

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

Issue No 10 September 1998

Isledon Village Planning Application Shambles by Chris Ashby

When Islington's Development Control Committee agreed a planning application for land next to Isledon Village on June 9th, it was entirely ignorant of one crucial fact. The officer's report had neglected to say that the site was designated in the Unitary Development Plan as being of 'Borough Grade 1 Nature Conservation Importance'. The UDP states the 'sites of nature conservation importance will be protected from any development'.

Thanks to the vigilance of local people who had discovered this omission, planning permission was put on hold until the committee could be reconvened to look at the matter again. However, the committee ignored the common sense views of residents and local supportive organisations as well as its own UDP and agreed the application again, on August 11th. This was despite a strongly worded report from the Council's own Environmental Services Manager, Bob Gilbert. His report states that 'The site includes a wide range of plant species that are unusual in the borough and even in London as a whole. There is probably no richer collection of wild flowers on a single site within Islington outside the Gillespie Park Nature Reserve.' Bob Gilbert has found hare's foot clover, the common century, sulphur cinquefoil and pale toadflax. There are four species of butterfly, and it is a hunting ground for kestrels and sparrowhawks.

In one fell swoop the Council has shown that the democratically negotiated UDP is not worth the paper it is written on.

People need to be housed - there is no question of that; but this development

will do little to resolve that problem. It will, though, by housing more residents in an already densely crowded area, place an intolerable burden on local health, educational and recreational facilities. Moreover, it will destroy one of the few remaining nature conservation sites in the most built-up borough in the country, a site that the Council had pledged to protect. So much for sustainable development!

In desperation, residents are appealing to the Local Government Ombudsman to intervene since the Council cannot be relied upon to look after their interests.

Forum Chair Nags Council !

The approval of housing development on the Isledon Village Railway Sidings has caused many people with long experience of Islington Council Planning Department to despair this summer. One of these is Frank Vincent, Chair of the Nags Head Neighbourhood Forum, which covers Highbury Ward. He has taken the unusual step of writing to the Chairs of every Neighbourhood Forum in the Borough and Chairs of Forum Environment/Planning Sub Groups. He calls on all Forum members throughout the Borough to join the Nag's Head Forum in registering total dissatisfaction with the way Planners and the Development Control Committee have handled this application and ignored the UDP. Frank writes that residents and Forum members devoted many hours to helping form the UDP to provide planning policies that best serve the Borough. What has been decided flies in the face

of the guidelines democratically agreed. Not only did the Planning Officers omit to mention the Grade 1 conservation status but wrongly advised members that it was an area designated for housing! One of the Chairs of the Gillespie Sub-Group, Margot Sreberny, said that this Planning Committee and Planning Department is condemning hundreds of people to living in areas without nearby schools, health centres and other social essentials. As well as the Isledon development more housing is planned at the other end of the Seven Sisters' Road and on the corner of St Thomas's Road. **If you want to know more ring: Chris Ashby 0171 609 5093**

HCA NEWS NEEDS HELP!

We need someone to organise the volunteers who deliver this News to members. This is what it involves:

- Receive 550 unfolded A3 News from Editor
 - Fold and get help with folding HCA News (takes several hours)
 - Stick address labels on for easy delivery by 'areas'
 - Ring 20 volunteers to arrange times for them to pick up from you
 - Give volunteers their 'area' bundles for delivery
- Normally all the above is spread over about 2-3 days.*

The work could be shared between several people. If you are at home most days and would like to try doing this for a few months please could you ring Alison on 0171 359 5731? Many thanks!

Cllr Nigel Mason - Gillespie Ward Labour Councillor writes -

I found myself elected to a very different Islington Town Hall than the one I had imagined, I don't suppose anyone predicted a 26-26 score draw as the result on 7 May! However, that was the result and now all of us, Labour and Liberal Democrat, have got to get on with running the Borough for the benefit of its people.

The atmosphere in the Town Hall has been a little Cold War-like in the first few months, but I'm sure this will start to change as Councillors get to know one another and start working together on Committees. I am confident that when a big local issue arises, i.e. Arsenal Stadium, all the local Councillors will work together to represent our constituents.

I am certainly enjoying being a local Councillor. Our surgery never fails to produce interesting people with any number of different problems and issues. The feeling when I helped someone in genuine need get themselves and their child a decent home was reward for all the hours in the Town Hall.

I am a member of the Social & Economic Regeneration Committee, which is particularly useful as a Gillespie Ward Councillor because of the Finsbury Park area. There is a real feeling of progress on this issue at the moment and I cannot praise enough those local people who have campaigned for so long.

I see one of the major challenges facing all of us, whether a Councillor or a community activist in the HCA or Neighbourhood Forum, is how we balance conflicting priorities. We all see the need for increased affordable housing in Islington, but with so little space in the area it is difficult to build without impacting on the environment. Likewise, we recognise the importance of developing leisure activities and creating jobs, but have to balance this with a respect for people's lives and homes. These are not easily resolved problems, but ones we all need to work together on.

Finally, I would like to take this chance to thank all those people who have offered me help, advice, and encouragement this year. I look forward to working with you on the issues that will arise in the critical time ahead.

