

Transport strategy – response from the Barbican Association

Representing the interests of the 4000 or so residents of the Barbican Estate

General comments

The vision of this strategy and its elements are all very good – and we support them. We agree that City streets are often unpleasant places to walk or cycle because they are crowded and obstructed and noisy (both traffic noise and construction sites).

We note that crowded pavements are crowded not just with people but with clutter on the street – A boards, piles of rubbish waiting for pick up, street cabinets (post boxes etc), bus stops, tables and chairs outside pubs, standing drinkers outside pubs. We suspect it might be easier to deal with street clutter than with the more fundamental problems caused by narrow streets (the medieval street plan) and a large number of construction sites, due to the City's emphasis on development.

We note that not much attention is paid to two wheel motorised vehicles, whether they be traditional motor cycles, mopeds, mobility vehicles, or pedal cycles fitted with an electric motor. Lumping these vehicles with four wheel vehicles may not be sensible and ignores the contribution that two wheelers and “last mile” bikes and scooters can make to reducing pollution and congestion.

Most motor cyclists ride into the City to work as they live too far for pedal cycling and public transport may not be convenient. In particular, low paid workers and students may disproportionately rely on two wheeled vehicles. While they do contribute to air pollution (unless they are electric) and congestion, they do so less than other vehicles and this should be recognised in the way they are treated. They have advantages over pedal cycles for riders who are older or less fit and have further to travel; for riders who have more baggage to carry; and in bad weather, and they have advantages over four wheeled vehicles in being less polluting and causing less congestion and taking up less parking space.

On implementation, there is an excellent timetable of key dates and metrics, in final section Delivering the Strategy, However, the City has a poor track record in implementing its big strategies. As an example the last Local Plan is frequently ignored when planning decisions are made, and this point is elaborated on in our comments under proposal 12.

The strategy should require that City officers report on, say, a half yearly basis how progress is being made in meeting these key dates and metrics. All reports on decisions made by City committees that have an impact on the Public Realm should a) say how each decision impacts this strategy and b) say if any elements of the strategy have been waived in the making of the decision.

In the half-yearly reports suggested above these impacts should be collated to provide an overview to gauge just how seriously the City is taking this Strategy.

We make specific comments on the following proposals. Where we have not specifically mentioned a proposal we either support it or are neutral. In general, however, we welcome these proposals. If you deliver them all, it will be marvellous – but we don't think you will!

Proposal 1: *Embed the Healthy Streets Approach in transport planning and delivery*

With the exception of “Things to see and do” this list is unexceptional. In the context of the City most pedestrians are going somewhere – and simply want to do so pleasantly. They don’t need things to see and do. The City is not a theme park. On the other hand, the City’s wealth of interesting buildings and streetscapes provides more than enough for visitors “see” – which is why many come.

Proposal 2: *Put the needs of people walking first when designing and managing our streets.*

We agree that pedestrians should be given priority over vehicles – but remember that disabled/unwell people may need vehicles to help them move around [the strategy does recognise this]

We are surprised that on p31 the map does not identify the pavements in Eldon Street as less than 2 m wide or as focus area for pedestrian priority. This street is a busy route to Liverpool Street station and its pavements, particularly on the north side are inadequate – not helped by the pub on the corner of Wilson Street, where drinkers stand outside and block the entire width of the pavement. We can see why you do not want to close it to through traffic, but it must be a candidate for wider pavements.

Similarly, the map on page 31 fails to recognize the southern pavement of Beech Street where the pavement width is only 1.6 m wide for its entire length. This is an overcrowded, dangerous place, where pedestrians are forced into the cycle lane, risking impact with cyclists or causing cyclists to swerve into the path of overtaking vehicles.

Not all streets of less than 2 m wide merit widening – eg the north side of Monkwell Square is not a route to anywhere and is not heavily used.

Proposal 4: *Enhance the Barbican high walks “We will ensure that the Barbican high walks are well maintained and enhanced where necessary. This will include improving signage and the visibility of access points to make them easier to navigate, particularly along the key north south link from Wood Street. We will maintain existing public lifts that provide access to the high walks and other walking routes. We will explore the potential to add new public and publicly accessible lifts where required through the development process.”*

We welcome this proposal to improve the Barbican Highwalks, particularly the proposal for new lifts.

We would extend this to welcoming new bridges linking from the Highwalks to outside the estate (cf London Wall Place Highwalks)

We would like to see all the mechanical accesses to the Highwalks redesigned as some of the lifts are unreliable – and an unreliable lift is less use than no lift at all.

