

Date: 27 October 2009
Our ref: SMF/Petitions/Grove Hill Road

Community & Environment Services
Brendon Hills
Corporate Director

Manoj Kochhar
21 Grove Hill Road
Harrow
Middlesex
HA1 3AA

Dear Mr Kochhar

Petition calling for the closure of Grove Hill Road

I am writing with reference to petition dated 14 September 2009 on the above subject which you are one of the signatories.

It is our practice to report all petitions received on traffic matters to the council's Traffic and Road Safety Advisory Panel along with officer comments. It may be appropriate for this Panel to make recommendations for a course of action for decision by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety. I expect your petition to be reported to the Panel meeting on 25 November 2009.

In considering the request to close an end of Grove Hill Road we will need to consider the arguments / reasons you have supplied and to consider the wider implications for the roads in the area which may be affected by such a closure.

I can appreciate why residents and businesses in Grove Hill Road believe it would be beneficial to close the road to through traffic. I will comment on your reasons using the same numbering.

- 1) Increased numbers of vehicles on the roads nationally and the local developments you have mentioned will inevitably lead to more traffic on Harrow's roads. More traffic will tend to produce more noise and vehicle emissions however this is partially offset by advances in the engines of modern vehicles. Such negative impacts tend to be proportionate rather than suffered by some road but not by others. Measures like road closures may bring some benefits to certain roads but the overall amount of traffic does not change. So the benefit in one street would be at the expense of conditions in surrounding roads.
- 2) Buses either out of service or perhaps on diversion may well use Grove Hill Road. This practice is legitimate however buses are not meant to stand in residential locations especially with their engines running. It may well be possible to address this latter point irrespective of a road closure.
- 3) Construction vehicles, perhaps associated with local development sites, are permitted to use Grove Hill Road as it is a public highway. There are existing parking controls which should prevent parking except by residents and their visitors with permits. It is possible to contact our parking enforcement section to request action for vehicles parked across accesses even when waiting restrictions do not apply. Illegal parking would not necessarily be affected by a road closure.

- 4) There may well be traffic increases as a consequence of occupation of local developments. This additional burden tends to be shared across the road network and the other comments from 1 above apply. The new Police facility nearby may well have generated further activity locally. The closeness of law enforcement officers potentially has some benefits regarding crime and community safety. These might actually be partially offset should the Peterborough Hill end of Grove Hill Road be closed in the way you describe.
- 5) I am unaware of any previous plans to introduce such a closure at least in the last 10 years. I have made further enquiries of colleagues and similarly can find no record of such a plan. Even if it had been a consideration in the past, traffic and legal responsibilities change. Your request would need to satisfy current criteria.

There are aspects of the issues you raise which it may be possible to address even without a road closure. Buses for instance are not meant to stand in residential location especially with their engines running.

You state two possible objections to closing Grove Hill Road. These allude to traffic implications in surrounding roads which indeed is a major factor in any closure consideration. It is not a valid objection that vehicles at present travel illegally the wrong way along the one way street. It is however a legitimate manoeuvre to use the wide northern end of your road before the start of the one way restriction to turn around. Grove Hill Road is part of the public highway network which although not welcomed by you entitles the public at large to use it not only for access to addresses within the road but also as a through road.

The right turn from Tyburn Lane into Peterborough Hill is currently banned so the only way for traffic to follow that route is to turn left into Grove Hill Road and right into Peterborough Hill. A closure of Grove Hill Road would prevent this route and necessitate the removal of the right turn ban. This in itself would have congestion and safety implications. Forcing traffic wishing to turn right to continue to Northwick Park roundabout and then return for a left turn is impractical. I appreciate the number of drivers wishing to carry out this manoeuvre may well be relatively small but even a small number of right turners at busy times would have a significant adverse affect on traffic flow and hence congestion.

Lowlands Road, Tyburn Lane and Kenton Road form part of London's strategic road network (SRN). These are the busiest roads in the borough and only one level down from the red routes found elsewhere in London. The designation of this road means that although still a borough road, Transport for London (TfL) via its Network Assurance Team can affectively veto schemes which it judges would have an adverse affect of traffic on that SRN. The traffic signals at the junction with Peterborough Hill already operate at near capacity at busy times. The traffic that uses Grove Hill Road removes some of the congestion which otherwise would likely occur at that junction.

Whilst I note you have discussed your closure proposal with a police inspector from the local police facility, should such a closure scheme be promoted we would need to consult all the emergency services. The Police's traffic division often does consider traffic matters differently from local police. The ambulance and fire services in particular are conscious of the effect on response times even of a few seconds. Closures when they have been appropriate have usually been introduced with emergency access gates although these still would affect response times. I can envisage strong opposition to a closure from the emergency services.

There are further disadvantages which we also need to consider, which to some extent would have a negative impact on residents and businesses in Grove Hill Road. Firstly despite signage there will continue to people who end up turning into Grove Hill Road

expecting to be able to exit into Peterborough Road. These vehicles will then need to turn around. This will mainly be small vehicles but occasionally will involve larger vehicles with the consequent difficulty and disruption that causes. Drivers either residents, their visitors and businesses would be forced to enter and leave the road from the Tyburn Lane end which may be problematic in certain traffic conditions. Due to traffic on Tyburn Lane it might be necessary to have a left turn only in a similar way to Grove Hill. There are further the security implications of making a road a no through road in that there would be less chance of illegal and/or antisocial activities being observed by passing through traffic and of cutting it off from the Police facility.

Whilst I would acknowledge there are further environmental benefits as you have mentioned the considerable detrimental affects on the highway network in the area would make it difficult for us to recommend acceptance of your proposal.

Some of the adverse affects could potentially be reduced by considering a closure at the Tyburn Lane end of the road however the main negative impact on traffic on other roads in particular at the junction between Tyburn Lane, Kenton Road and Peterborough Hill which would need the approval of Transport for London cannot be overcome.

Whilst not being able to recommend the closure you are requesting I have ordered a traffic survey for your road which will help quantify the problems you face. There may be other measures which might be appropriate which this or future discussions with residents reveal. I will certainly raise your concerns at our regular liaison meeting with the emergency services and London Buses. I have also spoken to our parking enforcement team and they will reassess enforcement in your road with reference to your comments.

I appreciate this is not the outcome you were hoping for but I trust that the above shows how the council as the highway authority needs to consider such matters. I am happy to meet you or any of your fellow residents to discuss / explain the issue further.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Freeman
Interim Traffic Team Leader