Review of weight limits in Highgate

Draft note produced by Richard Webber – 11/8/2016

A : Background

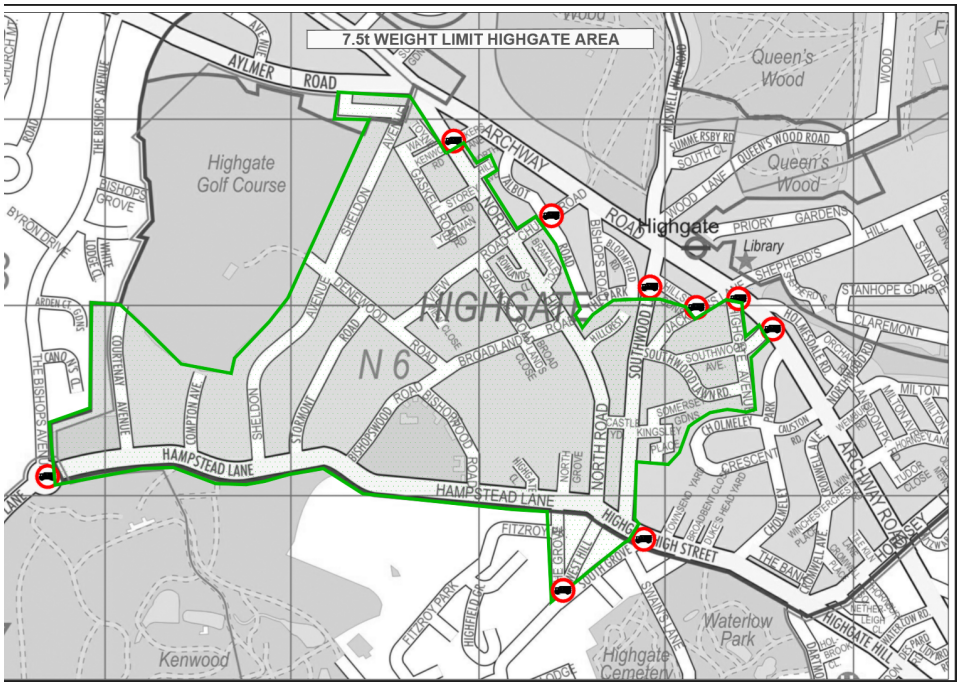
In 2014/5 a number of discussions took place between Haringey Council and local residents regarding the pedestrian crossing at the intersection of North Hill and View Road / Church Road. Residents are pleased with the outcome, the introduction of an all red phase which allows pedestrians to cross this complicated junction with greater safety.

During these discussions some attention was given to the appropriateness of current road signage along the lower section of North Hill. It was discovered that many of these signs were outdated, non-compliant, inappropriate and in some instances inconsistent. Examples of these signs were shown at a meeting of the Local Assembly which took place in St Michael's School.

Among the signs featured in this review were a number relating to weight restrictions. Officers from Haringey Council agreed to review and update the signs in such a way as to comply with current policy on weight restriction. In doing so it became apparent that it was not just signs on North Hill that needed attention. Over many decades weight restriction signs elsewhere in Highgate had been installed, changed or indeed even removed within the area to which the controls were meant to apply with the result that it is no longer possible to enforce whatever restrictions are supposed to be in place.

This has resulted in Haringey reviewing signage throughout the restricted area and coming up with proposals which, subject to consultation, it now proposes to implement. The following notes constitute the considered response of the Highgate Society - and incorporate comments from the Highgate Neighbourhood Forum - to these proposals.

Our understanding is that though these restrictions affect individual streets, the streets affected are defined by the outer cordon, the line of which is shown on the map following supplied by Girma Bethlehem on 29 July.



Cordon proposed by Haringey

B : Purpose of the weight restrictions

Although it is unlikely that any record of it can still be found, we presume that purpose of the original weight restrictions was to reduce the impact on Highgate Village and Highgate North Hill of long-distance heavy vehicle traffic between inner London and the M1. We believe that any evaluation of Haringey's proposals can only be judged in relation to some objective and we believe that this is one by which they should be judged.

It is important to remember that these restrictions have no impact on public service vehicles, on delivery vehicles or other vehicles requiring access to residential areas within the cordon and therefore that any restrictions, or proposed changes to them, are unlikely to have any material impact on residential roads that do not attract through traffic. Most don't.

