

Committee(s)	Dated:
Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee	6 July 2015 20 July 2015
Subject: Parliament Hill viewpoint interpretation	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Information

Summary

The most popular and famous view from Hampstead Heath is from the summit of Parliament Hill. The only on-site interpretation at this viewpoint is the very out-of-date steel sign, erected by the Greater London Council in 1984.

This report informs Members of an interim solution to provide up-to-date interpretation of this iconic view and lays out a method for agreeing a more permanent solution.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note this report.

Main Report

Background

1. There are numerous well-known and popular viewpoints across Hampstead Heath, taking in panoramas and linear views to central London, to Harrow on the Hill, and to adjacent areas of the North London Heights, including the villages of Hampstead and Highgate.
2. The London View Management Framework Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) March 2012 protects a total of 27 key views across the Capital, encompassing important buildings or urban landscapes visible from parks or other open spaces. Six are defined as London Panoramas, two of which are based on viewing locations on Hampstead Heath – one from the summit of Parliament Hill, centred on St Paul's Cathedral, and the second from the prominent oak tree just east of the summit of Parliament Hill, centred on the Palace of Westminster.
3. Detailed descriptions of these two statutorily protected London Panoramas, together with the criteria for their preservation, can be found in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

Current Position

4. The view from the summit of Parliament Hill is arguably the most popular and famous one on Hampstead Heath, enjoyed by many thousands of people each year. The only on-site interpretation provided at this viewpoint is the steel sign erected by the Greater London Council in 1984. Whilst this has historical value, the sign is damaged and clearly many years out of date. We are increasingly asked by the public to replace the sign with something more up to date and accurate.
5. As an interim measure, an annotated photograph of the view from the summit of Parliament Hill has been placed on the City of London website (see Figure 1). This photograph shows the main buildings and landmarks visible in Docklands, the City and the West End. A QR code (a smart-phone-readable optical label linked to a website) will very soon be displayed at the Parliament Hill summit on a simple post. This will allow users of smart-phones and other mobile devices to link to the website and view the annotated photograph, while comparing it to the actual view. If need be, the photograph can be replaced with more up-to-date photographs as the seasons change and as new buildings appear.

