

Submission in response to Wood Green AAP Regulation 18 Preferred Option Consultation Draft, February 2017

Submitted by and on behalf of affected residents

Re: Proposed demolition of residential properties on Caxton Road and Mayes Rd.

We wish to register in the strongest terms **our objections to the proposals in the Wood Green AAP relating to the demolition of existing residential properties on Caxton Road and Mayes Rd.** Many of the broader points we propose here also apply to other areas within the AAP where existing housing will be lost, however for the purposes of clarity we limit our observations here to the Caxton Road/Mayes Rd site areas identified in the plans of the AAP.

The proposals set out in the AAP entail the demolition of all the residences on Caxton Rd (nos.1-19); a significant portion of the residences on Mayes Rd (nos.86-98 and 63-81); and Coburg Rd (nos.11 and 13). Although the plans do not make this explicit, this **will result in the loss of approximately 100 homes**, and the permanent dispersal of their inhabitants. This is justified in the AAP on three main grounds: (1) expanding the existing retail area (the creation of a new town square); (2) creating a new East-West corridor linking the High Street and the proposed new commercial/residential area in the Cultural Quarter/Heartlands; and (3) opening up a view of Alexandra Palace, to encourage shoppers on the High Street towards this new area.

Setting aside for a moment the obvious distress these proposals have caused the affected residents, and the moral objections that can be raised against the forced destruction of family homes in the interests of expanding a retail area, it is our contention that the redevelopment objectives of the Wood Green AAP can be achieved without recourse to the drastic measure of knocking down existing housing stock on the streets identified. As outlined in detail below, we believe that **creative modifications of the existing plans will allow for the retention of the existing residential properties** without compromising the fundamental objectives of the redevelopment scheme. Further, we believe that the **destruction of existing housing stock contradicts many of the stated aims and priorities of the Wood Green AAP**, and as such has no place within the scheme.

In the text that follows we:

- Outline our key objections to the plans for Caxton Rd and Mayes Rd
- Suggest proposals for amendments to these plans
- Register our wider concerns with the process of consultation

1. The destruction of housing is unnecessary; modifications to development plans can be made to avoid this outcome

In addition to creating a larger retail area (the new town square and market) the plans for WGS A8 and WGS A9 (covering the Caxton Rd/Mayes Rd area) are justified on the grounds of creating a new east-west route linking the High Rd and Heartlands; and opening up a view of Alexandra Palace. We contend that **neither of these rationales justifies the destruction of homes**, and further, that **modifications to the plans could easily be made to achieve the desired outcomes by other means**. We take each point in turn below:

A. Creation of an East-West corridor

The AAP proposes to create a new east-west corridor linking the High Road, proposed new town square, and Heartlands area. This can be achieved without the destruction of existing housing. Indeed, the current development plans in fact **already contain two routes that will create just such a linkage** between the specified areas:

(i) The development of Station Road, which would connect the north end of the High Road to the north end of the Heartlands/cultural quarter area

(ii) The development of a new street network 'within the [current] site of the Mall extending Hornsey Park Rd and Park Ridings as pedestrianized streets with a perpendicular route linking the new town square with Wood Green High Rd further south' (p73).

Option (ii) above, in other words, already creates an east-west connection of the High Rd and new town square to the Heartlands/cultural quarter area at a more southerly point of the High Rd. This route is **less than 50 yards from the proposed east-west corridor that would involve the demolition of all the houses on Caxton Rd and a significant proportion of the houses on Mayes Rd**.

It is our contention therefore that it is wholly unnecessary to create an east-west corridor in the manner proposed. **Alternatives could include:**

- (a) Creating a route using the **existing unused and non-residential land adjacent to Caxton Rd** (currently comprising the car park at the back of the Hub plus the unused parcel of wasteland on the corner of Caxton and Mayes Rd). This route would run from the unused land adjacent to Caxton Rd, cross Mayes Rd at the point where it is opposite Brook Rd; and go along Brook Rd to Coburg Rd at the heart of the Heartlands development. This route has several advantages: it would not involve the destruction of any residential properties; Brook Road is already marked as on the east-west route and does not have any current residential use; the area at the junction of Mayes Rd and Brooks Rd is designated for retail development, and so would suggest a more 'consistent' route from retail to retail (the new shopping plaza towards the retail end of Mayes Rd). ***See Annex 1: Map: Route (A)***

