

Pedestrian Crossings in Wandsworth – Where have we got to?

Transport for London's Attempt to abolish some signal-controlled Pedestrian Crossings in Wandsworth – how Wandsworth Living Streets started back in 2010

Three years ago. Autumn 2010. Boris, the Mayor of London, announced that he wanted to 'smooth' traffic flow. TfL Officers rushed out a list of 145 crossings all over London which they proposed to abolish outright. Eight of them were in Wandsworth.

Boris's 'smoothing' of traffic flow meant he regarded our public streets as primarily a facility for drivers, *not for people*. It also meant, though he did not say this, that London's pedestrians should pay the price. We pedestrians would have to wait longer to cross the road. And we pedestrians would have to try and cross roads where crossings had been abolished.

This situation prompted Susie Morrow to gather a group of us on a grey September morning at a pedestrian crossing on Kimber Road slated for abolition. London Assembly member Jenny Jones joined us. Our protest got into the press. And suddenly we found we were part of a chorus of opposition across London. Wandsworth Council objected to TfL's highhanded decision too. A group of local residents formed Wandsworth Living Streets. Our aim was to give a voice to everyone in Wandsworth who valued our local streets as *places for people* (not just for *movement for vehicles*). Then in late November we heard that TfL had withdrawn *all* its proposed crossing abolitions in our borough.

This victory showed:

- Residents need to organise and we can get public authorities to listen to our concerns.
- Our public streets are a resource for all the community. Streets are a non-party issue where residents and Councillors of all political persuasions can agree.

Good News for Crossings in Wandsworth in 2014

- **Queen's Circus on Queenstown Road near Battersea Park**
This is an exceptionally busy roundabout. There is no way a pedestrian can cross the Road to and from Battersea Park without catching the eye of drivers as they swoop round the Circus heading for Chelsea Bridge. And for cyclists on the 'Cycle Superhighway', conditions are so dangerous TfL has diverted the route on to the pavement – creating further dangers for pedestrians. At long last after several years of badgering, TfL and Wandsworth Council have agreed to use funds from nearby big developments to re-design this crossing entirely. Cyclists will get a lightly segregated lane in the Circus. Pedestrians will get a signalised crossing at each of the four entrances to the Circus. And the re-engineered roundabout ought to be operational by Spring next year (2015).
- **Brighton Yard entrance to Clapham Junction Station**
Everyone likes the additional entrance on St John's Hill which leads travellers by train on to the overhead passageway to all the 17 platforms. The only problem is that not very many people use it. This is partly because all but one of the major bus stops are located much nearer the old

entrance. But also because there is no safe way for pedestrians to cross St John's Hill or for cyclists to get in and out of Brighton Yard. Wandsworth Living Streets made a little video showing just how dangerous it is for pedestrians threading their way through the traffic (see <http://wandsworthlivingstreets.org/>). The good news is that the Peabody Estate has agreed that their redevelopment plans should be no obstacle to building a signals-controlled crossing right away. Developer money (so-called Section 106 funds) are available. And Wandsworth Council has at last decided to proceed right away.

- **Albert Bridge Road:** a new retirement home is being built. We are told that it is likely that a new zebra crossing will link it to Battersea Park in the not too distant future.

The Bad News – Transport for London has just cut ‘Green Man’ crossing times in Wandsworth to 6 seconds

In late January this year (2014), the *Wandsworth Guardian* ran the story. The London Assembly Transport Committee had just learned that TfL had cut the ‘Green Man’ phase for pedestrians to a standardised 6 seconds. This has affected 25 junction crossings in the borough (for a full list, see at the end of this Update). TfL had not consulted residents. TfL had not told Wandsworth Councillors. And amazing as it may seem, TfL, like all highway authorities, is not obliged to consult on changes in the timings (both waiting times and crossing times) of signalised pedestrian crossings.

TfL has done this despite University College London evidence that some people cannot speed across crossings at 1.2 metres a second. In fact Living Streets nationally is calling for the assumed walking time to be 0.8 seconds. This is in the interests of not just older Londoners, but parents with buggies and small children, and people with mobility issues.

The situation in Wandsworth is not yet clear. There is a period of grace after the ‘Green Man’ goes off and before the signals allow vehicles to proceed. But there is no published information about these periods of grace. We do not know whether TfL altered these periods on longer diagonal crossings and particularly busy pedestrian crossings. What TfL's new 6 second rule ignores is how anxious people can get as they struggle to cross in time. This is particularly so on all those crossings where there is no Countdown indicator letting pedestrians know how many seconds they still have for crossing.

Wandsworth Living Streets is now trying to find out full information about waiting times for each crossing, whether any periods of grace have been extended to compensate for the reduced 6 second ‘Green Man’ phase, and when Countdown indicators will be installed where they do not yet exist.

There is another way – the more intelligent use of intelligent technology – SCOOT

- **What SCOOT is**
SCOOT stands for *Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Technique* (hence SCOOT)! Trust traffic planners to talk about ‘Road Space Management’ using a ‘SCOOT delivery portfolio’, as TfL Director of Traffic does in his paper, dated 18 July 2013. You can see more of the details on the Internet at <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/corporate/FPC-130718-Part-1-Item10-SCOOT.pdf>

In practice, SCOOT uses sensors to detect traffic and alter traffic signal timings based on demand. TfL has already installed SCOOT on about half of its 6,000 traffic signal sites and is now rolling it out on a whole lot more.

