

## Hampstead Police Station use, 2000-2013

Prepared by Janine Griffis, former chair of the Hampstead and Belsize Sector Working and the Camden Community and Police Consultative Group

The Hampstead Police Station was in a state of decline and disuse from 2000 to its eventual closure in 2013.

The police divisions of Hampstead, Kentish Town and Holborn were amalgamated in 1999 (the Magistrates Court already had closed by this time). The Hampstead Police Station was deemed to “fall far below the standards expected of a modern police station, including lack of lift access and structural problems”<sup>i</sup> The response team of 45 officers, who were “deployed in vehicles equipped with emergency lights and sirens”<sup>ii</sup>, was relocated to West Hampstead. The custody unit was closed that same year in 2000. Eventually in 2002, the Front Counter stopped being manned 24/7 and went to reduced hours.

There were plans to close the Hampstead Police Station as soon as 2002.

In 2005, surveyors had been appointed to find new offices for the Safer Neighbourhood Teams. In 2007, the Ham and High reported that the Met considered the building inaccessible and "not best located to serve the highest footfall of the communities" it serves.

Following the amalgamation in 2000, the only police that were permanently assigned to the Hampstead Police Station until its closure in 2013 were the neighbourhood police. In 2001, the local Sector Team “should have been an Inspector, Sergeant, 8 PC, though normal strength was 3 full-time PCs and 3 part-time PCs. On any given day there would be an average of 3 PCs available to patrol”.<sup>iii</sup>

It was the policy of the Met property managers to keep the station unoccupied: “In the meantime, as I noted again from my visit this week”, wrote Stuart Banks in 2005, “there is considerable unused space at Hampstead and it would be good to ensure that this does not become occupied, so that options for disposal remain uncomplicated.”<sup>iv</sup>

In 2006, Safer Neighbourhood Teams consisting of a sergeant, 2 PCs and 2 PCSOs were rolled out across London and the Hampstead SN Team and the Frogna & Fitzjohn’s Team were both based at the station. Over the years, the number of officers assigned to SN teams was reduced and by 2018, most teams<sup>v</sup> consisted of 2 PCs and 1 PCSO. These officers would not have been issued with patrol cars.

In 2012, the **Ham and High**<sup>vi</sup> reported that the “near empty” police station was costing £90k to run over a 12-month period. Another **Ham & High**<sup>vii</sup> article that year noted that “only two depleted Safer Neighbourhoods teams were working out of the station”. It goes on to say: “But when the Metropolitan Police was reorganised, and Hampstead lost its status as a key police station, its force was gradually eroded to the point where staff struggled to man the front desk”.

Kentish Town Station is not comparable to the former Hampstead Police Station from 2000 onwards. Kentish Town is the only 24-hour station in the borough with a front desk open 24 hours a day. All the borough’s response teams operate out of the station. In addition, the team dealing with Camden’s night-time economy is based at Kentish Town.

The Front Counter was open part-time from 2002 to 2013 and though no surveys were conducted of those using the facility, local recollection is that the counter was mainly used by those living locally.

There were alternative front counters in West Hampstead and Kentish Town and parking restrictions in Hampstead would have required those in cars to pay for parking. Furthermore, during this period, reporting crime either by phone or online was becoming easier. The Met Police launched the non-emergency number 101 in 2011 making it easier for people to report non-emergency crimes by phone. Reporting most crimes online also was (and is) an option. Contacting local Safer Neighbourhoods police was only possible by phone or email.

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<sup>i</sup> Letter from Supt Partnership Jim Busby, Camden, 16.11.2000 (Annex I)

<sup>ii</sup> Briefing note from Busby, 7.11.2000 (Annex II)

<sup>iii</sup> Chair's Report, Hampstead Sector Working Party, 3.12.2001 (Annex III)

<sup>iv</sup> Stuart Banks Interim Assistant Director - Utilisation Asset Management and Utilisation Metropolitan Police, 5 August 2005. [See link](#). (Annex IV)

<sup>v</sup> Camden New Journal, 13.04.2018 (Annex V)

<sup>vi</sup> Ham & High, 23.08.2012 (Annex VI)

<sup>vii</sup> Ham & High, 29.04.2012 (Annex VII)

# Annex I

Reference:

Reference: ED/CPL/182D/00

Date: 16 November, 2000



## METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE

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NW3 2TS

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Albany Street Police Station  
60 Albany Street  
London NW1 4EE  
Telephone 020 8733 6253  
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Dear Madam

I have been asked by C/Supt Armond to respond to your letter received on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2000 regarding Hampstead Police Station. It is fair to say that this subject has been somewhat misrepresented in the local press.

