

3 April 2008
To Cllr Nick Botterill.

Nick

Thank you very much for having convened such an impressive meeting where the concerns outlined in our petition about Westfield / SBG were addressed. I am pleased to have received your letter dated 27 March 2008.

At our hfcyclists meeting on 1 April 2008 we discussed your letter and I was asked to thank you and respond expressing gratitude for parts that encourage cycling, and address some points.

Your response is very thorough. Whilst I respect the wisdom of the officers present, I believe that in some respects they may have put undue reliance on the opinions of some of the "experts" they need to rely upon in this matter.

In particular I have called into question the work of Halcrow, whose Transport Assessment 2006 appears more to do with obtaining planning permission than providing a basis for traffic modelling. My letter to Nick Morris at TfL is critical of this Transport Assessment. see
<http://www.hfcyclists.org.uk/WestfieldNetworkProblems.doc>

It is good that the cycling wing of TfL is pressing for off-carriageway cycling into and through the Westfield complex. I wish TfL would give the same emphasis as to how cyclists on the E-W corridor will fare. Here there is a mixture of cycle track and very poor connectivity with the dangers of the carriageway.

I have addressed some of your points which I believe are questionable, and in bold made some minimum suggestions. I believe these would improve matters for pedestrians and cyclists. I would of course rather see more fundamental changes.

1] The current layout has been agreed with all parties, and any major changes are likely to result in traffic tailbacks over a wide area.

This is possibly a scare tactic to keep the status quo. The traffic modelling is itself flawed as it is based on figures which are devised to obtain planning permission. The figures in the transport assessment are inconsistent. There are likely to be traffic tailbacks over a wide area anyway.

2] On specific issues such as bus queuing space, we felt that the proposed provision was appropriate, given the propensity of buses to bunch.

The buses tendency to bunch is irrelevant. I believe that from either the East or the West, only 2 buses can enter or the leave the Southern Interchange during a light change. For entering the bus stand area, there is only room to accommodate 2 buses from a given direction. It will take more than 20 or 30 seconds for the buses to arrive at the stops, to fully disgorge the passengers and for both buses to move off. The rear bus stop must be clear before another bus can attempt to enter, otherwise it will end up blocking the crossing. A similar argument applies to buses that are leaving the bus stops.

3] We consider it is very important that the shopping centre provides a good public transport offer in order to minimise traffic generation and congestion.

THE best way to minimise the traffic congestion would be to charge an additional toll on the Westfield car park. This would be an overall win situation for all. If the rate at which cars arrive is above the rate at which they can get into the car park, and the car park is full, really serious congestion will result and the cars already inside the car park will not be able to leave. A more measured rate of arrival would result in more customers being able to use the car park over the day.

The argument that the parking at Westfield must be less than on-street parking is not completely valid. Westfield customers can be prevented from using on-street parking by various other measures, ie limiting on-street parking to an hour say, using resident or business vouchers etc.

4] We note that the proposed toucan crossing between the interchange and the W12 centre will be 7.5 metres wide compared with the present 4 metres.

This sounds good, but on the northern side [near the Central Line station] the crossing has to deal with cyclists moving from the carriageway to the cycle track while the traffic is flowing. Waiting pedestrians and southbound cyclists are possibly competing for the landing space on the pavement.

I believe it would be sensible to move the landing area for cyclists coming off the carriageway to the east of this crossing, to avoid such conflict.

On the southern side [near the West 12 Centre] there is the problem of how cyclists get diagonally through the pedestrians on the crossing. The Advanced Stop Line for cyclists has been removed in this westerly direction.

I believe it would be better if cyclists moved behind the waiting pedestrians on the pavement to get to the other side [to the west] of them. Such a shared use space would allow cyclists to get away when the general traffic is stopped rather than competing with pedestrians on the crossing.

The other crossing inside the bus stand area is much wider than 7.5m.

5] The crossing appears to be in the most appropriate location, as the desire line of pedestrians from the interchange is towards the W12 centre and the west.

The most convenient position would be directly between the Central Line station and the West12 Centre. As it stands any pedestrians wishing to cross and go east towards the roundabout, or even the West 12 centre, have an extra distance to travel.

The position of the crossing will also mean that on the northern side pedestrians will tend to accumulate on the side nearest the station, just where cyclists are hoping to come into land from the carriageway. The proposed position also means that the narrowed pavement on the north side may become obstructed by pedestrians waiting to cross.

I hope this is helpful

John Griffiths

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