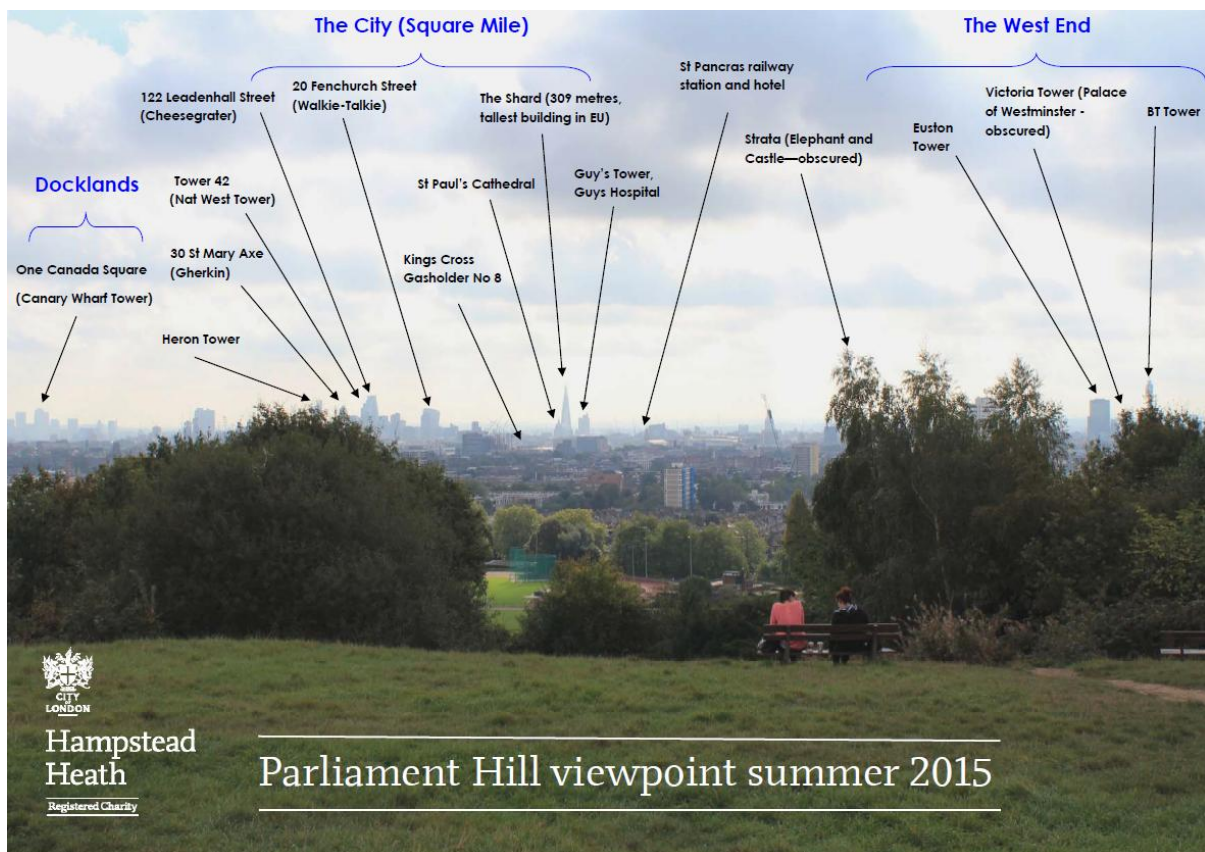


Figure 1: Annotated photograph of the view from the summit of Parliament Hill, available on the City of London website.

Options

6. We need to consider the best way to provide a permanent solution for giving the public information to enhance their experience of the Parliament Hill summit viewpoint. This needs to take account of:
 - The ever-changing nature of the London skyline, with new buildings appearing all the time in recent years and ongoing construction work.
 - The technology now available to us; an on-site sign is not the only way to provide the required information.
 - The aesthetics of the area. Anything permanently added needs to blend in with and complement the aesthetics of this famous and sensitive location.
 - The landscape improvement works taking place at Parliament Hill, previously presented to this Committee
 - The fact that there are actually two viewpoints for two statutorily protected London panoramas, both in close proximity to the Parliament Hill area.

Proposals

7. It is very important that the City liaises with the local community and user groups, to agree on a longer-term solution. The Superintendent is consequently planning an initial meeting with the Chairman of the Heath & Hampstead Society Heath Sub-Committee and a Member of the Hampstead Heath Management Committee. The Society has very kindly offered to help fund an agreed replacement for the existing sign.
8. It is likely that this initial meeting will be followed by the creation of a small working group to determine the best way forward and to come up with a proposal that can be brought before this Committee.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

9. The proposal supports the City's vision for "high quality, accessible and responsive services benefiting its communities, neighbours, London and the nation", and specifically supports KPP5 "Increasing the impact of the City's cultural and heritage offer on the life of London and the nation".
10. The proposal supports the Departmental Objectives to 'Protect and conserve the ecology, biodiversity and heritage of our sites' and 'Enrich the lives of Londoners by providing a high quality and engaging educational and volunteering opportunities' (Open Spaces Business Plan 2015/16 – 2017/18).

Conclusion

11. Temporary and permanent solutions are being sought to provide the public with information to enhance their experience of the Parliament Hill summit viewpoint.

12. An on-site QR code linking to a annotated photograph on the City of London website would provide an effective and easily achievable short-term solution for smart-phone users, especially if the linked photograph was regularly updated.
13. A working group liaising closely with the Heath & Hampstead Society and other interested parties would be tasked with devising a longer-term solution to provide all visitors to the site with accessible information for both statutory viewpoints.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: London Panorama Viewing Location: Parliament Hill Summit.
- Appendix 2: London Panorama Viewing Location: Parliament Hill east of the Summit.

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