- (b) Creating a route using the **existing unused and non-residential land adjacent to Caxton Rd, turning right onto Mayes Rd, and left onto Coburg Rd**, without destruction of the residential properties. *See Annex 1: Map: Route (B)*
- (c) Creating a straight route that **cuts through only the existing unused and/or industrial sites sitting between the back of the High Rd and the entrance to the tunnel on Coburg Rd**. This route would just clip the back gardens of the houses on Mayes Rd, but would not involve the demolition of existing houses. *See Annex 1: Maps: Straight Route*
- (d) Making the Hornsey Rd-Park Ridings connection the principal route. As the development plans acknowledge, this route would **‘[reinforce] the existing historic street pattern’** (p73) and therefore seems more appropriate (aesthetically, historically and in terms of the natural flow of the street-scape) than a route that involves demolishing and fundamentally altering the ‘historic street pattern’.

For maps and assessment of the alternative routes proposed, see Annex A

B. Achieving a view of Alexandra Palace

The AAP’s plans for WGS8 entail knocking down existing nineteenth century housing stock in order to ‘[enable] a view of Alexandra Palace from the new square’ (p71). **We fundamentally reject any plan that prioritises a view (for shoppers) above the right of local residents to remain in their homes.** Further, the development plans emphasise not the aesthetic merits of the view *per se*, but rather its ‘role in drawing the attention of visitors to Wood Green High Rd towards the western extension of the Town Centre towards Heartlands’ (p89). In other words, the view serves to draw visiting shoppers/consumers from one retail area to another. This **does not constitute a reasonable justification for demolishing local residents’ homes**, not least when the planning document itself acknowledges that ‘There are numerous views of Alexandra Palace through the AAP area’ (p20).

We further **contest the assumption that the demolition of the houses identified would achieve the desired view** since:

(i) The High Rd stands at 23.2m above sea level, Caxton Rd at 21.8m, and Alexandra Palace at 89.9m. From street level at the back of the houses on Caxton Rd, it is currently **barely possible to see Alexandra Palace**. This would be the line of sight from the proposed new town square, approximately 66.7m below the Palace.

(ii) The view of Alexandra Palace from the direction of the proposed square **can only be achieved from an elevated vantage point, and even then, is partially obscured, and seasonal**. The best view from this location is achieved in winter. The rest of the time, leaves on the trees obscure the view, with the exception of the broadcast tower. **Annex 2, Photo 1** illustrates the best view achieved from the **roof level** of 15 Caxton Rd. It follows that views from street level (approx. 7m below) would achieve an inferior line of sight. The **artist’s impression of the town square**

with ‘framed’ view of Alexandra Palace is therefore inaccurate and misleading (AAP, Fig.7.14, p90).

(iii) Proposed developments in the Clarendon Road/Heartlands area allow for the construction of **tall buildings**; indeed the SWOT analysis for the Clarendon Rd area recognises as a ‘threat’ the potential obstruction of views towards Alexandra Palace (p43). This means that buildings erected in one part of the AAP could obstruct the desired view from another area of the AAP.

It is not beyond the wit of town planners **to achieve a view of Alexandra Palace by other means** – elevated areas of the proposed new square; creating a line of sight from the current site of the Morrison’s store, to suggest just a couple of alternatives.

For suggestions of alternative viewing point sites, see Annex 2, photos 2 and 3

C. Expanding the retail area

The destruction of housing in the affected area is rationalised in the AAP on the grounds of expanding the retail area in the vicinity west of the High Rd (p47). Besides **objecting to the prioritisation of retail/consumption over the rights of existing residents to remain in their homes**, we contend that the housing on Caxton Rd and Mayes Rd can be retained without significantly affecting the capacity of the AAP to deliver this objective. The AAP identifies **a whole range of options for expanding the retail offering in this area**, including creating ‘new streets to the west of the High Rd on ... the site of the Mall’, ‘activating Station Rd as part of the town centre offer’, ‘providing complementary spaces ... in the Heartlands sub-area’ and ‘redesigning currently underused sites such as Morrison’s and Mecca Bingo’ (p47). Taking into account the potential to develop the large patch of wasteland next to the Mall, plus the ‘generally vacant ... delivery yards and half-empty car parks’ west of the High Rd (p48), this is more than adequate to deliver the expansion of retail space.

