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Response to London Assembly Investigation Cycling Infrastructure

Hounslow Cycling Campaign (HCC) is happy to provide our response to the London Assembly investigation into Cycling Infrastructure.

Hounslow Cycling Campaign (HCC) is the borough group of the London Cycling Campaign. We have over 150 members in London Borough of Hounslow.

There is minimal existing cycling infrastructure in the borough however in September 2017, TfL released a consultation for Cycling Superhighway 9 (CS9)¹. CS9 is an 11km route through the London Boroughs of Hounslow and Hammersmith and Fulham, between Brentford and Kensington, with plans to extend the route to Hounslow town centre.

CS9 is the largest proposal for cycling infrastructure ever seen in the borough, or indeed West London, hence our response is based around our recent experience of the consultation for this route. We have not responded to points where we have no direct experience in the borough.

The London Borough of Hounslow has recently announced that a decision regarding CS9 will be delayed until after the May 2018 council elections². We believe it is likely Hammersmith and Fulham will make the same decision.

1. What progress on new cycling infrastructure has been made under Sadiq Khan, and what are his long-term plans?

CS9 went out to consultation in September 2017, some 16 months after Mayor Khan was elected.

The only real measure of progress under Mayor Khan will be implementation of the scheme.

2. Has TfL resolved the problems that delayed some cycling schemes under the previous Mayor?

The CS9 consultation ran from 21 September to 31 October 2017. We understand that analysis of the consultation responses and work to address design issues raised in the consultation has taken longer than planned by TfL.

At the time of writing, TfL has not yet issued a public report of the consultation. We believe TfL has missed the deadlines for the LB Hounslow decision making processes required for the borough to make a decision before the May 2018 council elections.

As a result, the decision has been delayed until after the council elections. There is a risk that CS9 will be a “hostage to fortune” based upon what happens in the council elections and some local councillors are already trying to politicise the scheme.³

While we understand that it is not unusual for tasks to take longer than planned in large engineering projects, it is disappointing that the consultation could not have been run earlier therefore providing more contingency in case of delays and a better chance of a decision before the council elections.

3. Has segregation delivered the anticipated benefits on the Cycle Superhighways? How many cyclists are using these routes?

No segregated Cycle Superhighways have yet been built in LB Hounslow.

4. To what extent has segregation had negative consequences for other road users and, if necessary, how can this be mitigated?

No segregated Cycle Superhighways have yet been built in LB Hounslow.

5. Have Quietways delivered their anticipated benefits? How many cyclists are using them?

No Quietways have yet been built in LB Hounslow.

6. What are the differences in infrastructure between inner and outer London? How can TfL ensure infrastructure in different areas is sufficient and appropriate to the location?

We believe TfL should adhere to consistent standards for cycle ways that are uniformly applied to all routes.

The plans for CS9 along the A315 and A205 are, in general, high quality, however at the same time we see consultations for the A4 and A316 that are nowhere of the same standard as CS9 and have resulted in a degradation of the historic cycle paths along these routes.

7. Is TfL's approach to public engagement working effectively to improve scheme designs and meet stakeholder needs?

From our experience of the CS9 consultation, we believe TfL should address the following points:

- Earlier engagement and communication with the public regarding forthcoming schemes. As a cycling campaign group, HCC has been aware of CS9 since the earliest days of the plan in 2012 and we have been able to get information about the status of the plan (even if the status was “on hold”) through periodic meetings with borough officers and the mayor’s commissioners responsible for cycling (previously

Andrew Gilligan, currently Will Norman). We have been aware of the alignment along the A315/A205 and that the design is a largely protected route. However, the CS9 plans seemed to come as a shock to many members of the general public, particularly the section along Chiswick High Rd. Many people seemed to be completely unaware of long-standing plans for a cycle route and that it would be protected, with space re-allocated from footway and/or roadway. This surprise at plans can mean that many people's initial reaction is negative, as they may have an almost automatic dislike and fear of major change. This resulted in emotive outbursts, such as a local priest saying that CS9 would "do more damage than the Luftwaffe". Earlier engagement and providing the public an overview of plans should give people more time to think about the impact and also feedback that can be used to shape a subsequent consultation on detailed plans.

- Better promotion of the "Heathy Streets" agenda. HCC supports TfL's vision for Healthy Streets⁴ and believes CS9 will help deliver its objectives. However, TfL is a transport organisation, not a public health organisation and we do not believe that TfL or the borough were able to make an effective case for CS9 using the benefits of Heathy Streets. Indeed, opponents of the scheme use "bikes cause pollution" arguments based upon predicted increases to some journey times and TfL had no effective material in the consultation to counter this. TfL or borough officers attending consultations were transport professionals, not public health experts.

8. Are Londoners sufficiently aware of the cycling infrastructure available to them, and how can awareness be increased?

There needs to be greater emphasis on way marking cycle routes especially around railway stations. There are already good routes for cycling between Feltham railway station and Heathrow Airport but they are not waymarked as such. Similarly, the TfL Legible London sign outside Brentford railway station is still blank years after it was erected.

The consistent branding and quality of the recently made superhighways raise awareness by the popularity of their use and we are confident that CS9 built to such a standard would similarly be recognisable by its popularity.

9. How is TfL using infrastructure to attract a more diverse range of people to cycle in London?

We do not have evidence to comment.

10. Is there sufficient cycle parking in London, and is it in the right locations?

We do not have evidence to comment.

11. How are the lessons of the Mini-Hollands and other previous cycling schemes being applied elsewhere?

No mini-Hollands have yet been built in LB Hounslow.

12. Should cycling infrastructure be oriented toward longer-distance commuting journeys, or more localised trips?

Cycling infrastructure should be oriented towards both. We believe the distinction between routes is whether protected or unprotected infrastructure is appropriate rather than between local and commuting cyclists. Local shoppers on busy high streets deserve protected routes as much as commuters.

We understand long-distance commuting forms a small proportion of potential cycling trips, therefore the greatest potential for growth comes from local trips for shopping, going to school and leisure destinations such as cafes, restaurants, cinemas and other amenities.

In this respect, the “Cycle Superhighway” branding is not helpful as it conveys an image of a cycle route only used by speedy commuters dressed in lycra, riding carbon racing bikes. Indeed, TfL’s own documentation refers to Cycle Superhighways being used by commuters.

This was used by opponents against CS9 to put forward the argument that the route should not go through shopping streets, such as Chiswick High Rd and King St Hammersmith, but instead should go along the A4, which has little pedestrian traffic, but no amenities either. Opponents even referred to CS9 as a “bike motorway”.

Hounslow Cycling Campaign believes that the CS9 alignment along the A315 rather than the A4 is correct as people will always want to visit town centres such as Hammersmith, Chiswick and Brentford, hence there should be safe and protected cycle infrastructure to enable as many local journeys as possible.

The type of person using the cycle route will change by time of day and day of week, as it does for other modes of transport.

Hounslow Cycling Campaign did not use the term “superhighway” term in our campaign material and instead we referred to CS9 as a “protected cycle lane”.

We would like TfL to drop the “cycle superhighway” branding and use another term to refer to protected cycle routes.

¹ <https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/roads/cs9/>

²

https://www.hounslow.gov.uk/news/article/375/london_borough_of_hounslow_statement_on_cycle_superhighway_9_cs9

³ A rebuttal of Chiswick councillors’ views of CS9 <http://hounslowcycling.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/HCC-Case-for-CS9-v5.pdf>

⁴ <https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/how-we-work/planning-for-the-future/healthy-streets>