CILT

Consultation response to plans for pedestrianizing Oxford Street.

Deadline: 16 January 2026

BACKGROUND

TfL and Westminster Council have developed proposals that would be necessary to support the pedestrianisation of the section of Oxford Street between its junctions with Orchard Street and Great Portland Street. We've referred to this area as 'Oxford Street West'.

QUESTIONS

Q1. If you believe that the proposals would have an impact on you or others, please explain why in the space below. You can also comment on any other matter related to the proposals, and we have listed some potential topics you might like to consider:

- How our proposals would change your experiences of using Oxford Street West
- Any impacts our proposals might have; for example on the accessibility of Oxford Street West, or on roads surrounding Oxford Street West, or on the ability of businesses here to make or take deliveries
- Any suggestions you might have on improvements or changes we could make to our proposals

Maximum 20,000 characters

Q1 Proposed Response:

The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposals for the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street West. As an organisation representing professionals across passenger transport, freight, planning, operations, and wider mobility services, we recognise both the historic significance of Oxford Street and its continued importance as a commercial, cultural and transport corridor within London.

For more than a century, Oxford Street has functioned as a working street as much as a destination. Its character has been shaped by the interaction of very high pedestrian footfall with dense retail activity, extensive bus services, taxi movements, servicing and waste collection, and a steady flow of visitors and workers throughout the day and night. Any proposal to transform the street must therefore consider not only the public realm benefits but also the operational systems that enable the West End to function effectively.

CILT supports the ambition to create a more people-focused environment. Pedestrian volumes on Oxford Street have long exceeded the capacity of the footways, often resulting in crowding that compromises comfort, accessibility and safety. Removing through-traffic from Oxford Street West offers a genuine opportunity to improve the pedestrian experience, reduce collision risk, lower noise levels and create a setting more appropriate for one of London's most important retail streets.

The benefits of pedestrianisation can only be realised if developed through a careful understanding of the complex logistics, travel behaviour, service patterns, and operational structures that underpin the district. The West End is sustained by a finely balanced ecosystem of movement: tens of thousands of employees arrive at irregular hours; retailers depend on timely and reliable deliveries; waste must be collected; construction and maintenance projects rely on predictable access; and visitors, including those with limited mobility, depend heavily on bus connections and accessible

routes. These functions cannot be an afterthought: they are integral to the success of any pedestrian-oriented scheme.

Accessibility must be at the heart of the proposals. Oxford Street has long been one of the most accessible parts of the city due to its concentration of bus services and closely spaced stops, proximity to multiple Underground stations, and relative ease of navigability at street level. Given the walking distances to Underground and Elizabeth line stations, buses remain the most accessible option for many disabled people, older users and those carrying shopping. For these groups of people, the shift to a pedestrian-only space must not translate into longer, more complex journeys. High-quality crossings, step-free access points, generous seating provision, clear wayfinding signage and accessible taxi and bus interchange points all need to be integrated into the design from the outset. The ambition should not simply be to pedestrianise the space, but to create a street that is genuinely inclusive.

Traffic displacement presents a key risk. Oxford Street has historically acted as a wide corridor capable of accommodating buses and heavy vehicles. Removing this function risks diverting traffic onto narrower and less suitable streets such as Margaret Street, Marylebone Lane, Hanover Square, Tottenham Court Road, Newman Street, Wigmore Street and other streets already operating near capacity. Congestion in these areas could lead to slower journey times for buses and taxis, greater difficulty for cyclists, poorer air quality for residents, and logistical inefficiencies for service vehicles.

Servicing and freight operations require particularly robust consideration. The West End is home to thousands of businesses whose operations depend on frequent, precisely timed deliveries, waste collection and maintenance interventions. Every street in central London is a unique mix of businesses, residents, and physical space, and two factors are at play:

- **Delivery time:** some retailers (e.g. Zara) currently receive deliveries overnight, as do many of the chain coffee shops, but the majority of business customers won't take deliveries pre-7am or after 5pm. Pubs cafes and restaurants also won't take deliveries over lunchtime. Deliveries to residents are typically dependent on the resident being at home, although some central London mansion blocks have concierges. WSP has recently surveyed St Martin's Lane for Westminster City Council, producing insightful data, reflective of the delivery activity around Soho/Covent Garden.
- **Traffic regulations** on central London streets limit deliveries to a few hours a day, usually 07:00 to 11:00, with a few notable exceptions (e.g. Heddon St. 03:00 to 11:00). Many streets around Oxford Street are also one way, effectively producing a series of traffic 'superblocks', with limited entry and exit points.

Combining these factors impacts delivery productivity, and therefore the costs and vehicle numbers. The impact of these factors can be seen daily across central London with queueing freight vehicles, taking 10 minutes or more to exit through the traffic light junction. However, the issues are particularly acute around Oxford Street and can be seen every weekday morning between 09:00 and 11:30 where Beak Street exits on to Regent Street or Goodge Street exists onto Tottenham Court Road. The pedestrianisation of Oxford Street could exacerbate these issues. Meeting the needs of individual businesses on one street is possible, but any changes will impact the use of surrounding streets and the routing and timing of other deliveries that may currently share the same vehicle.

