Nine Elms Lane and Battersea Park Road

Sustrans response to Transport for London

Summary
Sustrans welcomes the consultation on proposals for changes to Nine Elms Lane and Battersea Park Road, and supports the ambition to improve and increase space and quality of provision for pedestrians, cycles and public transport users.

However, Sustrans has strong reservations on the overall proposal, which fall short of these ambitions, particularly concerning safety and comfort for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as permeability with proposed and existing infrastructure. In light of these concerns, Sustrans only partially supports this scheme.

- Nine Elms Lane and the eastern part of Battersea Park Road are strategic arteries for the area. With significant changes to the area well underway and over the coming years, including two new Northern Line Extension underground stations and a future cycling and walking bridge connecting Nine Elms/Vauxhall to Pimlico, these roads are key gateways. As such, they play an important role for all road users, and the existing layout particularly favours motor-vehicle movement at the expense of safety and convenience for people on foot or cycles.

- Changes to Nine Elms Lane and Battersea Park Road are an opportunity to provide a transformational scheme of high-class cycle infrastructure of the standard seen at the East-West and North-South Superhighways to really encourage uptake by cyclists of all abilities and create a pleasant, attractive pedestrian space.

Pedestrian facilities and crossings
- Sustrans supports the ambition to widen footways to improve pedestrian facilities. However, this aspiration is unfortunately not apparent in the design of much of this scheme.
  - Along almost all frontages between Wandsworth Road and Prince of Wales Road the already narrow footway is proposed to be further reduced. Sustrans holds concerns about the compromised safety and ease of use for all pedestrians while not providing cycle lanes of adequate width or protection.
• Pedestrian comfort and safety should be safeguarded throughout the entire scheme by ensuring that adequate footway widths are retained, and new publicly-accessible spaces provided along sites still in development.

• It is unclear from designs how much public space will be available from the new developments and how these will link into the proposal. However, Sustrans finds that this proposal falls short of the Healthy Streets vision, and will not encourage people to walk along these roads, as it appears that, in addition to an environment that continues to be noisy and busy, the footways will be narrow and therefore unsafe and uncomfortable at many points:
  o The proposed footway in front of Embassy Gardens and the American Embassy (sections 6 and 7) have been narrowed. Although the designs do not include measurements, Sustrans is concerned that these appear narrow and may impact access for wheelchair users to pass in both directions, particularly around the bus stop;
  o New signal crossing from Riverlight development to access New Mill Road (section 6) does not account for the existing columns from the development on the south side of Nine Elms Lane. This and the reduction in footway width creates a severe pinch on the footway for pedestrians. It is also unclear if that signal crossing will also be used by cyclists, which could cause further conflict on the footway;
  o Footway approaching the (new) New Covent Garden Market (section 5) will be narrowed and the resulting width appears insufficient for pedestrians to use it safely, particularly around the crossing point.

• Wherever there are opportunities to negotiate more footway width to come from the developments yet to be constructed, this should be raised with developers to avoid constraints on the public highway. Agreements should be put in place to ensure that privately-owned footway space is safeguarded for public access in the future to avoid the widths being diminished by later development.

• At unsignalised junctions, raised crossings should be provided over side road entrances to slow turning vehicles, improve pedestrian comfort and reduce vehicular dominance.

• Sustrans recommends the introduction of linked signals on staggered crossings, reducing the waiting time for users.

• At Riverlight, the proposed pedestrian crossing near Cringle Street and the narrowed footway to accommodate the cycle lane appears to be in conflict with the existing TfL Cycle Hire station. The design should ensure that cycle and pedestrian facilities provide adequate comfort and avoid conflict between users while retaining Cycle Hire provision in the vicinity.
Cycle facilities

- Sustrans believes much more needs to be done to provide continuous protected cycle facilities of adequate width throughout this scheme. The potential of usage in the area is high and these proposals fall short of providing safe, continuous and permeable facilities:

  o The narrative text for sections 4 to 7 indicate the use of stepped track cycle lanes, which Sustrans welcomes. However, it is unclear from the drawings precisely where and how these tracks will be incorporated.

  o This proposal is unlikely to encourage new and less experienced cyclists to use the scheme, as it will feel unsafe given the high volume of traffic, the proportion of heavy vehicles using these roads and the limited use of segregated tracks.

