

BRIEFING NOTE FOR:

Councillor Heather Acton, Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Parking

Councillor Robert Rigby, Deputy Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Parking

Councillor Brian Connell, Cycling Champion

Councillor Ian Adams, Little Venice Ward Member

Councillor Barbara Arzymanow, Little Venice Ward Member

Councillor Melvyn Caplan, Little Venice Ward Member

FROM: Martin Low, City Transport Advisor

DATE: 11 September 2015

TITLE: Quietway cycling route from Camden Town to Little Venice: Blomfield Road

OBJECTIVE: To advise you of and to seek comments on the proposed alignment of part of a Quietway cycling route from Camden Town to Little Venice on the Central London Cycle Grid

RESPONSE NEEDED: Yes

TIMING FOR RESPONSE: Friday 18 September 2015

AUTHOR: [REDACTED]

Purpose

- 1.1 Following the meeting on Thursday 3 September 2015, the purpose of this briefing note is to advise Members and seek comments on the proposed alignment of an eastbound cycle route between Westbourne Terrace Road and Blomfield Road in Little Venice.
- 1.2 Resolving a two-way cycle route in this area is critical to the successful delivery of the Central London Cycle Grid in the City of Westminster, in support of Westminster City Council's commitments to making cycling a safer, enjoyable and practical method of transport, and policies encouraging a City for All.
- 1.3 This briefing note seeks support to undertake design development and consultation to help improve provision for comfortable and convenient cycling in Little Venice, with a view to delivering this section of the Central London Cycle Grid in 2015-2016.

Background

- 2.1 Westminster City Council's Cycle Strategy aims to make the City of Westminster safer and more attractive for cycling, encouraging a greater number of people from all backgrounds to

cycle more frequently. Delivering the Central London Cycle Grid in the City of Westminster is an important part of the Westminster Cycling Strategy and will help facilitate its aims.

- 2.2 Delivery of the Central London Cycle Grid will also help support the Mayor of London's Cycling Vision for London, enabling routes on quieter streets for new and less confident cyclists to use.
- 2.3 Currently, Little Venice plays an important role in connecting cyclists, residents and visitors in the City of Westminster, to places where they want to go including Paddington Station, places of work, local schools and colleges. However, existing one way streets in the area mean that cycling can be difficult and inconvenient.
- 2.4 In the proposed Central London Cycle Grid, shown in Appendix A, Little Venice will continue to play an important role to help people to travel by bicycle in the local area. There is a proposed Quietway cycling route connecting Little Venice to Camden Town via St John's Wood, which is being delivered in 2016 subject to public consultation.
- 2.5 Subject to further funding from TfL, there are additional, future routes that will complement a connection via Blomfield Road and help improve local cycle connections. One such route is the proposed East-West Cycle Superhighway, which may use the Westway subject to future consultation. There may also be a future quietway cycling route planned via St John's Wood Terrace, Circus Road, Hall Road and Sutherland Avenue, which is subject to funding by TfL. The alignments of these routes are shown in Appendix A.
- 2.6 The existing, short, one-way section of Blomfield Road makes cycling in the area difficult. There has been demand amongst residents and visitors in the City of Westminster for improved connections for cycling in Little Venice for some time, with a wide range of views expressed throughout this period.
- 2.7 Finding a comfortable and convenient way for cyclists to travel eastbound from Westbourne Terrace Road to the two-way section of Blomfield Road (east of Warwick Avenue) is critical to delivering improved cycle routes in the area.
- 2.8 The Central London Cycle Grid, funded by Transport for London, has provided an opportunity to better understand the opportunities and constraints in the area, with a view to developing a feasible proposal which will enable a much needed eastbound cycle route to help cyclists travel within the City of Westminster, from the Grand Union canal via Little Venice through St John's Wood to The Regent's Park.