I can confirm that largely due to the renovation of Holborn and Kentish Town Police Stations, there are long term proposals to change the current accommodation of Policing Units in the Borough of Camden. You may be aware that the Borough of Camden is Policed as a single entity, and that the former divisions of Hampstead, Kentish Town, and Holborn have been amalgamated fully for some 18 months. This means that patrol officers from any of the five sites in the borough can be directed to respond and patrol in any area of the borough, commensurate with the type of call. This is a simple necessity given the vast number of calls for police assistance in Camden which regularly exceed 10,000 a month.

I can also confirm that no decisions have yet been made, and that the future of the station at Hampstead is being considered. All our options (including continued use of the existing building) are still very much open. One issue in that consideration would be the cost of obtaining suitable premises for other Police accommodation in the area.

However, the present building at Hampstead does fall far below the standards expected of a modern police station, including lack of lift access, and structural problems. It may be better suited to police office accommodation for example. I would like to stress that whatever the result of the review, Camden Police are committed to retaining a police building presence in the vicinity of the present station. This building would have a public access facility and act as a base for local community officers.

I am aware of the strength of feeling when a long-standing landmark such as a Police Station is the subject of review. I can assure you that this review will ensure that our performance against crime is actually improved in Camden rather than reduced as a result.

04/12 '00 16:34

TX/RX NO. 0970

P02

We have made our initial thoughts on this matter public to raise the issue openly at the earliest possible opportunity. As stated above any changes in building use will be very much a long-term project. The final decision will be considered fully by both the Metropolitan Police Service (centrally) and the Metropolitan Police Authority, who will balance local and Pan London issues in the process.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me direct as above.

Yours sincerely



**J BUSBY**  
Supt Partnership  
Camden

[ Agreed - by MHC

to:

Councilor N. Hild

MPS - Mark Thompson

MPRA - Sylvia Paulson

ex. [initials]

**Briefing Note**

7.11.2000

**Changes to Response Team Parade Sites in North Camden**

1. This note has been prepared to explain the recent movement of police response teams in North Camden.

In order to improve

- the briefing and de-briefing
- tasking and
- supervision

of police response officers in the borough, the response teams that formally started their shift at Hampstead Police Station, now parade at West Hampstead, about one mile away. Patrol patterns remain the same, and they will respond in the same way that they have to date. The only change will be the location where they start their shift. These officers are deployed in vehicles equipped with emergency lights and sirens.

1. The units moved are our uniform dedicated response teams. Those officers remaining at Hampstead include our joint uniform and CID unit for dealing with Hate Crime (Community Safety Unit), the Sector Team, Sector Inspector, and Custody facility, as well as Canteen/support facilities.
2. There are several associated factors that could be helpful in any analysis of the impact on the Hampstead area of such a move.
  - I. Hampstead Custody Unit is used by officers from all over the borough (and elsewhere) who convey their prisoners to that location in marked and unmarked vehicles. When they have finished processing their prisoners they become available for re-deployment. Such units will often take response calls in Hampstead as a result of their (albeit unplanned) proximity to the call.
  - II. Police deployments are made at the speed of about 1 deployment every 2 minutes on Camden Borough at our busiest times. Police units from elsewhere in the Borough routinely deploy to sites some distance from the site where they paraded for duty, and are almost always deployed by the Borough Control Room whilst on the road. They are not waiting for deployment from a fixed site (as are our colleagues in the Fire Service).

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- III. Those officers most likely to be on foot patrol in the Hampstead area are our Sector officers who remain parading at Hampstead Police Station.
  - IV. Analysis shows that most of our demand for immediate response calls in the old Hampstead Division comes from the West Hampstead sector, with areas such as Kilburn High Road featuring heavily.
  - V. No other Borough in London has five sites from which response teams start their shift. The increased complexity of briefing and preparations for patrol, availability of supervisors, and more rigorous control of resources are the main factors in this prevailing view. I am not aware of another Borough with even four parade sites.
1. Response times for all our units are monitored on a daily, and monthly basis. We are confident that there will be no degradation of response times in Hampstead as a result of this move, and will monitor the effects of this change.

**Prepared by:**

**Jim Busby  
Supt Partnership  
CAMDEN**

*Chair's Report*

Extra item on the agenda: Chair's report

Two weeks ago I attended the Camden Community Police Consultative Meeting.

Clear that the Met is still in crisis, made even worse by the aftermath of September's events.

While police from across Camden have been deployed to the so-called high-target areas, crime, particularly street crime, has soared – 56% from Sept. to October in Camden alone.

The MPA is in the process of allocating extra policemen to each borough – final decision takes place on 10 December – but seems clear that Camden is not going to receive a significant increase over its current number of just over 700 police.

Richard Sumray, our designated member on the MPA, has been very forceful on our behalf, but as we have few palaces or very tall buildings, Camden is not perceived to be at high risk (according to the Capital Cities Allocation Fund). Unfortunately the fact that Camden is at the bottom of the league tables in terms of response time (68%) does not seem to be taken into account.