The principal journeys which drivers of vehicles over five tons might otherwise might be tempted to make via Highgate Village and North Hill are:

- Between Kentish Town or Holloway Road and Falloden Way or Muswell Hill
- Between Holloway Road and Jack Straws Castle

and vice versa.

We believe the intention of the original restrictions were to have this traffic travel via the Archway Road or, in the case of traffic between Archway and Jack Straw's Castle, via the Archway Road, the A1, Henley's Corner and Golders Green..

We believe that these continue to be the routes that such traffic should be encouraged to use. Clearly this traffic impacts on the Archway Road but that road's function in the hierarchy roads implies that it should continue to be used for this purpose notwithstanding current levels of

pollution. This after all was the purpose for which the road was originally built, to relieve Highgate Village of through traffic. Any increase in vehicles between 5 and 7.5 tons is likely to be compensated by diversion of lighter vehicles on the alternative route through Highgate Village.

C : Deficiencies in the current arrangements for achieving these objectives

There are two principal deficiencies in the current arrangements. One is missing and inconsistent signs, the other the inappropriateness of their location.

At present, for example, although there is a sign at the junction of Bishops Avenue and Hampstead Lane that prohibit eastbound vehicles over 7.5 tons continuing along Hampstead Lane via Highgate Village to Archway it is arguable there is no corresponding sign in the opposite direction. There what appears to be an advanced warning sign outside Channing Junior School but if this were to be a control sign it is difficult to understand why it should have been necessary to install a control sign at the entrance to Bisham Gardens but not at the entrance to the High Street beyond that junction or indeed at the entrance to South Grove. The Highgate Society has photographic evidence that there was once such a sign at the junction of Highgate High Street and South Grove, where a control sign ought to be located, but this seems to have been lost at some time since this photo was taken in 1990.

Again whilst the cordon specified by Haringey Council suggests that the existing traffic order applies to the whole of Southwood Lane as far as Highgate Village, at present the northbound weight restriction sign is located at the junction of Southwood Lane and Jacksons Lane, not at the entrance to Southwood Lane. Assuming the sign outside Channing Junior School is an advance warning sign rather than a control sign, northbound signage allows vehicles over 7.5 tones to travel from Highgate Village to the Archway Road via Southwood Avenue, but again not in the opposite direction.

The other principal deficiency is that were restriction signs to restored to their correct locations, which is what it appears Haringey are proposing, the advance warnings sign outside Channing School is inappropriately sited to alert drivers in advance of arrival at the point of restriction. Vehicles exceeding the weight limit can not be expected to do a U-turn at that point. It would have been much better to warn them at the foot of Highgate Hill rather than at the top.

As the result of there being no advance warning signs vehicles over 7.5 tones travelling legitimately up Highgate High Street are required either to do a U-turn or to turn into South Grove and then into West Hill returning via Highgate Road to Kentish Town. Likewise vehicles over 7.5 tons travelling up West Hill (or even Swains Lane) are required to divert onto South Grove and continue as far as Hornsey Lane and perhaps even Archway gyratory.

Our contention is that if the intention of the proposals is to ensure that vehicles over 7.5 tons use the Archway Road rather than Highgate Village there is a need to introduce additional advance warning signs

- In Camden at the junction of Fortess Road and Highgate Road
- In Islington at the foot of Highgate Hill
- In Haringey at the approach to the Archway Bridge on Hornsey Lane

Likewise vehicles over 7.5 tons which approach Highgate from the Spaniards Inn, once they reach the exit from the Kenwood Car Park are currently obliged to undertake a U-turn since they are forbidden to use the section of Hampstead Lane in Haringey, nor may they use Bishops Avenue nor may they use Winnington Road. In this case an advance warning sign is needed at jack Straw's Castle if overweight traffic is not to continue through Highgate Village.

D : Extending the cordon

Given that the existing traffic order permits vehicles over 7.5 tons for the purpose of access and loading (different terms are used on different signs) and given the intention of prohibiting through traffic over 7.5 tons through Highgate Village, it is our opinion than rather than just erecting the warning signs needed to stop vehicles approaching the cordon having to U-turn, it would be simpler and more effective to extend the restricted area to where more appropriate warning signs would otherwise be placed.

This would involve the extension of the cordon to the foot of Highgate Hill and up south western edge of Archway Road or, at the minimum, the junction of Highgate Hill and Hornsey Lane.

