



## **Press release**

**23rd March 2009**

### **HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB CONSERVATION AREA TO BE DESPOILED WITH A £40,000 UNNECESSARY ZEBRA CROSSING TO SATISFY SEVEN PEOPLE**

Lack of response from 740 Hampstead Garden Suburb residents has been taken by Barnet Council as justification for endorsing its plan to install a zebra crossing – with zig-zags, flashing beacons and probably uprooting an established street tree – in a residential street within the Hampstead Garden Suburb conservation area.

As part of the Brookland School Travel Plans, parents of the roughly 600 children at the two schools were asked for their suggestions. Six parents of children attending the Junior School and one Infant School parent suggested a zebra crossing in Ossulton Way.

Residents Association Chairman David Lewis says “We have seen no evidence that families are in danger crossing this road. The Council’s own records show no incidents, even “slight” at this location.

“Our own sample observations on two school mornings revealed that seven and eight families crossed the road on their way to school within a half hour period. In about a quarter of the cases, the road was clear. In about half the cases, oncoming cars stopped to allow the families to cross. In the remaining cases the families had to wait up to 5 seconds for a stream of 3-5 cars to pass before the road became clear to cross.

“Saving 5 seconds for two or three families is not a sufficient reason to spend £40,000 of our money and despoil the conservation area.”

The proposal includes the removal of the existing central refuge. Ossulton Way resident John Hughes said “The central refuge currently slows the speeding traffic down. Its removal will make it more, not less, dangerous to cross the road. This was what happened on the Finchley Road at Temple Fortune. Barnet put in a pedestrian crossing instead of a central refuge near the junction with Willifield Way which resulted in a number of incidents, one of them involving personal injury. As a result, Barnet restored the central refuge.”

“We question the entire decision-taking process and the weight given to residents’ views” said David Lewis.

The Residents Association has been supplied with a copy of the Council’s decision letter. Bizarrely, this “decision letter” is written BY a council officer TO Councillor Harper, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport and does not seek his consent to the proposal.

The letter reveals that Barnet sent out consultation letters to 780 local residents to gauge their views on this and other proposals arising from the Brookland School Travel Plans. Only 43 people - roughly 5% - responded and, of those just 31 people supported the overall proposals (not specifically the crossing).



Derek Epstein, the Residents Association's conservation spokesman added: "I don't think anyone would need a PhD in statistics to accept that Barnet's consultation failed to demonstrate a level of public support for their proposal that was statistically significant."

"The Council disregarded a 1,000 signature petition opposing the Temple Fortune CPZ but now gives great weight to a request by seven residents and views expressed by 31 people among 780 consulted. It is clear that the wishes of the majority of residents is actually of no interest; the Council will simply do what it wants to do."

"At the RA's suggestion, Barnet carried out observations to establish whether there is a genuine need. However, the Council's "decision letter" contains no mention of those observations. And the results of the observations, now supplied to us, simply record the – relatively low – number of pedestrians who crossed the road. Not a word about whether any of them suffered any risk or any inconvenience by being unduly delayed."

"This proposal involves a huge waste of money, including the replacement of street lamps which have years of life in them, material visual damage to the conservation area and possibly increased danger from speeding cars - all in response to requests from 7 parents who want to avoid waiting 5 seconds for traffic to clear before they can cross the road safely."

"The Residents Association shares the same concerns and objectives as the Council - road safety, conservation and minimising public expenditure - and, on behalf of our members, we need Barnet to demonstrate to us that those issues are properly considered in reaching decisions on matters that affect the Garden Suburb and its residents. The Ossulton Way example vividly demonstrates that this is not currently the case."

"This decision appears to have been rubber-stamped by Councillor Harper, one of the Garden Suburb's ward councillors, without questioning the validity of a superficial report (or "decision"?) from officers."

"We will be asking Councillor Harper to reassess the Ossulton Way proposal based on a balanced evaluation of the need and a fair reflection of residents' wishes. If this is refused, we will sadly be forced to conclude that the entire consultation and decision-taking process is a sham."

Ends

For further information, contact:

David Lewis, Chairman: [chairman@hgs.org.uk](mailto:chairman@hgs.org.uk) 8458 0876

Derek Epstein, Chairman Conservation & Amenities: [consam@hgs.org.uk](mailto:consam@hgs.org.uk) 8211 4648