And at this same meeting, Hampstead has some bad news from the commander. Here in Hampstead, on any given day, we have only 3, maybe 4 officers, who can cover the whole of Hampstead and Belsize Park. Yet, according to Chief Superintendent Anthony Brooks, any extra community officers, if there are any, will be deployed to Kentish Town or to Albany St. Furthermore, the priorities for the Borough are burglary, street crime and drugs. There will be absolutely no emphasis on car crime or any quality of life issue, such as traffic violations, issues that do concern us in the northern part of the borough.

A little more than a year ago, we had 45 response policemen working in and out of the Hampstead Police Station, in addition to our sector team. We had a control room and lock-up facilities. Are we necessarily worse off without these? Theoretically a more centralised system should be more efficient and maybe we should give it a chance. But in this period of increased tension and soaring crime, our scarce resources are necessarily be drawn to the hotspots.

I will finish just by saying that I think we have our work cut out for us over the coming year, especially with the opening of Holborn Station, to make sure that we receive our fair share of police services.

## 6. Police Report

## Annex IV

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*Note from Janine Griffis: below is an email chain posted online covering plans by the Met's Property Services Division for the sale of the Hampstead Police Station, 2005. See key text in blue below.*

See this link for the full chain of emails:

<http://policeauthority.org/metropolitan/downloads/foi/log/hampstead-attach.pdf>

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Spicer Steve - DoR (PropertyServ)

From: Dennis Richard D - PSD sent: 02 December 2005 11:22 To: Spicer Steve - DoR (PropertyServ) Subject: Hampstead PS

As requested by Jane. All I have on proposed works at Hampstead. -----

Original Message From: Banks Stuart – PSD

Sent: 05 August 2005 15:51 To: Churchill Arthur - Cc: SWAYSLAND Julian - PSD; Dennis Richard D - PSD; Halpin ADAM - DoR (PropertyServ)

Subject: RE: Hampstead PS

Arthur A further thought since we seem to be moving to the "next level" on this one it's quite urgent that I receive - a business case from you setting out:

1 Why you want us to dispose of Hampstead PS (age of building, empty and unusable space - e.g. courtroom etc. - poor condition of building fabric, suspected structural problems, design not fit for purpose- all the usual stuff!!)

2 What kind of continuing presence you require in Hampstead (exactly what units/staff would need to remain as a presence.

3 Where you would re-accommodate the remaining units/functions. Could you get this to me a.s.a.p. please.

Thanks. Stuart

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Original Message From: Banks stuart - PSD

Sent: 05 August 2005 12:38

To: Churchill Arthur - Cc: Cannon John - ; SWAYSLAND Julian - PSD; Halpin ADAM - DoR (PropertyServ); GREEN Martin C - DoR (PropertyServ)

Subject: Hampstead PS

Arthur I've had considerable discussion recently with PSD colleagues around disposal options for Hampstead. As you may know, we thought there was a possibility of some space at the Post Office which is due to be sold. Unfortunately, although we have tried all possible approaches, the PO is committed to another partner already and it now appears that this is a dead duck. At the same time, there is virtually nothing else on the market in central Hampstead which would be suitable to accommodate your residual functions such as SN, Front Office, CPO etc. and even if there was, the cost would probably be prohibitive.



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We have been discussing some options for a joint venture on a sale and development of the existing site which might include an ongoing presence for the above functions in the same location. In order for us to be better advised regarding these options we will be seeking professional input from a consultant (Atkins).

It may very well be that Atkins personnel will need to visit Hampstead PS to look around and I'd be grateful if you could facilitate these visits without necessarily raising too much alert amongst staff.

In the meantime, as I noted again from my visit this week, there is considerable unused space at Hampstead and it would be good to ensure that this does not become occupied, so that options for disposal remain uncomplicated. Happy to discuss.

Stuart Stuart Banks Interim Assistant Director - Utilisation Asset Management and Utilisation Metropolitan Police

### Police numbers: how cuts have made officers ‘less visible’ on the streets of Camden

Politicians have slammed cuts to policing, while protesters on an anti-knife crime march last month called for more officers on the streets. Here, the New Journal reviews the figures.

13 April, 2018 — By [William McLennan](#)

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### Officer numbers

The Metropolitan police budget has been cut by £600million in the past four years. Police chiefs say that many of these “savings” have been made through “efficiencies” and modernising their approach with the help of new technology.

However, despite attempts to protect the number of officers, there are around **3,000 fewer** across London compared to 2010.

In Camden, the number of officers has fallen from **887 in 2010 to 631 in 2017**. In the past five years, the number has **dropped by 105**.

Since 2013, there has been a reduction of 23 constables, 30 detective constables, 28 sergeants, 10 detective sergeants, five detective inspectors, seven inspectors and two chief inspectors.