Options Assessment

- 3.1 Prior to 2015, consultation has been undertaken on previous proposals which sought to enable two-way cycling on Blomfield Road. A variety of views have been expressed and a suitable way forward to enable eastbound cycling has yet to be agreed.
- 3.2 Taking into account the outcome of previous consultations with local residents, a number of options have now been identified which seek to enable a suitable way for people to cycle eastbound from Westbourne Terrace Road to the two-way section of Blomfield Road (east of Warwick Avenue):
 - Option 1 Blomfield Road
 - Option 2: Clifton Villas and Warwick Avenue
 - Option 3: Warwick Place
 - Option 4: Towpath along the Regent's Canal

Options Evaluation

- 4.1 These options have been examined for their suitability for eastbound cycling, namely: safety, directness, comfort, coherence, and attractiveness, alongside other impacts on all users and issues such as parking. This assessment is summarised in Appendix B.
- 4.2 Following assessment of four options, the preferred alignment for enabling eastbound cycling is the use of Blomfield Road. Compared to alternative alignments, Blomfield Road provides the most direct and attractive alignment for cycling. Consultants believe that there is a feasible option which enables eastbound cycling on the footway on the canal side of Blomfield Road.
- 4.3 Consultants have not identified a feasible, sensible alternative route for eastbound cycling in the area. Of the other options considered:
 - Clifton Villas and Warwick Avenue are considered to be too indirect, inconvenient, and would require too many right-turns for eastbound cyclists
 - Warwick Place is too narrow for eastbound cycling
 - the canal towpath is an existing pedestrian space which is very narrow for cycle movements and includes a low bridge which is a significant hazard for cyclists and a blind corner.

Recommendations

- 5.1 Given the above issues, the preferred alignment for enabling eastbound cycling is the use of Blomfield Road. This option would deliver a wider, pedestrian priority shared use footway on the canal side of Blomfield Road (between Westbourne Terrace Road and Warwick Avenue), for use by pedestrians, and by cyclists to travel eastbound. Currently the footway on the canal side of Blomfield Road is narrow partly due to large street trees, and many people choose to walk in the carriageway, with general traffic. The preferred option would provide an opportunity to help pedestrians avoid walking in the road. This concept design is shown in Appendix C.
- 5.2 If we are able to find a way forward, design development will be undertaken in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Parking. This will take account of previous consultation with local residents.
- 5.3 The programme for works would include:
 - A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit for the preferred design, as well as a street lighting review. Any necessary amendments to the feasibility designs will be undertaken.
 - Public consultation following feedback from Members, envisaged in Autumn 2015.
 - Subject to consultation, this pedestrian and cyclist improvement scheme would be programmed to be constructed in 2016.
- 5.4 It is recommended that the preferred option is taken forward with the understanding that a strategy for mitigating parking losses is developed, including a future consultation on potential changes to parking zones in the area. This would address the perceived existing parking problems and vehicular traffic in this area.

Finance

- 6.1 All costs associated with the design and implementation of this cycling route have been fully funded by Transport for London (TfL) through the Mayor of London's Cycle Vision.

Next Steps

- 7.1 I welcome your comments on these recommendations, in the hope that we can find a suitable way forward to help cyclists in the area, improve pedestrian provision along the footway on the canal side of Blomfield Road, and minimise any impacts on local residents.

