

To: Haringey Council

**My second response to the Wood Green Area Action Plan, “Preferred Option”
Consultation, deadline extended to 28.4.17**

1. Since the consultation period has been extended from 31.3.17 to 28.4.17, I am making some **additional comments and objections** to those submitted on 29.3.17.

Re: Crossrail 2

2. Whether or not Crossrail 2 is to come to the Wood Green area will, no doubt, be decided elsewhere. However, there is no space for it in the centre of the Wood Green area without major and unacceptable destruction of housing and damage to the environment. I would therefore suggest that **if** Crossrail 2 is to come to the area, the only appropriate site would be the brown field land of the former Clarendon Road Gas Works, and that area could then be improved by appropriate development which **responds sensitively** to the Wood Green Area as a whole and its traditional houses, and new green areas should also be provided on that site. There is absolutely no excuse for tearing down existing buildings to construct a Crossrail 2 station when there is a brown field site available that could be used for that purpose, and any such action by Haringey Council would be irresponsible, extremely damaging to Wood Green, and a sheer waste of public money.

Improving Wood Green Town Centre

3. The Wood Green Town Centre can be greatly improved **without** any destruction, simply by diverting the traffic away from the High Road (as I have suggested repeatedly over the years). This would need to be looked into by competent town planners. Maybe traffic could run to the west of the area, somewhere along the existing railway line, possibly on a newly constructed road. All over the county, just as abroad, many town centres have been greatly improved by being pedestrianised. This is the **only** way in which the Wood Green Town Centre, which is currently a polluted area with heavy traffic, could be made more pleasant and inviting (not to mention safer), inducing people to come and linger. On page 20 of the consultation paper there is a reference to “the vibrant High Road” of Wood Green. Far from being “vibrant” (whatever that may mean), the High Road is congested and polluted most of the time. Currently, if I need to do some shopping in Wood Green, I walk as quickly as possible along the polluted High Road and spend as little time as possible there. Pedestrianising the area would also improve enormously the quality of life of all those who still live along this stretch of the High Road, and (as I have argued before) it would greatly help the shops along that road, if people were made to feel welcome, with places to sit along the pedestrianised area, trees and flowers planted, maybe a water feature, etc., etc. **This** is what could also improve the economy of the area, **not** the Council’s proposed destruction and inappropriate over-development.

The economy of the area

4. On page 48 of the consultation paper there is a reference to the “relatively low levels of spend” in spite of “high footfall” on Wood Green High Road (p. 46). This Council,

that seems to have taken advantage of every Government incentive to house homeless and jobless people, and housed them mainly in the Tottenham and Wood Green areas, should not be surprised about this. Clearly, these people need to be housed, but to place a disproportionate number of people who are not economically active in one borough, and even worse, in one area of a borough, is undoubtedly a burden. Strangely, the Council does not state what percentage of people are unemployed in the area of Wood Green. These are clearly not people with a lot of spending power. At page 25 the Council mentions that the Wood Green Area has “a higher than average proportion of people in low skilled ‘elementary occupations’ (13.6%) compared to London (9.6%). This again does not make for a high spending population.

The Vue Cinema

5. The consultation paper is so unacceptably vague that one has no idea what is actually proposed here. Only the little phrase, “No buildings need to be retained”, tucked away under the heading “Site Requirements” on p. 115 of the consultation documents, suggests that this cinema could be demolished. This would be absolute folly, for the following reasons: The Vue Cinema and the restaurants and shops underneath are of quite recent origin, and the building was hailed at the time as a “landmark building” – and so it is. To destroy this complex so shortly after building it would be a totally irresponsible waste of money, to benefit nobody other than the developers. We most certainly do **not** need “a new landmark building” there (p. 115 of the consultation paper), so shortly after the previous one was built. This Council is putting our money down the drains with its ambitions which are **not** in the public interest.

The Mall

6. Although rather badly designed, the Mall is also of relatively recent origin (built in the late 70s, I believe), and it is said to contain 446 residential units in addition to 5,215 square metres of employment space (p. 126 of the consultation paper). The Mall has by no means come to the end of its useful life, and the bridge in the middle would look far less oppressive from street level if Wood Green High Road were pedestrianised and made more attractive. The bridge, without the awful traffic underneath, could then provide shelter from the rain, and shade in the summer. The building of the Mall itself is functional, the inside is pleasant enough, and it merely needs to be well maintained by its current owners, Capital & Regional, as it currently is. There is absolutely no call for the destruction of the Mall and corresponding formidable upheaval and enormous waste of public (as well as private) money. Moreover, its red brick construction is far more acceptable, and clashes much less with the traditional houses of the area, than any newly built blocks using other materials would do.

Station Road Car Park

7. The proposed development of the “disused Council car park” to create “a cluster of timber worksheds, studios and offices” is, as far as I can see, the only unreservedly positive proposal in this consultation document. The only other positive thing that has already happened in Wood Green is the beautiful restoration of the “Green

Rooms”, the art-deco former electricity building in Station Road, which I look at almost daily while waiting at the bus stop opposite. Whether this building will be economically successful will depend on whether it can attract enough business in this outer-London area of Wood Green. I can only wish them luck.

