



Andrew Boff AM
Chairman of the Planning and Regeneration Committee

Sir Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
(Sent by email)

30 April 2025

Dear Sadiq,

Response to the Oxford Street transformation consultation

I am writing to submit the London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee's response to your consultation on the transformation of Oxford Street and proposed establishment of a Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC).

To inform our response, the Committee heard from a range of stakeholders at our meeting on 2 April 2025 including representatives from Westminster and Camden councils, the New West End Company, Westminster Amenity Societies Forum, the GLA and TfL. We also received written evidence and visited Oxford Street to meet with local residents' groups.

We heard a wide range of views on the merits and risks of the transformation proposals. Assembly Members also have a range of views on the overall questions posed in the consultation. However, we agree on the next steps that would need to be taken to enable informed discussion before the MDC proposal is further considered by the Assembly. In this letter we set out three recommendations that highlight the key issues for you to consider and request that more information is provided.

Oxford Street is London's premier retail destination and critical to London's economy.¹ The success of any transformation scheme will hinge in part on the trust that communities have in the process, and in how stakeholders are brought together. This trust could be enhanced by further transparency, information and opportunities for engagement on your proposals. We heard repeatedly of the need for more detail on elements of the proposals. For example, the Heart of London Business Alliance (HOLBA) told us that further information is required to understand the potential practical impacts

¹ London Assembly, [Planning and Regeneration Committee Panel 2](#), 2 April 2025, p.1

on transport and access.² This information is necessary for robust and informed scrutiny by the Assembly and other stakeholders. It is also vital for securing the confidence and support of residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

A new Mayoral Development Corporation

Much is still unknown about the MDC proposal. GLA and TfL officers indicated that there are currently no detailed plans for the MDC or pedestrianisation.³ As these plans are developed, they should pay particular attention to the following areas:

Funding

We heard from BusinessLDN, HOLBA and Harley Street Business Improvement District that an important step for successful delivery of the Mayoral Development Area is to establish a 'clear and credible' funding strategy, with a transparent plan for securing financial backing.⁴ This would not only ensure that the project is affordable; it would also avoid the potential that uncertainty could undermine local investment.

We are clear that to deliver its promised economic benefits, the MDC must have a solid financial foundation. It must also communicate this financial foundation transparently and in a way that generates the confidence of stakeholders, from residents and local businesses to potential investment partners. Without this detail, we cannot be assured that the MDC's funding position is sustainable. It is also unclear whether, or to what extent, the MDC would rely on public funding from the GLA or elsewhere, especially in view of the continued financial dependence of other MDCs, especially the London Legacy Development Corporation.

Planning powers

Clarity over planning powers is needed to combat the potential negative effects of uncertainty on development. We heard concerns from Tim Lord, Chair of Westminster Amenity Societies Forum (WASF), that investment in the area could be delayed as developers wait for this clarity.⁵ Queries were raised about why, or to what extent, the proposed MDC would need these planning powers to deliver pedestrianisation. Dr Will Norman, London's Walking and Cycling Commissioner, told us that planning powers were required to ensure that "that the buildings and the street evolve together as a new public space".⁶ He stated that this included changes to building use, for example, the introduction of more food outlets. However, it is not currently clear what these changes will look like, or how they form part of a wider vision and strategy for Oxford Street. It is also unclear how, and by whom, planning applications would be determined, how local accountability would be ensured, or how local amenity would be taken into account. A transparent and clear statement of your vision for Oxford Street is needed to properly manage any transition period and mitigate these risks.

Consultation and engagement

The success of any Oxford Street transformation project is dependent on the support and confidence of stakeholders. There was consensus from the local authority, business, resident and transport groups that we heard from that they wanted to see significant and meaningful consultation through the development and delivery of the proposed transformation. Resident groups, such as WASF, expressed concerns that the creation of an MDC and the subsequent transfer of certain powers from

² HOLBA submission to the call for evidence, p.2

³ London Assembly, [Planning and Regeneration Committee Panel 2](#), 2 April 2025, p.10-11

⁴ BusinessLDN, HOLBA and Harley Street Business Improvement District, submissions to call for evidence

⁵ London Assembly, [Planning and Regeneration Committee Panel 1](#), 2 April 2025, p.9

⁶ London Assembly, [Planning and Regeneration Committee Panel 2](#), 2 April 2025, p.4

local authorities, especially planning powers, could result in reduced accountability.⁷ Without a proper framework in place for continued engagement, there is a risk that some voices will not be heard. A robust plan of consultation and engagement must be in place to prevent this.