Martin Low



City Transport Advisor

Appendix A: Central London Cycle Grid in Little Venice and surrounding area

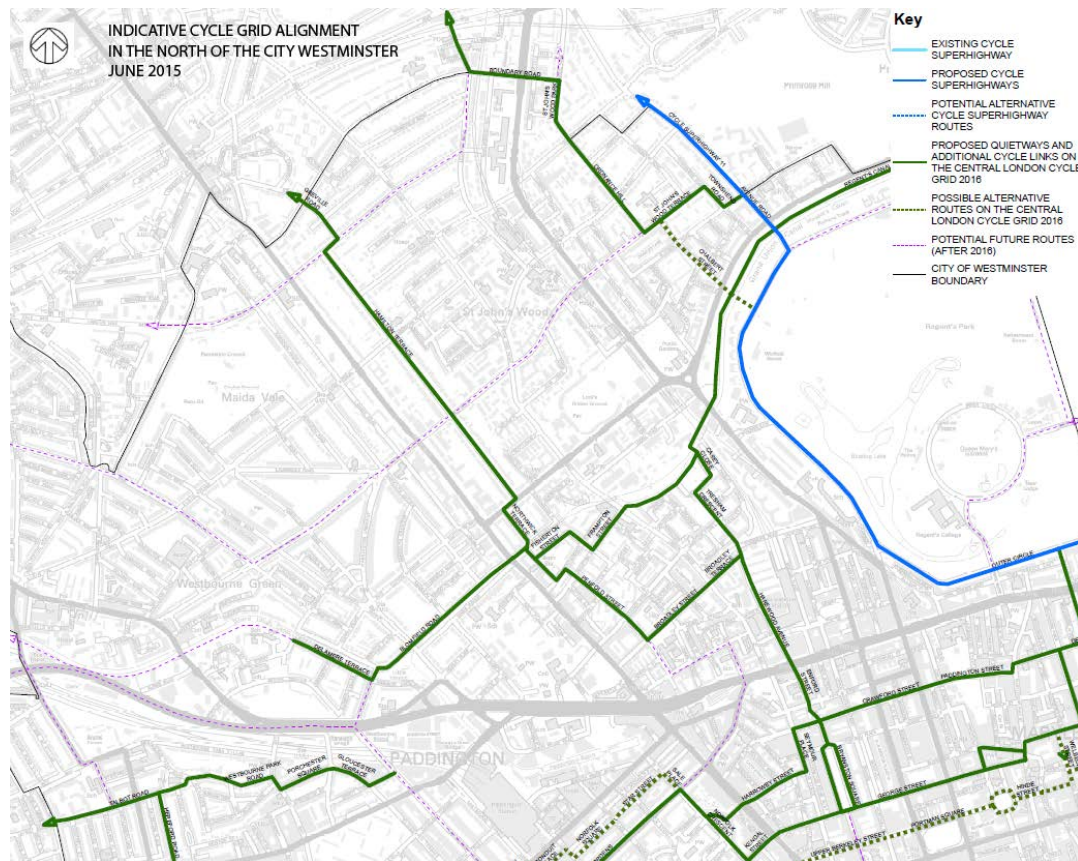


Figure: The proposed alignment of the Central London Cycle Grid

Appendix B: Alignment Options in Little Venice

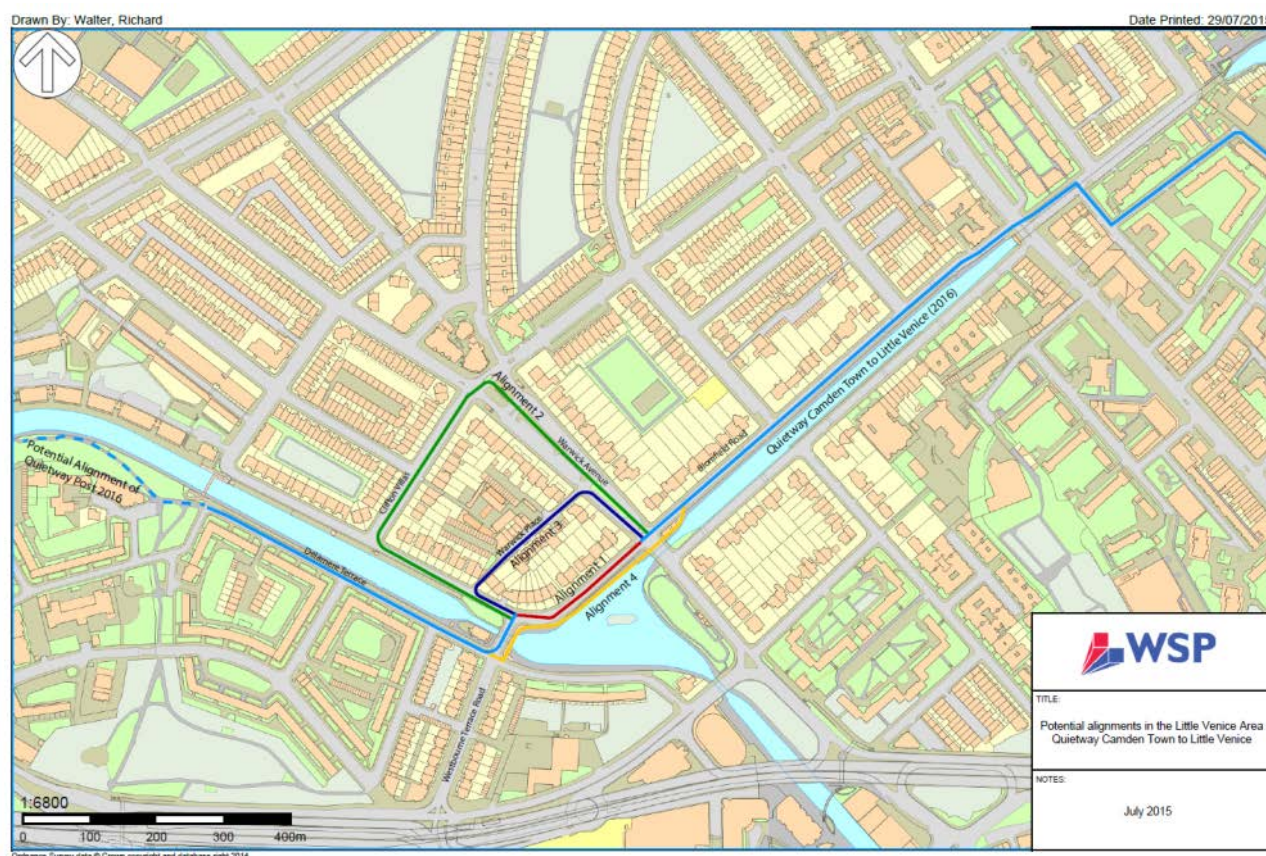


Figure: Options for eastbound cycling

11.1 Four options have been identified to assess their suitability for people to cycle eastbound from Westbourne Terrace Road to the two-way section of Blomfield Road (east of Warwick Avenue):

- Option 1 Blomfield Road
- Option 2: Clifton Villas and Warwick Avenue
- Option 3: Warwick Place
- Option 4: Tow path along the Grand Union Canal

Option 1: Blomfield Road

12.1 Blomfield Road between Warwick Avenue and Westbourne Terrace Road is currently one-way westbound. It provides a useful connection for cyclists travelling from St John's Wood to the Grand Union canal. However, eastbound cycling is currently not permitted.

12.2 This option for eastbound cycling would take a direct and low trafficked route (approximately 100 vehicles per hour in Blomfield Road at busiest periods of the day) following the alignment of the proposed Quietway cycle route from the Grand Union canal to The Regent's Park.

12.3 This route is direct, coherent and attractive and is already used as a cut through by some cyclists, implying that it is already recognised by cyclists as a desirable route.

- 12.4 It is believed that safety concerns due to any proposed contraflow cycling on the residential side of the street (raised in previous consultation) can be satisfactorily mitigated by careful consideration of the design of an eastbound cycling facility on the footway on the canal side of Blomfield Road.
- 12.5 Currently the southern footway along this section of Blomfield Road is narrow partly due to large street trees, and many people choose to walk in the carriageway, with general traffic. The design option in Appendix C would deliver a wider, pedestrian priority shared use footway for use by pedestrians, and by eastbound cyclists, and this would provide an opportunity to help pedestrians avoid walking in the road.
