

ZSL Response to Proposal to Reduce Traffic along Outer Circle

Synopsis of proposal

A proposal is being put forward by the Camden Cycling Campaign to restrict vehicle access along the Outer Circle over time to prevent the free-flow of traffic but allow for specific travel needs, e.g. Park vehicles, zoo deliveries etc. The proposal is initially focused on the section of road in front of the Zoo entrance, as this is a congested area with high potential benefits.

The justifications for removing through traffic from the Outer Circle are as follows:

1. It is a Park road and never intended as part of London's road network,
2. It is an ideal route for cycling both commuting and leisure,
3. The current level of traffic on the Outer Circle effectively renders the outer part of the Park unusable by Park visitors,
4. At present at least 80% of traffic on the Outer Circle is through-traffic.

ZSL Response

For the purposes of this response, ZSL has envisaged a traffic calming section of road outside the Zoo to span from St Marks Bridge to the West Service Gate (WSG), with restricted access of vehicles between Macclesfield Bridge to Gloucester Gate. Techniques such as removal of road markings, entry signs / barriers, partial road narrowing and curvature and increased landscaping and planting could be considered. Restrictions could mean that WSG deliveries would come from a westerly direction along the Outer Circle. East Service Gate (ESG) deliveries and vehicles to the zoo car park would come from the Gloucester Gate direction. Other staff, taxi and disabled vehicles would be allowed through the restricted area where required. All other through-flow traffic approaching in either direction along the Outer Circle would be diverted out from Macclesfield Bridge or Gloucester Gate.

The following response has requested input from Marketing, Security, Sustainability and Health & Safety departments.

Questions and anticipated concerns

- How does Westminster Borough Council's authority over the Park area tie in with Camden Council's potential involvement and also the involvement of the Camden Cycle Campaign?
- There's already restricted approach for large delivery vehicles to the Zoo over weak bridges.
- How would a restriction be manned or policed? As vehicles would still be able to drive along it, it would require some sort of control or camera. If cameras were fitted for vehicle identification, would all ZSL staff cars be registered?
- We don't want to make it any harder for visitors to get to the Zoo than it is already. However, zoo visitors coming by car has been dropping in recent years (e.g. 24% in 2007, 14% in 2008). Visitors approaching from Clarence Gate or Hanover Gate would find it difficult to get to the main car park if required to go over Macclesfield Bridge to Prince Albert road; as no right turn into Prince Albert road from the bridge.
- Current vehicle use would need to be assessed over the course of a year as we have seasonal and holiday traffic fluctuation.

- Changing road lay out could lead to increased accidents that would need to be carefully evaluated.
- Could lead to increased traffic pollution, congestion to residential and built up areas outside the Park. For example, in relation to Albert Road and routes from Euston Road round to Finchley Road and to Lords Cricket Ground, or increased congestion on peripheral roads for residents and zoo visitors walking up from Camden Tube.
- What would happen to the Pay and Display parking along the road? This is currently very valuable to the Zoo at weekends and busy peak days.
- Requires careful planning study parameters and methodology and an in-depth analysis involving multi-stakeholders to anticipate positive and negative knock-on effects to surrounding area.
- Requires funding.

Anticipated ZSL requirements

- Retain access and parking for disabled and less-abled visitors.
- Retain taxi drop-off / pick up area, perhaps within restricted area.
- Retain access for staff parking in Half Moon car park.
- Retain access to the Nuffield and Catering buildings for suppliers' vehicles.
- Ensure restrictions would not inhibit deliveries of urgent supplies to animal sections and vet hospital and therefore affect welfare.
- Ensure restrictions would not unduly inhibit visitor needs.
- Emergency access required at all times.

Anticipated benefits

- Proposal would fit well with our positioning to reduce car dependence and transport planning to increase accessibility to low carbon travel options.
- Would create a healthier, safer and more pleasant arrival and entrance experience for Zoo visitors.
- Could facilitate an idea of secondary entrance into northern side of Zoo.
- Could use Half-moon carpark for covered cycle storage, rickshaw stops etc.
- Would help to unify the site as reduce the impact of busy road running through it.
- Much safer and less stressful environment for families queuing along the Outer Circle on busy days. This could lead to queue management improvements and scope for entertainment along quieter, safer road.

Recommendation

In principle, the idea of a quieter road outside the Zoo entrance is appealing and it should also be investigated whether this can be achieved by the Parks through static traffic calming measures, reduced speed limit, speed humps or road narrowing. A quieter road would improve the immediate approach to the Zoo for our visitors by increasing safety, reducing exhaust and noise pollution and encouraging car-free journeys but effects to the surrounding area would need careful evaluation. Any such plans to reduce vehicle access to the area would need to be extensively reviewed and analysed over time with all stakeholders consulted to ensure that congestion was not just diverted elsewhere and that restrictions did not make journeys to the Zoo overly restrictive or complicated.