FR: Heritage and Character of Finchley Road

History

Originally named Finchley New Road[1], it was built as a turnpike road in the late 1820s/early 1830s to provide a by-pass to the existing route north from London through Hampstead. It followed the boundaries of the fields which existed at the time.

The residential sections of the street continue to have a good sense of rhythm, with the eastern and western sides complementing one another, and a good sense of continuation as the road progresses north[2].

Finchley New Road, 1905

The Central Library followed and was opened in 1897 by its benefactor, Sir Henry Harben, then Deputy Chairman of the Prudential Assurance Company. The library became central to the life of Finchley Road residents was extended in the 1920s.

[1] Weinreb, Ben; Christopher Hibbert. The London Encyclopedia. Julia Keay, John Keay (3rd ed.). Macmillan. p. 291. ISBN 978-1-4050-4924-5 and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finchley_Road.

[2] English Heritage Training for CA Appraisal update, 23.6.14

Hampstead Central Library Interior

Blocks of mansion flats were constructed during the late Victorian / early Edwardian period including, notably, Arkwright Mansions. Arkwright Mansions was constructed over the period 1897 to 1899, opening in 1900. Architectural features included a leadwork covered, half-mansard roof and dormer windows in a Dutch decorated style.

Arkwright Mansions, Finchley Road

During the 1930s Finchley Road became home to many refugees fleeing Nazi persecution in central Europe. The Cosmo restaurant, immediately to the south of the Plan Area became a central meeting point for refugees from Berlin and Vienna[3], with a clientele including Sigmund Freud, James Mason, Frederick Forsyth and, in later years, Kenneth Williams, James Fox, Dudley Moore, Rowan Atkinson and Harry Enfield[4].

Cosmo Restaurant Interior, Finchley Road

Source: Association of Jewish Refugees

Many refugees found accommodation in the street's elegant mansion blocks[5] and, until the road widening of the mid 1960s, Finchley Road retained its status as an elegant tree-lined boulevard with prime residential apartments and wide pavements.

[3] Financial Times, 15 November 2013, https://www.ft.com/content/1ffb7cd0-47e3-11e3-88be-00144feabdc0

[4] Camden New Journal, 21.11.13 http://www.camdenreview.com/node/984420

[5] http://freepages.family.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~treevecwll/arkwright.htm

FINCHLEY ROAD NON-PLANNING COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

Finchley Road is a key arterial road, and a Red Route, operating at 95% saturation during peak traffic flows. The high traffic volumes and lack of green infrastructure result in poor air quality, with levels of nitrous oxides and particulate matter which are frequently in breach of EU maxima .

High traffic volumes also create noise nuisance, which causes a variety of health problems, including stress, sleep disturbance and heart disease. Recently, the World Health Organisation estimated that at least one million healthy life years are lost every year from traffic-related noise in the western part of Europe, with 1.8% of ischemic heart disease solely due to traffic noise[6].

TfL-led research, Healthy Streets[7], identifies the ten indicators of a healthy street. These include being welcoming places for everyone to walk, spend time and engage with other people; making walking, cycling and public transport use more convenient, pleasant and appealing than private car use; spacious and clean pavements; being easy to cross, with safe crossing points; clean air; not too noisy; provision of regular opportunities to stop and rest; feeling safe when walking and cycling; visually appealing street environments; and provision of shade and shelter.

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6 *Burden of disease from environmental noise, Quantification of healthy life years lost in Europe*, World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, WHO, Copenhagen (2011)

7 TfL *Healthy Streets* http://content.tfl.gov.uk/healthy-streets-for-london.pdf

NON-PLANNING COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

I. In the event that CS11 is constructed between Swiss Cottage and Hendon Way, the Forum will welcome:

a) the installation of multi-purpose underground conduits beneath the road for the purpose of housing electrical and telephone cables, gas piping, fibre broadband, water supply and sewerage lines in single bundles. This obviates the need to dig up roads which, in turn, minimises interruptions to traffic flow and maintains a stable supply of essential utilities, when problems arise.

b) tree planting and cycle parking on segregation islands.

ii. Wide and high-quality footways, compatible with a Conservation Area, and in accordance with Section 7 of TfL's Streetscape Guidance, are supported.

iii. The use of heritage street furniture, notably in retail areas, is sought, to enhance the public realm.

iv. Where possible, pavement width is to be maximised to enable trees and other planting, along with the provision of seating and resting facilities. This will need to be agreed with TfL.

v. If a change to the layout of Finchley Road were to be proposed, such as a lane closure or footway buildout, the space released is to be utilised for tree planting. This will need to be agreed with TfL.

vi. The provision of cycle parking is encouraged. However, this should be achieved without reducing the effective width of the pavement.

vi. The Plan supports the application of traffic calming measures from Finchley Road into side roads, in accordance with TfL's Streetscape Guidance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A Healthy Street

The Forum seek to deliver enhancements to the environment of Finchley Road through substantial green infrastructure measures.

