

North Laine Community Association's Deputation to the Transport Committee

Tuesday 15th January

The North Laine Community Association objects to the proposal in the plan to improve Brighton Station of putting the taxi rank in Frederick Place and asks that this committee removes this feature of the proposals from the plans.

The idea of siting the taxi rank in Frederick Place, in the North Laine Conservation Area, only appeared in September 2012 at the stakeholders meeting. Prior to this, in 2011, there had been an analysis of ten possible locations for the rank with a recommendation given for each option. Frederick Place was not one of these options. One of these options was Guildford Road and it was rejected because of the concerns of residents. Keeping the rank where it is was regarded as a viable option.

Since residents of North Laine were informed about the proposals to site the taxi rank in Frederick Place (I briefed a meeting of the NLCA in September, Jim Mayor made a presentation at the October meeting and Jim organised a series of workshops for residents and traders in October and November) there has been universal opposition to the proposal to site the rank in Frederick Place. The whole community is against this plan as it stands. I have not heard a word of support for the scheme and a petition calling for the Council to reject the proposal now has over 600 signatures. If consultation and democracy is to have any meaning then the wishes of the North Laine community should be respected.

The scheme as it stands has greater weaknesses than keeping the taxi rank where it is. (For a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the ten options analysed see 'Station Gateway-Taxi Rank Options, November 2011). This scheme is likely to have a negative impact on North Laine in terms of noise, pollution, traffic and access and as such should be rejected. North Laine residents should not be expected to put up with an inferior quality of life in order that there can be changes to the station.

Whatever scheme is adopted there should not be a worsening in the quality of life of North Laine residents. If it cannot be shown that there will not be a negative impact then the scheme should not go ahead. There should not be a trial.

There should be a full public consultation on whatever plans there are for Station Gateway. In striving to adopt changes to address residents' concerns about the scheme the plan in the consultation document did not include some of the agreed changes so residents did not always know what they were commenting on.

North Laine is a Conservation Area-an area of historic importance with a Victorian townscape. Despite its importance to the city as a tourist and shopping destination, North Laine is primarily a residential area.

Specific issues raised by residents

1. A taxi rank in Frederick Place is likely to increase sound and air pollution and is unlikely to provide sufficient space for all the taxis thus there will have to be an overspill. The overspill may block access to Frederick Place for residents, queue down Queens Road or even use Over St. There will be space for 13-20 taxis in Frederick Place yet a minimum requirement is for 20 taxis (based on the numbers queuing during the day-it can be double at peak times). With access into North Laine from the north west limited to the entry into Gloucester Road, Frederick Place will have to cater for residents as well as through traffic accessing the London Road area. The map in the consultation document shows space for nineteen taxis in Frederick Place. This is misleading as there cannot be space for nineteen taxis. There is a drive to a car park which has a taxi blocking the entrance! Will taxis be allowed to park up outside the homes of residents?
2. Kemp St and Over St are likely to be used as rat runs by traffic trying to avoid Frederick Place, thus increasing traffic in a quiet residential street.
3. The only access to the Post Office will be via Foundry St thus increasing traffic in that street.
4. The Queens Road/Gloucester Road junction will be extremely busy, being the only route into North Laine from the north west. Taxis may well block this route at busy times.
5. Over St may well be used by taxis queuing to get into the rank.
6. Trafalgar Lane is totally unsuitable for the purpose envisaged by the proposals. The lane is only three metres wide, not wide enough for two lanes of traffic. Commercial traffic from Travis/Perkins and Warren Evans often block the lane which can only be used by one vehicle at a time. Moreover the turn into Trafalgar Lane from Trafalgar St is very tight. There is no pavement yet there are back doors to the properties of residents.
7. The Trafalgar St/Blackman St junction gets very busy with traffic backing up Trafalgar St-just opposite the turn into Trafalgar Lane.
8. There is a lack of traffic enforcement in North Laine at the moment. (eg Sydney St) This scheme has the potential to create more locations where traffic restrictions will be ignored e.g. the plug in Trafalgar St, the right turn into Trafalgar St from Blackman St, and any restriction in Gloucester Road.
9. Access into North Laine from the north is via Grand Parade and Church St-an unnecessarily long detour.
10. Access into North Laine from the north west is restricted to one access point and with the possible future closure of Terminus Road to private traffic there will be no access point.

What should happen next?

The Council should reject the scheme to locate the taxi rank in North Laine

The Council should go back to the document it produced on possible options for the location of the taxi rank and choose one of the viable options eg Existing Location.

Peter Crowhurst

(Chair, North Laine Community Association)



Above. Trafalgar Lane. The proposal is for this narrow lane to be the main route out of North Laine for residents in several streets. It is two way, it has no pavement, is not wide enough for two cars and there are back doors from the premises of residents opening onto the lane.



Above. Trafalgar St. This is a main route from the Seven Dials area into North Laine and the City College area. It will be closed off with these proposals and will become part of the taxi rank.

