

Call in of Fitzjohn's Avenue Area Safe and Healthy Streets

We are making this call in for the reasons set out below. We would like to be clear that we are not opposing having a northbound cycle lane. We would also like to welcome the decision to retain the northbound St. Mary's bus stop, which corrects a major flaw in the original proposals.

The loss of the southbound St. Mary's bus stop

The three Belsize councillors objected to the loss of the bus stops in our response to the consultation last summer. The reasons given were:

1. Many of our older and less mobile residents would be effectively unable to use the bus network because the resulting gap between bus-stops would be simply too large. It is important to note that Fitzjohn's Avenue is a relatively steep hill – and so to achieve accessibility, distance between stops needs to be less than that appropriate on the flat (rather than, as proposed, substantially exceed it). It is also important to note the number of elderly and less mobile residents dependent on the 46 bus – because although there are underground stations in all directions, none is accessible.
2. Removing that stop would inevitably reduce school travel by bus. We understand that to be currently around a third of students. As we have said above, we regard reducing the “school-run” and ensuring children and families make positive school travel decisions as essential. It is also fundamental to a range of Camden policies. This goes totally and utterly in the wrong direction. We strongly support the representations made by the school and by parents in this regard.
3. We understand that a significant part of the motivation for the proposed removal of this bus stop is to improve bus journey times. We regard this as misconceived. 46 journey times are currently delayed by the College Crescent turning (which other proposals within this scheme would improve) and in particular by the very substantial problems further north at Heath Street (on which arguably much stronger action is appropriate). Removal of this much needed bus stop would have no material impact on journey times.

The hill is equally steep on both sides and there are schools on both sides, and at the top, bottom and middle of the hill. We cannot agree with the statement at 2.8 in the decision report that the ‘consolidation’ of the two southbound bus stops “would help to reduce bus delays in the southbound direction and improve service reliability, while maintaining access for bus passengers, including those with limited mobility.” The removal would inevitably reduce access for bus passengers with limited mobility. It would make travelling by bus to school less attractive for some families.

We ask that the southbound bus stop should be retained.

Bus stop design

We recognise the improvements made in the revised proposals and we acknowledge that this is a changing area where finding the right balance is a challenge. We would urge that if this scheme goes ahead, that the detail design strives to use the most up to date thinking at the point of implementation. We would expect to see ‘chicanes’ and bumps to slow cycling speed on the approach to bus stops, along with the clearest markings showing pedestrian priority.

It is important to recognise that this is an issue that has been raised by many charities and local groups. The analysis in the report leans on statistics that show low levels of accidents, but this fails to capture the perception of danger among vulnerable people that leads them to change their habits and travel less by bus. We would urge the council to engage closely with the local community (and ward councillors) about the final design of the bus stops in this scheme.

Shared cycle and pedestrian pavements

The length of shared pavements, which enable cyclists to cycle on the pavement to nearby junctions with side streets, has been increased in the Officer's Report, despite public concern.

We understand that these spaces can help improve the safety and the flow of the cycle lanes for cyclists, but in this design the functionality and value of some of the spaces are unclear. Given the potential for these spaces to affect older people, disabled people and parents of young children, these spaces need to be designed with great care. As with bus stop design, there is the safety and the perception of safety to be considered.

We think this aspect of the design needs to be looked at again.

Narrowing pavement outside 88 Fitzjohn's Avenue

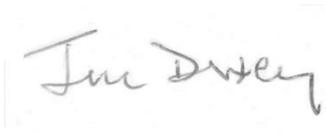
We are concerned by the reduction in the width of the pavement on the stretch outside 84-88 Fitzjohn's Avenue. This is right outside two schools. The pavement is already fairly narrow by a busy road. At present the pavement is 2.4m wide. The original proposals would have reduced the pavement to only 1.9m at the narrowest point. This has been revised back up to 2.0m.

DfT guidance on footway widths recommend a minimum of 2m of ‘clear’ footway, i.e. free from clutter. It is worth noting that there are two lamp posts on this stretch. Guidance from Active Travel England recommends a minimum of 3m footway width outside of schools.

We understand the constrained nature of the location and the difficulty in fitting in a safe cycle lane while maintaining safe pavement widths, but the decision report does not give sufficient consideration to the safety risks posed to children.

We think this issue needs closer consideration, including an analysis of different options and ways to mitigate the risks to all users of this area of public space under the proposals.

Instead of going ahead with the decision that has been made, we ask that instead Option 4 is chosen (proceed with the HSS trial but reject the Healthy Streets measures). This would allow the Healthy Streets proposals to be modified to reflect the requests and concerns raised in this call in and brought back later this year. Although the delay would be regrettable, we think it is necessary to ensure that the scheme is done right.



Cllrs Tom Simon, Nancy Jirira, Judy Dixey, Janet Grauberg

05/03/2026