Recommendation 1: Ahead of the Assembly being asked to consider formal proposals for the designation of a Mayoral Development Area at a plenary meeting, the Mayor should set out more detailed plans for the Assembly and other stakeholders to consider. These plans should include:

- Estimates of MDC income, specifying the expected funding from the GLA and from external sources.
- Estimates of MDC expenditure, where possible specifying expected spending on MDC running costs, public realm improvements and business rates relief.
- A clear statement of how you intend the MDC to use the planning powers you are seeking, and how planning applications and policies would be determined in a democratic and locally accountable fashion. In particular, this should indicate whether the MDC's strategy will include efforts to encourage more leisure and hospitality activity on Oxford Street.
- A proposed end date for the MDC.
- A framework for ongoing consultation and engagement with local residents and businesses within the governance processes of the MDC.

Plans for pedestrianisation

We heard from David Rowe, TfL's Director of Investment Delivery Planning, that detailed plans for pedestrianisation are still to be made. He explained that TfL is awaiting the results of the current consultation before progressing with these. While we appreciate the reasons for this, these details are fundamental to informed and meaningful scrutiny. Without them, Londoners cannot be assured that the proposals as they are set out will deliver the promised benefits. For example, Tim Lord told us that without more detail on pedestrianisation, there is a danger that the MDC would be created with "the answers on the practicalities some way down the line."⁸ Given the integral part that pedestrianisation plays in the transformation proposals, further detail on the plans or options for pedestrianisation should be shared with the Assembly and other stakeholders to facilitate meaningful scrutiny. In particular, you should supply further detail on your mitigation plans for the challenges associated with the following areas:

Traffic displacement

Traffic displacement is one of the most significant challenges facing an Oxford Street pedestrianisation scheme. Oxford Street currently forms a 'key corridor' for buses and taxis, with pedestrianisation likely requiring bus rerouting and additional traffic on surrounding streets.⁹ Consideration must also be given to freight transport, and how businesses within the proposed pedestrianisation area would continue to receive deliveries, especially those without side or rear servicing. These issues have presented barriers to the implementation of previous Mayoral plans for Oxford Street transformation.

⁷ London Assembly, [Planning and Regeneration Committee Panel 1](#), 2 April 2025, p.19. The Committee also heard concerns about democratic accountability from WASF members during our visit to Oxford Street on 23 April 2025.

⁸ London Assembly, [Planning and Regeneration Committee Panel 1](#), 2 April 2025, p.8

⁹ London Cab Drivers Club, submission to the call for evidence

We heard concerns from HOLBA and London Cycling Campaign about the implications for congestion and pollution in the areas surrounding Oxford Street.¹⁰ It was also noted on our site visit that some of the surrounding roads are already more congested than Oxford Street.¹¹ To ensure that the challenges facing Oxford Street are not simply displaced into neighbouring streets, careful and detailed traffic modelling and mitigation plans are required. These plans should be developed in tandem with the local community and made public for scrutiny by the Assembly and other stakeholders. There should also be clarity on North-South traffic connections and, if roads and junctions outside the MDC need to be redesigned, how this should be funded.

Accessibility

Special attention must be given to the needs of those with mobility issues, who risk facing additional challenges in accessing Oxford Street if bus and taxi access is moved further away. Buses and taxis are the main mode of transport for many disabled Londoners,¹² especially on a long road such as Oxford Street where people may be carrying heavy shopping. Deaf and disabled people's organisations such as Inclusion London have raised concerns that without meaningful engagement, pedestrianisation plans risk creating significant barriers for disabled people accessing the area.¹³ Before any pedestrianisation scheme is taken forward, it will be important to learn from other cities' best practice in how pedestrianised spaces are made inclusive. More broadly, we heard from TravelWatch that "genuine and wide-ranging co-design", including with individuals with lived experience, was required to ensure that the transformation scheme is inclusive and accessible.¹⁴

In addition, investment in step-free access at Marble Arch and Oxford Circus tube stations would provide additional routes for disabled people to access the area, with Councillor Adam Hug calling it 'potentially transformational'.¹⁵ We heard from David Rowe, TfL, that initial work has been done looking at options for providing step free access, but due to the age of the infrastructure this is potentially "very, very expensive" and "is not work that TfL can fund alone."¹⁶ We believe that step-free access at these stations should be included to ensure the regeneration of Oxford Street is inclusive and it remains accessible. The costs and funding arrangements for this should be considered within the overall Oxford Street transformation budget. Routes from train stations or any new bus stops to Oxford Street need to be easy to navigate for disabled people, with consideration given to the distance and ensuring surfaces are even for walking, and who should pay for any improvements needed.

