

KENSINGTON HIGH STREET CYCLE LANE – December 2020

Open Letter to Johnny Thalassites,

Lead Member, Planning, Place and the Environment at Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

We represent the broad community of residents in RBKC living in the Kensington High Street/A315 area. The signatories include the principal Residents' Associations and Resident Groups in its immediate vicinity, representing over 3,400 households in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea (and therefore many more residents).

Together we all welcome RBKC's recent decision to remove the temporary cycle lanes installed on our High Street in September. It is now widely known that these lanes were installed due to pressure from outside the borough, which demanded a quick solution. Regrettably that solution, whilst constructive in spirit, was poorly thought through in design and implementation, and there was not enough time for sufficient consultation with residents and businesses in advance of their installation.

Residents experienced traffic chaos on the High Street, with dangerous pinch points at the various crossing points and junctions. The congestion created significant problems for our local businesses and worsened the air quality in the surrounding area. The increased journey times have badly affected buses, taxis and emergency services. A variety of important organisations have also voiced concerns, including disability groups, as well as local business leaders due to the lack of consideration for the pickup of passengers and delivery of goods on the high street.

Looking ahead:

Whilst we fully support the decision made by RBKC to remove the lanes, we believe that now is the opportunity to work with RBKC to provide safer cycle routes, encourage more active travel, improve the public realm to make the High Street an attractive place for people to shop, socialise and just spend time, and reduce pollution from motor vehicles.

Many of our groups including the signatories support better conditions for cyclists and for pedestrians and are fully committed to engage in a constructive fashion with a working group aimed at considering in detail the various alternatives. We must look at all the potential options - segregated vs unsegregated, tidal flow vs two-way flow, one lane vs two, quiet back routes vs High St/major thoroughfare, keeping existing street furniture vs opening up the streets. The outcome should be to make Kensington High Street a more attractive place both to be in and to pass through.

At the same time, we must be mindful of the character of our Borough, the nature of our shopping and residential streets, the trading of our various businesses and shops, bars and restaurants. We must make it a priority to encourage a safer environment for cyclists and pedestrians, while maintaining the flow of transport for our buses and taxis, delivery vans and lorries, for our emergency services and those with disabilities in our community. We can't allow any future implementation to result in the experience we have all just endured. It will require balancing out the needs of all road users, whilst encouraging a more environmentally sound and active form of travel and making Kensington High Street a more attractive and inclusive place to be in as an integral part of a new vision for the High Street.

Together, we can achieve this if we engage in a constructive manner.

Signed by (in alphabetical order):

Abingdon Gardens Residents
Bullingham Mansions Residents
Campden Hill Residents' Association (CHRA)
The Cedar Estate
Chatsworth Court Residents
The Cherry Trees Residents' Amenities Association (CTRAA)
Cottesmore Court Residents
Durrel's House Ltd
Earl's Court Square Residents' Association (ECSRA)
Edwardes Square Scarsdale & Abingdon Association (ESSA)
The ESSA Mansion Blocks
Leonard Court (Kensington) RTM
Huntsmore House Residents

Iverna Gardens Residents
Kensington Court Residents' Association (KCRA)
The Kensington Residents Group
Kensington Square Residents' Association (KSRA)
Knightsbridge Residents' Association
Marlborough Court Residents
Melbury Court Residents
Pembroke Square Freeholders' Association
Point West Leaseholders' Association
Troy Court Residents
Victoria Road Area Residents' Association (VRARA)
Warwick Road Estate Leaseholders' Association (WRELA)