



# City of Westminster Cabinet Member Report

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| <b>Decision Maker:</b>    | Cllr David Boothroyd<br>Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform |
| <b>Date:</b>              | 03 January 2024   |
| <b>Classification:</b>    | General Release   |
| <b>Title:</b>             | 61 Harewood Avenue, London, NW1<br>Petition Response                  |
| <b>Wards Affected:</b>    | Regent's Park   |
| <b>Policy Context:</b>    | Fairer Environment  |
| <b>Key Decision:</b>      | No  |
| <b>Financial Summary:</b> | N/A   |
| <b>Report of:</b>         | Claire Nangle – Interim Director of<br>Corporate Property             |

## 1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 This report outlines the Council's current intentions with regards to the vacant former operational property at 61 Harewood Avenue, London NW1.

## 2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That the Cabinet Member approves the undertaking of a detailed design and planning feasibility for the relocation of the Council's street cleaning depot from the basement car park at 215 Lisson Grove to 61 Harewood Avenue.

## 3.0 Reasons For Decision

3.1 The report has been written in response to a petition received and sets out the Council's approach to the site.

## **4.0 Background Including Policy Context**

- 4.1** The council's waste service is responsible for street cleaning throughout Westminster. The service is currently contracted to Veolia as part of the wider Westminster domestic waste collection service. The street cleansing service operates from 13 council owned depots, each of which serves a specific geographic area of the Westminster estate (a 'village'). Because much of the street cleaning is still undertaken manually using hand carts, the spread of the depots across the City and their central location within the 'village' is critical to ensuring that the service can be delivered in a timely and efficient manner.
- 4.2** The depots operate under a sui generis planning consent which is protected under policy 37D of the Westminster Plan. The Lisson Grove/St John's Wood 'village' is served by a depot located in the basement of the council's offices at 215 Lisson Grove. The depot comprises a section of the basement car park, including 8 parking spaces and an adjoining circa 125 m<sup>2</sup> (GIA) utility block incorporating basic office, storage and welfare facilities.
- 4.3** 61 Harewood Avenue is located circa 0.4 miles southeast of the Lisson Grove depot at the junction of Harewood Avenue and Rossmore Road. The original purpose of the building is unclear, although it is believed to have been built in the 1960's as part of the larger social housing estate, which adjoins it to the south. The building is of single storey steel frame and brick infill construction and provides circa 342 m<sup>2</sup> (GIA) of accommodation.
- 4.4** Up until 2018, the property was occupied under a lease and service contract by Sodexo who used it as a food preparation kitchen, providing 'meals on wheels' to Children's Services clients. For a period after that it was used as temporary storage although the building has now been vacant for over 12 months.
- 4.5** There is both a strategic and operational rationale for the relocation of the depot from Lisson Grove to Harewood Avenue. The key rationale is strategic. The Council's offices at 215 Lisson Grove are the subject of a longstanding and ongoing redevelopment proposal which would see the site redeveloped for residential purposes. Whilst this project is currently undergoing reappraisal, the relocation of the depot from 215 Lisson Grove will be a condition of any future planning consent, given the protected status of the planning use. To release the latent value from the site at 215 Lisson Grove, the council would either need to include a depot in a replacement facility or source a new depot in the marketplace. To accommodate a depot in any replacement council development, the construction of a dedicated basement facility would be required. This would add significant to the cost and complexity of the development. Sourcing a replacement depot in the marketplace is also likely to be challenging given the narrow search area, lack of suitable product and potential for planning issues.
- 4.6** In addition to the strategic rationale, there are service benefits from relocating the depot to 61 Harewood Avenue. The Lisson Grove depot has a restrictive entrance height of 2 metres. Whilst this is sufficient to permit entry to the service's manual barrows, it does not allow a number of the larger support vehicles to be retained on site. At present, 6 of the larger

support vehicles that operate in the north of the city are located at the Westway Depot, south of Harrow Road.