It therefore supports the excavation of a trench, between the pavement and the road, or beneath the carriage way, to accommodate a common utilities duct. This will enable utilities to be channeled through the duct and to release road and pavement space for tree planting, including succession planting. Moreover, it will significantly reduce the need for road closures to perform utility maintenance and repairs.

The installation of a quiet road surface, such as porous asphalt, would serve to reduce road noise, improve drainage and reduce splash and spray in the rain[8].

Gaps in the street tree canopy are to be filled, as a matter of urgency. The Plan favours large-canopy species which provide biodiversity benefits.

Traffic calming measures from Finchley Road into side roads leading eastwards, such as raised entry treatments, are to be implemented in order to achieve a combination of objectives relating to safety and user priority. This should comply with TfL's *Streetscape Guidance*, as set out on pages 154 to 162 [9].

The Plan supports effective measures to control the speed of traffic on Finchley Road and reduce noise and vibration, in particular at night.

Certain traffic calming measures (such as speed bumps) cause noise and vibration, and are therefore undesirable for roads leading east from Finchley Road.

The Neighbourhood Plan recommends traffic calming through:

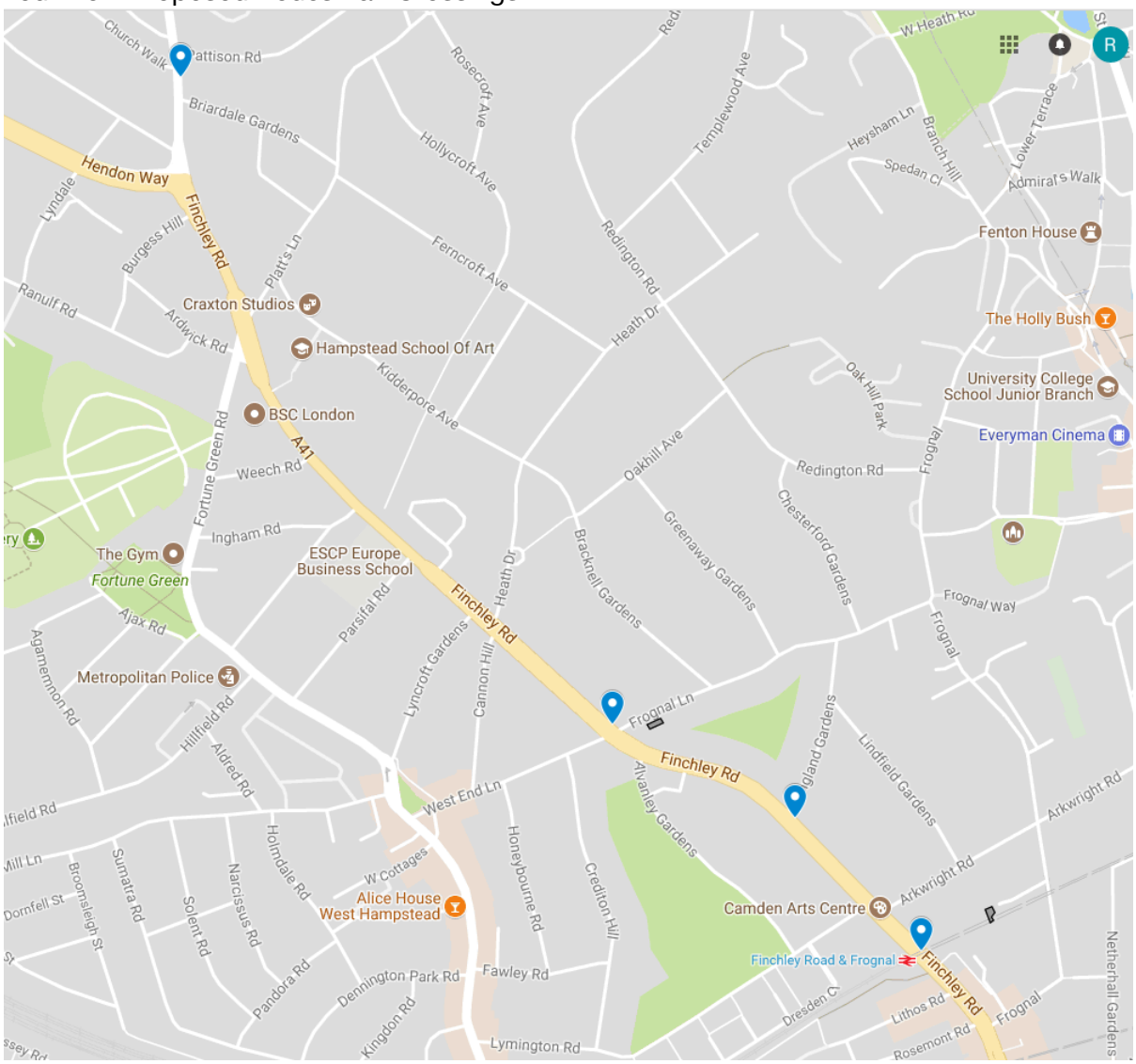
a. visually narrowing lanes;
b. sharpening curves;
c. curve extensions;
d. the appropriate positioning of trees and planters at corners, entrances and on alternating sides of the road;
e. rush-hour entry restrictions from Finchley Road into the streets leading eastwards from Finchley Road;
f. installation of speed cameras on known rat runs, in order to discourage high vehicle speeds and reduce congestion, while improving the streetscape.

