

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

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A VIEW FROM THE TERRACES

By our Highbury Terrace correspondent

On Monday Arsenal played their first home game of the season. With a two nil scoreline, three players sent off, bumper-to-bumper parking and helicopters circling overhead, it was the same old stuff.

There was a far more exciting fixture the following night at the Town Hall when local team, The Planners, took on The Public in a replay of the Ashburton Grove Brief.

Fans will recall that last season ended in ignominy for The Planners when a foolish foul by their latest signing, Paul Fox, resulted in their victory being disallowed and they were ordered to play the match again.

It was a late kick-off. At 9.30 p.m., before a capacity crowd, committee Chair, Richard Heseltine, blew his ref's whistle and the debate started. The Brief came under heavy pressure as local groups and residents exposed its weaknesses and omissions. HCA and ISCA representatives argued convincingly that The Ashburton Grove Brief should not be considered in isolation. The development of the new stadium is totally dependent upon moving the Waste Station to Lough Road. Yet there is not a word from the Planners about the Lough Road site, the land is owned by somebody else and the good people of Lough Road haven't been consulted as to whether they'd like to live next to a waste station.

The Planners' star defender, Ian Crawley, looked more and more flustered as the holes in his Brief were exposed. At one point he conceded a corner and was obliged to give a straight answer. If Arsenal cannot meet the transport targets they will not get permission to build the stadium.

Fans will probably know that Crawley

has recently signed a transfer deal with Bristol City and that this was probably his last appearance for the Planners in a big game.

The match was clearly going into extra time and it was close to midnight when Councillors got to have their say. Maureen Leigh delivered a no-nonsense condemnation. Joan Coupland revealed that Monday night's helicopter was an Arsenal Spy in the Sky, as they try to figure out what their fans get up to. Paul Fox wisely kept his mouth shut.

It was left to Jenny Sands, a last minute substitution, to give the Brief a proper mauling. She lambasted the Planners for a very poor piece of work. It appeared that she, uniquely, had read it. She confessed it had been a struggle. She had delved into the obfuscation and brought to light a number of flaws. She had a list of amendments which local groups wished to make and another of her own.

It was then that Crawley displayed the nifty footwork for which fans will most remember him. In a bravura display, he daringly announced that planners had met local groups, had studied their written submission well in advance of members and had addressed all their concerns.

The total inaccuracy of these claims went unremarked at the committee table, as the Star Defender reassured and placated. Sands was wrong footed and persuaded to take her eye off the ball.

The final whistle loomed and Heseltine called for the vote. This is where it all went horribly wrong. Fans of Town Hall fixtures will know that things tend to get shambolic in the dying moments. This one lived up to expectations. Heseltine, who had tried to referee firmly,

lost control of the game. It transpired that Councillors didn't know what they were voting for.

Wally Burgess tried to rescue the proceedings from total farce. He read out Crawley's amendments. His attempt failed.

The amendments were passed. The Brief was passed. They thought it was all over. Some of the members were on their feet and leaving the pitch. Heseltine was tidying his papers. Egged on by Cllr Greening shouting "Point of order" from his seat at the back, suddenly Sands made a late run. What about her amendment to increase the no-parking zone to a mile and a half?

Crawley attempted a clearance. "You didn't say it when you should have done." The febleness of this defence was palpable. He had conceded a penalty in the final seconds of injury time. With the meeting breaking up this amendment was passed.

The players were going out of the door when linesman and committee secretary, Oliver Craxton, had to shout at them to return and pass the Brief as further amended. Confusion reigned. One member raised a hand at the wrong time and then had to dispute the count. Tempers flared and a serious mid-pitch incident threatened.

A member of the public launched a blistering attack on the incompetence of the players. How could they hope to run a Council when they couldn't conduct a simple vote? The players stood and gaped.... justly rebuked.

