

Highbury Community Association response to CPZ online consultation

3rd September 2015

This document has been prepared to supplement the limited capacity of the online consultation to accept comments from members and residents.

1. Introduction: the bigger picture

As the table in Annex 1 shows¹, around 117,000 people are being consulted in the course of the Islington Council CPZ Consultation. There has been no consultation on CPZs since 2007, during which time Councillors felt that many areas of Islington might be dealing with new issues.

The preliminary proposals from the Council vary considerably from area to area, as they should since very different situations hold in different parts of the borough. For instance:

- those living near **Whittington Hospital** (*around 4,000 people being consulted*) have reason to want far greater protection from day-time and evening parking by people visiting patients.
- It may well be that in Bunhill and Clerkenwell, (**Finsbury Square and Farringdon Station area** - *around 12,000 people being consulted*) as the local Councillor suggests areas with many young wealthy people in gated communities with no parking rights, and a late evening clubbing scene, that residents need protection from those who come and park on their spaces overnight. (Even here it is not completely clear: the minutes of the Bunhill and Clerkenwell ward partnership meetings show that no-one has ever raised parking problems at these meetings.)

However, other areas emphatically **do not** feel themselves to be in such a vulnerable situation, and would prefer to keep the status quo. This is because they value the delicate balance between residential areas, and good local shops and restaurants, and do not want to threaten the local economy and the livelihoods of the local businesses – who already struggle with a high business rate. This is only partly altruism – it is also that living in Highbury and Islington is so popular precisely **because** of the areas' excellent local amenities. Residents very much want to keep shops and restaurants alive and thriving, if possible.

- This is overwhelmingly the case in the **Stadium Control area**, as will be detailed below (*around 83,000 people being consulted*)
- It is also the case in the **Angel area**, with a similar mix of shops, restaurants and residential areas (*around 12,000 people being consulted*) The Angel Association write on their website: "The Council are consulting on radical reductions in visitor parking in our Zone B. The current ability to park after 6.30pm Mon-Fri, after 1.30pm Sat, and freely on Sun, would be abolished and replaced by controls up to 11pm every day. Allegedly this would make it easier for residents to park near their homes. The Council have provided no evidence about the problem this radical reduction in parking addresses. What it would do is reduce visitors to the Angel area, with difficult impacts on our shops, markets, restaurants, theatres and other businesses. It is an over-reaction to an unspecified issue".

¹ Since Wards and CPZs do not cover exactly the same terrain, the table in Annex 1 has been constructed based on population numbers found in ward profiles, and – where not all of a ward falls into a CPZ – a fraction of the population has been factored in for the purpose of that table. Explanations of how the table was constructed can be found in Annex 2.

2. The Stadium Control Area proposal

This CPZ area is by far the largest of those being reviewed by the Council. Over 70% of residents subject to consultation live in this one area (see Annex 1), while the other 4 CPZ areas taken together total under 30%. It is thus extremely important to understand the issues for this area and to get any solutions proposed right, since they affect such a very large number of people – nearly 83,000.

The main proposals are fourfold.

- 2.1 The removal of all existing matchday controls and ‘flip down’ signs, replacing them with permanent clear signage;
- 2.2 Extension of all existing controls to 9.00 pm seven days a week;
- 2.3 Introduction of free e-vouchers for residents’ visitors;
- 2.4 Introduction of a flat rate of a £2.40 pay-and-display charge

The first two are considered together since the second springs from the first. There are attempts to offset the amount of inconvenience and expense springing from the second proposal in the 3rd and 4th proposals below (which we come to later) but really there ought to be no need for them if the first is dealt with. The second not only fails to address key issues, but is exceedingly damaging to the fabric of the local community.

2.1 The removal of all existing matchday controls and ‘flip down’ signs, replacing them with permanent clear signage.

If having a separate match-day scheme has become unaffordable for Islington Council – and their budget has indeed been severely cut – then ways must clearly be found to inform the public about upcoming event days and times more cheaply.

