

**In the matter of a response to a Prevention of Future Deaths Report arising from the inquest into the death of Vanessa Ford**

1. This is the response of the London Borough of Hackney to the Prevention of Future Deaths Report ("PFD") issued by HM Assistant Coroner for Inner North London, Ian Potter, dated 4 March 2024 following an inquest into the death of Vanessa Ford heard on 26 February 2024.
2. The London Borough of Hackney would like to offer their sincere condolences to the family and friends of Vanessa Ford who tragically died on 23 September 2023.
3. The concerns expressed by the Coroner for this Council to consider, alongside Network Rail, were as follows:

*In addition to the small electrical box [on the pavement of the road bridge], the evidence revealed numerous items of street furniture on the Dalston Lane Road Bridge, such as recycling bins, all of which could be used to facilitate easier access to the wall and the railway network. The concern here is that the siting of items of street furniture generally on this bridge poses risks to all manner of members of the public, from those contemplating suicide, to young children, and may undermine safety efforts to impede easy access to the railway network.*

4. Upon receipt of the PFD, Officers from the Council conducted both desk based investigations and site visits to accurately map what street furniture was present either on the road bridge or in sufficient proximity to it which might facilitate access to the railway network.
5. The Council identified the following pieces of street furniture in that location:
  - a. Small electrical box owned by Global Communications; and
  - b. Various recycling bins nearby on Martel Place, as described in the PFD report.
6. In respect of the electrical box, the Council has identified that the electrical box is associated with an advertisement screen located on the flank wall of 85 Dalston Lane. The site has a long history of being used for advertisements and most recently benefits from advertisement consent granted by the Council, in its capacity as local planning authority, under application reference 2024/0845.
7. Existing planning policy does not explicitly cover the 'location of street furniture in proximity to road bridges over railway lines'. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) refers to 'street clutter' at paragraph 116(c) where it refers to applications for development creating "*places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary*

*street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards*” but is otherwise silent on the topic of the location of street furniture.

8. Apparatus such as electrical boxes like this which are often associated with advertisement screens which are themselves subject to the [Town and Country Planning \(Control of Advertisements\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#). The NPPF states that “*advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts*”. The Council’s own planning policy - LP33, LP7 - Advertisements - provides that advertisements must not cause a physical obstruction to the public realm with the supporting text stating that should not “*add clutter to an already busy street scene thus adversely affecting the local environment blocking the public realm and in some cases affecting highway safety*”.
9. Discussions have taken place, and will continue, between the highways team and the local planning authority to see whether an effective mechanism could be put in place through the planning process to identify and flag up electrical apparatus and street furniture at locations such as this one.
10. In respect of the various recycling bins nearby on Martel Place, the Council has taken steps to remove those bins and this action was completed on 8 May 2024.
11. The Council has also been in contact with Network Rail to coordinate actions and ensure clear ownership of responsibilities. The Council has received confirmation from Network Rail that further measures to address specific concerns around the access gate at Martel Place and the wall more generally are underway.