2. Demolishing the housing stock on Caxton Rd and Mayes Rd contradicts the Council’s stated housing policy aims

Haringey Council recognises the need to increase housing stock in the area. The AAP scheme purports to address this need. There are, however, a number of clear inconsistencies between the stated policy aims and the AAP proposals.

The AAP makes several references to **the need for family homes**, stating, for example, that ‘there is a pressing need for larger affordable homes’, and that provisions must be made to **‘ensure that the existing family stock is not eroded’** (p75). At the same time, the proposals acknowledge that **‘the majority of [new] dwellings [built under this scheme] will tend to comprise apartments over shops’** (p75) and that new housing developments will be ‘high density and with a **high proportion of smaller (1&2 bed) units’** (p45). These, by the plan’s own admission, are **not** likely to be **suitable for families**.

Further, one of the stated aims of the AAP is ‘to improve the diversity and choice of homes’ (p75). **Demolishing** an entire street-and-a-half of varied **Victorian homes** (two-storey, three-storey, and four-storey houses, many of which have back gardens) **will not ‘improve the diversity and choice of homes’** in the area, but will **reduce choice and diminish the diversity of the streetscape**.

It is **perverse**, therefore, **to demolish the existing, good quality housing stock** on Caxton Rd and Mayes Rd, much of which is comprised precisely of that scarce commodity: **good-sized family homes** – not least when there are no assurances that like-for-like (in terms of size, outdoor space and capacity) replacements will be built (or that existing residents could afford these if they were).

We further reject the assumption in the AAP that the Wood Green Central area is ‘not suitable’ for family homes. The fact that many families have chosen to live there refutes this claim; it is precisely the excellent access to shops, amenities and transport links that attracts families to the area. The model of urban planning that pushes housing out to the periphery while retaining a mainly commercial centre has long been discredited; a mixed-use urban centre where people can live, work and enjoy the amenities is surely a better way to achieve the aspirations of the AAP.

3. The plans will break up an existing local community, contrary to the aspirations of the AAP

One of the stated aims of the AAP is ‘to support mixed and balanced communities in Wood Green’. The **Mayes Rd/Caxton Rd area already supports a ‘mixed and balanced’ community**. The housing demarcated for destruction is occupied by a mix of private renters, council tenants, and owner-occupiers, and its residents embody the demographic diversity (age, ethnicity, religion, occupation etc.) that gives Wood Green its unique character. To knock down these houses would **break up an existing local community whose residents are committed to the area**, send their children to local schools, put money into local shops and services and pay taxes to improve the local environment. Its residents would be dispersed (or in the case of council tenants “decanted”), with **no reassurances that they could continue to live in the local area to which they are committed**.

4. The destruction of a large number of Victorian houses constitutes a destruction of Haringey’s heritage assets, contradicting the AAP’s purported values

The AAP asserts that ‘[e]xisting buildings and open spaces of historic or architectural interest must be preserved or enhanced’ and that ‘all development proposals should demonstrate an understanding of the local historical environment’ (p91).

The houses on Caxton Rd and Mayes Rd earmarked for destruction were built in the earliest period of Wood Green's development in the Victorian age. The houses that now make up 86-90 Mayes Rd (Gloucester Villas), for example, were built in **1863** (the year of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Declaration), pre-dating the houses on Parkland Rd (adjoining Caxton Rd) whose 'residential character' is to be respected under the AAP (p85), and pre-dating the houses on the Noel Park estate, whose 'historic character' is to be preserved.

The plots of land now comprising Caxton Rd, Mayes Rd, Middleton Rd and what was then known as Wood Green Terrace were purchased in 1855 by one Thomas Whitaker ('gentleman') and John Ivory (a 'pianoforte maker') who were authorised to develop the land 'as building sites or other parts thereof to be dedicated to the use of the public as roads or streets'. One of these lots (lot 120) was 'set apart for an Inn, Hotel or Public House ... to be used for no other purpose' – presumably what is now Duke of Edinburgh pub (Mayes Rd) which is also singled out in the AAP for its historic value.

