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**Hendon Hub proposal – Inclusion Barnet Feedback**

**Background**

On 4th February 2021 we responded to a survey by real estate consultancy GL Hearn, appointed by Barnet Council to help manage the Hendon Hub Consultation.

The feedback we provided was developed in consultation with Inclusion Barnet members and other disabled people living and/or working in Barnet.

Our sincere thanks to all who assisted with this process. We will keep you informed of any news we receive, and hope to continue to represent the views of disabled people at further stages of the consultation process.

Inclusion Barnet website: <https://www.inclusionbarnet.org.uk/>

Hendon Hub public consultation website: <https://hendonhub.co.uk/consultation/>

**To what extent do you support or oppose the Hendon Hub proposals overall?**

I am submitting this feedback on behalf of Inclusion Barnet, a peer-led Deaf and Disabled People’s Organisation (DDPO) based in the borough. We are a membership organisation, and our responses follow consultation with our members and other disabled people who live and/or work in the borough.

One of our members commented that, at public consultation meetings; *‘what hasn’t been explained is what is being done regarding disability. Can’t seem to drill down to the disability issues. At these meetings [the developers] do a lot of talking, and residents are chatting in the box rather than [being given the opportunity to ask] the questions. [There has been] no definitive answer regarding access and disability issues’.*

With this and our own efforts to understand and respond to the consultation in mind, we would first like to suggest that processes are put in place to actively and continually engage disabled residents, workers and students as the planning process.

Another member said *‘I am sure it will look great. But it feels like the plans are… to make a Middlesex university environment rather than [one for] people who live in Hendon.’*

There are a number of considerations crucial to providing equality of access, and we are aware that many of these are statutory requirements. Whilst we of course hope and expect that all legally required access provisions will be made, we urge you to think bigger. We believe that creative, thoughtful attention to inclusivity which goes above and beyond statutory requirements could make the Hendon Hub a place where disabled people can see and feel that they are meaningfully valued as important members of the community.

Access considerations highlighted by our members include:

* Adequate parking, including sufficient spaces for Blue Badge holders, within reasonable distance of facilities and with wheelchair-accessible routes between parking spaces and facilities
* Signage which is appropriately sized, formatted, located and illuminated (with particular consideration of people who are partially-sighted, those with learning disabilities and neurodivergence such as dyslexia)
* Pedestrian crossings sufficient in width and number to accommodate footfall without crowding, and crossing equipment (such as visual/auditory signalling, buttons etc) chosen carefully for accessibility
* Adequate street and internal lighting, particularly in areas where facilities and access routes are provided for disabled people
* Walkways, ramps and handrails unobstructed by street furniture
* Doorways and walkways of sufficient width for users of both manual and electric wheelchairs and mobility aids, as well as ramps and wheelchair lifts where relevant
* Wheelchair and mobility vehicle parking provided, and monitored to prevent improper use (e.g. bicycle storage)
* Consideration of pedestrianised areas. Where this is not possible, measures taken to discourage use of pavements by cyclists and electric scooters
* Adequate indoor and outdoor seating, including at bus stops and particularly in areas where queueing is likely
* Dropped curbs
* Refuse bins to be clearly labelled and their designs selected with accessibility in mind, and for these to be ample and regularly emptied to avoid excess litter becoming a hazard
* Provision of public toilets, including both standard accessible facilities and Changing Places facilities
* Thorough and ongoing consideration of internal and external accessibility, in consultation with both accessibility specialists and local disabled people

With disabled people more likely to be victims of hate crime, we welcome the addition of a Safer Neighbourhoods policing team to the development plans. We would also like to suggest advocating that the facilities and businesses created by the development subscribe to the Safe Places scheme to ensure that disabled and vulnerable people have places to seek support should they feel in danger (<https://www.barnetmencap.org.uk/safe-places/>).

We would like to know how many people will be affected by Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) and what provision will be made to minimise the impact on their lives and support their mental wellbeing.

**To what extent do you support or oppose the proposals for the new public Hendon Library?**

We understand and are sympathetic to the concerns of those who do not want to lose public use of a heritage building. However, as a DDPO, we acknowledge that older buildings are often less accessible and that listed buildings can be difficult to adapt in line with access requirements.

One of our members said: *‘It has been a while since I have visited Hendon library. I do agree it does need improvement. Any improvement and investment in the library can be a good thing.’*

Others agreed that a *‘modern library with access for disabled people’* would be an improvement, and one suggested that they would like to see more space to study.