Proposal 7 Provide more public space and deliver world-class public realm

We welcome proposals to make public realm more attractive, but we are sceptical about measures to “activate” spaces. That is often a metaphor for bad public art or performance. The point about the City is that it is already “over-activated” – the problems you have on the streets are, as this strategy acknowledges,

-too narrow

- too crowded

-too often obstructed by building sites

-affected by large lorries

-affected by excessive noise from roadworks/building sites

The promise of wider pavements, less traffic (fewer building sites?). quieter spots with greening are all good. Don’t go over the top and add more activity!

Proposal 8: Incorporate more greenery into the City’s streets and public spaces

Proposal 9: Reduce rainwater run-off on City streets and public realm

Proposal 10: Incorporate protection from adverse weather in the design of streets and the public realm

We particularly support these proposals

P37 – We agree with the general priority given to pedestrians. But remember that disabled/unwell people may need vehicles to help them move around.

Also City streets are not friendly for elderly sedate cyclists

Proposal 11: *Take a proactive approach to reducing motor traffic*

We are pleased to see reference to private and shared vehicles used by people with shared access needs.

We would like to see a reduction in Black cabs plying for hire. Many black cabs have poor air quality standards and anything that reduces the time they spend motoring would be of benefit. At the same time there need to be accessible taxi ranks and easy ways of summoning a taxi from a rank.

Residents have concerns about increased deliveries outside working hours. We want to see the current prohibition on deliveries at night time near residential areas maintained.

Proposal 12: *Design and manage the street network in accordance with the City of London Street Hierarchy*

“Alongside the street hierarchy we will also consider:

The views and aspirations of different street users and City residents, workers and businesses

How to best prioritise walking, cycling and buses as the most efficient ways to move people

How to incorporate the street’s role as a public space and reflect the types of buildings and uses along it, including planned development

How to provide appropriate access for delivery, servicing, and other commercial activities

How to provide access for residents, people of all abilities and people with access requirements, such as heavy luggage or injuries and illness

How to maintain emergency response times and access for emergency services”

We particularly welcome consideration being given to the needs of residents in the above list (emboldened)

We note that one of the first three plans – to be completed by 2022 covers the Barbican and Smithfield area, including the Culture Mile.

We note that residents will be consulted – which we welcome. But we also note that over the past few years we have been consulted about:

- street scene improvements in Moor Lane
- the Barbican and Golden Lane Area Strategy
- the Culture Mile Look and Feel strategy
- the Noise strategy
- the Lighting Strategy
- the previous Local Plan

And we are currently being consulted about this strategy and the new Local Plan.

Yet we have noticed very little real change (except for developments made by private developers and given planning permission). The City seems much better at producing strategies than at implementing them. It produces overlapping strategies that incorporate ones from the previous strategy but have the effect of moving the implementation date back.

What is the hierarchy of strategies? Does this one take priority over the Barbican and Golden Lane Area Strategy for example?

Proposal 13: *Use timed and temporary street closures to help make streets safer and more attractive places to walk, cycle and spend time*

NB

“Launching a Lunchtime Streets programme in 2019 to provide additional space for people using streets at lunchtime during the summer months. At least five Lunchtime Streets will be in operation by 2025

- *Supporting the leisure and cultural offer of the City by holding ‘car-free’ weekends and days, with streets only open to people walking and cycling. We will aim to hold the first car-free day in 2019”*

So long as such street closures do not make vehicle access to residents’ car parks unreasonably difficult, and allow disabled residents to take part, even though they may need motorised transport, we support these initiatives

Proposal 14: *Make the best and most efficient use of the kerbside and car parks*

There is a suggestion to introduce motorcycle parking based on size and emissions. However, the larger motorbikes are starting to incorporate blind spot monitoring, emergency braking,

and pedestrian-friendly innovations that I would be beneficial in an urban environment so it may not be wise to penalise them. A TFL study on Powered Two Wheeler access to bus lanes illustrated a PTW emitted one sixth of the emissions of a small car.

Proposal 15: *Support and champion the 'Turning the Corner' campaign*

P47 "People using cycles as mobility aids or mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs will be able to use new and improved cycle lanes."

We support this but it needs to be accompanied by measures to alter London's aggressive cycling culture

Proposal 16: *Develop and apply the City of London Street Accessibility Standard*

2022 is a long time to wait for an accessibility action plan. We would urge the City to enact short term solutions much more quickly

Vision Zero. Further consideration should be given to the safety of motorised two wheel vehicle riders. This section mentions that 9 motorcyclists were killed or seriously injured in the City in 2017 compared to 15 cyclists. The Evening Standard quoted for the whole of London in 2017 681 motorcyclists or moped riders were killed or seriously hurt compared with 454 cyclists. City Matters on 18 December quoted a 78% increase in motorcycle casualties compared with the previous year in the Square Mile. What strategies does the city have to reduce the risk to two wheelers?