Another important aspect of accessibility is the provision of public toilets, which the Committee noted in its site visit are in short supply in the Oxford Street area. Should pedestrianisation be implemented, we hope that the MDC would review provision and look to expand it.

Cycle routes

According to London Cycling Campaign, there are currently no high-quality east-west cycling routes in the West End.¹⁷ Around 4,000 cycling trips take place on Oxford Street each day. This gap in the cycle network can be seen on TfL's own map of cycleways in Central London.¹⁸ We heard concerns that if high quality and direct cycle routes are not provided on nearby streets as part of the

¹⁰ London Cycling Campaign and HOLBA, submissions to the call for evidence

¹¹ Site visit to Oxford Street with WASF representatives on 23 April 2025

¹² Inclusion London, [Our statement on proposals to pedestrianise Oxford Street](#), accessed 17 April 2025

¹³ Inclusion London, [Our statement on proposals to pedestrianise Oxford Street](#), accessed 17 April 2025

¹⁴ TravelWatch, submission to the call for evidence

¹⁵ London Assembly, [Planning and Regeneration Committee Panel 1](#), 2 April 2025, p.17

¹⁶ London Assembly, [Planning and Regeneration Committee Panel 2](#), 2 April 2025, p.17

¹⁷ London Cycling Campaign, submission to the call for evidence

¹⁸ TfL, [Central London Cycleways Map](#), accessed 29 April 2025

transformation, there is a risk that, given the demand, cyclists will attempt to cycle on Oxford Street if it is pedestrianised. It is imperative that further detail is provided on how new cycle routes will mitigate this risk to ensure the safety of pedestrians and cyclists alike.

Policing

The West End, including Oxford Street, accounts for 65 per cent of all crime in Westminster.¹⁹ We heard from Councillor Adam Hug that pedestrianisation has the potential to intensify issues of crime, such as phone theft, shoplifting, and public disorder.²⁰ Tim Lord noted that there are currently 40,000 reported crimes a year in the West End ward, and according to the Soho Society a previous pedestrianisation of Old Compton Street in 2000 saw an increase in crime that contributed to the scheme being dug up.²¹ Dr Will Norman told us that tackling these issues “will be fundamental to the deliver[y] of the entire project”.²² We were pleased to hear from Molly Strauss, Head of Oxford Street Transformation, that the team have been in conversation with the MPS and MOPAC about these challenges.²³ The Assembly requests further information on the outcomes of these conversations, and your proposed plans for improving public safety and reducing crime in the area.

More detailed plans for the pedestrianisation programme are required, including work to address some of the challenges that may arise for transport users, local residents and businesses.

Recommendation 2: Ahead of the Assembly being asked to consider formal proposals for the designation of a Mayoral Development Area at a plenary meeting, the Mayor should commit to providing the Assembly with the following information:

- An assessment of the potential displacement of traffic from Oxford Street to surrounding streets, including buses, taxis, freight and service vehicles, and measures to mitigate this. This should include an assessment of the road safety impacts on surrounding streets.
- A plan for where buses, taxis and other displaced traffic would be routed, how the impacts of this would be mitigated, investment in alternative junctions and routes and how this would be funded, and servicing and delivery arrangements for businesses.
- A timed and costed plan for the initial phase of pedestrianisation and associated public realm changes on Oxford Street West.
- Details of plans and infrastructure that will be implemented to ensure people with mobility issues, including older and disabled people and pregnant women, can still access Oxford Street without being negatively affected by the removal of transport options. These measures should be co-designed with people with lived experience.
- Details of how the pedestrianised area will be policed, especially at night.

Recommendation 3: In the longer-term, if the MDC is established, we would expect to see the following steps being considered. While these plans may take longer to be finalised, the Mayor should give a commitment ahead of the Assembly plenary session that the MDC will provide this information as an early priority:

¹⁹ HOLBA, submission to call for evidence

²⁰ London Assembly, [Planning and Regeneration Committee Panel 1](#), 2 April 2025, p.12

²¹ London Assembly, [Planning and Regeneration Committee Panel 1](#), 2 April 2025, p.13

²² London Assembly, [Planning and Regeneration Committee Panel 2](#), 2 April 2025, p.15

²³ London Assembly, [Planning and Regeneration Committee Panel 2](#), 2 April 2025, p.15

- Plans for pedestrianisation and other public realm changes of the remaining areas of Oxford Street, including the Marble Arch and Tottenham Court Road areas.
- Plans for implementing full step-free access to all platforms at Marble Arch and Oxford Circus stations.
- Plans for implementing new cycle routes on surrounding streets.
- Details of new public toilet provision planned for the area.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Boff', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andrew Boff AM
Chairman of the Planning and Regeneration Committee