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Dear Simon,

Re: Response ANON-RQ8R-53SZ-2 to the consultation on Hampstead High Street Public Realm Improvements

Thank you for your invitation to respond to the consultation on public realm works in Hampstead. We respond both as councillors for Hampstead Town ward and as residents of Hampstead Village; we live on Hampstead High Street, Perrins Court, and Fitzjohn's Avenue respectively and understand the everyday consequences of these proposed changes.

We support the majority of the proposals, but strongly oppose the replacement of the zebra crossing with a controlled crossing, which would have a deleterious effect on Hampstead Village.

Furthermore, we believe that these changes cannot take place in a vacuum and a bold plan for Hampstead that includes renovating Greenhill itself, reducing rat-running, and restricting HGVs would likely to lead to better results and reduced costs long-term. We further note our disappointment that the scheme does not link into the proposals at the junction of Heath Street and East Heath Road and also the possible works on New End.

We are especially guided in this submission by reference to the Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan¹ and to the Council's Planning Guidance on Town Centres, which includes the designated Hampstead Town Centre.² We are further indebted to the Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum for making available to us the results of their traffic survey. We have considered their findings before compiling our response, but urge the Council to read their findings closely.

Change in number of westbound lanes

We support altering the lines on the High Street to denote two northwest-bound lanes instead of one. This is a necessary means to increase capacity at this junction, and will reduce tailbacks and thus improve air quality and traffic flows. However, we qualify this

¹ Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum (2018): "[Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2033](#)"

² Camden Council (March 2018): "[CPG Town Centres](#)"

support by noting that increasing junction capacity comes with downsides that require specific examination.

In particular, we believe the London Ambulance Service must be specifically consulted in detail on this proposal to ensure the doubling of capacity northwest-bound does not limit ambulances' ability to navigate the junction while on a call. The freer flow in ordinary circumstances must be balanced against the reduced capability of drivers to pull over to allow ambulances' passage, and we advise significant weight to be given to the London Ambulance Service's views.

We note that paragraph 6.17 of the Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan states:

“Where an increase in vehicle traffic is unavoidable and cannot otherwise be mitigated, then public realm or public transport improvements which aim to achieve corresponding reductions in vehicle usage elsewhere in the Plan Area should be delivered through the use of planning obligations, so that development does not lead to a net increase in motor vehicle usage.”

Increasing the capacity of the road junction will have the effect of increasing vehicle usage via the A502, and therefore we ask that offsetting mechanisms are introduced elsewhere in the Plan area.

Change in zebra crossing

We strongly and unequivocally oppose changing the zebra crossing to a controlled crossing. All three of us use this zebra crossing every day and recognise its importance to welding together the two sides of Hampstead High Street.

It is a busy pedestrian thoroughfare, and by directly connecting Oriel Place to Flask Walk, it provides a direct pedestrian route from one side of Hampstead Village to the other. Camden's Planning Guidance on Town Centres notes that 'it is key [for public realm improvements] to ensure Camden's centres are pleasant, safe, and convenient places to walk', and we believe the thoroughfare guaranteed by the zebra crossing is essential to ensuring that.

These public realm improvements are, in part, motivated by significant through traffic, which has increased in recent years. We expect the use of Heath Street and the High Street as a through route for traffic from Barnet to increase if Cycle Superhighway 11 were to proceed.

This through traffic has had a detrimental impact on the character of Hampstead Village. Its name perseveres because it does remain a 'village' in distinctive character and appeal, but we believe replacing the zebra crossing with a controlled crossing will effectively sever it in two. This will make it more time-consuming and difficult for residents or visitors to visit multiple shops. Uniting the two sides of the street is essential to ensuring the continued patronage of local shops rather than simply going to a supermarket.

Traffic light crossings prioritise vehicles leaving pedestrians waiting for the lights to change before crossing. Where there is a long delay, pedestrians cross on green lights, leading to

increased numbers of deaths and serious injuries at controlled crossings compared to zebra crossings. The delay can be so bad on Heath Street – at the western end of Oriol Place – that pedestrians wait two lines deep to cross. This crowding causes problems for pedestrians walking along the pavement.

The crossing is, furthermore, used by a very large number of protected persons, including children – as Hampstead has the highest concentration of schools in the country – and older residents. Camden’s Planning Guidance on Town Centres commits the Council to ‘inclusive town centre environments, which are able to meet the needs of all’, and we believe this may not be the case if the proposal goes ahead.

According to the 2011 Census, Hampstead Town also has the highest average age of any ward in Camden. 8% of our residents are over the age of 75: again, by far the highest proportion in Camden, ahead of neighbouring Frognal & Fitzjohns.³ Nearby Henderson Court and Monro House are large retirement and care properties, as is the under-development 79 Fitzjohn’s Avenue, and ensuring their inhabitants can cross easily is essential.