- 4.7** The service also has a strategy in place to both electrify their street cleaning vehicles and expand the fleet to improve the speed and efficiency of collection across the City. The intention therefore is for the service to make Harwood Avenue the primary Electric Vehicle (EV) charging hub for their north of the City street cleaning vehicle fleet. The depot reconfiguration would include installation of charging stations for up to 16 of the small/medium sized EVs, with the remainder of the space taken up by the manual barrows. This in turn would free up space at the Westway Depot required for an expansion of the fleet serving the central City villages.
- 4.8** From a service perspective therefore, the benefits are twofold. It enables them to expedite the transition of their fleet from diesel vehicles to EVs, thus delivering on their/the Council's environmental objectives and to expand their fleet in order to deliver on their service improvement/efficiency objectives.
- 4.9** Corporate Property have undertaken some initial feasibility work with the service and Veolia in respect of 61 Harewood Avenue. The required works are largely internal and electrical. The interior of the building will be stripped back to shell to create open 'garage' space for the parking and charging of the cleansing fleet. A kitchen, office and welfare facilities will be incorporated into the floor plan. The only external work will be the creation of a roller shutter entrance off the service yard. The charging equipment will require a building power upgrade to 250 kVA.
- 4.10** A pre-planning application has confirmed that the proposed use is compliant with local plan policy. The planners have highlighted the need to consult with the local community and to ensure that any amenity issues are addressed in the application, including noise disturbance and air quality/odours issues. The intention is for the service to work with the planning consultants through the feasibility process to design an operational method statement that will address any amenity concerns of the local community and any planning policy requirements. This will draw on the extensive experience that the service has in operating street cleaning depots elsewhere in Westminster, often in close proximity to residential properties.
- 4.11** The relocation feasibility work is currently on hold pending a project to remove a significant amount of hazardous asbestos from the premises. The property cannot be accessed until this work has been undertaken. It is anticipated that this work will be completed early in the new year and the development feasibility will follow on from this.

## **5.0 Financial Implications**

- 5.1** 61 Harewood Avenue sits in the General Fund asset Register. An initial high-level costing has been undertaken and provision has been made in the Capital Programme for the cost of the reconfiguration works although the estimate will be refined as the designs are finalised.

## **6.0 Legal Implications**

- 6.1** The proposal in this report is to undertake a detailed design and planning feasibility for the relocation of an existing facility in Lisson Grove, to a new location nearby. Subject to all and any necessary approvals in this regard, the proposal is to develop and change the use of a property the Council already holds in the General Fund.
- 6.2** In respect of undertaking the feasibility study, the Council may do so under its general power of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011; this is the power to do anything an individual can do provided it is not prohibited by other legislation. The Council also has the power under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its functions.
- 6.3** The powers to deliver the proposal, together with any future possible legal implications relating to the closure of the existing Lisson Grove facility, the arrangements with Veolia and the development and future use of the new site, will need to be considered if the options for the redevelopment of the new site evolve. The Council shall need to consider undertaking the necessary contract, planning and property due diligence.

## **7.0 Carbon Impact**

- 7.1** The project is strongly aligned to the Council's decarbonisation policies. One of the primary operational objectives is to enable the introduction of electric waste collection vehicles into the Council's street cleaning fleet to decarbonise the street cleaning process. The repurposing of this vacant former operational site is also a significantly more sustainable solution to the alternative of re-providing the depot in a future new-build subterranean development.

## **8.0 Equalities Implications**

- 8.1** The Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity. The Council must take into account its wider public sector equality duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 when making decisions. The Council should have due regard to this duty in undertaking its projects. An Equalities Assessment will be undertaken as part of the feasibility to inform future decision making.

## **9.0 Consultation**

Ward Councillors have been briefed on the proposal in a briefing note issued on 21 October 2023. Consultation with relevant community groups will be undertaken as part of the impending feasibility exercise.

**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any  
of the Background Papers, please contact:**

Claire Nangle, Interim Director of Corporate Property

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## **APPENDICES**

**None**

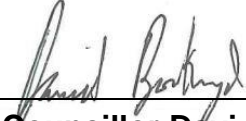
## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Petition received entitled “St Johns Wood Cleaning Changes”.

For completion by the **Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform**

**Declaration of Interest**

I have no interest to declare in respect of this report

Signed:  Date: 21 December 2023  
NAME: **Councillor David Boothroyd**

State nature of interest if any:

*(N.B: If you have an interest, you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter)*

For the reasons set out above, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled

**61 Harewood Avenue, London, NW1 Petition** and reject any alternative options which are referred to but not recommended.

Signed:   
Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform

Date: 21 December 2023

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and this pro-forma is returned to the Secretariat for processing.

Additional comment:

If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law. Note to Cabinet Member: Your decision will now be published and copied to the Members of the relevant Policy & Scrutiny Committee. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication to allow the Policy and Scrutiny Committee to decide whether it wishes to call the matter in.