These houses and streets, in other words, were built at the very inception of the original nineteenth century development of Wood Green, marking a significant moment in area's history and creating the very streetscape that has been passed down to the present day. As such **they have a particular historical value.**

As the AAP's own SWOT analysis states, the 'loss of existing character/impact on heritage assets' represents a potential 'threat' (p29) of the development scheme. Indeed, the AAP does much to signal commitment to preserving 'the historical streetscape rhythm' (p68) in relation to the High Rd retail area. As the plan states, 'Wood Green contains a number of characterful terraces ... [these] are of historic value to the centre' (p72). These historical streetscape considerations should not be limited to the commercial area but **should apply equally to the residential area**, especially given that Victorian terraces are uncommon in the so-called 'residential hinterlands' of Wood Green Central.

Lastly, these nineteenth century houses on Caxton Rd and Mayes Rd have a **genuine aesthetic value that should be preserved.** This is particularly the case given that much of central Wood Green is dominated by the visually unappealing and unsympathetic buildings permitted under previous planning regimes. The area comprised by Caxton Rd, Mayes Rd and Parkland Rd stands as an island of the Victorian age surrounded by a sea of modern developments dating mainly from the 1970s to 1980s (the Mall, Morrison's supermarket etc.).

5. Concerns with the failure to offer protections or guarantees to affected residents

It is of utmost concern that the AAP offers absolutely no reassurances about what provisions will be made for residents who would be affected by the demolition of their homes. Indeed the AAP's statement on 'Decanting/Replacement of Demolished Stock' (p49) asserts that 'finding relocation opportunities is not a planning matter'. Affected residents are thus left with the vague assertion that 'there is an expectation that the increase in local housing stock

will improve the area's ability to meet housing need' (p49). There are a number of issues here:

- This is no more than a general assertion about an intention to increase housing stock overall, and is framed as an 'expectation', not a commitment or a guarantee
- There is no specific commitment that affected residents will be relocated ('decanted') to new housing developments within the area
- It does not address the issue that under the development plans, like-for-like replacement housing is not guaranteed.

As the AAP acknowledges, the majority of the new developments will be high density 1-2 bed apartments and apartments above shops, not family homes and are therefore unlikely to be suitable for many of the families affected by the demolition of their homes. From the evidence of past such regeneration schemes in London, it is likely that displaced residents will be priced out of the new housing developments.

We note that in the proposals for WGS1, other residents are singled out for some form of protection, *vis.* 'redevelopment involving the use of the travellers' site ... will not be considered unless adequate re-provision of these housing units has been secured' (p107). Two points can be raised here: (a) 'adequate re-provision' is not defined – and who decides what is 'adequate'? and (b) **In the interests of equality, protections should be extended to all affected residents**, not limited to specified groups.

6. Consultation of affected residents was inadequate; vulnerable residents in particular have not been adequately informed

We refer to this issue here in the context that had consultation documents been more explicit, we believe that public opposition to the plans would be greater.

The discovery that one's home is at risk of demolition is a cause of enormous stress and anxiety. It is therefore **imperative that those at risk of losing their homes are adequately informed**. While the Council has held a number of public events and consultations to publicise the AAP scheme as a whole, these are not adequate to communicate in detail the local-level effects of the different parts of what is, by any measures, a huge and complex development scheme

Residents on Mayes Rd and Caxton Rd received a letter in January informing them that their property fell within a 'potential development site' (an ambiguous phrase that could imply positive regeneration). First, **the letter was not addressed to named individual occupants**, but to 'the occupier', making it indistinguishable from the usual unsolicited mail. Secondly, **the letter does not state explicitly that residents could lose their homes**. Instead it directs the reader to the Haringey council webpage to find out about the 'vision and long term proposals'. A subsequent newsletter highlights the objectives of the scheme as a whole, and again directs readers to a web address to 'view the full documents'. It is there that the reader first encounters the Wood Green AAP Regulation 18 Preferred Options Consultation Draft, a detailed and highly technical document some 175 pages in length. The proposed demolition of homes in the WGS1 9 area is expressed in the single phrase on p125

– ‘No buildings to be retained’. Notably, there is an inconsistency between the area laid out on the map (which includes houses on both sides of Mayes Rd, plus Coburg road) and the text in the address box below, which mentions only one side of Mayes Rd (nos.86-98). This **creates uncertainty and confusion** as to which areas are indeed to be demolished.