The Planners scraped home. However, if Arsenal F.C. submit their planning applications in October, this match will be seen for what it was, a pre-season "friendly." ■

To keep up to date with what is happening with Arsenal's proposed move, visit the Islington Stadium Communities Alliance web-site..... www.redcard.org.uk

FOCUS ON DORRIE VALERY—

CENTRE DIRECTOR FOR QUEENSLAND MULTI-MEDIA ARTS CENTRE

HCA: *Let's hear about you first. What's your background?*

Dorrie: I'm 39 years old, Mauritian, female and I speak fluent French! Because I've spent my whole life in the inner-city, working and living among the black and ethnic minority communities, I'm well known in those circles, with many useful contacts.

HCA: *What did you do before managing QMMAC?*

Dorrie: I managed a community based project for City & Islington College. Also I worked as a freelance consultant in management, financial advice and helping people set up Quality Standards in the voluntary sector.

HCA: *'Quality Standards'? Sorry to be so ignorant, but what does it mean?*

Dorrie: Employees of charities or community centres run by volunteer Trusts or Boards aren't governed by professional bodies like solicitors, doctors, police or other professionals are. So a system of approved ways of organising work in a centre, e.g. dealing with people, security, confidentiality and so on has been set up called 'Quality Standards'. Most of the UK voluntary sector does not use these Standards. I do. I teach other centres which systems to use. QMMAC not only applies UK Quality Standards but will shortly implement the tougher European Quality Standards.

HCA: *When did you start working here and what was it like then?*

Dorrie: I started on 3rd May 1999 after Islington Council's 'Regeneration' Dept had been in charge of the project for 9 months. I found a derelict warehouse with one huge space, lots of smaller rooms upstairs – basically it was unusable & dangerous to enter. The roof leaked constantly and heavy rain brought 18 inches of flooded sewer water into what is now our Theatre, Carnival, Dance and Exhibition Space.

HCA: *What's the hardest task you've had this last 15 months?*

Dorrie: Getting the legal problems over the unfinished contracted building works sorted. Plus the physical effort of working long hours to get plumbing, electricity, a usable kitchen and enough toilets and

showers fitted before I could open to the community.

HCA: *What's been the best part of the last year?*

Dorrie: Hard to say – the people and users are top of the list. I love all the successes: the 24 track sound studio, the IT suite and Carnival design workshops among many. But *Share a Capital Christmas* with all the planning and volunteer labour ending up with Capital Radio using QMMAC as its London-wide base, giving toys to over 130,000 children, stands out as a major achievement!

HCA: *Tell me who exactly has created the Arts and Multi-Media Centre you run now?*

Dorrie: The £100,000 grant from Islington Council was the start. But only the start! Over £300,000 of equipment, computers, tables, skilled labour (carpentry, sound & computer technology and more), has been donated or loaned by literally hundreds of individuals and local and London businesses in the last 15 months. Queensland Rd businesses support QMMAC – they give money & equipment to the Centre and job placements to our users. We need the businesses and I think they gain too from helping our users.

HCA: *Who uses QMMAC and what is different about this centre?*

Dorrie: People of all cultures, colours and races who want to improve their lives or learn a skill and find learning, or being part of society difficult, because they have some kind of barrier to overcome. For example – people with visible and invisible disabilities, HIV/AIDS, or a history of criminal conviction are all welcome here. But we're also open to anyone who wants to extend their computer skills, enjoy a music lesson, learn office skills, hire our facilities or be part of making QMMAC successful. It's different because our users get involved at every level to keep it running, so it is 'their' centre. We've over 200 active volunteers just now.

HCA: *Tell me about some of the projects and courses QMMAC provides?*

Dorrie: I started a Police Surgery –our Community Police Officer meets and advises young people with challenging be-

haviour – or helps their parents! An Employment Project to get people back to work – we've helped 52 people get jobs this year. A Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Project for children – kids turn up for a bit of fun after being in hospital having treatment, like a Blood Transfusion. Accredited Computer courses run by QMMAC's only other employee, Melanie, Art and Music classes and the chance to cut your own CD in our Sound Studio keep 250+ people using QMMAC each week. New classes start all the time. Last week QMMAC's carnival team won a prize at the Millennium Dome – it's a real mixture!

