# London’s Oxford Street pedestrianisation plans face skepticism over safety, economy, and practicality



A purported vision to pedestrianise Oxford Street is once again being championed by London’s Mayor, who seems more focused on virtue-signaling than practical urban management. The ongoing schemes, including a one-day trial recently staged, aim to turn this historic shopping artery into a vehicle-free zone stretching from Oxford Circus to Marble Arch—with calls for further expansion—despite clear warnings about the real costs involved. This grand plan promises to transform what remains one of the world’s most congested and traffic-choked streets into a supposed haven for pedestrians, but the reality is far more complex and troubling.

Proponents cling to the idea that reducing vehicles will “improve” public safety and air quality. Yet, the data released by City Hall paints a less optimistic picture: Oxford Street, despite heavy bus traffic—175,000 boarding or alighting daily plus tens of thousands passing through—has suffered from numerous injuries and fatalities, highlighting how traffic displacement might simply push danger elsewhere. The safety concerns aren’t only academic; they point to a fundamental flaw in optimistic visions that imagine removing traffic without considering the chaotic rerouting and congestion that often follow, especially in already bustling, narrow side streets.

The plans may sound appealing in theory—more outdoor dining, vibrant street life, and a boost to local economies—yet these ambitions overlook the deeper economic realities of recent years. Once generating billions annually, Oxford Street has struggled amid pandemic closures and the shift to online shopping. The Mayor’s focus appears to be on superficial image and new “vibrant” spaces rather than tackling the core economic challenges that threaten the street’s future. Promises of outdoor events and leisure activities overlook the fact that many businesses on Oxford Street are already under pressure and may not benefit from pedestrian corridors if they come at the expense of vehicle access.

The opposition voices are mounting, highlighting serious concerns about the logistics and unintended consequences of such dramatic reforms. Redirecting traffic is no simple task—criticisms from local businesses, transport operators, and residents warn that the new routing could clog surrounding streets, worsen pollution levels in neighboring districts, and alienate those who depend heavily on accessible transportation. Conservative councillors and transport experts have pointed out that pushing vehicles into narrower side streets risks simply shifting the congestion problem rather than solving it.

Added to these challenges are questions of inclusivity and accessibility. Disabled residents and visitors rely heavily on public transport, and the removal of vehicle access without detailed, careful planning risks marginalizing vulnerable groups. Inclusion London and advocates for accessible transport emphasize the importance of establishing clearly defined bus routes and accessible pick-up points—elements often overlooked in grand urban plans driven more by political symbolism than practical needs.

Public opinion, often cited by advocates as support for pedestrianisation, should be viewed with caution. While a significant proportion claim to back the idea, many local residents, traders, and transport professionals see it as a rushed, impractical scheme rooted in political posturing rather than sound urban policy. The announced expansion of the project—aimed to cover more of the street by 2028—only underscores the scale and scope of the upheaval, raising questions about whether the supposed benefits justify the costs.

Furthermore, the transfer of highway authority responsibilities to Transport for London indicates a move towards greater centralized control, ostensibly to streamline the process. However, it also raises concerns about the long-term commitment and effectiveness of a project that seems more driven by political ideology than careful, incremental planning.

Critics from all sides warn that these pedestrianisation efforts could undermine investor confidence, encourage anti-social behaviors, and lead to higher crime rates—issues that have plagued other European cities with similar projects. The Soho Society and other local voices urge caution, warning that hasty implementation without solid safeguards could result in chaos, harming both the economy and community safety.

In reality, the push to pedestrianise Oxford Street is more about appearance than substance. It reflects a wider trend of urban activism aimed at virtue-signaling rather than delivering practical solutions. The idea that removing traffic will automatically lead to a better environment, safer streets, and economic revival is overly simplistic and dangerously naïve. This project, if pushed forward without proper consideration, risks turning one of London’s most iconic streets into a symbol of misguided planning rather than genuine progress.

While supporters dream of a “world-class” shopping street filled with outdoor cafes and entertainment, the hard truths of congestion, cost, and practicality should not be ignored. The true test will come when the realities of implementation clash with the rhetoric—something the current push seems all too eager to overlook. Rejecting shiny illusions in favor of sensible, balanced transportation solutions remains essential if we are to preserve Oxford Street’s vitality without sacrificing safety and accessibility.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.mylondon.news/news/zone-1-news/car-free-oxford-street-pedestrian-32532102> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
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 revitalise the area and attract more visitors. The proposal received majority support from Londoners and businesses during a public consultation. Inspired by successful transformations like Times Square in New York, the initiative seeks to rejuvenate the mile-long stretch into a world-class, accessible hub for shopping, leisure, and outdoor events. Despite challenges such as the closure of major retail stores, the plan is expected to boost tourism, attract investment, and generate employment. Implementation requires collaboration with the government to pass necessary legislation and identify alternative routes for buses currently using the street. The changes are to be introduced as swiftly as possible.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/oxford-street-pedestrianised-sadiq-khan-traffic-free-consultation-decision-mayor-b1233250.html> - Following a public consultation where two-thirds of respondents supported the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street, Mayor Sadiq Khan announced plans to proceed with the transformation. The changes will involve more of the road being closed to traffic than initially anticipated, extending the pedestrianised area to include the eastern section between Oxford Circus and Great Portland Street. The decision aims to regenerate the iconic street and improve the shopping experience, with implementation expected to take place before the end of the mayor's term in May 2028.
4. <https://www.london.gov.uk/overwhelming-support-for-mayors-oxford-street-plans> - A consultation revealed that nearly 70% of Londoners and businesses support Mayor Sadiq Khan's plans to pedestrianise Oxford Street. The initiative aims to regenerate the area, improve visitor experience, and enable new leisure offerings. Major businesses, including Selfridges, John Lewis, and Ikea, have welcomed the plans, which are expected to boost retail and drive growth for London and the wider UK economy. Detailed traffic and highway proposals will be developed to pedestrianise the section of road between Orchard Street and Oxford Circus up to Great Portland Street, with consultations to be published later this year.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/oxford-street-pedestrianisation-sadiq-khan-mayoral-development-corporation-crime-westminster-council-b1220312.html> - Concerns have been raised about the potential impact of pedestrianising Oxford Street on investor confidence and crime rates. The Soho Society warned that the plan could create uncertainty for developers and lead to an increase in criminal offences, citing previous instances where pedestrianisation led to such outcomes. The London Assembly was informed of these concerns, highlighting the need for careful planning and management to ensure the success of the transformation.
6. <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24201803.market-street-pedestrianisation-trial-gets-green-light/> - Oxford City Council has approved a trial to transform Market Street into a pedestrian-friendly zone, aiming to boost visitor numbers to the Covered Market and support local businesses. The trial includes improved surfacing, wider walkways, new cycle racks, and outdoor seating. The project is part of a £6.8 million regeneration of the Covered Market, with the trial set to run for 18 months, during which public and stakeholder feedback will be gathered to inform future decisions.
7. <https://www.cbre.com/insights/articles/oxford-street-reimagined-how-pedestrianisation-will-transform-londons-iconic-high-street> - Oxford Street, a vital retail location in Britain, has faced challenges such as the closure of major department stores and increased vacancy rates. However, the area is witnessing a positive turnaround, with new brands expanding and the upcoming opening of an IKEA store. The renewed aspirations to pedestrianise parts of Oxford Street are expected to further support this momentum, potentially transforming the street into a more vibrant and attractive destination for shoppers and visitors.