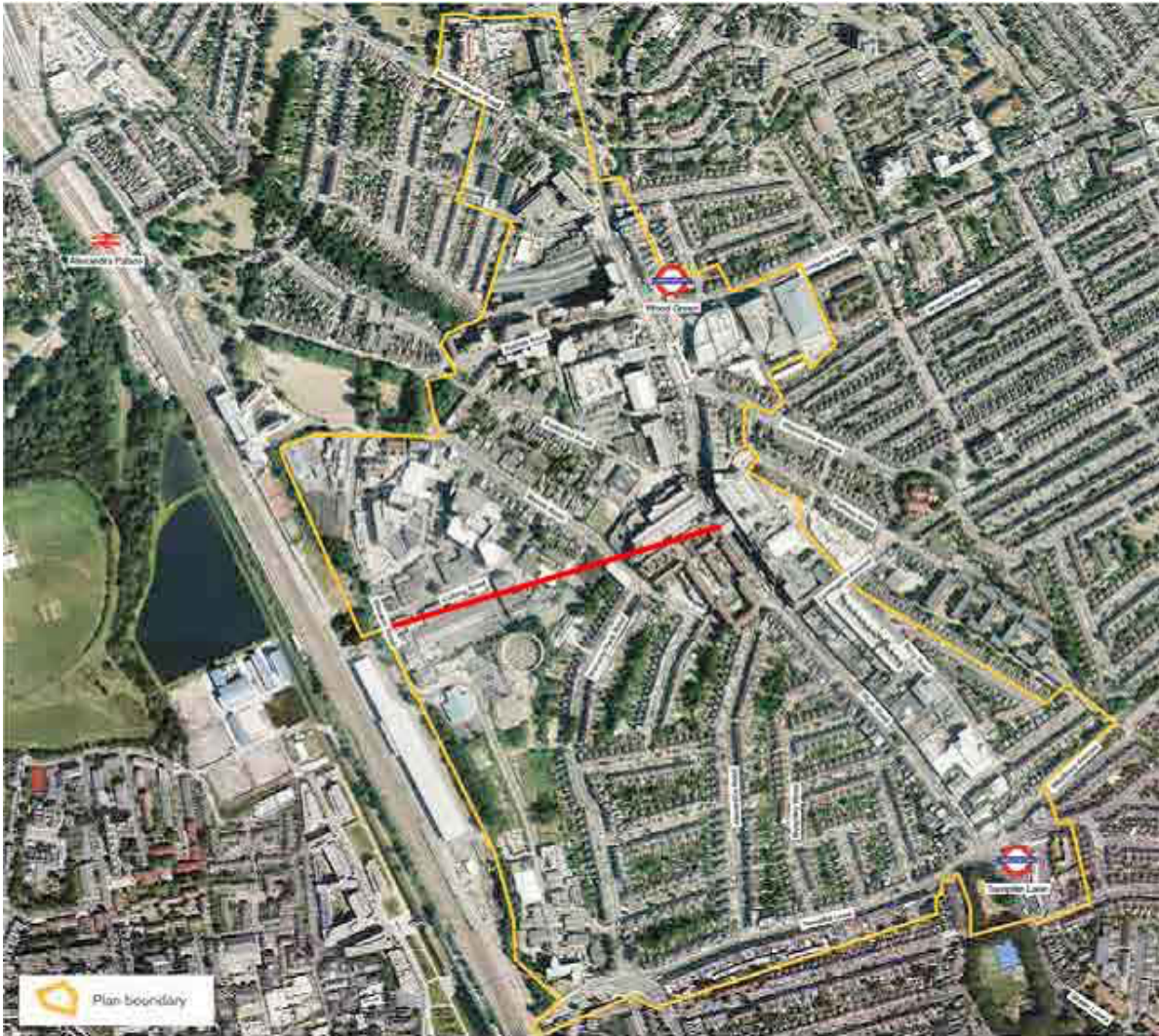
Clearly, (assuming first that they had read and followed up on the original letter and newsletter), not all residents will be able to negotiate the Preferred Options Consultation Draft, whether through **lack of access to the internet, mobility issues, language skills etc.** It has been our experience that **the majority of residents on the affected streets either did not know about the redevelopment scheme at all, or did not know that their homes would be directly affected in this way.** This is particularly concerning in relation to vulnerable residents, such as the elderly.