HCA: *Yours was one of the community centres which lost all its Council funding in July. What does this mean for QMMAC?*

Dorrie: QMMAC is run by an independent Trust. Since I've only had just over a year to get the Centre up and running, from nothing, it is madness to cut our core funding now, giving us very little time to raise vital funds. If the cut was staged we could soon run with no drain on the Council's budget at all. Our users are very stressed by the threat of QMMAC's closure. Some of them with a history of criminal convictions have openly said that if the project closes they'll be back on the streets and up to their old tricks again. Our project is valued by so many people – the energy and commitment is there to keep going – but we do need money to pay the rent to the Council in October! They're charging us £40,000 a year. We are not proud – any money is welcome!

HCA: *Who is supporting you in your campaign against the cuts?*

Dorrie: Islington Labour Party is joining us at meetings and rallies – our MP Jeremy Corbyn is brilliant. The London Socialist Alliance is helping every day. I am trying to help other Centres by giving them the knowledge to survive. What you have to remember is that each Centre has its own strengths and character which suits the people who use it – you can't do what the Council is trying to do – move projects around and duplicate work that is already being done! What a waste of public and private donated money – what a waste of talent and energy – over my dead body! ■

Editor's note: *HCA is selling toys donated by Capital Radio in aid of QMMAC at its stall at the Gillespie Park Festival on Saturday 10th September, 2.00 - 6.00pm.*

ARSENAL DEVELOPMENTS LATEST

Look at the map. Highbury Stadium and the Ashburton Grove site you've heard about in relation to Arsenal's proposal for a new 60,000 seat stadium in Ashburton Grove. The third site, Lough Road, up to now has been the poor relation – no public consultation, no agreed Planning Brief, just Arsenal agents visiting in suits and hard hats, prospecting for somewhere to put the Waste Transfer Station and businesses from Ashburton Grove.

At least 30,000 people live within a mile, so can expect to be affected by what happens there. Why? Because a new road would be necessary, joining Holloway Road, opposite Hornsey Rd, to the Caledonian Rd. The total area of the 3 sites affected by Arsenal's proposals is about 54 acres – a huge amount of inner-city land.

ASHBURTON GROVE:

Things are moving on, but slower than Ken Friar, AFC's ex-MD, hoped. He said in November 1999 if planning consent was granted, 'a new Stadium could be open possibly by 2003'. Wrong by at least 2 years – AFC agents have given HCA & other groups a timetable showing that IF there is no Public Inquiry the Stadium is not expected to be ready before the end of 2004. And even the Council is now admitting that a Public Inquiry is likely – so the estimate extends to 2005-6. So where does that leave people who want Arsenal FC to have a bigger stadium? HCA has always said that Arsenal Directors could not have chosen a more complicated site – it is not the quick solution Ken Friar told the public he wanted last December. Under pressure from groups Arsenal agents revealed drawings in July showing that the Stadium would be well over the maximum permitted height of 30 metres, and without a roof.



Ken Friar emphasised that the drawings change constantly. He hoped an application would go in during the Autumn. ISCA (Islington Stadium Communities Alliance) will be calling for a Public Inquiry as the proposals will impact on so many people, as well as being against the Council's Unitary Development Plan.

HIGHBURY STADIUM SITE:

Brief passed 17th April. Plans drawn for about 320 flats, an underground car-park, social housing in a block, but not much 'mixed development'. Also plans are unclear on public access to the green space inside. HCA wants no 'luxury gated ghetto' but accessible open space and a through route for pedestrians/cyclists. Architects plans by Allies and Morrison, available on www.arsenal.co.uk

LOUGH ROAD:

The land is owned by Railtrack, Sainsbury's and various others, and AFC agents admit that some of the owners are not keen to sell. Maybe because a Draft Brief exists for a varied development which the public were consulted on 2 years ago. Unusually the Draft Brief was never sent to Committee for approval, despite pressure from residents. Now, following pressure again the Planners say they will consult on the area in September – but have not said whether this will be based around a new Brief which would provide a framework for Arsenal's plans for that site. A report in the

Estates Gazette on 22nd July that Arsenal agents have asked Planners for advice on obtaining Compulsory Purchase Powers for land at Lough Road does not seem to be common knowledge among Councillors – or, if it is, they are keeping quiet. ■

ISCA www.RedCard.org.uk for more information or ring Voicemail 7619 0171 for the August ISCA News.

