# Oxford Street trial signals bold push for pedestrianisation amid mixed reactions



The Mayor of London, Sir Sadiq Khan, has marked a significant step towards pedestrianising Oxford Street by holding a one-day traffic ban trial on a key section of the iconic shopping thoroughfare. On Sunday, vehicles were prohibited from accessing the half-mile stretch between Oxford Circus and Orchard Street between noon and 20:00 BST. The mayor described the event as "the day the fight back began to rescue this street," signalling his determination to transform Oxford Street into a pedestrian-friendly zone.

Oxford Street, one of the world's busiest shopping streets with around half a million visitors daily, has faced mounting challenges over recent years. Major retail closures and growing competition from online shopping have contributed to a decline in foot traffic and economic activity. Sir Sadiq Khan’s plan is part of a broader initiative to rejuvenate the area, making it a vibrant, accessible place for shopping, leisure, and outdoor events. Drawing inspiration from successful pedestrian zones like Times Square in New York and La Rambla in Barcelona, the plan seeks to boost visitor numbers and economic prosperity.

The one-day trial formed part of preparations for a more comprehensive pedestrianisation plan that would ban vehicles from a 0.7-mile stretch extending between Oxford Circus and Marble Arch, with potential expansion towards Tottenham Court Road. This ambitious project, which has been in development for more than two decades, awaits government approval to establish a new Mayoral Development Corporation that would grant the mayor necessary planning powers to implement the changes. It is estimated to cost around £150 million, with financial backing anticipated from local businesses, private investors, and new revenue streams generated by the redevelopment.

Public opinion appears broadly favourable. A recent public consultation revealed majority support, with about two-thirds of respondents endorsing the plan. The trial event attracted pedestrians who appreciated the opportunity to stroll without the usual vehicle congestion. Grace and Tom Brown, two visitors, expressed strong support, saying they would prefer the area to remain traffic-free permanently, noting how the change encourages safer, more relaxed shopping experiences. Passer-by Kish Sha remarked positively on the initiative, highlighting the vibrant atmosphere and the sensible redirection of buses and emergency vehicles to alternative routes nearby.

Yet, the plan has not been without controversy. Some local residents and businesses have voiced concerns about the displacement of traffic onto narrower side streets that may not accommodate the increased flow, raising fears about congestion and safety. Conservative Westminster councillor Tim Barnes warned of negative impacts on local communities and businesses from increased traffic on side roads, emphasizing that emergency and delivery vehicles would be forced into these smaller streets. The Soho Society echoed worries about access for individuals with mobility issues or heavy shopping loads, highlighting potential challenges for inclusivity under pedestrianisation.

Sir Sadiq Khan acknowledged these concerns, assuring that the authorities had consulted residents and would continue to work closely with local communities, retailers, and landowners to mitigate adverse effects. He emphasised the aim of restoring Oxford Street's "previous glory" as a clean, accessible, and vibrant public space. The mayor also confirmed ongoing efforts to secure additional powers from the government to better regulate licensing for al fresco dining and other activities that enhance London’s hospitality and retail sectors.

The mayor’s latest push for pedestrianisation contrasts with previous attempts to make the area traffic-free. A similar plan proposed in 2018 was blocked by the Conservative-run Westminster City Council due to strong local opposition. At that time, Sir Sadiq Khan labelled their decision a "betrayal," remaining committed to revitalising the street. More recently, in April 2025, accusations emerged of a "mayoral power grab" related to plans to shift control of Oxford Street's planning from Westminster Council to a mayoral development corporation, reflecting underlying political tensions surrounding the project.

Support from significant political figures, such as Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner, has bolstered the initiative. Rayner highlighted the pedestrianisation’s potential to "drive growth by creating new jobs, generating economic activity, and giving a much-needed boost to London’s night-time economy." This aligns with the mayor’s vision of a revitalised Oxford Street as an internationally renowned, world-class destination.

The project’s implementation hinges on securing government approval and finalising detailed traffic management plans, particularly to manage bus routes and emergency vehicle access. Sir Sadiq Khan has expressed intent to proceed as quickly as possible once permissions are granted, underscoring the urgency to address Oxford Street’s economic and social challenges.