Waste and recycling operations also require flexibility. These activities are often undertaken in the evening or at night, outside of normal shopping hours. Continuing to allow such operations within the pedestrianised framework, subject to appropriate noise controls and vehicle standards, will

reduce daytime conflicts and help prevent repeated circulation of waste vehicles on neighbouring streets.

While CILT supports the move towards consolidation, cargo bikes, zero-emission last-mile solutions and well-designed loading bays placed at the right distance from business frontages, many businesses (especially those dealing in fresh food, drink and fast-moving consumer goods) require early-morning deliveries that extend beyond the very early hours. Access for deliveries up to around 10am remains important if stock is to reach the shops close to opening times and in sufficient quantity. Allowing controlled early morning access as close as possible to premises will reduce manual handling distances, improve safety and minimise the risk of delivery activity being displaced onto unsuitable surrounding streets. Such proposals must be developed with the freight sector, retailers, landowners and operators who understand the day-to-day realities.

Efficient freight movement therefore requires reliable journey times, exactly like efficient bus services. If an operator cannot rely on a journey time, they'll add time to the schedule so they can make the delivery time even if delayed. That might mean the vehicle needs to park up somewhere and wait to make the delivery, but it also means the operator may need to use more vehicles to deliver their total volume. Vehicle and driver productivity matter because they cost money, and operators will do anything possible to reduce costs. As one example, the Brewery Logistics Group used 555 vehicles to deliver in London in 2019 and by 2024 used 661. Obviously, there have been changes to customer ordering after the pandemic and less predictable behaviours from commuters and others, but INRIX has also reported declining traffic speeds and there is simply less kerbside space available, due to more segregated cycle lanes, floating bus stops and e-bike parking. And beer delivery by cargo bike is not safe, as moving liquid in a barrel means the centre of gravity moves unpredictably. If the combined effect of the existing individual and small changes has already increased one sector's fleet by 20% (Brewery Logistics), what might the impact of further changes around Oxford Street be?

Heavy-duty vehicles, including buses and HGVs, require adequate carriageway widths and junction geometry to operate safely and efficiently. Experience from other schemes shows that transferring large vehicles from wide arterial streets to constrained local roads and create serious issues for residents, businesses and operators alike. Any re-routing strategy must therefore be tested rigorously against real-world vehicle requirements, not solely traffic models, taking account not only of current demand but future growth and wider changes across London's transport system.

Environmental benefits are a core objective of the proposals, and reductions in noise and pollution on Oxford Street itself are welcome. However, care must be taken to avoid unintended consequences elsewhere. Buses and taxis are currently among the greenest motorised modes in central London due to high levels of electrification and high passenger occupancy. If changes lead to a shift away from these modes, towards private cars or less efficient trips, there is a risk of worsening congestion, air quality and visual intrusion on surrounding streets. Environmental assessment and mitigation should therefore extend beyond the immediate pedestrianised area.

CILT encourages TfL and Westminster City Council to adopt a phased and adaptive approach to implementation. Pilot schemes, temporary materials, iterative refinement and continuous data monitoring will allow planners to respond to issues as they arise. Seasonal variations in footfall, retail patterns, tourism and construction activity must also be considered: the operational pressures of the winter trading period, for example, are very different from those of late summer and early autumn. A flexible, adaptive process will ensure the scheme is resilient and able to learn from lived experience, rather than relying solely on modelling and consultation-stage assumptions.

We also emphasise the importance of maintaining a sense of continuity with the longstanding identity of Oxford Street. Modernisation need not undermine the traditions and familiar qualities that have shaped its character. A well-designed pedestrianised street can respect its heritage by maintaining established sightlines, preserving the rhythm of historic shopfronts, and ensuring that long-standing businesses, workers and communities continue to feel anchored in the area.

Overall, CILT supports the ambition to enhance Oxford Street West for people, but this must be delivered through a balanced, evidence-led, operationally robust strategy that safeguards essential servicing, maintains accessible public transport and avoids transferring negative impacts onto neighbouring streets.

Q2. We've proposed a series of changes to bus services which use the section of Oxford Street between Orchard Street and Great Portland Street. We'd like to know how the proposed changes to bus routes 7, 94, 98, 139 and 390, N7, 94, N98, N113, N137, 139, N207 and 390 would affect passengers. If you have any thoughts, please explain these in the space below. If your comments relate to a specific bus route (or several bus routes) **please let us know what routes these are** in your comments.
Maximum 20,000 characters

Q2 Proposed Response:

Buses are a lifeline for millions of Londoners and have played an essential role in the daily functioning of Oxford Street for many decades. The street has traditionally operated as one of the most important bus corridors in the capital, providing direct and understandable links between key destinations, residential areas and employment centres. For passengers who rely on the bus network, e.g., shift workers, students, tourists, older people, disabled travellers and those unable to access the Underground, changes to routes can have a significant impact on the convenience and reliability of their journeys.

