

## **OXFORD STREET PROPOSALS FOR TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAY CHANGES**

### *Consultation Response From Baker Street Quarter Partnership*

Baker Street Quarter Partnership is the Business Improvement District for the wider Baker Street and Marylebone area representing 170 significant local commercial occupiers and landowners. We are focused on ensuring the long-term vitality and progression of this unique and important commercial district of Westminster, while ensuring wider benefit to the residential communities within and around it. Ensuring the area is enjoyable, safe, clean, vibrant and accessible are key focuses.

The commercial district around Baker Street and west Marylebone is a leading centre in the West End and CAZ with 50,000 employees working in the District bringing an estimated annual spend of £30.5 million (on top of an estimated £4.5 million from visitors). The highest quality office occupiers are attracted by the excellent transport infrastructure, the high-quality workspace and the mixed-use ecosystem of retail, restaurants, hotels and culture, together with the high-quality environment and place. Investment in the area remains strong with a robust development pipeline for high quality office accommodation. The area also has a significant residential population.

### **Summary**

Oxford Street is an important neighbour to Baker Street and Marylebone, with many commuters and visitors entering and leaving the district via Oxford Street and its Underground stations. Currently their experience entering the district from Oxford Street tends not to be positive and detracts from their enjoyment of our District. It is an area commuters will actively avoid if they can due to overcrowding and concerns around crime and anti-social behaviour. Local office workers choose to use Selfridges back entrance and the Bond Street Station entrance/exit on Marylebone Lane for these reasons.

We are therefore strongly supportive of improvement to Oxford Street that would make it a better neighbour to Marylebone. We are, however, concerned at the impact the current proposals will have on our district, in particular on the important north-south gateway streets that link Oxford Street and Marylebone, on Wigmore Street, and on road network resilience and traffic in the wider area. We feel it is imperative that there is clarity on the additional funding that will be required for street management and improvements on the surrounding streets outside the MDC that will take the load for Oxford Street if these proposals go ahead in terms of new/additional bus stops, taxi ranks, footfall and delivery infrastructure.

## Comments on proposals and their impact

Regarding the transport and highway proposals put forward for Oxford Street West:

### Wigmore Street:

- The western end of Wigmore Street is part of the leading office district around Marylebone and Baker Street with a relatively quiet nature in terms of footfall. We are concerned that the additional of two bus stops to this first block on Wigmore Street, and the accompanying footfall for people looking to travel to Oxford Street, will fundamentally change the nature of this block and risks detracting from its attractiveness as an office location. If these proposals go ahead it will be imperative that funding is made available for additional resources from the Council and Police to ensure the area is clean, well maintained and safe. Given Wigmore Street is not in the MDC boundary we are concerned that this will not be the case.
- Lack of resourcing to uphold the quality of Wigmore Street would detract from the success of the Oxford Street transformation with many, notably those travelling by bus, arriving to Wigmore Street under the proposals.

### North-South 'Gateway Streets':

- These streets – namely Old Quebec Street, Portman Street, Orchard Street, Duke Street, James Street and St Christophers Place – form key gateways and links between Oxford Street and Marylebone and will be vital considerations in encouraging footfall flow between the districts and securing complementary amenity uses. The 50,000 footfall and £30.5 m annual spend from workers in the Baker Street/Marylebone commercial district is significant in this respect.
- There is a need for a focus on these streets and provide appropriate resources for public realm design and management to ensure they are successful and support the wider vision for Oxford Street rather than deteriorating due to the extra demands placed on them by the proposals.
- The MDA boundary cuts across these side streets which adds the complexity of necessary coordination between two authorities on future management, activation and public realm improvement making a focus on and resources for these streets vital.
- Orchard Street – which is the key link route between Oxford Street and the Baker Street and Portman Square commercial district – is particularly at risk of being reduced to a servicing road to Oxford Street. The current proposals add an additional taxi rank on top of the existing taxi rank and bus stops on this short street. It is not clear from the proposals whether loading bays will also be added here. Without focus on the public realm design of this street and appropriate resources for management the current proposals would negatively impact Orchard Street's environment and stymie its potential to ensure a positive experience that encourages footfall to flow between the two districts.