Proposal 17: *Keep pavements free of obstructions*

In the light of our general comments at the beginning, we support this proposal and urge that action is taken to implement it swiftly. It is a "quick win"

Proposal 19: *Support and champion accessibility improvements to Underground stations*

Take the earliest opportunity to work with TFL and developers to make Barbican tube accessible with lift access to both platforms

Proposal 20: *Apply the safe system approach and the principles of road danger reduction to deliver Vision Zero*

P55 Proposal to reduce speed limit on City streets to 15 mph.

This would have a major impact on road casualties, but what measures will be taken to enforce it?

Without enforcement, the limit will be consistently exceeded (including by cyclists)

Proposal 24: *Apply a minimum cycling level of service to all streets*

It would be helpful if the City could provide guidance on the use of scooters by adults on pavements or the highway. There are an increasing number of adult scooterists and guidance would be welcome

Proposal 26: *Ensure new developments contribute to improving the experience of cycling in the City*

Consider incorporating some parking for powered two wheel vehicles alongside that for pedal cycles

Proposal 29: *Support and champion a central London Zero Emission Zone*

“While the Central London ZEZ is being developed we will introduce local ZEZs covering the Barbican and Golden Lane estates and the City Cluster by 2022 (Figure 11). Proposals will be developed in consultation with residents and businesses and will reflect the availability of zero emission capable vehicles, while seeking to accelerate their uptake”

2022 is only four years off – and although there is an appetite among residents for electric cars, we doubt that all residents will be able to change to electric vehicles by 2022. This applies particularly to older residents, who may be less able to use public transport and rely on their cars more than younger adults – also families with young children.

There may also be big issues in installing enough chargers in the carparks [UK Power Networks had to bring in a separate electricity supply for the pilot on Thomas More carpark].

We welcome measures to encourage and facilitate a move to electric cars, but we don't welcome measures that will make movement impossible for those who simply can't switch by 2022.

Proposal 35: *Reduce noise from streetworks*

We support his measure strongly, but see no specific measures over and above current best practice (which results in noisy streetworks) to enable this

Proposal 38: *Reduce the number of freight vehicles in the Square Mile*

“Permitting night-time deliveries where there will be negligible impact on residents both en route and in the City. “

What do you mean by negligible? A bit more traffic noise through the night might be OK if there is some already, but if there is virtually none (as is the case on the smaller streets around the Barbican) it will have an impact by disturbing people's sleep.

Proposal 41: *Reduce the impact of construction and streetworks*

We support this, but we are sceptical of how the City might reduce the impact of construction sites. The City is full of construction sites which take over large sections of pavements (often whole pavements and sometimes whole streets). Often these closures result in pedestrians moving out into the roadway, risking collisions with vehicles and cyclists.

Decisions on planning applications should consider the impact of a development during the construction phase on pedestrian safety. Only in exceptional circumstances should pavements be closed, and road safety should not be compromised for private gain

Proposal 42: *Make the street network resilient to severe weather events*

P87 "Priority 1 pavements and cycle routes will be treated for snow and ice at the same time as priority 1 streets (Figure 13)."

We support this. Currently, pavements are typically untreated when it is icy – and this leads to injuries and restrictions of mobility

Proposal 43: *Establish a Future Transport Programme*

Good set of criteria

Proposal 47: *Support and champion improved connections to the Square Mile from Greater London and the surrounding region*

P96 "Enhancing the coverage and frequency of 24-hour public transport services in central London, including increasing the number of lines operating night-tube services..."

Any extensions to operating hours must take account of the need to minimise noise and other impacts on residents "

This last sentence is important. Twenty four hour tubes must not be at the expense of residents' health. The City must force TFL to resolve the excessive noise of its underground lines under the Barbican estate until the noise levels in residents' flats are minimal – to ensure they have undisturbed sleep at night. This is a public health problem.

"Exploring the feasibility of Sunday operation of the Waterloo and City Line"

Supported, particularly as the proposed reduction in Central London bus services will make access to Waterloo Station and the South Bank harder from the Barbican.

Proposal 52: *Use temporary interventions and trials to accelerate the pace of delivery*

We support trials and experimentation. But make clear the criteria for success, the means of evaluation, and publish the results.

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