

‘There will be a tsunami of traffic’

Rachel Roberts

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Hampstead residents face the prospect of hundreds of HGVs thundering down Finchley Road twice a day for years to come after the O2 centre car park was named by HS2 as a potential lorry holding area for the construction of the railway.

The car park is one of five Camden sites being considered by

HS2 Limited as an additional holding area on its shortlist of seven.

Five sites in the south of Camden and two in Westminster are also under consideration, with one lorry holding area already set to be built in the London Zoo car park.

Camden Council - which remains vehemently opposed to the scheme - said it is pushing HS2 Ltd to address the impact of “polluting and potentially dangerous” lorries

on the borough’s roads.

Resident Clive Beecham said whichever site is chosen, the combination of HS2 and Cycle-Superhighway 11 (CS-11) will “strangle” the area in a noose of noise, traffic chaos and pollution.

He said it is now time for TfL to factor in the impact of HS2 before they decide to go ahead with CS-11.

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“ We will be hit with a tsunami of traffic congestion... HS2 will bring an extra 800 lorry movements a day through north-west London

Clive Beecham

Actress lambasts CS-11 scheme and calls for cycle lanes instead

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Hampstead actress Janet Suzman has blasted Transport for London (TfL) for its determination to press ahead with Cycle-Superhighway 11 (CS-11) without factoring the likely construction of High Speed Rail 2 (HS2) into their modelling.

The actress, who lives in Keats Grove, is best known for her theatre work, and has now directed her dramatic turn of phrase onto TfL.

She said: "Their model is faulty. The government is forcing this stupid railway through against all sensible opposition and what with CS-11 and HS2, we will all be dead with dust emphysema if we're not already dead from exhaust fumes as the whole are grinds to an angry halt."

Ms Suzman suggests a less drastic scheme to improve cycling than CS-11, which proposes to remove the Swiss Cottage gyratory, narrow the roads for motorists and partially close Regents Park to vehicles.

She said: "This northern gateway into London is so very busy that common sense demands a simpler and this less vindictive solution.

"Those who pass through it on



■ Hampstead actress Janet Suzman is unimpressed with TfL's proposals.

their merry way should have cycle lanes commensurate with the width of their machines – narrow enough not to squash a highway to a standstill. Regents Park should not become a velodrome. The gyratory should not be undone."

She urged TfL to work with what is already there in order to achieve the same ends as CS-11 and provide

a continuous cycling link between Swiss Cottage and the West End.

Ms Suzman suggests: "Take a little more space from a too-wide pavement and marry it with a little space from an existing road. Find parallel roads to main arteries for the bikers where possible.

"Don't make a three-lane road a two lane road – it leads to conges-

tion, cardiac infarctions and death-dealing pollution, and then how would the great Royal Free cope?"

Ms Suzman said it was disingenuous of TfL to count more than 3,700 signatures against CS-11 as a single objection in its consultation results.

She said: "Those partially supportive, and I hazard a guess here, would prefer everyone to be fitter and the pollution levels to drop, but not to the total detriment of residents who don't – or can't – bike."

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has not yet said the scheme will definitely go ahead – and has indicated he may yet be prepared to modify the proposal.

Ms Suzman said: "Mayor Khan is an honourable and sensible man. He should properly review the worst excesses of this scheme and quell them – he's the boss. We don't just pass through – we live here."

Ms Suzman's comments come as it was revealed the O2 Centre car park is one of seven sites under consideration by HS2 Ltd for a lorry holding area – which could bring hundreds of lorry movements a day into the area for years to come.

■ Letters - see page 28

Lorries may besiege Hampstead after HS2 shortlists O2 carpark

Rachel Roberts

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Hampstead residents face the prospect of hundreds of HGVs thundering down Finchley Road twice a day for years to come after the O2 centre car park was named by HS2 as a potential lorry holding area for the construction of the railway.

The carpark is one of five Camden sites being considered by HS2 Limited as an additional holding area on its shortlist of seven.

The other Camden sites shortlisted are in the south of the borough in Hampstead Road, Euston Road, Freight Lane and Granby Terrace - all closer to HS2's proposed terminus at Euston Station.

Two Westminster sites are also under consideration, with one lorry holding area already set to be built in the London Zoo car park.

Camden Council - which remains vehemently opposed to the scheme - said it is pushing HS2 Ltd to address the impact of "polluting and potentially dangerous" lorries on the borough's roads.