This is why the use of zebra crossings is enshrined via the Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan and the Hampstead Conservation Area Statement. The Neighbourhood Plan states at paragraph 6.35 that ‘the use of zebra crossings is encouraged as the first-line option for pedestrian crossings with the Plan Area’. As such, there is a rebuttable presumption that zebra crossings are superior for maintenance of the character, and this has the legal status of Camden planning policy.

Because of the above, we strongly oppose the replacement of the zebra crossing with a controlled crossing. In our canvassing of local opinion, this has been as near to the unanimous view of Hampstead residents as we think possible.

Diagonal crossing across Heath Street

We support introducing a diagonal crossing across Heath Street. As per the above, one of the main objectives of any changes to the public realm should be to sew together the parts of Hampstead Village and especially its town centre into one united whole. We believe that introducing a diagonal crossing will make this easier and reduce any practical and psychological divide between one side of Heath Street and the other.

We further believe that this will reduce the number of individual pedestrian movements required and ease traffic flow as a consequence. Although fewer vehicles progress up Holly Hill from the High Street than progress either left or right onto Heath Street, reducing the demand for that access route onto Holly Hill by facilitating a diagonal crossing would allow more flexibility in signalling and traffic movements.

We further note that the diagonal crossing will require longer to cross the road and this needs to be reflected in the phasing of traffic lights – especially as, as noted above,

³ Nomisweb (2011): “[Table KS102EW – Age structure](#)”

Hampstead has a large concentration of elderly residents and school children. We ask that this be reflected in the traffic light phasing.

Modify parking restrictions

We note the need to improve bus flows, but are concerned that large lorry and HGV traffic will increase as a necessary consequence as well. This outcome would be contrary to the draft Clean Air Plan and to objectives of the Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan.

Paragraph 6.15 of the Neighbourhood Plan notes the duty to develop 'creative solutions which avoid increases in motor vehicle traffic', while paragraph 6.16 and 6.17 require that any works that increase motor vehicle traffic – as these undoubtedly would – are accompanied by works nearby to reduce traffic such that there is not a net increase in motor vehicle usage across the Plan's area. These proposed public realm works do not include offsetting proposals and therefore fall foul of the Plan.

We note the potential structural instability of the Greenhill embankment, leading to its requiring buttressing in recent times. Given the importance of those parking spaces, we would welcome a solution that would maintain use of those parking spaces while keeping users of the spaces safe. We urge the Council and Transport for London to explore all engineering options to reduce the risk of structural collapse as part of holistic works in the area.

We have met with Council officers, the Heath & Hampstead Society, and Transport for London and set out an alternative that would potentially avoid any loss in parking, improve the road width, and improve the amenity space: giving long-term benefits. The Council and TfL supported the proposal at the time, but did not want to progress it for cost reasons. This is disappointing and short-sighted, given the increased works and costs to patch repair the retaining wall.

The availability of parking spaces adjacent to Greenhill is essential to ensuring the shops located between Gayton Road and Pilgrim's Lane remain viable. As a result, we have met and discussed an alteration to the scheme that would avoid restricting the parking in front of Greenhill. We are disappointed that there was no coordination between this scheme and repairs that could have facilitated this at minimal cost.

We further noted as part of our discussion with the Council regarding Greenhill that changes need to be made to the roadway on Greenhill itself (on top of the embankment). This is extremely dangerous for pedestrians and is used as a rat run. We ask that this be modelled into the scheme and potential changes made to the roadway of Greenhill itself as well as part of this review to increase cost-effectiveness and reduce duplication.

Further comments

We welcome the introduction of a cycle lane on Heath Street and the introduction of advanced stop line 'bike boxes' on the northern side of the junction (southbound) and the

north-western end of the High Street. Some of the turns at the junction are sharp – especially that from the High Street onto Heath Street southbound (as practised, for example, by the 46 bus) – and ensuring cyclists have priority will significantly reduce the probability of accident.

We welcome the widening of the footway by Holly Hill. Currently, the footway is far too narrow, as it does not allow pedestrians to comfortably pass other pedestrians that are waiting at the traffic lights. It further makes it an uninviting streetscape for commercial premises, and contributes in part to the divide between Hampstead Village's commercial premises south of the Heath Street/High Street junction and those north of it.

We urge further public realm works to be done to close that divide, and to develop solutions that make Heath Street safer for pedestrians, given the difficulties that wider vehicles – such as buses – pose when navigating a narrow street with narrow pavements. The proposal as set out fails to address this.

Further work and analysis is required including looking at alternative proposals that reconcile Transport for London's demands with wider Council policies – including the Neighbourhood Plan, the Town Centres planning guidance, and the Clean Air framework – as these appear to have been looked at in isolation, not as a whole. This all needs to be shared with us as local councillors and with the Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum so that we have a better understanding what the longer-term effect of these proposals and others will be and can offer ideas as to how to mitigate their harm, as required by the policy framework.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Oliver Cooper



Cllr Maria Higson



Cllr Stephen Stark

Conservative councillors for Hampstead Town