# TfL gains control of Oxford Street amid local opposition to pedestrianisation plan



Transport for London (TfL) is set to assume control of Oxford Street as the designated highway authority from 20 September 2025, marking a clear push by the Greater London Authority to turn this iconic shopping street into a highly restricted pedestrian zone. The move, rooted in the Highways Act 1980, Section 14B, is presented as a step towards ‘improving’ the area through a £150 million scheme that aims to reduce traffic and boost the leisure experience—yet it raises serious questions about accountability and the true beneficiaries of such policies.

The transfer follows behind-the-scenes negotiations that reveal a troubling disregard for local voices, particularly Westminster City Council’s objections. Conservative members have condemned the decision as lacking transparency, criticizing the GLA for rushing ahead without meaningful consultation—especially given the vital role Oxford Street plays for local businesses and residents, many of whom stand to suffer from increased restrictions on vehicular access. The council’s cabinet member, Daniel Astaire, reportedly halted work on the pedestrianisation, claiming that the proposals lacked sufficient detail and refused to endorse the plan—a move that underscores the deep tensions between Westminster’s local authority and the centralising ambitions of Sadiq Khan’s administration.

Despite these disagreements, legislative powers appear skewed in favor of the GLA. Under Section 14B(5) of the Highways Act 1980, Westminster’s refusal to consent is unlikely to hold much weight; the GLA can still appeal directly to the Secretary of State. With the UK government’s outward support for the scheme, Westminster’s opposition might well be rendered symbolic—an inconvenient obstacle rather than a substantive barrier. A report from Westminster itself admits that rejecting the GLA’s request would bear little consequence without government backing, highlighting the edge that overarching London authorities now hold over local councils.

While TfL claims to be committed to working “collaboratively,” the reality suggests a top-down approach aimed at imposing an ambitious, centralised vision that sidelines local concerns. The push for pedestrianisation echoes broader efforts to enforce sustainable transport policies, but one wonders at what cost to community engagement and economic vitality. The ongoing political friction around Oxford Street exposes the broader dilemma of unchecked authority being wielded in the name of ‘progress,’ often at the expense of the very communities these plans are supposed to serve.

This controversy is emblematic of the troubling trend toward centralised decision-making in London, where political elites prioritize their grand visions over local needs. As the April 2025 handover looms, questions remain about how effectively these plans will be executed, and whether the genuine interests of residents and small businesses will be adequately protected amid the push for ‘green’ urban utopias that may ultimately do more harm than good.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/sadiq-khan-oxford-street-mayor-pedestrianisation-plans-westminster-b1248374.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/sadiq-khan-oxford-street-mayor-pedestrianisation-plans-westminster-b1248374.html> - An article from The Standard reports on the transfer of control of Oxford Street to the Greater London Authority (GLA), enabling plans for partial pedestrianisation between Selfridges and Ikea. The move, effective from 20 September 2025, allows Transport for London (TfL) to manage the street, including maintenance and traffic management. The article highlights opposition from Westminster City Council's Conservative members, who argue that the decision was made without proper scrutiny. The handover is seen as a step towards the mayor's £150 million plan to transform Oxford Street into a pedestrian-friendly area.
3. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/14B> - The official UK government website provides the text of Section 14B of the Highways Act 1980, which outlines the procedures for designating highways as Greater London Authority (GLA) roads. It specifies that an order under this section is of no effect unless it is made with the consent of the relevant highway authority or, if that consent is refused, is confirmed by the Secretary of State. This section is pertinent to the transfer of Oxford Street's control to the GLA, as discussed in the article from The Standard.
4. <https://fitzrovianews.com/2025/09/11/westminster-council-criticised-for-oxford-street-handover/> - The Fitzrovia News reports on criticism directed at Westminster City Council for agreeing to transfer control of Oxford Street to the GLA. The council's report stated that refusing the GLA's request would be futile, given the government's support for the project. The article highlights concerns about the council's decision-making process and the implications for local residents and businesses.
5. <https://www.wired-gov.net/wg/news.nsf/articles/tfl%2Bbecomes%2Bhighway%2Bauthority%2Bfor%2Boxford%2Bstreet%2Bas%2Bmayor%2Bmoves%2Bahead%2Bwith%2Bpedestrianisation%2Bproposal%2B18092025092000?open=> - A press release from Transport for London (TfL) announces that TfL will become the highway authority for Oxford Street from 20 September 2025. This change follows discussions between Westminster City Council and the GLA and is a step towards the mayor's plans to pedestrianise Oxford Street. The press release outlines the responsibilities TfL will assume and the collaborative efforts with Westminster City Council to implement the transformation.
6. <https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/oxford-street-16> - The London Assembly's response to a question about Oxford Street's status as a GLA road indicates that Westminster City Council is the current highway authority. It notes that the use of Section 261 powers requires either the consent of the current highway authority or the consent of the Secretary of State for Transport if the proposed move of responsibility is contested by the local authority. This information is relevant to the discussions about transferring control of Oxford Street to the GLA.
7. <https://www.transport-network.co/Westminster-rejects-Oxford-Street-pedestrianisation/15008> - An article from Transport Network reports on Westminster City Council's rejection of plans to pedestrianise Oxford Street. The council's cabinet member for Oxford Street, Daniel Astaire, informed officials to stop working on the pedestrianisation plan, stating that there was no acceptable proposal. The article highlights the challenges in implementing the pedestrianisation scheme and the council's decision to halt progress on the project.