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NEASDEN TEMPLE VOTED PICK OF THE POLL IN LONDON AND NATIONWIDE

- Nearly 37,000 vote online for 'Pride of Place' -

The magnificent BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, also known as the Neasden Temple, in Brent, is the place that makes residents feel most proud in London, according to an online poll.

The Hindu temple not only took the most votes in London, but came out on top in the national poll, with 2,344 people going online to register their pride. The building – the first traditional Hindu Mandir to be constructed in Europe – is an extraordinary architectural gem, constructed by skilled craftsmen from 2,000 tons of Italian marble and 3,000 tons of Bulgarian limestone.

A spokesman for the Board of Trustees of the Mandir said: "We are delighted that the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir has won the Pride of Place Award.

"When His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the spiritual leader who inspired the Mandir, consecrated it in August 1995, he envisaged it as not only a place of worship for Hindus, but as a place of learning, spirituality and peace for all people. This award is a tribute to all the residents of this wonderful borough."

Cllr Paul Lorber, Leader of Brent Council, added: "The Swaminarayan Temple is an amazing Brent landmark that fully deserves the recognition of topping the Pride of Place poll. It has been described as the 'eighth wonder of the world' and attracts visitors from all over the world. It is a building that the whole borough can rightly be proud of. In addition to the magnificent building, visitors to the Temple will also receive a warm welcome from the hundreds of volunteers who give up their time to make the Temple a success."

Nine local authorities across London took part in the Pride of Place poll by inviting visitors to click and vote for one of ten locally nominated top spots on their websites.

In all, 36,800 people went online to vote for their favourite place in this first national council-led poll.

In the London vote, Firepower – the visitor attraction at the Royal Artillery Museum in Greenwich – and the Horniman Museum at Forest Hill in Lewisham, came in close second and third spots behind the Neasden Temple.

Big guns are the main draw at Firepower, where visitors can experience life in the battlefield, play with interactive exhibits and learn about the science and history of artillery.

Forest Hill is home to the Horniman Museum, where you can discover the cultural and natural world. Music performances, art, cultural artefacts from across the globe, an aquarium, events and education are all free. Outside, the award-winning Horniman Gardens provide a green oasis with panoramic city views.

The Pride of Place poll is part of the Government’s ‘Connect to your Council’ campaign, which aims to encourage citizens to access their local authority services online - anytime, anywhere. People can now use council websites to find out anything from planning information to applying for school places. Alternatively, they can visit www.direct.gov.uk/mycouncil for more details of the range of online services now available.

Notes to editors

1. Local authorities which have signed up to the poll have done so voluntarily; not every council in England is involved.
2. The Pride of Place poll is part of the Communities and Local Government’s ‘Connect to your Council’ campaign which encourages citizens to make their council websites a first port of call for services and information. Residents can now use council websites to find out anything from bin collection rotas to how to apply for school places.
3. The full name of the Neasden Temple is the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) Shri Swaminarayan Mandir. The BAPS is a “socio-spiritual organisation” that runs the temple. For more information about the Mandir, visit www.mandir.org
4. The most popular attractions in London, with the percentage of the vote they received in their respective boroughs, were as follows:

1. Neasden Temple (BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir), Brent, 81%.
2. Firepower Museum, Greenwich, 24%.

3. Barking Abbey, Barking & Dagenham, 23%.
4. Forest Hill and the Horniman Museum, Lewisham, 31%.
5. Honeywood, Sutton, 40%.
6. Gurdwara Karamsar, Redbridge, 59%.
7. Hampstead Heath, Camden, 18%.
8. Emirates Stadium, Islington, 34%.
9. Borough Market, Southwark, 24%.

Media Enquiries: 020 7944 3042; out of hours 020 7944 5945
Public Enquiries: 020 7944 4400; Email: press@communities.gsi.gov.uk
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**For media enquiries please contact Simon Holder on 020 7261 8342,
simon.holder@gnn.gsi.gov.uk**