This would have the benefit of protecting the following streets:

- Cholmeley Park, Cholmeley Crescent and Causton Road
- Cromwell Avenue
- Despard Road and Waterlow Road (in Islington)
- Highgate High Street

We also recommend the extension of the cordon to include

- Bloomfield Road
- Talbot Road
- Church Road
- Bishops Road
- The Park

None of these street is suitable for vehicles over 7.5 tons and no disadvantage would accrue to the distribution of goods or materials.

E : The Camden part of Highgate Village

The cordon shown in the map supplied by Haringey Council does include a small area within the London Borough of Camden, namely:

- The upper section of West Hill from the junction with South Grove
- The Grove

In addition there is a restriction on vehicles over 7.5 entering Bisham Gardens from Highgate Hill but there is no restriction of access at the western entrance from Swains Lane.

If the purpose of these restrictions is to protect Highgate Village from through traffic it should apply to South Grove which, it could be argued, is the section of the Village which needs protection most. In the map supplied by Haringey South Grove does not appear to lie within the cordon. At its junction with West Hill there is no restriction. However the advance warning sign outside Channing School indicates a weight limit of 7.5 Tons. It is all very confusing.

Likewise of all the roads within the area covered by the Highgate Neighbourhood Forum it is difficult to imagine one less suitable to vehicles over 7.5 tons that the section of Swains Lane above the entrance to Highgate Cemetery.

We therefore believe that there is a necessity for Camden Council to be involved in the review of the restrictions to the area and the extension of the cordon to the foot of Highgate West Hill and the upper part of Swains Lane.

F : The Miltons and other streets east of the Archway Road

The area covered by the Highgate Neighbourhood Forum does include roads in "The Miltons" to the east of the Archway Road.

Whilst there may be a good reason for reviewing restrictions in this area as well as the area within the cordon it should be recognised that changes to the area currently under consideration are very unlikely to have any impact on the Miltons. We therefore recommend that they should be subject to a separate review, if at all, rather than form part of this one.

G : Residential streets

It is our understanding that at present very few residential streets within the cordon are used as "rat runs" by vehicles over 7.5 tons and that proposed changes to the weight limit would affect only those roads used by through traffic, namely Hampstead Lane, North Hill, North Road, Highgate Hill and Southwood Lane since any overweight vehicles on other roads would continue to be allowed access for the purpose of loading and unloading.

H : Displacement

Other than from North Hill, Southwood Lane, Hampstead Lane and Highgate Hill to the Archway Road and Bishops Avenue we do not believe the displacement of traffic resulting from these proposals would be perceptible, whether as a result of the implementation of the proposed cordon or from its extension as far south as Archway. However in the absence of adequate warning signs consideration does need to be given to the use of Cromwell Avenue as an access route between Hornsey Lane and the Archway Road, not least as a result of the changes in turns permitted as a result of the implementation of the new gyratory at Archway. The application of the limit to cover all of Highgate is consistent with policies being rolled out by other authorities across London.

I : Changes from 5 ton to 7.5 ton limit

It is our understanding that it is the policy of Haringey to implement a uniform and consistent set of weight limits in residential areas within the borough, that it is not practical to enforce the old five ton limit because the police can not distinguish vehicles of between five and 7.5 tons and that most of the existing signage does specify five rather than 7.5 tons as the weight limit.

It is our opinion that this change will have no perceptible effect on residential street in Highgate and marginal impact on distributor roads. It is our opinion that whatever negative effects will result from a change in the limit will be more than compensated for by the introduction of a regime which it will now be possible to enforce, not least as a result of the re-introduction of missing signs and the introduction of warning signs.

It is also our opinion that these effects will be minimal by comparison with the benefits to be obtained by extending the cordon as far as the Archway and by including Swains Lane and South Grove.

We would like to know what plans are being made for publicising, monitoring and enforcing the zone.