### **Funding/resourcing for surrounding streets:**

- As outlined above we feel strongly that resources should be made available to the streets surrounding Oxford Street West, both for public realm improvement and management.
- This will be important to ensure these streets also thrive and are appropriately designed and managed to deal with the increased footfall and servicing being placed on them to support the Oxford Street West scheme e.g. bus routes, stops and associated footfall on Wigmore Street, additional taxi ranks on Orchard Street, and loading bays (locations unclear).
- A lack of focus on and resources for these neighbouring streets risks their deterioration which will negatively impact the success of the Oxford Street West plans.

### **Resilience of road network:**

- We are concerned that proposals will significantly reduce the resilience of the road network in the area due to the lack of direct east-west routes parallel to Oxford Street. We are concerned that a closure on Wigmore Street would necessitate very convoluted diversions - including for the three new bus routes - for road traffic, which in turn adds traffic throughout wider Marylebone impacting both residents and businesses. Marylebone Road, as the nearest direct east-west route, would appear sub-optimal as a strategic road with existing substantial demands on it.
- Junction Orchard Street, Portman Square, Wigmore Street: improvement to this junction would be welcome as it currently does not function well. There is frequently traffic backing up across the pedestrian green phase crossing, creating risk to pedestrians. There is also frequently traffic backing up several blocks north on Baker Street from the junction. We are concerned at this junction's capacity to take the three bus routes as proposed given there are already existing capacity issues apparent.

### **Deliveries/loading:**

- We are concerned that there is no information on where loading bays will be placed in the area surrounding Oxford Street. It is not possible to fully assess the impact of the proposals without this information. If loading bays are to be placed in the same areas as additional taxi ranks and bus stops the aggregate impact would likely be significant and not desirable in some streets.
- We would like to understand if funding will be made available to progress meaningful delivery/freight consolidation to achieve a reduction in freight traffic. This would be very welcome, but, as seen in the lack of progress to date, despite multiple successive efforts, this will not progress without funding. The Regent Street model is an outlier that is limited, and also made possible by single land ownership that is not in place for the rest of the district. Freight consolidation will become increasingly important with the change of use to office buildings in the Oxford Street district as offices – especially multi-tenanted office buildings – are known to attract a higher number of deliveries than retailers.

- We feel the delivery window of midnight to 7am on Oxford Street is very restricted and are concerned at the impact this will have on surrounding streets.

#### **Noise:**

- We feel it is an oversight that the noise impact assessment does not include the nighttime period given the bus routes moved to Wigmore Street will run overnight and deliveries on Oxford Street will also be in the nighttime period.

#### **Comments on Bus routes:**

- As outlined above, we are concerned at the additional pressure on Wigmore Street from the additional bus routes in terms of significant uplift in crowding/footfall.
- This will require additional management resources including Policing.
- Likewise we note our concern at the addition of three bus routes to the Orchard Street/Portman Square/Wigmore Street junction which is already frequently backed up.
- We also note a concern about where bus diversions would go in the event of works on Wigmore Street given the lack of direct parallel east-west routes.
- We did not feel there was sufficient detail in the Accessibility section to enable us to fully consider the impact of the bus route (and taxi infrastructure) changes on those with additional accessibility needs.

#### **Conclusion**

While we remain supportive of the principle of improvement for Oxford Street we have significant concerns about the impact on the surrounding streets and ask that the impact on these is recognised and mitigated through appropriately resourced public realm design and management. We would like reassurance around the detail on loading bay provision and freight consolidation/reduction as well as the impact of the proposals on the resilience of the road network.

Penny Alexander

**Chief Executive**

15 January 2026