



HIGHGATE
SOCIETY

10A South Grove
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Transport for London
Local Communities & Partnerships

July 2022

Central London bus review - North London area - Euston Road area proposals

Response by the Highgate Society

Background

The Highgate Society is a non-political voluntary organisation with over 1200 members and is a voice for the whole Highgate community. It was founded in 1966 by local people who had successfully fought Government plans to route heavy traffic through the heart of Highgate. We exist to make Highgate a better place to live and work. For further information see: <https://highgatesociety.com>

We have proactively communicated with members and the wider Highgate community about this consultation in order to gather views ourselves and encourage responses to TfL through the questionnaire and by email. The consultation has been publicised through our email newsletter.

Importance of bus travel in Highgate

Highgate is exceptional in inner London because it has both an elderly population, and very hilly terrain. These factors lead to greater reliance on bus use, particularly in an uphill direction. Cycling possibilities for many are limited as Highgate Hill, Highgate West Hill and Swains Lane are among the steepest in London. For many in the Highgate community particularly the disabled, there is often no realistic alternative to bus travel.

For these reasons the Highgate Society in its transport strategy states:

“In general we agree with the priorities of road users set out in the existing [Camden] Transport Strategy, save that public transport is a higher priority than cycling, being used by so many more people: first pedestrians, then public transport, then cyclists, then goods (including tradespeople), then cars, then motorcyclists. However, the specifics and relative priorities for different roads and areas will vary.”

TfL funding cuts

We deplore the reduction in grants for TfL from central government. It is short sighted and risk a downward spiral of reduced services leading to reduced bus reliability which further reduces bus travel and causes ever increasing use of cars which themselves lead to greater congestion and delays as well as contributing to climate change and pollution. Bus cuts will disproportionately harm people who use buggies, the elderly and wheelchair users, amongst others.

We understand TfL's need to save money as a result of cuts to funding and due to reduced uses of buses, but it is short sighted to reduce bus services given the overwhelming need to reduce traffic with its impact on climate change and air pollution. TfL needs a sustainable funding arrangement so that reliable transport can be provided.

Covid pandemic and timing of changes

It is too early to know whether changes in working patterns following the Covid pandemic are permanent. However, it is important that a post pandemic recovery in transport should not be car led, but this requires alternatives in the form of good public transport.

TfL must be ready to review and increase bus services when there is evidence of increased demand. In particular, buses need to be a key aspect of future transport plans, not be considered as the poor relation to private vehicles, tube travel and cycling. This requires TfL to monitor the outcomes from whatever reconfiguration of services is adopted.

Routes from Highgate village to the City

At present there are two routes from Highgate village to the City – the 271 via Holloway Road and the 214 via Kings Cross. The 271 route is scheduled to cease following another TfL consultation which closed in January 2022. The proposed change to the 214 route will therefore leave no direct bus route to the City.

The present consultation and documentation does not acknowledge or appear to have taken account of the changes already proposed for the 271 route. This is not acceptable.

The 271 is due to be replaced by the 263 which will terminate at Highbury Barn. Assuming the changes now proposed for the 214 go ahead, the earlier consultation should be reopened. The 263 route should continue to Moorgate travelling along the route of the 271 rather than terminating at Highbury Barn

Services to Kings Cross / St Pancras

Kings Cross / St Pancras is a major transport hub for north central London, with connections for numerous national mainline services, Eurostar, Thameslink and Circle / Metropolitan, Piccadilly, Northern and Victoria underground lines. Many users of the 214 route from Highgate village change at Kings Cross / St Pancras and transport options will suffer from the loss of the direct connection from Highgate village.

The current routes are well tailored to local demands and needs, and imposing extra unnecessary changes on users will, in the case of the population of the Highgate area, which has a higher proportion of elderly people than most areas of London, discriminate against older people by imposing unreasonable difficulties on them by obliging them to make more frequent changes. This is especially the case when travelling with baggage which will often be the case for those travelling to Kings Cross / St Pancras.

The 214 route should continue to travel via Kings Cross St Pancras even if it then continues through the West End to Pimlico. There is no obvious reason why this should not be possible.

Conclusion

We remain ready to engage in further discussions to help get an acceptable outcome from this consultation.

Finally, the impact of these or other changes must be monitored so there is an understanding of impact on travel before and after implementation.