Overall, the one-day car-free trial on Oxford Street offers a tangible glimpse of a future where London's renowned shopping street is safer, cleaner, and more welcoming for pedestrians. Whether this vision fully materialises will depend on balancing the varied interests of local residents, businesses, and visitors, alongside overcoming political hurdles and logistical challenges inherent in such a large-scale urban redevelopment.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c9dxxn43zg5o?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c9dxxn43zg5o?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/business/retail-consumer/londons-oxford-street-go-traffic-free-shopping-area-makeover-says-mayor-2025-06-16/), [[3]](https://www.itv.com/news/london/2025-06-17/sir-sadiq-khan-to-pedestrianise-oxford-street-as-quickly-as-possible), [[6]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx244r3n50xo)
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## Bibliography

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2. <https://www.reuters.com/business/retail-consumer/londons-oxford-street-go-traffic-free-shopping-area-makeover-says-mayor-2025-06-16/> - In June 2025, London Mayor Sadiq Khan announced plans to pedestrianise Oxford Street, aiming to rejuvenate the area and create a world-class, accessible hub for shopping, leisure, and outdoor events. The proposal received majority support from Londoners and businesses during a public consultation. Inspired by successful transformations like Times Square in New York and La Rambla in Barcelona, the initiative seeks to attract more visitors and boost economic activity. The plan involves banning vehicles from a 0.7-mile stretch between Oxford Circus and Marble Arch, with potential for further changes towards Tottenham Court Road. Implementation depends on obtaining necessary legislation and identifying alternative routes for buses currently using the street. The project is expected to cost about £150 million, with funding from local businesses, private investors, and new revenue streams. The pedestrianisation aims to create a beautiful public space, improve tourism, attract investment, and generate employment. The plan has been in development for over two decades and is seen as a response to the decline of Oxford Street, which has faced challenges such as the closure of major retail stores and competition from online shopping. The initiative is part of a broader effort to revitalise central London and make it more pedestrian-friendly.
3. <https://www.itv.com/news/london/2025-06-17/sir-sadiq-khan-to-pedestrianise-oxford-street-as-quickly-as-possible> - In June 2025, London Mayor Sadiq Khan announced plans to pedestrianise Oxford Street, aiming to implement the changes 'as quickly as possible' due to strong support from Londoners. A public consultation revealed that two-thirds (66%) of respondents support the pedestrianisation plan. Oxford Street, one of the world's busiest shopping areas with around half a million visitors daily, has faced challenges such as the closure of major retail stores and competition from online shopping. The plan involves banning vehicles from a 0.7-mile stretch between Oxford Circus and Marble Arch, with potential for further changes towards Tottenham Court Road. Detailed proposals for traffic management will be consulted on later this year. The initiative aims to rejuvenate the area, attract more visitors, and boost economic activity. The project depends on obtaining necessary legislation and identifying alternative routes for buses currently using the street. The plan has been in development for over two decades and is seen as a response to the decline of Oxford Street.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx27rn5d02po> - In April 2025, London's Mayor Sadiq Khan faced accusations of a 'power grab' over plans to pedestrianise Oxford Street. The proposal involves using new planning powers to take control of the central London area away from Westminster City Council to facilitate the street's pedestrianisation. The Labour mayor stated that 'urgent action is needed' to boost the area and deliver a 'world-class, accessible, clean avenue.' However, Andrew Boff, chair of the planning and regeneration committee for the London Assembly, expressed deep concern, describing the move as a 'power grab' from the mayor to take away power from local residents. The consultation into the changes was nearing completion at the time of the report.
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-44405730> - In July 2018, Westminster City Council confirmed that plans to pedestrianise Oxford Street had been 'taken off the table for good.' The council's leader stated that 'the majority of its residents' were against the proposals to make the area traffic-free. Mayor of London Sadiq Khan described the decision as a 'betrayal' and stated that he 'won't walk away from Oxford Street,' expressing concerns that the move 'poses a real threat to the future' of the road. The pedestrianisation was backed in a public consultation and was seen as one of Mr Khan's flagship policies at the time.
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx244r3n50xo> - In September 2024, London Mayor Sadiq Khan announced plans to pedestrianise part of Oxford Street, stating that 'urgent action' is needed to regenerate the famous high street, which has been affected by a shift to online shopping and the Covid-19 pandemic. The proposal involves pedestrianising a 0.7-mile stretch between Oxford Circus and Marble Arch, with the potential for further changes towards Tottenham Court Road. The plan, which was blocked by the previous Conservative-controlled Westminster City Council for its unpopularity with residents, has received backing from Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner, who stated that the pedestrianisation 'will drive growth by creating new jobs, generating economic activity, and giving a much-needed boost to London’s night-time economy.'
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx24414r967o> - In September 2024, London's Mayor Sadiq Khan faced opposition to his resurrected plan to ban traffic from part of Oxford Street. The proposals include pedestrianising the stretch between Marble Arch and Oxford Circus, with potential restrictions introduced further east towards Tottenham Court Road. This follows the Labour mayor's previous attempt to pedestrianise part of the world-famous shopping street in 2018, which was blocked by the then-Conservative local authority. The Conservatives argue that the plan will be unpopular and that Khan is 'forcing things through.' Oxford Street is one of the world's busiest shopping areas, with about half a million visitors on average every day. Khan believes the plans will help revive the area, which has suffered the effects of big-name shop closures in recent years such as Debenhams and House of Fraser.