

## **TfL Consultation on Transforming Vauxhall Cross January 2016**

### **Response from the Battersea Society**

The Battersea Society have carefully considered the latest proposals for Vauxhall Cross and were grateful for the chance to ask detailed questions at the additional consultation session held at York Gardens library on 7 January. Rather than respond online our views are set out below.

#### ***A: Proposals for the bus station and impact on bus users***

- The Society remains opposed to the replacement of the bus station. As Kate Hoey so coherently argued in the Adjournment debate on 7 January, the existing bus station is well liked by the thousands who travel through it each day between buses and the two stations. Other MPs supported her arguments, which reflect the long held views of the local residents - why replace a relatively new, award winning bus station which works very effectively?
- The new arrangements are clearly less satisfactory for bus users than the current arrangements. This is because of the central road through the bus area, the location of stops onto the main roads and rather more dispersed stops than at present. In spite of the proposed bus-only lay-bys onto Wandsworth Road and outside the tube station, those using these stops will face straight on to heavily trafficked routes, with the concomitant air pollution and water splash.
- While we understand the arguments for improving traffic flows and removing the traffic gyratory, we also consider TfL has been deficient in not preparing an option which retained the bus station in its current form. There are clearly challenges in retaining the existing structure alongside the removal of the gyratory but we consider that TfL should at least have considered retention and if infeasible presented the arguments why. Without this the case for the proposals for replacement are defective.

Within this proviso that there is no need to replace the bus station, we have general and more specific comments on the proposals within the latest consultation.

- The design of the new bus station on the eastern side of the site is critical. It is essential that bus users (as now) are well protected by an overall canopy and that there are pleasant easily managed sitting areas. In addition the provision of a few service kiosks for refreshments etc. would be an added benefit, together with improved toilet facilities.
- The Battersea Society has major concerns that the western side of the bus interchange is so dependent on the final design of buildings on the island site. Any planning guidance developed by Lambeth for this site should include a requirement that the new building must involve an integrated bus waiting area at ground level, with proper protection for bus users, together with seating, travel information etc.

#### ***B Wider proposals for Vauxhall Cross***

*Impact for pedestrians:*

- The removal of the footbridge and its replacement with additional crossings at ground level is a positive aspect of the proposal. In addition the removal of the traffic road and the enlarged open square between the bus station and National Rail is to be welcomed, together with the wider pavements and landscaping on South Lambeth Road.
- The Battersea Society has major concerns about interaction of buses and pedestrians on the central road through the bus station. This bus link will present a particular hazard for those changing between buses, tube and rail, especially those running to catch buses. We were told the road surface would be at the same level as the rest of the bus waiting area. While this is advantageous for those with buggies, cases etc. it does mean there is less clarity of exactly where the road is, presumably there would be a clear change in surface and colour with lines demarcating the edge of the road area.
- Throughout the area, including the central bus road, it will be important that the controlled and other crossings are located where natural pedestrian desire lines emerge. At present, for example, because there are no obvious crossings between the existing bus station and Tesco, people regularly cross randomly through heavy traffic streams. While wanting as open an area as possible, carefully designed pedestrian barriers onto some of the main traffic streams may be desirable, in order that people on foot are naturally guided towards controlled crossings.
- Parry Street appears to be a more significant route than at present because of the increase in turning movements. Given the developments to the west of Parry Street, on the corner of Wandsworth Road/Nine Elms, and on South Lambeth Road some barriers or barrier planting may be appropriate to channel pedestrians. It is not clear from the maps how strong a barrier the suggested soft landscaping might be.

#### *Impact for cyclists*

- The provision of dedicated cycle ways and controlled cycle / pedestrian crossings at key junctions as suggested should provide an improvement over current arrangements
- The concerns we expressed in our comments on the December 2014 consultation still hold in relation to the junction of cycle and pedestrian routes on the corner of Vauxhall Bridge and Albert Embankment. That is that there appears to be clear conflict between cyclists turning in both directions between Albert Embankment and the bridge with those progressing to and from Kennington Lane.

#### *Impact on drivers*

- As the scheme is clearly designed to assist vehicle flow, hopefully drivers will find it easier and quicker to travel through Vauxhall Cross and the proposals suggest this will be the case. However this will be heavily dependent on the signalling system and controlled crossings acting in a way which allows as smooth as possible a flow of traffic. The timing of lights must be controlled to avoid build up between and across junctions, while at the same time providing pedestrians and cyclists with timely, but separated, priority.
- In addition it will be vital to have clear, easily readable, on-road and mounted directions signs to navigate drivers through the junctions.

### *Impact on street and public realm*

- It is essential that the landscaping and design of the pavements and open spaces is taken forward in a single integrated way, similar to the landscaping strategies being adopted for major developments elsewhere in Nine Elms. This must involve long term management agreements between TfL and developers for the maintenance and day to day management of the whole Vauxhall Cross area. We recognise the work of the Vauxhall One BID and consider that their existing role could be expanded to incorporate the equivalent of a town centre facilities manager. This would enable stronger integration of public services, transport and travellers needs to ensure Vauxhall Cross emerges as an attractive, clean, safe interchange with its own distinct identity.
- This management would need to complement and link to the management of both the linear park through Nine Elms and the new public spaces towards Lambeth Bridge. The current documents fail to fully set this out and we suggest that a fuller document on landscaping and the public realm is produced for further consultation.

### *General comment on the process undertaken*

- We consider that a lot of public money, energy and emotion has been wasted because half baked, vague proposals, many of which were clearly not feasible, have been put forward at the various TfL consultations over the last couple of years. A classic case was the suggestion that the roadway under the rail viaduct on Kennington lane might be widened and used for extensive bus lay-bys and stops.
- We suggest that TfL would benefit from undertaking some focus group discussions before developing initial proposals for major schemes such as Vauxhall Cross. Community and users' views would then be better reflected in the proposals put forward. We understand there were some discussions with residents in the immediate neighbourhood but this was totally inadequate, given the importance of the bus station to a much wider travelling constituency.
- Excluding the bus station, the latest traffic proposals are more coherent and a major improvement on the earlier suggestions. However we consider that more time is needed before reaching a decision on what is one of London's key transport hubs. There appears to be an unseemly hurry to get proposals approved before the Mayoral elections. We support the suggestion that Vauxhall Cross should be an issue for the hustings and the Mayoral candidates' manifestos, and a decision delayed until after the elections.

**Battersea Society January 2016**

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