

Consultation on Proposed road safety improvements Westbere Road – Hampstead School

To: Steve Hands

CC: Simi Shah

This response to the consultation on proposed road safety improvements Westbere Road – Hampstead School is from Camden Cycling Campaign, the local borough group of London Cycling Campaign. We represent the interests of cyclists living or working in the Camden and aim to expand the opportunities for all to cycle safely in the borough. We have discussed this consultation by email and online (using Cyclescape).

Introduction

We note from the consultation:

- that on weekdays 95% of vehicles are exceeding the 20mph limited with 55% exceeding 25mph; this is a really severe case of speeding;
- but there is no information as to the volume of motor traffic. Traffic volumes are key, assuming that the safety of people who cycle is of concern;
- that the stated aims are:
 - to reduce the vehicle speeds in the vicinity of the school
 - and to improve road safety for pedestrians with a focus on the children and young people traveling to and from the Hampstead School site.

Why isn't the safety of people cycling to school a consideration?

- and that Camden proposes the following changes
 - build out the footway on the north side of Westbere Road outside the school to reduce the carriageway width;
 - option to build some rain gardens;
 - build raised tables on the informal pedestrian crossing point at the north end of the School and on the zebra crossing further south to reduce the vehicle speeds.

Our main comment on the proposals

At the quarterly meeting with officers in autumn 2017, CCC were told about a scheme in Fortune Green to improve the area and to eliminate rat running around Hampstead School and to make it safer to cycle to and from the school. This scheme would have included modal filtering of motor traffic, possibly using bus gates. We are very disappointed that a scheme which would have substantially reduced motor traffic volumes has been severely diluted.

Objective 2 of the Draft Transport Strategy is to reduce car ownership and use, and motor traffic levels in Camden. Measure 2j (ii) refers to permanent/timed restrictions on residential streets where there are known problems of 'rat running' and through motor traffic while maintaining access for local people and cyclists (filtered permeability).

The speeding in Westbere Road is a known problem of 'rat running' and it is classified as a local road so is not an essential through route. Ideally we would like to see an area-wide modal filtering scheme as originally suggested.

Failing this, Hampstead School needs at least a Healthy School Street through which no motor traffic apart from buses can pass during the school arrival and departure hours.

The best way to slow the motor traffic passing the school would be to narrow the road by putting in stepped cycle tracks on both sides of the road. This slowing of speeds would enable safe walking and cycling to/from school.

Specific comments on the proposals

Anyone cycling to and from Hampstead School will be accompanied by a substantial load of rat-running motor traffic that is travelling right through Westbere Road.

They will experience the following hazards:

- those cycling from the north will be confronted by a pinch point at the first wide build out. They are expected to pull out with fast moving motor vehicles behind them; these vehicles have been driving at 30 mph on Lichfield Road and are only just approaching the first raised table;
- those cycling south from the school will soon encounter the point where the road widens and then they have to enter a pinch point by the zebra crossing. Drivers may feel tempted to try to pass them here;
- and those cycling towards the school from Menelik Road will be forced into a pinch point by the zebra crossing;
- those cycling north from the school will cross into Barnet where they will be overtaken by a stream of motor vehicles.

Such conditions are totally unsuitable for an unaccompanied 12-year old cycling to school. Nor do they conform to the objectives of Camden's Draft Transport strategy, which includes:

Objective 1: To transform our streets and places to enable an increase in walking and cycling.

An increase in cycling must depend on making the roads less threatening to cycle on, whereas these proposals can be viewed as adding to the risks that cyclists face on Westbere Road.

We therefore object to the proposals as being inadequate and possibly even counter-productive.

Please acknowledge receipt of this response. We would be very happy to discuss any aspect of our comments; contact details are below.

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