

Date: 17th July 2020
Our reference: Covid-19 Safe travel in Camden/Seven Dials
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Making travel in Camden Safer: Responding to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

New Coronavirus (COVID-19) safety measures in Seven Dials

Dear Resident / Business / Stakeholder Group,

Summary

- **We are making changes in Seven Dials to make it safer and easier for you to walk and cycle in the area to reach key locations, in response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)**
- **We will be reducing traffic levels within the Seven Dials area preventing rat-running and making it safer for pedestrians and cyclists**
- **We will be introducing timed road closures (10am – 6pm each day) preventing through traffic on Monmouth Street, Neal Street and Mercer Street**
- **We will be relocating the market on Earlham Street on to the pavement to give more space to pedestrians in the road this will restrict vehicle access to Tower Street and Earlham Street between 7am and 7pm Monday – Saturday.**
- **A 24hr road closure will be in place at Monmouth Street / Tower Street preventing access to and from Upper St Martin's Lane**
- **We will be reversing the flow of traffic on Short's Garden (between Seven Dials and Endell Street) and on Monmouth Street (between Seven Dials and Tower Street)**
- **We will be adding a pocket park, cycle stands and a dockless bike hire bay**
- **We will be removing parking and loading bays to create more space for pedestrians and cyclists**
- **Work will start after the 24th July to implement these changes**
- **Emergency gas works are taking place between July and September 2020 first on Monmouth Street and by mid-August on Shaftesbury Avenue. There will be road closures unrelated to this scheme to facilitate this work.**
- **You can share your comments on these changes via safetravel@Camden.gov.uk**
- **You can find out more about these changes on this website <https://www.camden.gov.uk/making-travel-safer-in-camden>**

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has created new road safety challenges that the council is taking seriously. We want to make it easier and safer for people to walk and cycle locally, shop on their local high street, reach their local green spaces, schools and

NHS sites, all while maintaining physical distancing. We are also looking to tackle future challenges caused by the way that people travel, as lockdown restrictions continue to ease. This includes a predicted rise in walking, cycling and car use, with people less likely and less able to choose public transport due to the reduction in capacity caused by physical distancing requirements.

The safety based changes we are implementing are mandated by the Government. The Department for Transport has issued statutory guidance to Councils to rapidly reallocate road space to people walking and cycling as a response to Coronavirus (Covid-19). In addition, the Mayor of London has issued similar guidance to London Boroughs in relation to the TfL Streetspace programme.

To respond to these new challenges quickly we are making a series of safety-based changes to streets in Camden. Included in this letter is:

- Detail on the changes being made in your area
- A drawing showing the changes being made
- A drawing showing who we have notified
- Information on how to find out more

How are we responding to Coronavirus (COVID-19) safety issues?

We have identified a number of locations across the borough to begin to tackle the safety issues, including that proposed in your area. These initial locations have been chosen as they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- New safety issues related to limited space for physical distancing, walking or cycling have been highlighted to us as a result of Coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Before the pandemic there had already been some local community engagement from existing projects which highlighted issues which we are now looking to address
- They are areas where we can make it easier and safer for people to maintain physical distancing while walking and cycling locally, to shop, reach their local green spaces, schools and NHS sites

These safety measures include looking at widening pavements, reducing through traffic on residential streets and creating new “pop-up” cycle lanes. This will make it easier for people to access amenities and to use local roads to journey to key destinations or simply for exercise all while staying physically distanced.

Proposals to reduce through-traffic on our streets also help deliver one of the 17 recommendations from our Citizens Assembly on the climate crisis, which called for “promoting and trialling more car free zones and days”. Almost 60% of Camden residents responding to the Camden Transport Strategy proposals, adopted in April 2019, agreed with the principle of reducing through-traffic on our residential streets through the application of timed or permanent restrictions. Removal of parking spaces to enable walking and cycling is also consistent with the adopted Camden Transport Strategy (2019). Policy 2h, as part of a wider objective to reduce car ownership, car use and motor traffic levels in the Borough.

What are the challenges in Seven Dials?

Overall the number of vehicles using our roads is down but speeding has increased as a minority of irresponsible drivers take advantage of quieter roads. Across London, during the lockdown period, some average speeds were recorded at 37mph on 20mph roads. Locally, areas of Camden which already suffered from speeding problems have seen speed increases of as much as 13%.

As the lockdown continues to ease there is expected to be a rise in walking, cycling and car use – as both public transport capacity decreases due to physical distancing, and people choose alternative means of travel. This change in the way people travel will mean extra pressure on streets.

TfL have estimated that if all car-owning households switched their usual public transport journeys to car journeys, some boroughs would see a near doubling in the number of private transport journeys, causing massive congestion issues. In Camden this would be an increase in private transport trips of over 90% in addition to an increase in car trips originating in other boroughs. We know however that in Camden the proportion of households without a car across the borough is 69%, making walking and cycling safety and facilities crucial.