*** What does the Ecology Centre Do? ***

* Based in the Gillespie Park Nature Reserve, the Islington Ecology Centre was purpose built to 'environmentally friendly' * standards to provide both a visitor and education centre. There is a library and observation room, displays about wildlife, * nature conservation and environmental issues. Schools use it as do playschemes and community groups. At the moment, * there are several workshops for adults, open to all for a small charge: *

- * **Bike Maintenance Workshop** - First Wednesday of each month to October
- * **Introduction to Drawing** - Tuesdays 6-9pm, starts 10th November for 5 weeks
- * **Bhangra Indian Dancing** - Tuesdays 8-10pm, starts 1st Sept for 8 weeks
- * **Aromatherapy Workshop** - Saturday 26th September 10am-4pm - one day
- * **Yoga** - Two tutors - bring a mat or blanket and wear loose clothes
- * Thursdays 6pm-7.30pm, 7.40pm-9.10pm
- * Mondays 6.30pm - 8pm

* There are many guided walks this Autumn. For information on the walks, events or workshops ring **0171 354 5162** *

ARSENAL STADIUM UPDATE

The Arsenal Consultants have done some of the studies for the Environmental Impact Assessment for expansion to 50,000 at Highbury. Things are not going smoothly for the Arsenal, however, as some of the studies have been delayed. Ken Friar, Arsenal's Managing Director, says he thinks that there will not be a Planning Application before the New Year. He says that expansion at Highbury is still Arsenal's 'preferred option'.

A big change is that Arsenal are playing their European games this season at

Wembley. Uefa requirements for advertising hoardings mean that if these games were played at Highbury seating capacity would be reduced. The other change has been that the Police have told Arsenal and Islington Council that, as of next season, the Police will not manage or pay for controlling the Football Traffic. This places the Council in some difficulty, to put it mildly! Those of us who live within the Arsenal Parking Scheme know that the Scheme takes a lot of policing and it was not done to any effect at all last season. How can the Council do more than the very little they are already doing? This problem was discussed at the Transport Committee on 9th July and talks

were due to take place between the police, Arsenal and Council officers over the summer. The Committee decided that the Council should 'monitor' the traffic over the coming season. The HCA said that one way to reduce traffic coming into the area would be to abolish the central parking down the middle of Drayton Park NOW. Cllr Nigel Mason agreed.

The HCA is still attending the Council run Progress Review Group and has appointed Planning Consultants and Lawyers to represent the Association. We will oppose expansion which demolishes homes and makes the traffic and disruption worse for the wider community around the Stadium.

SUMMER CRIME WAVE IN GILLESPIE ROAD

There has been a relentless succession of shop vandalism, break-ins, robbery and muggings in Gillespie Road since May. The callous murder of a well-known and popular elderly man, Tony Russo, in his own home, upset and deeply shocked his neighbours. Many feel under threat now - What can the community do to improve the safety of people and property in this street? The HCA interviewed the Gillespie Road Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator:

HCA: How long has the Neighbourhood Watch been in existence in Gillespie Road?

NW: It's been going about 8 years and I've been co-ordinator for 2 1/2 years. My area stretches from the Arsenal creche/lower end of Highbury Hill opposite the Tube, to the small parade of shops in Gillespie Road.

HCA: How does it work and what are the benefits?

NW: I want to say that we are NOT 'nosey -parkers'! We keep an eye on each other's property especially when neighbours go on holiday - turn lights on & off and so on. The aim is to help each other and you can even get up to 25% off household insurance if you belong to the scheme. We circulate a Newsletter too.

HCA: What has been happening in Gillespie Road this summer?

NW: Tony's murder was a dreadful tragedy and shocked us all. Several of us went to his funeral and the whole street donated money for flowers. Another elderly person was broken into shortly after Tony was attacked, but luckily the police were called and no serious harm was done. An elderly man was 'door-stepped' in his flat in Stephen's Ink Estate and robbed of £5 and his 'Personal Alarm'. People's cars are constantly being broken into too.

HCA: What about the shops and businesses this summer?

NW: A shop-owner was roughed up by two teenage girls and the police were called. Other shop-keepers were robbed in a frightening incident at knife-point by a helmeted motor bike rider. A few weeks later two men passed off forged £20 pound notes in one of the shops. The Highbury Estates estate

agents was broken into and all the computer, copier and other office equipment stolen. The Ecology Centre was broken into the other week and now has CCTV as a protection. Of course, our small shops can't afford that and also lose a lot of income to petty pilfering even if they escape serious robbery.

HCA: We hear there was trouble during the World Cup -what was that?

NW: Yes - when England lost to Romania 6 men went on the rampage smashing 6 cars in Avenell Road, then smashing the Gillespie Road Laundrette's large shop window and another 5 cars before the police came in force and chased and arrested them.

HCA: What can be done about all these different types of crime?

NW: The police know that a lot of the trouble stems from one source. The Council and police say that they are working on the problem, which reassures residents to some extent. Other crimes are carried out by a variety of young people, not all live nearby. What we must all do is watch out for each other and report anything suspicious immediately to the Police, who are well aware of the recent problems we've had in Gillespie Road.