In cases where it directly affects people’s homes, the Council has a responsibility to inform residents of houses earmarked for demolition in clear and explicit terms what are the implications of the development scheme. It was in fact **vigilant residents who took the lead in informing their neighbours** about the scheme and its direct implications for their homes. It is our contention that **if these implications were more widely known, they would not gain widespread support.** This has been borne out in our petition and in the comments submitted to the Wood Green Map Commonplace page.

We urge the Council to listen to the voice of local residents, to amend its plans to take into account the concerns outlined above, and give serious attention to the alternatives proposed.

Annex 1 – Alternative routes for East-West corridor

(1) Straight Route



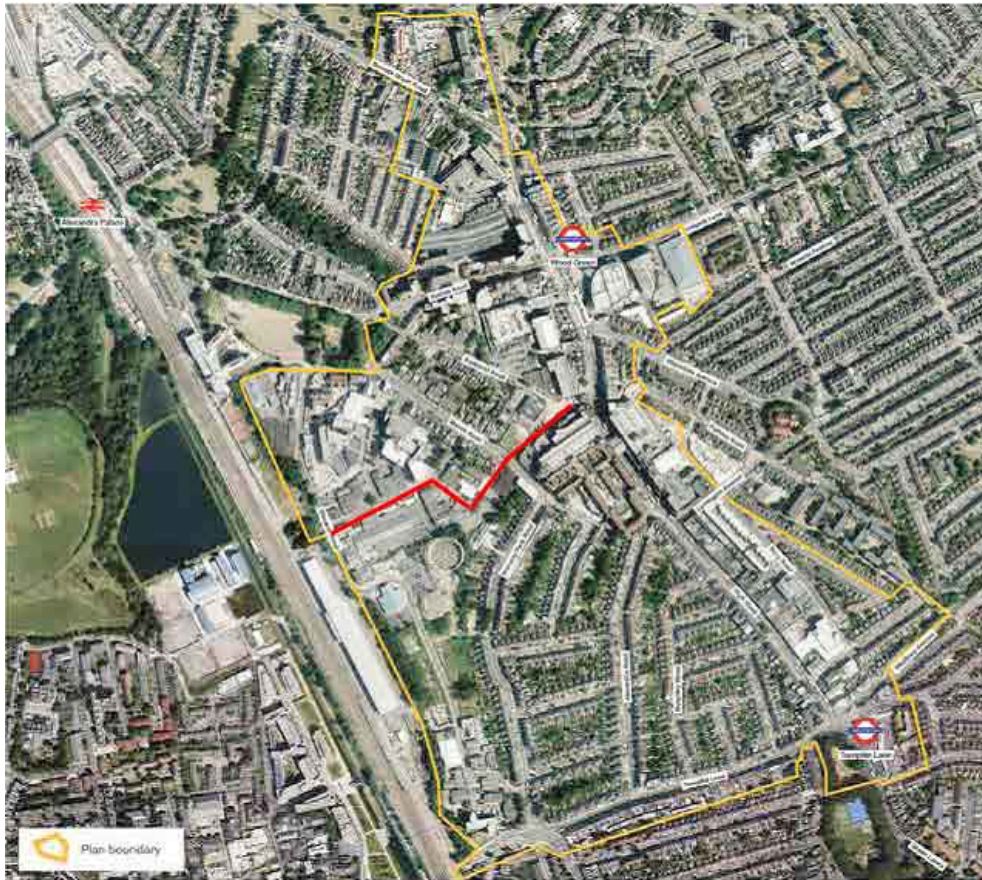
Route: From Pembroke Tunnel (Coburg/Western Rd) – through current industrial area and via currently unused/wasteland section of Caxton Rd to back of High Rd

Benefits:

- **No destruction of families' homes**
- **No destruction of Victorian architecture**
- **No compromise on planning vision of a straight route**
- **Better line of sight options for view to Alexandra Palace en route**
- **Minimal adjustment while still delivering AAP objectives**

Drawbacks: none

(2) Route (A)