Additionally early modelling by TfL has revealed there could be more than a 10-fold increase in kilometres cycled, and up to five times the amount of walking, compared to pre-COVID levels. We have already started to see this reflected in Camden. Weekend cycle flows at our three automatic cycle count point sites have recorded an average increase of 120% in cycling levels this May compared to last.

We are also aware that physical distancing requirements have meant that some areas of pavement are now too narrow for pedestrians to use safely.

Seven Dials specifically is a busy mixed-use area of Central London and is home to over 150 independent retail and restaurant / café businesses as well as three hotels, three theatres, hundreds of office workers and over 290 residential apartments. We know from previous engagement with the local community and stakeholders that there is a large amount of rat running traffic cutting across the area via Mercer Street and Monmouth Street. As a busy commercial location with high pedestrian footfall there was therefore already an existing need for improved pedestrian safety and amenities, which was being explored before the pandemic.

Through our online engagement tool Commonplace, we invited people to suggest locations where new walking and cycling projects might be needed to facilitate physical distancing requirements. Seven Dials was highlighted by 5 comments, with a further 34 people supporting those suggestions. Suggestions included reducing rat running through traffic restrictions, changes to the one way system and road closures.

In order to respond to the issue of rat running we are going to be reducing through traffic by adding bollards to a number of streets with some 24 hr restrictions and some timed restrictions, in addition to changes to traffic direction. These changes will make the area quieter and safer for pedestrians and cyclists, helping “re-open” this important commercial area. We will be providing more space for people to physically distance, introducing new

cycling and pocket park facilities and preventing through traffic while still allowing for residential access.

What will the work involve?

The following changes will be implemented after the 24th July:

- Roads closed to motor traffic between 10am and 6pm seven days a week to:
 - Monmouth Street from the junction with Shaftesbury Avenue
 - Mercer Street at the junction with Shelton Street except for access (parking permit holders, off-street vehicle accesses and hotel pick up and drop offs)
 - Neal Street (north) from the junction of Short's Gardens

- Roads closed to motor traffic seven days a week to:
 - Monmouth Street from the junctions of Tower Street and Shelton Street preventing access to and from Upper St Martin's Lane

- Earham Street Market will be operational but stalls will be relocated to the pavement to provide more space for pedestrians. To facilitate this there will be no access for vehicles (aside from construction traffic and local access) between 7am and 7pm Monday – Saturday on the following roads:
 - Earham Street (west) from the junction with Seven Dials
 - The whole length of Tower Street
 - Monmouth St between Tower Street and Seven Dials

- Traffic directions on the following streets to be reversed at all times:
 - Short's Gardens between Seven Dials and Endell Street
 - Monmouth Street between Tower Street and Seven Dials

- Parking and loading bays will be removed from across the area in order to increase space for pedestrians and cyclists including on Monmouth Street between Seven Dials and Upper St Martin's Lane and on Short's Gardens. Some resident bays will be added to Mercer Street, Earham Street (east) and Tower Street. Overall there will be a reduction of 22 resident parking spaces.

- A one way system will operate at Neal's Yard for pedestrians and the informal seating and planters temporarily removed to provide more space for physical distancing. Pedestrians can access Neal's Yard from Monmouth Street and exit via Short's Gardens or further south on Monmouth Street. A diagram showing these access routes can be found on our website.

- A dockless bike hire bay and cycle stands will be added to the south of Monmouth Street providing a new facility for cyclists in addition to a pocket park area.

We are aware that emergency gas works will be occurring during July – September. There will be traffic management restrictions and diversions which are unrelated to this scheme in place during this time. This will include local road closures.

Timed closures will be controlled by removable bollards so that emergency services and refuse lorries can still enter. The bollards will be managed by the Seven Dials security team. Cyclists and pedestrians will be able to pass through each closure at any time.

The timed closure at Mercer Street junction with Shelton Street, will be manned and access will be allowed for residents, commercial access to 164 Shaftesbury Avenue building and to facilitate hotel pick up and drop offs only. Individuals with applicable resident parking permits will also be allowed access.

