

TRAFFIC MOVEMENT AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY ON ALMA ROAD, GROVE ROAD AND WOOD LANE, HEADINGLEY

This deputation is from the Wood Lane Neighbourhood Residents' Association, which covers Alma Road, Grove Road, Woodland Park Road, Balbec Avenue, Wood Lane and Shire Oak Road. Supported by Ward Councillors, residents have battled for 5 years, including during consultation on the Headingley Parking Strategy, to relieve longstanding problems of pedestrian safety and access, with no resolution in sight. A new Healthcare Centre, serving 14000 patients, will soon considerably increase traffic hazards for pedestrians, cyclists, and residents and will make the difficulty of access to premises intolerable.

Area description

This predominantly residential area also includes Shire Oak Primary School and Pre-school, Wheatfields Hospice, University flats, St Urban's church and several business premises. There is continual development and expansion (of premises). Bounded by Otley Road and Grove Lane, it is close to central Headingley shops and within a few minutes walk of Headingley Stadium. Wood Lane was closed off from Otley Road in the 1970s, to prevent "rat running" traffic. Access is *only* via Grove Road (or, further along, via Woodland Park Road or Balbec Avenue). These narrow roads are used by many pedestrians and cyclists.

Traffic pressure points

The area is already at traffic saturation. Particular pressure points are the key T junctions at Alma Rd/Grove Rd and Grove Rd/Wood Lane, which is the access to the very narrow Wood Lane cul de sac, where the school is located. Additionally, 'rat running' along Alma Road (a one way road) leads to queued traffic down Grove Road, at its extremely congested crossroad with Grove Lane, by the church. Vehicle access to and from Wood Lane and Grove Road has become increasingly difficult.

Existing problems of illegal, dangerous and inconsiderate parking, obstruction and accidents

Commuters (and Headingley match supporters) take up all parking spaces, often parking in and obstructing private drives and roads. Illegal parking for shorter periods, including on yellow lines, footpaths and at junctions, is widespread. Traffic movement up or down Grove Road is difficult or impossible when vehicles are parked on both sides. The very busy Alma Road/Grove Rd and Grove Rd/Wood Lane junctions are made particularly dangerous for pedestrians (one being knocked down last year) and for car drivers because of very restricted visibility until well out into the junction. They become impassable for larger vehicles. Accidents occur frequently, most recently at Alma Rd/Grove Rd on 7 January 2011, when a substantial wall was demolished again and two cars severely damaged, one with a broken axle.

Additional problems from the new Healthcare Centre due to open soon at St Michael's Court

This site, at the end of Wood Lane, has vehicle access *only from* Otley Road at Shire Oak St. Many patients will attempt to approach via Wood Lane, and will 'hunt' for parking rather than battle with the heavy traffic on Otley Road. Mayhem will result throughout the day because each will have to turn round in a restricted space and go elsewhere, with additional danger resulting from driver frustration. Misdirected delivery vehicles will be unable to turn, adding acutely to the traffic problems.

Safety hazards for children, other pedestrians and cyclists

The safety of pedestrians and cyclists using these roads, especially to the school and Wheatfields, is paramount. The School Governors have written to express grave concern about the potential impact of the Healthcare Centre on the roads around the school, given that dangerous parking at the Wood Lane/Grove Road junction already creates an extremely hazardous crossing for children and parents.

Difficulty of access for emergency and other services

Over 100 residences of predominantly elderly people are located on the Wood Lane 'cul-de-sac' section. 83 of these premises connect to Wood Lane by two narrow entrances opposite one of the school gates, on a blind bend. Congestion from traffic and parking associated with the school, hospice and rugby matches regularly causes serious difficulty of access for taxis, access bus and ambulances. ***Our concerns about danger to life for this very high density population have been confirmed by Moortown Station fire officers*** since it would be impossible to move a line of cars parked along the exceptionally narrow cul-de-sac length of Wood Lane, to get fire engines through.

Willingness to explore solutions including charged resident only parking

We ask that the issues are urgently addressed before the Healthcare Centre opens. There is willingness to consider measures such as charged resident-only parking, or some form of levy, to get traffic control measures implemented. Appropriate signage indicating no through road and restricted access, double yellow lining to improve traffic movement and improve visibility at junctions could be considered, also including Wood Lane 'cul-de-sac' to become an 'access only' zone.

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