A statement from Camden said: "The council is clear that the case for an additional lorry holding area has not yet been adequately made.



■ The O2 centre in Finchley Road could be a park for HS2 lorries.

"If one is to go ahead, any further site must not increase the impacts of the scheme on local residents, cyclists and road users."

But resident Clive Beecham, who lives on the border of Swiss Cottage and St John's Wood, said that whichever site is chosen, he fears the combination of HS2 and Cycle-Superhighway 11 (CS-11) will effectively "strangle" the area in a noose of noise, traffic chaos and pollution.

Mr Beecham, a company director, said: "We will be hit with a tsunami of traffic congestion, whether or not the O2 centre is chosen.

"TfL did not take account of HS2 at all when they modelled for CS-11. There will be an extra 800 lorry movements a day through north-west London - and that's quite apart from this proposed holding area."

Mr Beecham added: "It seems that HS2 are invincible, and will do what

they like, so we are more hopeful of a change to the CS-11 scheme.

"It's ridiculous that the impact of the two schemes together was not considered by TfL, which is why we are appealing to our MPs, Tulip Siddiq and Karen Buck, to help."

Eight other potential sites in Camden have been rejected by HS2 after the council argued they would have increased construction traffic on inappropriate residential roads.

HS2's report finds that the seven locations on the shortlist are "reasonable alternatives" to a possible on-street lorry holding area next to Park Crescent.

The options will be subject to further study and the report states that other sites may emerge as further work progresses.

A statement from HS2 Ltd said: "The decision on where to locate lorry holding areas will be reached after Royal Assent, when a contractor is appointed and the construction timetable is developed.

"HS2 Ltd understands how important this issue is to local people and will continue to engage with residents, the London Borough of Camden, City of Westminster Council and TfL as logistics are developed."

YOUR OPINIONS

More danger from cyclists than motorists

Anthony Kay, of Swiss Cottage, writes:

As someone who walks everywhere whenever possible as first choice, and then uses public transport, with my car as the last choice, I am a great believer in reducing the volume of cars on the roads and extending alternative facilities as much as possible.

However I feel the representatives of the cycle lobby, who were given so much space in last week's letter page, are themselves guilty of muddying the facts, and trying to ignore the concerns of everyone else.

Justin McKie, the chair of Regents Park Cyclists, may well be correct that no cyclist has been fined for speeding round the Regent's Park Outer Circle; but that does not mean that they do not race around at speeds too fast to stop quickly.

Earlier this year, my wife and I were nearly knocked over by a pack of cyclists using the Outer Circle as a race track, so we are very concerned how they might behave with even fewer vehicles to worry about.

Generally when out walking nowadays, I feel much more likely to be knocked over by silent cyclists than ever by a car; whether that is when they are racing round the Outer Circle, or on pedestrian only paths in the park, on the pavement, going over a red light, or going the wrong direction on the road.

To hope, as Eugene Regis does, that cycling could ever reach the popularity it does in Holland or Copenhagen is completely unrealistic and cloud in the sky.

Apart from those places being very small in every way in comparison to London, most importantly as anyone who has been there should know, they are completely flat.

The same goes for a lot of European cities, such as Hamburg, where my wife comes from; so much so that a simple basic ungeared cheap bike was quite good enough there for her. Also she did not need to know how to use the handbrake in the car to do a hill start.

While the recent British successes in the Tour de France and the Olympics will increase for a time the profile of cycling, in reality very few people have the luxury of being able to even think about cycling being a realistic way of getting to work.

What might reduce congestion and pollution is an improvement in public transport.

But then TfL wants to reduce the number of buses per hour on the Finchley Road, and the CS-11 proposals require an existing bus lane to be closed, and they have also admitted some bus journey times will increase.

While the Swiss Cottage gyratory should be improved, even on that the few superficially good ideas in the CS-11 proposals are negated on reading the detail which panders excessively to the minority of cyclists over everyone else, including bus users with part of a bus lane being abolished.

The proposals will result in gridlock both on the main Finchley



■ Plans for the new CS-11 have caused widespread controversy.

Mayor should hear residents' fears

Cllr Siobhan Baillie, of Frognaal and Fitzjohn's ward, writes:

The Mayor of London launched an eye catching campaign about London's doors being open but it does not matter how many doors are open in this city if Mr Khan's ears are closed.