The current proposal – to behave as if 365 days of the year were event days and to put in controls until 9.00pm, just so that the 32-36 or so actual event days a year are covered – is grossly disproportionate. The old phrase ‘taking a sledge hammer to crack a nut’ springs to mind, especially when all the imperfections of 2.3 and 2.4 below are taken into consideration.

If the Council’s main desire is make sure that local residents and visitors are not caught out by unexpected upcoming matches and other events, and the time of day they will take place, then the forward march of technology since 2007 can easily deal with the problem. Mass mailout texts are simultaneously sent to every parent in a school when there is going to be a strike, or if the school will close for the day at short notice – because of snow, for instance. Arsenal itself sends out texts and emails to thousands of supporters about unexpected additional matches or changed timing.

It should be possible for the Council to collect mobile phone numbers in the Stadium Control area as part of the current consultation. Almost everyone has a mobile phone even if they do not have a computer. Texts about match days and times could then be sent a few days in advance and on the day.

For those visiting the area such as tradesmen, other methods are needed such as signage warning people to look at posters outside the area’s tube stations/railway stations/ and a number to text given on every sign, where an automatic message about the next match date and time can be listened to, with details about the hour at which parking controls will come into force.

2.2 Extension of all existing controls to 9.00 pm seven days a week

We experience no difficulties in parking on non-match days in the Stadium control area, and have no need at all of the additional 'protection' proposed by the Council. This is the very widely held view throughout the area, as council employees who have been to interview households have discovered.

We do not need or want more protection and the protection on offer will not solve the two main problems anyway. The difficulties are rather of two other kinds:

- Match timings can be confusing and variable, and special match day rules for parking kick in far in advance of a match. Often posted match day hours do not correspond to actual hours, when Saturday evening and Sunday matches take place. **The proposal above under 2.1 would deal with all of this.**
- On match days, excessive numbers of cars display disabled parking permits and park in residents' spaces. On Highbury Hill alone we regularly count 60 or more such vehicles. Some may be genuine, but many are not. Current proposals do nothing to address this long standing complaint. **As has been requested many times in the past by residents, Islington Council needs to tighten up on blue badge abuse.**

Far from solving the problems caused by event day visitors to Arsenal, the proposals generate a whole new layer of inconvenience and expense for residents, and for visitors to churches, the mosque and other places such as the Ecology Centre, the City Farm, the Olden Garden and Highbury Fields not to mention gyms and swimming pools. Some visitors do need to come to these places by car as a result of incapacity, age or the distance travelled. Not everyone lives within walking distance of the places they would like to visit, and not everyone is able to cycle.

By the same token, lonely isolated old people will get fewer visits from visitors at evenings and weekends, especially if they do not have a computer and cannot get e-vouchers (see below).

Impact on shops and restaurants

Local residents highly value the services provided by good local shops and restaurants, and do not want to threaten the local economy and the livelihoods of the local businesses – who already struggle with a high business rate and with the vehicles delivering their goods being ticketed by wardens after only 5 minutes. Part of the quality of life of the neighbourhood comes from the range of excellent and accessible small local shops, and we want to preserve what we have.

Islington's Council's proposals impact extremely negatively on these shops. Much of their trade comes from takings on evenings, Saturday afternoons and Sundays, when a quick comprehensive shop can be done by parking locally. During the working day and on Saturday mornings, there are not enough paid parking places for everyone.

We also have some unique shops at Highbury Barn, such as La Fromagerie. The owner Danny Michaelson wrote,

'personally I expect my business to be seriously affected by these parking plans. As you know there will be no parking at Highbury Barn until 9.00pm on Saturdays and all day until 9.00pm on Sundays. Saturday afternoons and Sundays are our peak trading times of the week, and our turnover will be seriously reduced at those times. I fear for the future of La Fromagerie in Highbury, and for all other traders particularly restaurants'.

Many other shops have expressed the same fears. If shoppers cannot stop, buy and move on easily from local shops, they will simply start to buy everything they need from supermarkets, where they can park for free.

Though the shops at Highbury Barn, as a set of shops, are almost unique in inner London, we have many other shops which will also suffer a severe loss of turnover if these proposals go ahead. The excellent Turkish and Kurdish shops down Highbury Vale will lose custom as will many of the other shops within this CPZ along the Blackstock Road towards Finsbury Park.

