



OXFORD STREET PEDESTRIANISATION CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Centre for London Consultation Response

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OUR RESPONSE TO THE OXFORD STREET CONSULTATION

Question 1. The Mayor has proposed the designation of a Mayoral Development Area (MDA) and the establishment of a Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) to help regenerate Oxford Street in line with his vision for the street. We would like to know your views on this.

You might like to consider the proposals in relation to the following areas in doing so:

- The designation of an MDA and the establishment of an MDC for Oxford Street
- The boundary of the MDA
- The purpose and objectives of the MDC
- The approach to the MDC's functions in relation to planning, other functions and granting discretionary relief from non-domestic rates
- The composition of the MDC's Board and Planning Committee

Centre for London (CfL) welcomes the Mayor of London's proposals for designating Oxford Street as a Mayoral Development Area. The regeneration of this vital Central London area of commerce, culture and community will benefit the wider economy of the capital, and promote London as a destination for visitors and tourists. Centre for London has long advocated for locally-led economic and development planning through the establishment of Mayoral Development Corporations, and as an organisation, we support the Mayor's decision to approach regeneration through this strategic process.

To ensure that the MDA area is successfully transformed through pedestrianisation, however, Centre for London regrets that the boundary of this vital district of the city does not extend beyond its consulted approach to include the wider Soho area. As our March 2024 report *Rebooting London's Economy* recommended, development corporations should have a more substantial role in the growth of the city, with their impact enabling delivery of housing, commerce and industrial spaces. To that end, the consulted boundaries could lead to the visitor economy in Soho underserved by positive governance and economic planning which could generate major returns for businesses, communities and the wider area.

As it stands, the Mayor's proposals do not extend to grant licensing powers to the Oxford Street MDC. Centre for London believes that this may restrict the impact and effectiveness of the regeneration. Licensing powers enable the promotion of effective commercial development, growth in visitor economy businesses for food & drink, and ensure newly attracted businesses adhere to standards which reflect the same positive growth vision set by the MDC. It would be an unfortunate loss of control to not include licensing powers. As our March 2022 report *Remixing Central London* highlighted, greater flexibility and variety in commercial centres such as Oxford Street require a development strategy which emphasises stewardship, vibrancy and community value. Enabling the Oxford Street MDC to have greater control over both planning and licensing would support this vision and benefit Londoners and visitors alike through a diverse, prosperous public realm.

The Mayor's proposal for functions related to business rates relief for non-domestic property are welcomed and will enable the Oxford Street area to benefit from inward investment and support for community projects. However, without licensing powers and boundaries over a larger Soho district,

there is a risk that businesses outside the MDC area could lose footfall, investment and result in less viability for a vibrant Central London area.

If implemented, there is, likely to be concern from both Westminster and Camden councils regarding the loss of income from business rates, particularly from such an important commercial centre. Therefore, the Mayor and MDC Board, when established, should agree on a memorandum of understanding to ensure rates income is shared accordingly. This is especially important in the context of the current financial challenges facing local councils.

The composition of the MDC Board is an important symbol for the future development of the Oxford Street area. Therefore, Centre for London recommends this Board include at least two representatives of the local community. For other members, it is important to include voices from a mixture of different backgrounds and occupations. Lay members appointed to the Board must therefore be representative of London's diversity, its economic and social vibrancy, and with strong connections to the Oxford Street and/or West End. It should also be a prerequisite for one of the appointed lay members to be a representative of a local Business Improvement District.

Question 2. The Mayor considers the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street would help to deliver his vision for the area and support its regeneration. What are your views on the principle of pedestrianising Oxford Street?

Please use the space below to provide your answer, including:

- Any thoughts you might have about pedestrianisation, or suggestions for how it could work best
- Any other ideas you have to support the regeneration of Oxford Street

Centre for London has strongly supported the Mayor's vision to pedestrianise Oxford Street **since 2018**, and welcomes this proposal open up this vital centre of commerce for businesses, visitors and the community. To implement this vision, it is therefore important that all opportunities to protect public transport access and active travel methods are preserved or enhanced. As a central thoroughfare, the redirection of TfL bus routes must be consulted on through close engagement with both constituent councils, local communities, and businesses in the proposed Oxford Street MDC area. TfL should therefore implement a strategy of 'no net loss' of access to public transport or active travel methods as a result of the regeneration.

For this transformation to occur equitably, Centre for London recommends that TfL direct greater financial support for public transport and active travel methods in the Oxford Street area, including Safer Streets and Walking and Cycling Grants London funding. The Mayor should also continue to lobby the Government for a long-term funding settlement for TfL which enables expanded delivery of active travel infrastructure in Oxford Street and across the capital. In terms of access, Centre for London recognises the potential risk for pedestrians and cyclists by enabling cycling access to a fully pedestrianised Oxford Street. We therefore recommend TfL consider design options which maximise cycle access and pedestrian safety, including use of urban greening and traffic management infrastructure.

The Mayor should recognise that pedestrianisation may lead to increased levels of litter. Our October 2023 report *Reducing Street Clutter* emphasised the negative impact of unnecessary street signage, rubbish bags and advertising which acts as a barrier to better pedestrian experience and access for people with mobility and visual impairments. Enabling a cleaner, greener and more sanitary public realm is an economic policy as much as it is environmental. To reduce these risks, it is essential that the Oxford Street MDC

funds both waste management and community waste officers to ensure the newly unlocked space is a joy to visit. At a most basic level, the MDC must ensure it is engaged with waste authorities, waste management operators, and both constituent councils to deliver a good level of service.

Pedestrianisation may also increase the frequency and prevalence of street crime, anti-social behaviour, and health risks. It is therefore vital that the Metropolitan Police and London Ambulance Service are fully engaged with the development of traffic and access management strategies to pedestrianise the thoroughfare. Beyond access, the Metropolitan Police should consider increasing its street officer presence both during and after the pedestrianisation process. This should be followed by a formal community-enabled strategy to ensure policing is effective along the route and in its connecting roads. The MDC may also consider developing a bespoke anti-social behaviour strategy and possible funding of crime prevention measures such as CCTV.

Centre for London is in favour of the Oxford Street pedestrianisation and supports the regeneration of the area to promote inward investment, tourism and economic growth. To enhance this opportunity, there are several aspects of governance, planning and transport policy which should be considered to ensure improvements are equitable and deliver a long-lasting improvement to one of the UK's most famous streets.