This report seeks approval to remove the Chiswick High Road bus gate, signalise the junction at the entrance to the Stamford Brook bus garage, and improve the operation of the westbound bus lanes in this general location.

1.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Area Committee:-

1.1 notes the work previously undertaken to improve the functioning of bus priority measures in the Goldhawk Road - Chiswick Lane sector of Chiswick High Road;

1.2 notes the proposed removal of the existing signalised bus gate located on Chiswick High Road between Ennismore Avenue and Homefield Road;

1.3 notes the proposed signalisation of the junction of Chiswick High Road and the access road to the Stamford Brook Bus Garage;

1.4 notes the proposed extension of the westbound bus lane to a new start point immediately west of British Grove and its conversion to 24 hour operation;

1.5 notes the proposed 25 metre reduction in the length of the existing 24-hour bus lane, and minor adjustments to bus stops and parking as detailed in the report;

1.6 approves the proposal to undertake local and statutory consultation for the above proposed works;

1.7 approves the implementation of the above works subject to favourable response to consultation and subject to the Area Committee Chair’s discretion.
2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 In 2001/02, two separate bus lanes were installed on the south side of Chiswick High Road between Goldhawk Road and Chiswick Lane:

- A part-time bus lane starting at a point approximately 60 metres west of the Goldhawk Road / British Grove junction and extending to the pelican crossing approximately 50 metres west of Netheravon Road, operating 7.00am-10.00am and 4.00pm-7.00pm Monday-Saturday;
- A full-time bus lane starting at Airedale Avenue and extending to a point approximately 30 metres west of Homefield Road.

2.2 These bus lanes were part of a London-wide initiative to improve the reliability and attractiveness of bus services in the face of increasing general traffic volumes and traffic congestion.

2.3 A signalised bus gate was installed immediately west of Homefield Road, at the end of the full-time bus lane. The bus gate was designed to allow westbound buses on the bus lane to continue west on Chiswick High Road through the Chiswick Lane junction (routes 27, 237, 267, 391, 440 and H91) without coming into conflict with general westbound traffic of which roughly one-third turns left into Chiswick Lane.

3.0 PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF BUS LANES AND BUS GATE

3.1 The introduction of the bus lane and especially the bus gate proved to be somewhat problematic. There have been significant issues of non-compliance, mainly involving general traffic moving illegally into the bus lane and passing through the buses/taxis/cycles side of the bus gate if turning left into Chiswick Lane. This non-compliance is due to a combination of deliberate queue-jumping and accidental use of the bus lane by drivers who are confused by this rather unusual facility.

3.2 An initial review of the above facilities was instigated in November 2002, resulting in a package of measures including additional signage and road markings in an attempt to clarify the situation and improve compliance. A proposal was put to the Chiswick Area Committee on 26 February 2003 to combine the part-time and full-time westbound bus lanes into one 24-hour lane, to achieve consistency in bus priority in this area.

3.3 Experience has shown that, wherever possible, bus lanes should operate 24 hours, seven days. Although bus/taxi/cycle volumes do not warrant the provision of a bus lane at all times of the day, 24-hour bus lanes provide consistency and reduce driver confusion. In particular, they reduce the potential for conflict at junctions, especially at or near the start and finish times of part-time bus lanes, when a proportion of general traffic uses the bus lane while the majority of cars do not. Where there is a requirement for kerbside parking or loading, part-time bus lanes are generally retained, however in the case of the...
lane in question there would be no loss of parking or loading facility due to the current provision of parking bays set back within the kerb line.

3.4 Consultation on the above proposal showed general support, however the Chiswick Area Committee deferred its decision pending further consideration of the operation of the bus gate, which is the main subject of the current report.

4.0 SUBSTANTIVE REVIEW OF BUS LANES AND BUS GATE

4.1 Following evaluation of the effect of the improved signage on traffic behaviour, a substantive review of the bus gate has been undertaken. The review’s conclusions follow.

4.2 The location of the existing bus gate provides insufficient lane-changing space on the approach to the Chiswick Lane junction to allow general traffic to move easily into the left lane to access Chiswick Lane while simultaneously allowing buses to move into the offside lane to proceed west on Chiswick High Road.

4.3 Due to its proximity to the Chiswick Lane junction, drivers unfamiliar with the bus gate tend to move into the nearside lane (the bus lane) in preparation for the left turn into Chiswick Lane. This causes confusion and contributes to the frustration of drivers using the correct lane. A small proportion of regular drivers exploit this confusion to use the bus lane to cut in front of westbound traffic.

4.4 The bus gate’s proximity to Homefield Road also causes difficulties for drivers accessing or leaving this road. Those accessing Homefield Road have insufficient waiting space while those leaving are unsure whether to turn left into the remaining few metres of the bus lane or to risk obstructing the bus lane while attempting to join the queue in the general traffic lane.