- **Who does SCOOT help to scoot along?**

So far it has been wholly geared to helping drivers dash along faster. TfL says that since April 2009, its traffic signal reviews (and SCOOT?) have reduced traffic delays by 8%. For pedestrians, the figure is only 1% -- ie TfL has not helped pedestrians move along our streets faster at all. And in the TfL Director of Traffic's list of Benefits (Paragraph 7), there are no benefits listed for pedestrians at all. In fact his paper only mentions pedestrians once! However he does promise (Paragraph 3.2) that 'there is an on-going development programme for SCOOT, which specifically considers pedestrians and cyclists'.

- **So could SCOOT be developed to benefit Pedestrians as well?** That is the question. Could SCOOT sensors detect where pedestrians are still crossing the road and prolong the crossing phase until they are clear of the carriageway? That would really boost Road Safety.

Could SCOOT detect that a crowd of pedestrians have built up waiting to cross, and bring forward the 'Green Man' phase faster than the signals are otherwise programmed for?

And what about the situation where a pedestrian presses the button, crosses the road before the signals change because there is little or no traffic, and then the lights change holding up vehicles when there is in fact no one still waiting to cross?

What can each of us do?

- **Wandsworth Living Streets will keep a close eye on Wandsworth Council and Transport for London to make sure they deliver the new Brighton Yard and Queen's Circus crossings.**
- **Wandsworth Living Streets will press TfL to pay more attention to the needs of pedestrians at crossings.**
- **Are there any particular crossings you know of that need attention (waiting times; adequate crossing times; etc)?** If so, do let WLS know and one of our Committee members can hopefully work with you to get some action.

Additional Information:

1. What makes for a Good Pedestrian Crossing?

Living Streets has been thinking hard about this. In December 2013, Wandsworth Living Streets sent detailed ideas for better pedestrian-friendly streets to the London Assembly's Transport Committee. Here are some of the highlights -- you can see our full submission on our website at <http://wandsworthlivingstreets.org/>

- **More crossing points on pedestrian ‘desire lines’** (the technical term of where and in what directions pedestrians want to cross roads).
- **Signalised pedestrian crossings to have shorter waiting times** before the lights change to halt the traffic.
- Pedestrian crossings to have **longer crossing times**.
- **Countdown indicators** on all pedestrian crossings.
- **All traffic signals to have a pedestrian phase**. For example, at the Hammersmith end of Battersea Bridge, there is no pedestrian phase across Cheyne Walk.
- **Complex junctions to be simplified to allow intuitive pedestrian movement in the shortest time and along ‘desire lines’**. A notable example of poor quality pedestrian provision is at the southern end of Putney Bridge at its junction with the Lower Richmond Road.
- **Staggered multi-stage crossings to be all made straight across**. For example, the crossing at Wandsworth High Street junction with Buckhold Road.
- **Good side-road entry treatments** to improve pedestrian priority and continuity of footway. A good example is the recently installed entry treatments on side roads at St John's Road and St John's Hill.
- **Where Medians (raised central traffic islands) exist, they must have dropped kerbs** to allow a wheelchair user to use them. And **pedestrian refuges must be adequately proportioned and offer real protection for users**, especially pedestrians with children; in many cases, zebra crossings would provide a better facility for pedestrians.

2. List of traffic-signalised junctions where the pedestrian phase Minimum Green Time has been reduced by TfL to 6 seconds in WANDSWORTH

ALBERT BRIDGE ROAD - PRINCE OF WALES DRIVE

(J&C) A217 ARMOURY WAY - A217 WANDSWORTH PLAIN

A24 BALHAM HIGH RD - UPPER TOOTING RD - TRINITY RD - A214 TOOTING BEC RD (DIAGONAL PED CROSSING)

BALHAM HIGH ROAD - RITHERDON ROAD

A24 BALHAM HIGH ROAD - CHESTNUT GROVE - BALHAM STATION ROAD (DIAGONAL PED CROSSING)

BALHAM HIGH ROAD - BEDFORD HILL

(J&C) A3205 BATTERSEA PARK ROAD - A3031 ALBERT BRIDGE ROAD

(J&C) A3205 BATTERSEA PARK RD - YORK RD - A3207 FALCON RD - A3220 BATTERSEA HIGH ST

BALHAM STATION ROAD - FERNLEA ROAD - BEDFORD HILL

(ATM) KINGSTON ROAD - ROEHAMPTON LANE

(ATM) LAVENDER HILL - ELSPETH ROAD - LATCHMERE ROAD

MITCHAM ROAD - SOUTHCROFT ROAD - RECTORY LANE - AMEN CORNER
(J&C) QUEENSTOWN ROAD - BATTERSEA PARK ROAD
(ATM) QUEENSTOWN ROAD - BROUGHTON STREET
ROEHAMPTON LANE - DANEBURY AVENUE
A24 TOOTING HIGH STREET - LONGLEY ROAD - BLACKSHAW ROAD
(ATM/J&C) WIMBLEDON PARK ROAD - REPLINGHAM ROAD - AUGUSTUS ROAD (DIAGONAL PED
CROSSING)
A219 PUTNEY HIGH STREET - A219 PUTNEY HILL - A205 UPPER RICHMOND ROAD
(J&C) YORK ROAD - PLOUGH ROAD - YORK PLACE
A219 PUTNEY HIGH STREET - DISRAELI ROAD - NORROY ROAD
(ATM) GARRATT LANE - KIMBER ROAD - SWAFFIELD ROAD
ROEHAMPTON LANE - CLARENCE LANE
(ATM) PUTNEY HILL - PUTNEY HEATH - TIBBET'S RIDE
(ATM) A3031 ALBERT BRIDGE ROAD - PARKGATE ROAD
A306 ROEHAMPTON LANE - QUEEN MARYS HOSPITAL MAIN ACCESS

This note for Wandsworth Living Streets supporters has been prepared by Robert Molteno
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