HCA: Are there any other specific measures you would like to see?

NW: I'd like Arsenal to leave their CCTV on outside the ground during the summer closed season. I've asked the Police to patrol our street at night but so far this is not possible. I want more people to join Neighbourhood Watch - the more stickers we have in windows the more protected we'll all be. I also wish old Alice was still around as nothing escaped her notice!

HCA: Many thanks for your help.

To join Neighbourhood Watch or to find out more ring the local Home Beat Police Constable, Alan Ward, on 0171 421 0645 To report a crime dial 999 in an emergency or Highbury Vale Police Station 0171 226 9090, if less urgent.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM DATES:

- 07.09.98 Gillespie Sub-Group Stephen's Ink at 7.30pm
- 14.09.98 Drayton Park Sub-Group Highbury Round House at 7.30pm
- 21.09.98 Nags Head Forum Emmanuel Church at 7.30pm
- 06.10.98 Quadrant Sub-Group Sotheby Mews Day Centre at 7.30pm
- 03.11.98 Highbury Vale Forum Sotheby Mews Day Centre at 7.30pm

Meetings of the forums and their sub-groups are open to all who live or work in Islington. They deal with all matters of

local concern, great and small, and are one of the best ways of dealing with persistent problems with Council services, and of promoting your ideas for improvements. Why not turn up, take part and find out what is going on? New members are always welcome.

Maureen Cunningham, the Neighbourhood Development Officer has invited the Chair of Development Control Committee, Cllr Wally Burgess, and Ian Crawley, Head of Regulatory Services, to the Highbury Vale Forum on 3.11.98 to speak and answer questions on development on brownfield sites. Please ring Maureen if you have a question you would like asked. Tel: 0171 527 8639

WIN A BRAND NEW BIKE AT GILLESPIE PARK FESTIVAL!

A £200 Dawes Street Cruiser will be raffled on **Sunday 13th September 2pm-7pm** at the Gillespie Park Festival. Proceeds to London Cycling Campaign and Sustrans.

Over 30 stalls, music, dance, workshops, activities, wildlife walks, food and drinks for all. Compered by Margot Sreberny and Revd. Stephen Coles this year. Enter via Stephen's Ink off Gillespie Road or via Quill Street entrance. If you've never been, this is a Festival not to be missed!

The Stadium and the Community - a conference

on: Wednesday 21st October 1998 at Keele University

Organised by The Federation of Stadium Communities the conference will:

- Examine the impact of sports stadia on the surrounding communities
- Provide examples of how positive and constructive relationships have been developed between sports clubs, local authorities and communities
- Promote an awareness of initiatives that can be devised to alleviate the problems concerning stadium communities

Speakers will include representatives from sports clubs, academic/research institutions, local authorities and community organisations.

For more information: 01782 838488

HCA XMAS PARTY

Last year, Annie Waring and other members organised a highly successful Fundraising Party on December 5th. This year we thought we could have a party with less emphasis on the Fundraising - maybe with some entertainment or raffle, plus drink and food. Can you or you plus neighbours/friends offer to organise this year's Xmas Party? It should be a lot easier and much less work for the organisers this year. Ring : 0171 359 5731 to discuss.

WANTED

Volunteers to attend a few hours each week at **Elizabeth House** to help with events bookings and general administration. People are needed urgently to enable valuable youth work to continue during the rebuilding of this great community centre. Ring Robert Scott 0171 359 5731

Window cleaner! Can any one help or recommend someone? Ring Angela: 0171 359 5976

AND OFFERED

Specialist plastering and damp-proof rendering - Gary Edwards and his mate can patch a ceiling or replaster your house. References supplied. Tel: 0181 556 2326 Mobile: 0797 021 6118.

Pet sitting service - Have you a cat, dog, rabbit, fish that needs looking after when you go away? Ring Pat Tuson on 0171 609 5093

ROOM TO LET IN ELIZABETH HOUSE!

Unfurnished office space (7'x11') now available in Elizabeth House, Hurlock Street. Use of photocopier. Rent negotiable. Possibility of modernised, refurbished space once major renovation completed in 1999. Ring Robert Scott 359 5731

'FINSBURY PARKER' COMMUNITY NEWS REBORN

Thanks to a grant raised by the Finsbury Park Action Group the free community newspaper The Parker is re-born this Autumn! The 100th edition will be delivered to about 7,000 homes in an area covering the three boroughs of Islington, Haringey and Hackney. Look out for a new style Parker!

OPEN HOUSE IN ISLINGTON

Several houses in Highbury are OPEN to the public over the weekend of 19th/20th September as part of the London and National Open House Scheme.

Jury House, 14A Highbury Terrace Mews and **Venus House, 1A Elfort Road** are two modern 'infill' houses on narrow sites that are both interestingly different from the Victorian norm. **11 and 12 Orlestone Mews** demonstrate two more contrasting ways of getting away from the standard terrace house

Full details of these and many others available from Town Hall on 0171 226 1234 or from Library at Fieldway Crescent.

Highbury Community Association
The HCA represents residents and businesses, on all aspects of living and working in Highbury, Stoke Newington and Finsbury Park.