4.5 The bus gate compromises the efficiency of the Chiswick Lane junction by restricting the number of westbound vehicles that can approach and move through this junction when the signals there are at green. This has led to unnecessary delays to general traffic on Chiswick High Road, which in turn restricts egress from the Stamford Brook bus garage.

5.0 PROPOSALS

5.1 The bus gate should be removed, together with the signals at Ennismore Avenue.

5.2 The junction of Chiswick High Road and the Stamford Brook bus garage should be signalised, as shown in the attached plans. This configuration would allow westbound bus lane traffic to proceed at all times through this junction while general traffic on Chiswick High Road would be held when necessary to allow buses to safely exit the bus garage.
5.3 This arrangement would double the available space between the two signalised junctions and provide more space for westbound buses and general traffic to move into the correct lane for the Chiswick Lane junction. It would also provide sufficient holding space to ensure the stop-line at the Chiswick Lane junction is not starved of traffic. Removal of the two traffic islands between Ennismore Avenue and Homefield Road would improve the space available for traffic waiting to make a right turn into these side-roads.

5.4 The two new islands required to accommodate the new traffic signals would be positioned to maintain private vehicle access to 59 and 63 Chiswick High Road. The existing westbound bus stop near 57 Chiswick High Road would be moved back nine metres, but there would be no need to relocate the bus shelter.

5.5 A new bus stop or bus stand located near 45 Chiswick High Road would be utilised for occasional driver changeover and any westbound bus services terminating at the bus depot. This would not significantly disrupt the operation of the bus lane and would be an improvement on the current situation wherein driver changeover takes place at the normal bus stop.

5.6 The existing bus lane would end approximately 25 metres earlier, at Homefield Road. The left turn out of Homefield Road would be simplified.

5.7 At its eastern end, the bus lane would start approximately 45 metres earlier, at the bus stop immediately west of British Grove. This would be achieved by a minor adjustment to the kerb-line and the loss of one inadequate-sized metered parking space as shown in the plans. The pedestrian refuge island would be retained.

5.8 The two existing bus lanes - British Safety Council to Airedale Avenue (7-10am and 4-7pm Monday-Saturday) and Airedale Avenue to Homefield Road (24 hours, seven days) would be rationalised into one continuous bus lane operating 24 hours seven days for consistency and road safety. This proposal was the subject of local and statutory consultation in February as mentioned earlier.

5.9 The operation of the Chiswick Lane junction would be improved by extending the hours of operation of the current restricted parking area in the first 18 metres of Upham Park Road. The single yellow lines on each side would be replaced by double lines, extending the no waiting / no loading restriction to operate at all times. This will ensure that parked vehicles do not interfere with the operation of the traffic signal detectors and do not restrict access to or egress from this road for residents’ vehicles and general servicing. This proposal was also the subject of consultation in February and there were no objections.

5.10 A review of signal timing and phasing at the Chiswick Lane junction is also underway, and may provide additional traffic flow benefits including a possible left filter arrow for traffic turning from Chiswick High Road into Chiswick Lane. Regardless of the outcome of this review, the signals at Chiswick Lane and Stamford Brook bus depot will be linked to ensure optimum traffic flows.
6.0 SAFETY ISSUES

6.1 Bus lanes always provide the potential for faster-moving buses and taxis to “undertake” slow moving or stationary general traffic. This can be disconcerting for drivers. In the above proposal, the speed differential through the new signalised junction would be reduced by the fact that the majority of the buses would need to stop at the bus stop on the approach to the junction. Buses that did not need to stop would be slowed by the restricted width of the bus lane at this location.

6.2 The speed of taxis (and any cars or motorcycles illegally using the bus lanes) could be reduced by the addition of a small speed table (not shown on the plan) positioned immediately west of the head of the bus stop. Designed correctly, this would not hinder cyclists or buses travelling at reasonable speeds.

6.3 A bus lane camera would be positioned at the junction and would provide a significant deterrent against illegal use of the bus lane.

7.0 HEAD OF TRAFFIC COMMENTS

7.1 The Head of Traffic has examined the proposals contained in this report and agrees that they comply with sound traffic management principles.

8.0 ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (FINANCE) COMMENTS

8.1 The cost of the proposals is to be fully met by Transport for London under the London Bus Initiative (LBI) programme. It is essential that full confirmation of funding for all the works is received from TfL before any expenditure is committed. Expenditure will need to be contained within identified funding.

9.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Improving access to public transport benefits people who do not own or have access to private transport. Young people, elderly people and lower socio-economic groups are over-represented in this category. People with disabilities are increasingly able to use normal bus services, due to the new generation of low-floor easy-access buses.

9.2 Cyclists are a vulnerable road user group. The proposals should help to increase the safety of cyclists and reduce the number of accidents on Borough roads.

10.0 ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Making public transport and cycling more attractive should encourage a modal shift from private car travel. Reduced private car travel delivers environmental and health benefits through reduced congestion and pollution.
Contact: Chris Calvi-Freeman, Head of Transport
Telephone: 020 8583 5215

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| This report is relevant to the following wards: |
| Chiswick Homefields |