J : Islington and Camden

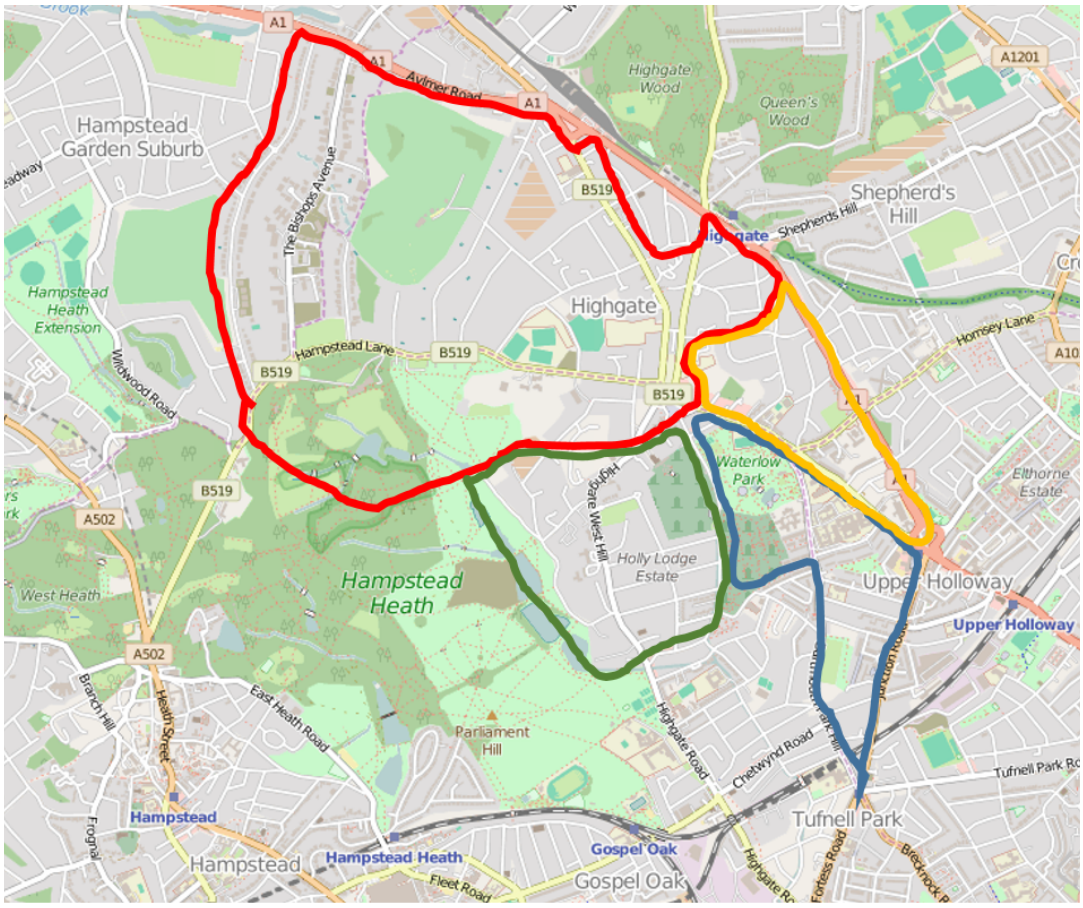
A study of the northern edge of Islington shows that 7.5 tons restrictions apply to Dartmouth Park Hill between Tufnell Park and St Joseph's church on Highgate Hill. All roads in the triangle bounded by Dartmouth Park Hill, Junction Road and Highgate Hill are all subject to restrictions, the signs

looking as though they have been erected recently. Given that vehicles over 7.5 tons may not turn left off Highgate Hill, for example into Magdala Road or Dartmouth Park Hill, it would seem unlikely that Islington would wish not to apply similar restrictions to Despard Road and Waterlow Road.

On the Camden side of Dartmouth Park Hill there are no day-time weight restrictions but there are night-time ones, unlike on the Islington side. Camden, it would seem, have been much less active in introducing weight restrictions to local roads (although they have been active south of Brecknock Road). Thus there are no restrictions in Highgate New Town or on Swains Lane, routes where one would suppose they would be justified.

J : Achieving a more rational cordon.

A map showing both the current Highgate cordon and the North Islington one suggests that it would be logical to join the two together to make a single expanded one with a more rational boundary as shown in the map below.



The red cordon is that which Haringey believes the current restricted zone together with neighbouring parts of Barnet which share the same restriction.

The blue cordon is that part of Islington with an existing weight control together with Bisham Gardens.

South Grove is the only route between the two cordons. It is currently restricted in one direction but not in the other, and so status unclear.

The orange cordon contains parts of Haringey and Islington that we believe should be added to the existing restricted areas, together with Talbot Road and Church Road, so as to create a single cordon.

The particular merit of this extension is that overweight vehicles do not have to do a U-turn when they reach Highgate village.

Likewise the green cordon contains parts of Camden, much of it Holly Lodge and Swains Lane which ought not to be left uncontrolled and which, if controlled, would then prevent overweight vehicles having to turn round outside the Flask.