- 12.6 A new traffic signal and a new signal stage would need to be introduced to enable cycles to cross the junction of Blomfield Road and Warwick Avenue.



Blomfield Road, looking east

Option 2: Clifton Villas and Warwick Avenue

- 14.1 Clifton Villas is a two-way street, north of Warwick Place. Using Clifton Villas for eastbound cycling would mean a less direct route compared to alternative potential routes, presenting a significant detour for cycling.
- 14.2 Comfort and safety are key concerns due to the potential number of left and right turns needed to enter and exit Warwick Avenue.
- 14.3 Clifton Gardens and Warwick Avenue are bus routes, which may also render this alignment less comfortable and less attractive for cycling.

Option 3: Warwick Place

- 15.1 Warwick Place is a narrow, one-way westbound street, and eastbound cycling is currently not allowed. At its junction with Blomfield Road, Warwick Place is too narrow to accommodate eastbound cycling and westbound general traffic.

- 15.2 Using Warwick Place for eastbound cycling would mean a less direct route compared to alternative potential routes, presenting a significant detour for cycling.
- 15.3 Comfort and safety are key concerns due to the nature of the junction at Warwick Place and Warwick Avenue. Warwick Avenue is a bus route, which may also render this alignment less attractive to cyclists.



Warwick Place, looking east

Option 4: Towpath along the Grand Union Canal

- 16.1 The towpath along the Grand Union Canal currently allows pedestrians access between Delamere Terrace and Blomfield Road, but cycling is not permitted on this section of towpath
- 16.2 This section of towpath is narrow, and has a section with poor sightlines. There is a low bridge which presents a significant hazard for cyclists.
- 16.3 An expensive access ramp would likely be required for cyclists to travel between the towpath and Blomfield Road east of Warwick Avenue, and this may not be desirable or feasible.
- 16.4 Permitting cycling could create additional conflicts with pedestrians. The Canal and River Trust manages the towpath and are not in favour of introducing cycling along this section of the towpath which has high pedestrian footfall and canalside activities (including moorings).

Appendix C: Blomfield Road Concept Sketch

Enclosed