  o The eastbound bus stop outside Elm Quay Court (sections 6 and 7) merging with the cycle track puts cyclists at significant risk of collision with buses and would be very intimidating for cyclists. A segregated solution, such as a bus stop bypass, should be proposed.

  o Sustrans is very concerned that cycle lanes and shared bus-and-cycle lanes in Sections 1-3 do not protect cyclists and do very little to provide a feeling of safety. Taxis using these bus lanes will add to the danger posed to cycles.

  o Sustrans supports the removal of traffic lanes to create cycling and walking space, e.g. at Battersea Park Station and Queenstown Road (section 2). However, unsegregated cycle lanes do not provide adequate protection from the high volume and heavy traffic here. Segregation should be provided on links and at signalized junctions.

  o Sustrans is concerned by cyclists being required to share minimum-width bus lanes at several sections and to enter general traffic lanes to pass bus stops, e.g. under the railway bridge at Battersea Park Station (section 2); over the bridge by Battersea Dogs and Cats Home (section 3); and opposite Cupar Road (section 1). This is intimidating for cyclists having to ‘take the lane’ when being followed by buses and puts them at risk of collisions with general traffic when moving out. It should be explored whether these bus stops can be relocated to locations where there is more space to provide segregated cycling facilities around them.

  o While Sustrans supports cycling permeability to and from Thessaly Street, and the benefits to public transport usage of allowing buses to use this road, it is vital to ensure that the current closure to general traffic is maintained and properly enforced in the future to prevent this quiet road and cycle link through to destinations at Wandsworth Road becoming a rat-run for through-traffic.
• Sustrans supports the provision of two-stage right turns, and low-level, early cycle release at signalised junctions. However, Sustrans is very concerned that the scheme proposes potentially very dangerous infrastructure at junctions, failing to protect cyclists:

  o For most of the scheme there is a lack of segregated provision at signalized junctions. While some junctions may have early starts for cycles, Sustrans holds concerns that this still leaves cyclists vulnerable to left hooks.

  o At Queenstown Road/Battersea Park Road junction eastbound on the west arm (section 2), the cycle feeder lane between two traffic lanes forces cyclists to move out across left-turning traffic and to ‘take the lane’ when approaching on a green light. This puts cyclists at significant risk of collision and is a very challenging manoeuvre which will discourage new and less confident cyclists from using the scheme.

  o At Prince of Wales Drive/Battersea Park Road junction westbound on the east arm (section 3), the bus lane ends some way before the cycle lane, putting cycles at risk of collision from vehicles, a high proportion of which will be merging left to enter the straight-ahead and left-turn lanes.

  o At the Savona Street/Prospect Way/Battersea Park Road junction (section 4), it appears cyclists turning right out of Savona Road will be in conflict with vehicles turning right from Prospect Way. Sustrans holds concerns that an early start for cyclists is insufficient to remove the collision risk. The design should protect cycles from hook collisions at this and all junctions. If Savona Street and Prospect Way are released in two separate stages this may remove collision risk, but this is not made clear from the drawings.

  o Several of the proposed ASL’s are 5m deep or unspecified. An ASL depth of 7.5m should be provided throughout.

• Segregated feeder lanes and separate cycle signal phase should be provided at all signalised junctions along the scheme to protect cycles from conflicting movements and close passes. These should tie into segregated cycle lanes along the links.

• Sustrans strongly supports the provision of segregated cycle tracks which ensure safety and facilitate use. This could be achieved through the provision of a bidirectional segregated cycle track throughout the scheme to achieve the desired level of cycle protection. This may be more space-efficient than one-way cycle lanes each side. This may require: removal of some proposed and existing bus lanes, which still appear to be piecemeal throughout the scheme; further removal of central islands and turning pockets; negotiation with developers to provide more available space for pedestrian and cycle facilities; relocation of bus stops away from narrow points; and reduction in the number of general traffic lanes at junctions.
Waiting and loading restrictions are in place at multiple locations. While some clearly restrict waiting or loading during peak hours, drawings are unclear whether they prohibit loading during peak hours (for example by Alfreda Street on section 1, multiple locations on section 2, and by Battersea Dogs and Cats Home on section 3). Only in section 2 does the accompanying text suggest loading restrictions during peak hours. Loading restrictions during peak hours should be in place throughout the scheme to minimize the risk of cycles being forced out into traffic to pass vehicles. This would be solved if segregated provision were provided throughout.