Camden’s police force was merged with Islington’s in January 2017, making it more difficult to track numbers. Comparing the two boroughs’ combined figures for 2017, the number of officers working in Camden and Islington **reduced by a further 32 this year**.

John Sutherland, Camden borough commander between 2010 and 2012, believes the reduced police presence is one of the causes of rising youth violence.



*Protestors called for an end to street violence after a spate of killings*

He said the “root causes” were “many and complex”, but added: “Police numbers have fallen very significantly and we just can’t pretend that that’s not the case.”

Mr Sutherland, who retired last month after 25 years’ service, said: “At the same time there have been huge reductions in the number of PCSOs that have an impact on street presence.”

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He identified the reduced police presence on the streets as one of the key drivers of youth violence, along with a reduction in the use of stop and search, cuts to youth services and the wider normalisation of violence in society.

### **Bobbies on the beat**

Neighbourhood policing in London has changed considerably in the past decade. London boroughs are divided into wards, each with a “safer neighbourhood team”. In Camden there are 18 teams.

These are the “local officers” or “bobbies on the beat”. They are expected to get to know their patch, patrolling the area and attending meetings with residents.

In 2006, each team had one sergeant, two police constables and two police community support officers (PCSOs), providing a deterrent presence on the streets and focusing on anti-social behaviour, as opposed to investigating crimes and making arrests.

Today, most wards in Camden have two PCs and one PCSO.

One sergeant is now expected to manage between two and four wards.

A former neighbourhood policing sergeant, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said: “You have basically **halved your numbers and halved your supervision levels** overnight.”

He said that at the same time officers’ workload had increased, reducing the time they had to patrol.

“The more load you put on them workwise, the less they are out on the street,” he said. “The higher the chance of seeing Old Bill, the lower the chance of you wanting to commit crime in that area. You cannot get away from that fact.” . . .

**‘Costly’ and ‘under used’ Hampstead police station could close in matter of months**

**PUBLISHED:** 10:45 23 August 2012 [Josh Pettitt](#)

The Grade II-listed police station has been dismissed as “under used” and too “costly” to run by Met bosses and is earmarked for closure within the next six to 24 months if plans are approved, the Ham&High understands.

The station in Rosslyn Hill could be closed once a proposal to shut it is submitted to the London Mayor’s office for policing and crime.

It is understood measures are being put in place to relocate the few remaining officers based there from neighbourhood policing teams.

A police spokesman said the future of the station is under review, but no decision has yet been made over the fate of Hampstead police station.

Fears over the future of the station have been growing for months after opening hours were slashed and Camden’s chief of police said the cost of keeping it open was “disproportionate” to the service it provided.

In May the Ham&High revealed the near-empty station had cost the taxpayer more than £90,000 in basic running costs over 12 months – more expensive than busier stations in Kentish Town and West Hampstead.

The historic home of the Met’s Hampstead sub-division is believed to be one of a raft of stations set to be put on the property market. The vast 1913 Victorian building – which has its own court house – could sell for up to £11million, swelling the Met’s coffers.

The revelation comes as Camden Conservatives prepare to do battle with the Met over any proposed closure. . . .

## Behind the scenes at Hampstead Town Police Station

**PUBLISHED:** 07:00 29 April 2012 [Josh Pettitt](#)

Gathering dust in one of the seemingly endless empty offices is a reminder of the station's former glory.

Row upon row of stern officers stare out from a 1932 photograph of the Hampstead sub-division of the Metropolitan Police.

Though the station now only hosts two depleted Safer Neighbourhoods Teams, it once housed an entire police force and a fully-fledged courthouse next door.

The station is a rabbit warren of old interview and forensic rooms, holding cells, a doctor's surgery and even a senior officers' canteen.

As Borough Commander John Sutherland said recently when he visited the Grade II-listed station: "History drips from these walls."

Ruth Ellis – the last woman to be executed in the UK – was arrested in South Hill Park, Hampstead, after shooting her lover outside The Magdala pub.

She appeared before magistrates in the courtroom before being sent to Holloway Prison to be hanged.

These days the last evidence of court hearings is a slip of paper with type-written names for March 31, 1998, adorning the waiting room.

A metal tray for cigarette ends outside and a cupboard-size robing room to the side of the magistrates' bench are a testament to the building's past, dating back to 1913.

The cells in the basement, listed by English Heritage, are littered with police notebooks.

A quick scan provides a flavour of the day-to-day policing of the area, with officers recording everything from a pair of new shoes being found in a West Hampstead bin to an attempted murder in the village.

But when the Metropolitan Police was reorganised, and Hampstead lost its status as a key police station, its force was gradually eroded to the point where staff struggled to man the front desk.

It was announced last month that its opening hours would be slashed after a series of unscheduled closures caused anger among Hampstead residents. . . .