Highway redesign should adopt a holistic view, taking account of the whole Plan Area, in order to discourage rat running and speeding. Any proposed works on Finchley Road are required to be agreed with TfL.

8 Euro Cities *Low-noise road surfaces.* *https://workinggroupnoise.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/leafletlayout_v2_simplecover_final.pdf*

9 TfL *Streetscape Guidance* http://content.tfl.gov.uk/streetscape-guidance-.pdf

Four New Proposed Pedestrian Crossings



https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1mdkXbKkNzOGdt3vOtbPyugQCB9LU939t&hl=en&ll=51.550884699683564,-0.18392718842471822&z=18

a: Crossing from Briardale Gardens to northbound bus stop. 51.5607, -0.19692

b: Crossing from Frognal Lane to West End Lane. 51.55304, -0.18872

c: Crossing from Langland Gardens to northbound bus stop. 51.55194, -0.18524

d. Crossing from Finchley Road southbound bus stop to Finchley Road and Frognal Overground. 51.55036, -0.18284

All bus shelters are to incorporate Countdown boards providing customers with live bus information.

A High-Quality Pedestrian and Retail Environment

Finchley Road is also the gateway to the NW3 Education Park, with 55 schools and 12,500 pupils[10], compared with 1,396 children of school age living in Hampstead at the time of the last census. Notwithstanding (unenforced) School Travel Plans, the area is notorious for its school run problems, as acknowledged in the Camden Local Plan.

It is likely that greater numbers of parents would embrace walking and active transport modes, if Finchley Road were to be upgraded into a safer, easier, cleaner, greener and more appealing environment.

By increasing the number of people walking, considerable public health benefits would derive, including reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, depression, dementia, hip fractures and some cancers.

Streets with a high footfall are also more likely to be commercially viable for traders. Evidence from TfL's London's Town Centre Study 2011 shows that pedestrians spent an average of £373 per month, compared with £226 per month for car users[11]. Average spend is also linked to the time a consumer intends to spend in the area.

Similarly, research by Just Economics for Living Streets (The Pedestrians' Association)[12] found that case study evidence suggests well-planned improvements to public spaces can boost footfall and trading by up to 40%.

Through investing in better streets and spaces for walking, a competitive return can be provided: when compared to other transport projects, walking and cycling projects can increase retail sales by 30%[13] [14].

In the same vein, Arup's *Cities Alive* report, notes that,

> *"Accessible, comfortable and well maintained seating facilities where people can gather, rest and converse are fundamental tools to catalyse social activities in public space. According to William H. Whyte's Street Life Project, a direct observation experiment on people's patterns of use of public space "you can calculate that where pedestrian flows bisect a sittable place, that is where people will most likely sit"*.[15]

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10 *School run traffic*, Church Row and Perrins Walk Neighbourhood Forum submission to TfL, 3.3.16

11 http://content.tfl.gov.uk/town-centre-study-2011-report.pdf

12 The pedestrian pound: The business case for better streets and places https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/1391/pedestrianpound_fullreport_web.pdf

13 Todd Alexander Litman. 2003. "*Economic Value of Walkability*." Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board 1828 (-1): 3–11. http://www.vtpi.org/walkability.pdf

14 Dan Burden and Todd Alexander Litman. 2011. "*America Needs Complete Streets*." ITE Journal 81 (4): 36–43. https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/act/transportation/america-needs-complete-streets-2011-aarp.pdf

15 "The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces", by William H. Whyte. 1988. The Conservation Foundation. https://archive.org/details/SmallUrbanSpace