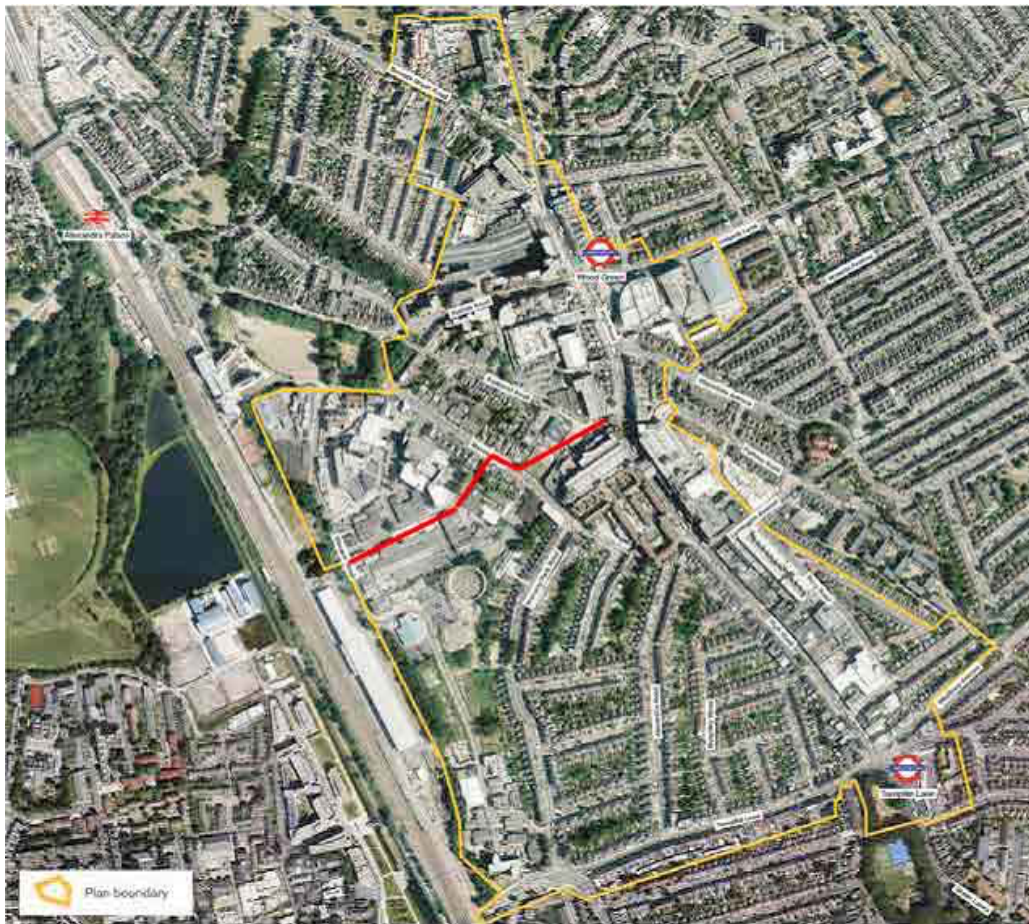
Route: From High Rd via Caxton Rd (loading bay/car park / waste ground side) to Brook Rd to Coburg Rd

Benefits:

- **No destruction of families' homes**
- **No destruction of Victorian architecture**
- **Retain historic access routes**
- **Minimal adjustment while still delivering AAP objectives**

Drawbacks: Planners prefer a straighter route

(3) Route (B)



Route: From High Rd via Caxton Rd (loading bay/car park / wasteland side), turn right onto Mayes Rd, turn left onto Coburg Rd

Benefits:

- **No destruction of families' homes**
- **No destruction of Victorian architecture**
- **Retain historic access routes**
- **Minimal adjustment while still delivering AAP objectives**

Drawbacks: Planners prefer a straighter route

Annex 2: Views of Alexandra Palace: line of sight issues

Photo 1: View from roof level of 15 Caxton Rd



Comment: This is the view from roof level of Caxton Rd. The view of Alexandra Palace is partial and obscured, best seen in winter when there are no leaves on the trees. The proposed new town square would sit some 7 metres below this; hence a clear view of Alexandra Palace cannot be achieved from that vantage point.

Photo 2: Alternative viewing points (i) view along Straight Route (map 1)



Comment: This view could be achieved along Straight route (map 1). Taken from current car park 1st floor height.

Photo 3: Alternative viewing points (ii) Current view from Morrison's car park



Comments: This offers a clear view of Alexandra Palace, suggesting that this could be a good site for a pedestrian retail/cafe area, with a Crossrail entrance, closer to other local transport links, ie. Wood Green underground and bus station (current and proposed)