Passenger behaviour on Oxford Street is distinctive: many journeys are short, multi-purpose and undertaken at irregular times. People switch frequently between shopping, employment, leisure, healthcare and cultural activities. Buses serve these needs particularly well due to their intuitive routing, regular stops, and the ability to board and alight close to shops and workplaces. Diverting routes to parallel streets risks lengthening walking distances and reducing spontaneity for users who are accustomed to frequent, predictable stops directly on the street.

The proposals to reroute services that currently operate along the section between Orchard Street and Great Portland Street represent a major change in the structure of the West End bus network. Routes such as the 7, 94, 98, 139 and 390, along with night routes N7, N8, N15, N22, N25, N55, N73, N109, N136, and N137, provide essential connectivity across wide parts of London, from Acton and Shepherd's Bush to Willesden, Kilburn, Edgware, Camden, Clapham and beyond. The removal of buses from Oxford Street West requires a comprehensive assessment of how passengers will continue to reach key destinations with reasonable walking distances, clear interchange points and reliable onward connections.

The proposals may also increase pressure on neighbouring bus corridors such as Wigmore Street, Great Portland Street, Park Lane and Tottenham Court Road. Some of these streets already face congestion, narrow carriageways, complex junctions or restricted movement patterns. Journey time and average speed impacts require close attention. Reliability is critical on high-frequency routes serving wide catchments, as small delays can quickly cascade across the network. Continuous monitoring of journey times, passenger loads and reliability should therefore be integral to any implementation, with a willingness to adjust routes or introduce additional bus priority where needed.

Without significant bus priority measures, diversions could result in slower and less reliable journeys, undermining public confidence in the network and potentially driving some passengers back to private car or taxi use, which would conflict with wider policy objectives for decarbonisation, congestion reduction and improved air quality.

Operationally, the concentration of bus terminations around Oxford Circus is a significant issue. Routes including the 7, 12, 22, 55, 73 and 159 already terminate in this area, representing around 38

buses per hour. Terminal arrangement directly affects reliability, driver relief and the ability of buses to turn safely in constrained streets. In the past, services have been extended along Oxford Street towards Marble Arch or Tottenham Court Road specifically to relieve pressure at Oxford Circus. These lessons should inform the final design, including consideration of alternative terminal arrangements.

Bus drivers and controllers may experience new challenges navigating unfamiliar diversion routes, responding to altered traffic conditions, and maintaining timetable adherence. Interruptions to reliability can have network-wide consequences, affecting not only West End services but also communities many miles away. Frequent and predictable bus services are particularly vital at night, when the Underground offers limited alternatives and the safety of well-lit, regular bus services becomes essential for public confidence.

Well-designed bus diversions can succeed when part of a carefully considered, fully integrated network review. The priorities should include maintaining frequency, ensuring sufficient interchange opportunities, introducing additional bus priority measures, and providing simple, legible information for passengers. Real-time signage, clear pavement-level wayfinding, and updated digital maps are all essential tools to help customers adapt to the new configuration.

We recommend ongoing monitoring and evaluation throughout any pilot or phased implementation. Passenger counts, journey time data, operator feedback, and accessibility audits should all be used to refine the network and ensure that the community does not experience adverse impacts over time. The redesign should also take account of predicted growth in population, employment and retail activity, as well as any wider changes in London's transport network, such as shifts in Underground capacity, changes in active travel patterns, or new development sites that will generate additional demand.

The role of buses in tourism should also be acknowledged. For many visitors, travelling along Oxford Street and Regent Street on the top deck of a bus, particularly during the Christmas period, is a distinctive London experience. Removing buses from Oxford Street West diminishes this aspect of the visitor journey and alters how tourists experience the area.

Network resilience must be considered. When the Underground or Elizabeth lines are closed, whether routinely or unexpectedly, buses provide essential alternative capacity. A bus network displaced further from Oxford Street may be less able to absorb such disruptions. Contingency planning for these scenarios should form part of the scheme's development.

Finally, it is important to preserve the clarity and usability that have traditionally made London's bus network one of the most recognisable and trusted anywhere in the world. While change is sometimes necessary to support public realm improvements, the underlying principles of accessibility, reliability and simplicity must remain at the forefront of any modifications. A well-functioning, comprehensible bus system is essential both to the success of Oxford Street West and to the wider economic and social fabric of London.

In conclusion, while CILT understands the rationale for removing buses from Oxford Street West to support pedestrianisation, we urge TfL and Westminster Council to proceed with caution. The bus network plays a vital role in accessibility, congestion management, environmental performance, tourism and resilience. Any changes should be evidence-led, carefully monitored and adaptable, ensuring that the long-standing strengths of London's bus system are not inadvertently weakened.

Q3. Please tell us your postcode?

Q3 Proposed Response:

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