The Chocolate Factory

8. This is an interesting, historic building and part of our heritage. It must be preserved in its existing appearance and **no** development which damages or visually detracts from it must be allowed. It is currently tucked away to the west of Wood Green Town Centre, but will become much more prominent and accessible if Crossrail 2 arrives at Wood Green and is located somewhere nearby, and if the former Clarendon Road Gas Works site is appropriately redeveloped. The area near the Chocolate Factory needs to be improved generally by being made more pleasant and green.

The Library

9. Far from needing to be demolished, the Library merely needs to be **greatly improved and properly refurbished**, and the recently introduced “Customer Service Centre”, which is noisy and does not belong in the library at all, must be separated off into premises of its own. There are some rather attractive flats above the library which must not be destroyed. The same need for refurbishment applies to the shabby hall in the same building which has some sad looking market stalls which are everything **but** “vibrant”, as alleged in the consultation document by Haringey Council that simply does not seem to have any other adjective at its disposal. In fact, by increasing the rent so that our own Post Office could no longer afford to rent its premises in that hall, the Council has completely **destroyed** the viability of these market stalls, because much fewer people enter that building since the Post Office has had to move out to share the premises of WH Smith on Wood Green High Road. What a joke! This is a Council that does not seem to know what damage it is doing.

Council Offices in Station Road and River Park House on the corner of the High Rd.

10. It beggars belief that Haringey Council wants to demolish all these buildings of quite recent origin. **What a totally irresponsible waste of public money!** These are **our** assets, built with **our** money; they do **not** belong to council officers and councillors who have their workplace there. I remember these blocks being built not so long ago, and very solidly built, mostly in red brick which blends well into the surrounding area. **The very last thing we need there are proposed tall buildings, i.e. eyesores, which do not fit in!** I also clearly remember River Park House being built not so long ago. I opposed its construction at the time, on the grounds that it is too tall (with its 9 storeys!) and too massive for the area. Of course, it was built regardless, and I well remember Haringey Council hailing it as a “landmark building”, and this is indeed what it has become. Now that we have got used to it, **it must not be removed.** Besides, it has one redeeming feature, despite its size and bulk: its golden-brown tones of the reflective windows which sometimes catch the sun and look rather beautiful, and blend in with the surrounding brick-built houses, the tube station and the red-brick office blocks to the west in Station Road. If the Council has surplus office space (which may well be the case), I suggest that some of the red-brick office

blocks on the north side of Station Road could well have their upper floors converted into flats, whereas the ground floor could provide commercial space.

Contradictions

11. There are some absurd contradictions in this consultation paper. On p. 11, para. 2.4 it says, "Currently the London Plan (2015) designates Haringey Heartlands/Wood Green as an area of intensification with the potential to deliver.... 1,000 net additional homes...." However, on p. 11, para. 2.7 we read, "The Local Plan covers the period 2011-2016. The Council's submitted Local Plan: Strategic Policies identifies the Haringey Heartlands/Wood Green Metropolitan Town Centre area jointly as a Growth Area capable of accommodating 4,300 new homes." But by the time one reaches page 165 of the consultation document, Haringey Council's "ambitions" have grown exponentially, and one reads, "Delivery Summary of sites allocated in the Wood Green AAP", "Wood Green total: Net resi units: 7,701"! In fact, the London Plan and Haringey Council's SP1 (which covers the period 2013-2026, proposed a far more reasonable 1,700 new homes for the area. Clearly, the now proposed 7,700 are **hugely excessive, damaging and an ill-advised over-development**, as well as contradicting the council's own SP1.

The infamous Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV)

12. It is easy to see that the grossly excessive development proposals in Haringey Council's "Preferred Option" Consultation (NB. "preferred" by Haringey Council, **not** by the local population!) serve no other purpose than to feed this highly controversial HDV, a very risky business which may bankrupt the council while benefiting nobody but the developers. The HDV is strongly opposed by the public, as repeated demonstrations have made clear. But without it, the appalling destruction of so many buildings and the high-rise, high-density over-development proposed in the Wood Green AAP could not take place. The days of Haringey Council in its present make-up may be numbered, but if these developments go ahead, the damage to Wood Green will be permanent.

Why Wood Green does not need an "Area Action Plan"

13. Wood Green as a whole is **not** a regeneration area, but an area in need of preservation and careful consideration of any development taking place, to preserve its heritage and identity. All developments must be considered and evaluated on an individual case by case basis. There is **no** justification for wholesale change and destruction, such as the reckless action that has already taken place in the north-east of Tottenham, to the detriment of that area. The Council's allegation (page 6 of the consultation document) that "Wood Green is an important centre within a thriving global city" is yet another touch of megalomania. Wood Green is no such thing. It is a town centre of mainly local importance with some minor significance for a wider area of Haringey. This kind of unwieldy consultation is pointless and misleading. The wildest promises are made in the consultation paper, but people have no idea what they are being consulted on in concrete terms. On page 8 it is said, regarding the previous "Consultation on the Issues & Options for Wood Green AAP" in 2016 (which I did not see) that "over 1.100 people have been engaged with, with over 500 forms of feedback received, including 23 written responses". The Council should ask itself

why, if allegedly 1,100 people have been "engaged with", only some 477 have returned a feedback form and only 23 have bothered to give a written response. This kind of consultation is useless, and people, if they know about the consultation at all (most of them don't) are simply overburdened with the mass of vague proposals. The Council should not consult until it has concrete plans for particular developments, each of which must be consulted on and assessed on its own merits.

URSULA RINIKER

27.4.17

(Sent to the Council on that date, attached to an email from riniker ursula)