The View from the Street article from Jessica Learmond-Criqui (*Mayor must put rhetoric into practice and scrap CS-11 plan, H&H letters, August 11*), sadly reflects what residents are saying to us about the CS-11 debacle.

Thousands of consultation respondents feel completely

ignored by the Mayor's office and residents are outraged at TfL.

This is not because they are anti cyclists or petrol heads that do not want more people to cycle.

They have not been provided with sufficient information to assess CS-11 and they expect a proper democratic process.

We believe the new Mayor should be more open to listening to residents directly affected by proposals.

It also goes without saying that decisions should not be made while there are such serious concerns being raised about the consultation process.



Road, but also in neighbouring side streets, which motorists will turn into rat runs, thus increasing the overall level of pollution.

Also the proposed blocks on getting access to Finchley Road and Avenue Road will result in residents having to take long detours, increasing travelling time and thus again the overall level of pollution.

Apart from the cyclists themselves, and some politicians, who despite their appearance, think that their support gives them a young trendy healthy energetic image; the main financial beneficiaries from all of this would be the bike manufacturers and sports equipment industry to some extent, but mainly the construction industry and its legion of professional advisers and

consultants.

Fear-mongering rife in controversy

Mallory Wober PhD, of Lancaster Grove NW3, writes:

I have cycled in NW6 (and now NW3) for 70 years and hope to continue to do so. I also drive a small car – very useful for giving lifts to small grandchildren and elderly friends and relatives.

I am worried now that a cyclist lobby is doing its best to reduce my driving options; the pressure is expressed in several ways, a menace of pollution being one argument.

Justin McKie says in a letter that

“every day 26 people die in London because of pollution”. This accords with widely published estimates of over 9,000 deaths a year in London attributable to this cause.

At least four things should be said about this: first, the pollution measures are taken at spots of maximum traffic congestion and are used to apply to the city as a whole. But what is true at the foot of Fitzjohn's Avenue is unlikely to be so, indeed is not so, further up the hill. London is full of green spaces and hills and these disperse pollution from main highways.

Second, have any death certificates specified pollution as a cause of death? If so what are the numbers of such attributions? The 'science' behind many of the allegations in the controversy is not

‘transparently’ convincing.

In the blizzard of fear-mongering, we are not given such supportive details (nor any explanation for the steadily increasing figures of life expectancy in the UK as a whole and including London).

Third; what used to be called a “feeding frenzy” has been encouraged by office bound reports and journalistic hysteria which may often distract from the truth.

The EU has very recently provided a list of UK “cities” which breach particulate emission standards* and include Prestonpans (in Central Scotland).

Healthy breezes blow in off the coast there and the notions either that Prestonpans is a city or that pollution levels there are harmful are fanciful.

Closer to home, your cartoon (*H&H letters, August 11*) exaggerates the experience due to cars speeding through Regents Park, supposedly boasting of injuries caused to cyclists.

Fourth; pollution intensity can be and sometimes is caused by planning changes. Returning the other day from Kings Cross with family in the car, the congestion at the north end of Royal College Street, now narrowed in places to one effective motor lane actually intensifies the local pollution.

I suspect that the illustration you publish, of the scene at Swiss Cottage looking down on the CS11 (no sign of the high rise at 100 Avenue Road fortunately) assumes that motor traffic, such as home delivery shopping, and public service vehicles, ignores that such traffic will now be corralled into jams, putting forth the very fumes the green lobby vilify.

We need a more meticulous debate on these matters.

I do have opinion on CS-11 plans

Andrew Dismore, of Labour London Assembly member for Barnet and Camden, writes:

In your coverage of Cycle Superhighway 11 last week, you report me as ‘having no opinion’ (*‘There is no doubting local objection to this’, H&H, August 17*).

This is not correct. I submitted a detailed response to TfL's consultation which said that ‘ whilst I support in principle the concept of cycle superhighways, and agree that it is important to increase cyclist safety, I have some questions relating to the impact of Cycle Superhighway 11’.

I then set out 9 major points, these detailed questions arising out of a site visit I made with TfL during the consultation.

These included the impact on traffic round Swiss Cottage and on bus services and stops; blocked junctions in Avenue Road; Regent's Park gate closures; and of course the impact and interaction with HS 2 traffic.