

NORTH UXBRIDGE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION (NURA)

2 Belmont Close,
UXBRIDGE,
Middlesex,
UB8 1RF.

MOPAC,
169 Union Street,
LONDON,
SE1 0LL.

20 January 2022

FEEDBACK ON POLICE AND CRIME PLAN 2021-25

Dear Sirs,

As the Association representing the residents of North Uxbridge in the London Borough of Hillingdon, NURA would like to comment on the Draft Police and Crime Plan 2021-25.

We support the statement that it is essential that to make our city a safer place the Police must work in partnership with communities and local councils. To this end we hope that the MOPAC will forge closer ties with NURA - particularly in respect to decision-making that directly affects our residents.

We also wholeheartedly support the Plan's aims of seeking to enhance public trust and confidence in the Police and to provide more visible neighbourhood policing.

In response to widespread concerns from our residents, NURA has been very active in campaigning to save the modern Police Station in Harefield Road, Uxbridge ever since the 24/7 front desk was closed in December 2017 and the whole facility threatened with permanent closure. As part of this campaign NURA organised a petition to request that the 24/7 front desk be reopened and the facility be permanently retained.

This Petition, which was submitted to the Mayor's Office on 22 January 2020, has 1352 signatures and 600 comments, which show both the support for the Police across this community and the opposition to the closure of Uxbridge Police Station. Please fully consider all the comments in this Petition when finalising this Police and Crime Plan.

Please involve the North Uxbridge Residents Association in your discussions before a final decision is made on which Police Stations and which 24/7 Front Counters will be retained in the London Borough of Hillingdon. This should be a partnership like that you refer to on Page 9 of the Draft Plan.

NURA supports the London Borough of Hillingdon's offer to buy the Uxbridge facility for £5 million and lease it back to MOPAC for five years at a rent of only £45,000 a year. The Council has also generously pledged a grant of £250,000 a year for five years to cover half the running costs. We consider that this offer must be accepted so that Uxbridge Police Station can remain open.

On Page 30 of the Draft Plan it is stated: "The Mayor is determined to use this term to build bridges with government and strengthen our working with partner agencies. Key to effective local crime prevention is strong working relationships between MPS Basic Command Unit (BCU) Commanders and local borough Leaders. MOPAC will continue to use its convening role to support and encourage these working relationships wherever possible".

Given the above statements, NURA contends that MOPAC needs to meet with Boris Johnson (MP for Uxbridge and South Ruislip) and the Leader of Hillingdon Council to discuss, face-to-face, the long-term future of Uxbridge Police Station. Both gentlemen are keen for Uxbridge Police Station to remain open.

On Page 43 of the Draft Plan it states: "The Mayor will continue to support the ambition of the MPS Estate Strategy to concentrate on fewer but better buildings. This approach will provide revenue savings to help protect the front line and release capital for reinvestment in technology and equipment to help modernise policing. There will continue to be one 24/7 front counter in every London borough. Neighbourhood teams will be based in buildings close to the communities they police."

Given this statement NURA contends that the logical conclusion is to retain Uxbridge Police Station (the most modern in the Borough) and take the financial offer from Hillingdon Council to strengthen the police presence in this area.

Whilst the single police station / one 24/7 front counter strategy may work in smaller, more compact inner London Boroughs, it is not practical or sensible in much larger, long and thin outer London boroughs like Hillingdon. This big Borough (the second largest by land area in London) needs at least two police stations and greater front counter accessibility.

In the past Sadiq Khan has indicated that the only police station in the London Borough of Hillingdon will be the one in Hayes End – 3.5 miles away from Uxbridge. Built back in 1938, this much smaller facility apparently requires an investment of over £5 million make it fit for an enhanced role.

Hayes End is not as accessible to the public (no nearby Underground station) and there are limited bus routes serving it) as Uxbridge. The Uxbridge Police station scores by being close to Uxbridge Underground Station (served by both the Metropolitan and Piccadilly lines) and Uxbridge Central Bus Station (served

by buses covering the whole Borough of Hillingdon). It also has much better nearby public car parking.

NURA considers that the Mayor of London should not spend £5 million from the Metropolitan police budget on trying to get Hayes End police station fit for an enhanced role in the 21st century whilst seemingly rejecting a very generous financial proposal from London Borough of Hillingdon to keep the much more modern Uxbridge facility (only built in 1988) fully open.

If it is deemed essential for a 24/7 front desk to be retained at Hayes End Police Station (to serve both Hillingdon residents in the east of the Borough and people living in the west of Ealing), NURA considers that an additional front desk facility should be opened in Uxbridge Police Station. This extra facility (which could perhaps only be open at certain times (say Monday to Saturday between 11.00am and 3.00pm) would much better serve the residents of Uxbridge, Ruislip and the far flung village of Harefield.

NURA also contends that this Plan should include the reopening of the Uxbridge custody suite (the cells). Currently, if there is an arrest in Uxbridge, the offender has to be transported all the way to the cells at the Heathrow Airport police station (usually full) or Acton, Hammersmith or even Kingston Police Stations. These unnecessary journeys clearly waste valuable Police time and resources. As the Mayor rightly wants to reduce vehicle emissions in London, long trips by diesel or petrol engined Police vehicles should be eliminated if at all possible.

In preparing the MOPAC Review of the Police Stations in the London Borough of Hillingdon, NURA needs to be kept fully informed of what resources will be housed in each station and exactly how blue light response times will be affected by any station closures. We want to work closely with MOPAC to achieve a common goal of reducing crime in London and making the Capital a safer place for all residents to live and work in.

Yours sincerely

Paul Johnson

(Chairman, NURA)