We feel strongly that the designs for a new Hendon Library premises should prioritise accessibility, including but not limited to:

* Adequate parking, including sufficient spaces for Blue Badge holders, within reasonable distance of the library and with a wheelchair-accessible route between parking spaces and library
* Provision of toilet facilities, including both standard accessible facilities and Changing Places facilities
* Signage which is appropriately sized, formatted, located and illuminated (with particular consideration of people who are partially-sighted, those with learning disabilities and neurodivergence such as dyslexia)
* Consideration of sensory needs of disabled library users – for example, the acoustics of the building and the possibility of adjustable lighting
* Doorways and walkways of sufficient width for users of both manual and electric wheelchairs and mobility aids, as well as ramps and wheelchair lifts where relevant
* Thorough and ongoing consideration of internal and external accessibility, in consultation with both accessibility specialists and local disabled people

**To what extent do you support or oppose the proposals for the temporary relocation of Hendon Library to The Burroughs car park, which may be required as part of this project?**

There is concern from our members about the likelihood of temporary buildings being accessible. Should temporary relocation occur, careful consideration must be taken to ensure the accessibility of the interim premises.

**To what extent do you support or oppose the current proposals for the Meritage Centre?**

We welcome the proposal to create a single community hub, rather than potentially rehousing the services elsewhere in the borough; Barnet’s voluntary and community sector has a strong collaborative ethos, with organisations regularly consulting and signposting people to colleagues at other agencies. Having a single community hub (as currently exists within the Meritage Centre) means that individuals in need of support are less likely to need to travel long distances across what is a very large borough.

All members we consulted said they had used services based at the Meritage Centre.

Members noted that the Meritage Centre is not in great condition, and welcomed the idea of new, more modern premises for the services based there. They said that they would like to see more services under one roof.

Others, however, were concerned that interim plans for accommodating the services which use the Meritage Centre had not been explained. We would welcome information on these.

Members highlighted that the new space must be accessible, and must be available to the relevant community services at a reasonable cost.

One member commented: *‘The Wellbeing Hub needs to exist as a flexible community space for meetings, activities and refreshments.’*

Another agreed that the new building could be more accessible by having: *‘Flexibility to be large space or smaller spaces. The kitchen to be used or usable by volunteers. Improved signage and labelling so people are aware of it. Access to computers/WiFi.’*

**Do you have any comments on the community benefits that we have identified could be delivered as part of this project?**

One member commented that the planned new, *‘environmentally friendly area looks very nice indeed’* and, having attended public consultation meetings, was impressed by plans for a publically-accessible arts facility. We were unable to find information about the latter, and would be very interested to read this if possible.

**Do you have any comments on parking in the area, how it is currently used and managed, and what might be reasonably required in the future?**

Some members have no concerns about parking, while others do. One stated:

*‘Despite all the positive impact. I do worry about the parking. For example Colindale area looks good but I have heard lots of unhappy people with cars trying to find a space to park. I feel same thing will happen here, especially with student accommodation around 600, which means lots more cars in the area and that’s not good.’*

We sent an email to GL Hearn on 26/05/21 as follows:

*“In total, how many current parking spaces do you anticipate will be removed from use, and how many new ones will be created?*

*Additionally; how many disabled parking spaces will be removed, and how many created?”*

We received a response on 03/06/21 that a member of staff would look into this and get back to us. We would very much appreciate clarification on these points, as well as data on the number of parking spaces and of Blue Badge spaces available currently.

**What kind of public spaces (e.g. piazza or courtyard areas, green spaces, play space etc.) would you like to see created as part of the Hendon Hub project?**

Our primary concern is that community facilities and public spaces created be accessible to all members of the community. We believe that this development presents an amazing opportunity for Barnet to position itself as an innovator and role model in the field of disability inclusion; one which it would be a great shame to waste.

There are many amenities - such as wheelchair-accessible picnic benches and accessible playground equipment – which could be put in place at relatively nominal cost to the project and would mean the world to the people who used them.

**Do you have any further comments or feedback you would like to give?**

All members we consulted felt that new housing should be designed to be accessible for disabled people.

We understand that independent (supported) housing for care-experienced young adults may be created within the development following resident concerns about potential imbalance between the numbers of students and permanent residents. We welcome this, and would like to suggest that you consider tailoring some of the provision to disabled young adults. There are many care-experienced children and young adults with complex needs, who – like all young people – are likely to need support with the transition to independent living.

We would also like to know how many units of student accommodation will be designed with a particular focus on accessibility – whilst we hope that all common areas of buildings will meet and exceed statutory requirements, it would be great to have the assurance that disabled students will be enabled to live in university accommodation, should they so wish. We encourage you to involve disabled students in the design of university buildings and facilities.