

DEPUTATION TWO – WOOD LANE RESIDENTS

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the people in your Deputation.

MS S GRIFFITHS: My Lord Mayor, members of Council. I am Sue Griffiths, this is John Griffiths and Darren Shickle (?) and we represent the Wood Lane Neighbourhood Residents' Association, which also covers Alma Road, Grove Road, Woodland Park Road, Balbec Avenue, Wood Lane and Shire Oak Road in Headingley. We, with our Councillors, residents have battled for five years, including during consultation on the Headingley Parking Strategy, about longstanding problems affecting our access and pedestrian safety, with no resolution yet or in sight. Meanwhile, a Healthcare Centre, serving 14000 patients will open soon very nearby. This will considerably increase traffic hazards for pedestrians, cyclists, and residents and increase the difficulty in accessing premises to an intolerable level.

The area is residential, primarily, but with a Primary School, a Pre-School, Wheatfields Hospice, University flats, a church and business premises and there is constant expansion. Bounded by Otley Road and Grove Lane, the area abuts Headingley shops and is within a few minutes walk of Headingley Stadium. Wood Lane was closed off from Otley Road in the 1970s, to prevent "rat running" traffic and is accessed only via Grove Road. Many pedestrians and cyclists use all these narrow roads, which are already at traffic saturation point.

The particular pressure points include two T junctions, one at Alma and Grove Road and the other at Grove Road and Wood Lane, which is the only access to the very narrow Wood Lane cul-de-sac section, where the school is located – an extremely busy area. "Rat running! along Alma Road (a one way road) leads to queuing traffic down Grove Road and near its extremely congested crossroads with Grove Lane, by the church. Vehicles often park on both sides of Grove Road, making traffic movement down it difficult or impossible and access to and from it from Wood Lane has become increasingly difficult.

We have illegal, dangerous and inconsiderate parking everywhere – commuters in the day and match-goers in the evening for Headingley events take up all parking spaces, often parking in and obstructing private drives and roads. There is widespread illegal parking on, footpaths at corners and on junctions so there is no visibility until well out into the junction and this is particularly dangerous for pedestrians, one having been knocked down last year, and for car drivers - it is dangerous and impassable for larger vehicles than a car.

There are frequent accidents, e.g. at Alma and Grove Rd on 7 January a very substantial wall was demolished yet again and two cars were severely damaged, one with a broken axle.

The new Healthcare site at the end of Wool Lane has access only from Otley Road at Shire Oak St, but many will try to approach via Wood Lane and will hunt for parking rather than battle with the heavy traffic on Otley Road, so there will be mayhem throughout the day as each will have to turn round in a restricted space and go elsewhere, and driver frustration will present an additional danger. Misdirected delivery vehicles will be unable to turn, causing blockage.

The safety hazards, in particular for children and pedestrians and cyclists using these roads is paramount. The School Governors have written expressing 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.

There is difficulty of access for emergency and other services. There are over a hundred residences of predominantly elderly people located on the narrow Wood Lane cul-de-sac and virtually all of these connect to Wood Lane by two narrow entrances opposite a school gate on a blind bend. Congestion there from traffic and parking associated with the school, hospice and rugby matches regularly causes serious difficulty of access and delay for taxis, access bus, ambulances etc, in addition to the congestion they have traversed to get to Wood Lane. Our concerns about danger to life for this very high density population have been confirmed by Moor Town fire officers. It would be impossible to move a line of cars parked along the very narrow section of Wood Lane to get the fire engines through.

We ask that the issues are urgently addressed before Healthcare Centre opens and we are sufficiently concerned that there is willingness to consider solutions which could include charged resident-only parking or some form of levy to get necessary measures implemented, such as appropriate signage indicating no through road and restricted access, double yellow lining to improve traffic movement and improve visibility at junctions. Also Wood Lane cul-de-sac to become an ‘access only’ zone. Thank you. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen, please.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I move that the matter under consideration should be referred to the Executive Board.

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I call for the vote on that? (*A vote was taken*) That is clearly CARRIED. Thank you.

Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.