HCA represents both residents and businesses, and local residents are united in their desire to protect the shops and to keep this unique, friendly, village-like symbiosis between residents and businesses alive and well.

2.3 Introduction of free e-vouchers for residents' visitors

E-vouchers seem to be poorly thought-through on current evidence. The intention - to enable residents' visitors to visit for free as before between the hours of 6.30pm and 9.00pm - has its heart in the right place but is flawed.

Issues with e-vouchers

- They presuppose a computer in the house and membership of My eAccount on the Council website. This cannot be assumed for all homes, especially in the poorest homes and in the homes of elderly people.
- Imagine a visit, in the evening, by a carer to an old person for a precious 15 minute slot bathing or feeding that person and putting them to bed. It is often the case that a different carer comes each time, so the old person would have to spend some of their precious visit, ascertaining the number plate of the carer's vehicle, going online to the Islington Council website, typing the number in and getting an e-voucher.
- How do you get an e-voucher at short notice – e.g. an evening plumbing emergency - if the Islington website is down for maintenance or is temporarily out of action? It does happen. (Richard Greening suggests using paper vouchers but can see that reimbursement might be problematic).
- Since e-vouchers would be obtained ahead of time, free, with no upper limit on numbers, they are patently open to abuse. It is likely that residents near the stadium would find it impossible to park near their homes because other residents had made e-vouchers available to friends on match days and these friends had parked in residents' bays.
- The advantage of scratch-off permits is that you do not have to know the licence –plate number of your visitor in advance, but can keep a stack of them and give them to workmen, carers and other visitors as required. E-vouchers seem a very inconvenient replacement for these.

2.4 Introduction of a flat rate of £2.40 evening pay and display charge

The intention is that this payment would be made Monday to Sunday from 6.30pm – 9.00pm, match day and non-match day alike. Presumably those who park will have to do so in pay-and-display bays, and not residents' bays, since they are strangers and not friends of residents. On non-match days, these may not affect us so much, but on match days they will make parking much worse for us in the Arsenal CPZ than at present.

They will also remove a key source of income for local schools and other buildings. Some schools (e.g. Drayton Park, St Joan of Arc) charge £15-£20.00 a car for parking on match days, and get a good supplementary income from doing so. Some churches with a car-park do the same thing (St Joan of Arc again). But who is going to pay that when they can park for only £2.40 at an evening match?

3. Conclusion

We appreciate the chance the consultation has offered to get the views of people in the area, and to set out the views of our HCA membership. Opinions ring out loud and clear.

- **We feel that the unintentional consequence of the proposed measures is to make life much harder for local people in the CPZ and to make life a good deal easier for Arsenal supporters and perhaps for the club too. The proposed changes discriminate against some of the very people they are designed to protect such as the elderly.**
- **None of the changes detailed here in 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 make sense. Not only do they greatly increase cost and inconvenience for residents, they threaten the fabric of the neighbourhood, which is based on the relationship between residents, shops, restaurants, churches, the mosque and the use of green spaces. The livelihoods of shop keepers and restaurants are of particular concern.**
- **Simplifying the signage does not seem to be a justifiable reason for this huge increase in restrictions. We have proposed a simple way of dealing with the Council's need to end the costs of the original match day scheme, and we propose that this is the ONLY change made.**

Finally, we realise there are other issues which also concern councillors. For instance, do the various 'car-free' developments which have appeared since 2007 displace cars onto nearby streets into residents' spaces overnight?

People write to HCA with complaints all the time, and raise issues at the AGM; neighbours complain to one another – as they have done for years about illegitimate use of blue disabled badges on match days, or of Arsenal's continued desire to allow parking of visitors' coaches in the streets, when they have a perfectly good under-croft originally designed for coaches. So we do get to know what local problems are felt to be.

If there is an issue of this kind, or if such a problem arises in future, we will most certainly hear about it and can then raise it with our local Councillors and with the Council. There is no need to pre-empt this by suggesting changing current parking arrangements on this basis, before evidence has accumulated.

Thank you.

HIGBURY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

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