We note that there are telecommunications equipment in the footway which may be a constraint. Nonetheless it may be possible to install two 'sub-standard' 2.5m traffic lanes within the existing layout, omitting the ASL, with the coned cycle lane stopping 20m short of the stop line to encourage merging. Cyclists would turn left or right from the left-hand lane which would be left-only for drivers. This concept is modelled on the Danish merge-turn arrangement which works well.

Conclusion

We welcome the reduction in traffic from the scheme, which has introduced banned turns and vehicle restrictions that have made a real improvement to the look and feel of Tooley street, including less noise and air pollution. This has made walking and cycling safer during the pandemic and fits with the plans already consulted upon and agreed in 2019.

We are keen to remain engaged in the process of learning from the trial measures and, in response to your invitation, will make further responses periodically in the light of any future adjustments made. In the longer term we would like to contribute further to achieving our placemaking objectives for pedestrians and disabled users of Tooley Street. This includes encouraging further consideration of Healthy Streets interventions including footway widening, public realm materials, seating, and urban greening.

We are also anxious to ensure that emerging proposals on the London Bridge corridor including Borough High Street are fully integrated with ongoing work to improve Duke Street Hill at the junction with London Bridge. At this critical and busy location for pedestrians and cyclists we believe extensive design enquiry is needed to deliver the safest solution for vulnerable users of the street.