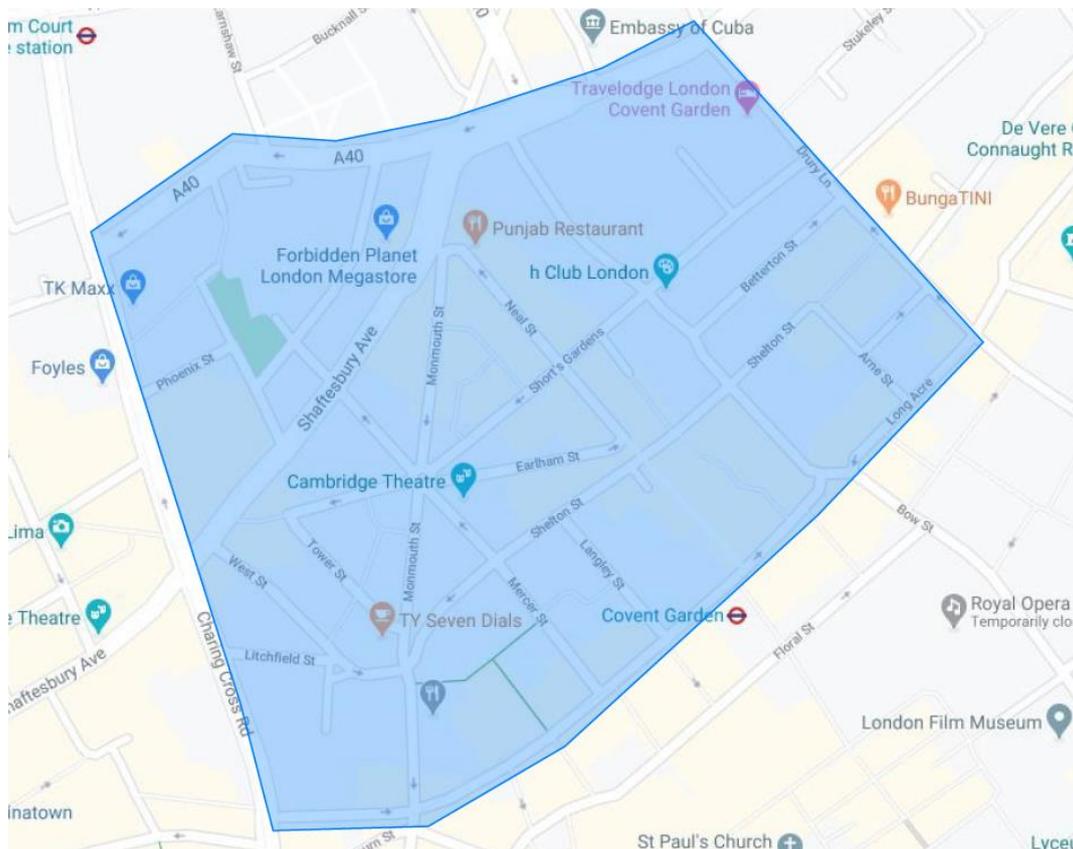
Local deliveries can be undertaken during timed closures by utilising the loading bays on Endell Street north of Short's Gardens.

Drawings of these changes, are included in this letter.

How can you give your views?

There is an immediate need for this safety improvement in response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) so we are using Experimental Traffic Orders which once made can be brought into force relatively quickly.

We have already consulted with statutory emergency services on these changes. We are also notifying local residents, businesses and stakeholder groups within the local area and you can see the map of those notified below. You will also see information going up on the local streets and on our website.



The experimental scheme will run for a maximum period of 18 months and you are able to comment at any time on the changes we have implemented. The Council would like to carry out a full public consultation after the experimental scheme has run for 12 months and will take a decision as to whether it can do this nearer the time in light of the circumstances then prevailing. This consultation will then inform the Council's decision as to whether, at the end of the 18 months, the changes should be made permanent. Traffic levels will also be monitored, as required, on relevant streets after the experimental scheme is implemented.

We will be in contact with you again with more details on this closer to the time.

How can you find out more?

More information on this scheme, and the other changes we are making across Camden in response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) can be found on our dedicated website:

<https://www.camden.gov.uk/making-travel-safer-in-camden>

Where you can also find:

- The Executive Officer Decision report
- Detail on the changes to parking and loading
- Access and egress map for Neal's Yard

In the meantime if you have any further questions or comments on the project, please don't hesitate to get in touch via safetravel@camden.gov.uk,

Seven Dials Scheme - Timed closure (10:00-18:00, 7 days a week) - Monmouth St North Gasworks

Legend

- Direction of traffic
- Reversed direction of traffic
- Existing road closure
- Permanent road closure
- Timed road closure
- Manned timed road closure
- Resident parking locations
- Resident parking locations outside of timed closure (8 bays)
- Gas works
- Market stall area during timed closure

Vehicle access to Tower St outside of timed closure.

Space for Pocket park, cycle docks and DBH designated area.

Manned timed closure. Seven Dials residents and 164 Shaftesbury Avenue access only.

Gas works within loading bay area along Monmouth St coinciding with scheme.

Removable bollard for timed closure. Allows for Neal St/Monmouth St N to be pedestrianised during timed closure.