BLACKSTOCK ADVICE AND COMMUNITY PROJECT CLOSES TO THE PUBLIC

By Angela Sinclair (Acting Chair BACP)

Blackstock Advice was forced to close its doors on 21st July, following the loss of its Council funding, which was cut from £65,000 p.a. to nothing at a stroke.

Attempts by the Labour opposition to reverse the committee decision in Full Council failed when the meeting was abandoned in uproar before we could make our case.

Remaining money has to be used to pay for the costs of winding up the project, including redundancy pay.

Throughout 18 years of existence BACP has depended on Council funding to help those in need. Last year its two workers saw nearly 4,000 clients. Monitored a few months ago by the previous Council, it was approved as being "good value for money", and so we hoped to avoid drastic cuts.

On the Council's advice some weeks ago, BACP took on a part time fundraiser, who has applied to the National Lottery and others for money; but his pleas are unlikely to be successful, as most-grant givers are reluctant to replace Council support. Anyway time is short. BACP will be obliged to leave its

Council owned office in a few weeks.

Free professional advice is a major need of the most deprived, mainly for help in claiming benefits to which they are entitled, when they cannot cope with the complicated form-filling and bureaucracy involved. Without these benefits people may live in distressing poverty no civilised society should tolerate.

The Council plans to launch a new advice service from next April. Even if this materialises, those in urgent need of advice have nowhere to turn in the meantime. So far nobody has explained why a new service would be better or cheaper than the one that is being axed. ■

Letters from.....

Francis Radice, 100 Highbury Hill N5

Imagine some farmers defending their land from a swarm of locusts three miles wide by batting them down with tennis rackets; or an elephant trying to prevent a giant colony of ants from invading his territory by stamping on them. Some kind of mad nightmare? Not so. This is precisely the sort of thing Islington Council proposes to do in establishing a Controlled Parking Zone if there is to be a new Arsenal stadium. The aim is to require all Arsenal fans to leave their cars outside some other people's doorways (as long as it's at least a mile and half away from the stadium) and walk the rest of the way.

But what of those who carry on as before and drive up as close to the stadium as they can? Will these be turned back by an army of traffic wardens vigilantly fanning out on every street wherever the CPZ can be penetrated? A few thousand should do the trick. Another army sitting in offices, will be issuing everyone living in the CPZ with distinctive, difficult-to-forge stickers, re-issuing them when they fall due for renewal and collecting the fines from those who get caught out breaking the rules. Ah well, at least there'll be full employment!

& from.....

Borislav Petranov, 22C Highbury Grange, London N5 2PX

Is there any place of meetings for young mums and dads, organized by the Association? We would love to meet other parents of young babies from the area. We also have quite a few things we don't need any more for a small baby and need things for an older baby which are very expensive. So we will be happy to lend and borrow various baby stuff. In our time in Oxford the University had a special place where once a week students could buy and sell, for nominal prices, all the stuff they did (not) need...

* *The HCA doesn't do this, but you could contact the St Thomas's Playgroup (Talk to Catherine Azzopardi on 020 7503 6115). We like the idea of a community exchange for baby things. If readers are interested in setting one up, why not get in touch with Borislav?*

Come to the **GILLESPIE PARK FESTIVAL ON SUNDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER** from **2PM - 6PM** - North Islington's answer to the village fete!

See the HCA stall where we shall be selling toys to help Queensland Multi-Media Arts Centre - and bric-a-brac to help the HCA. If you would like to help or have any small items to donate to HCA, ring Anna Banks on 7226 7261 now!

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Highbury Community Association

The HCA represents residents and businesses, on all aspects of living and working in Highbury, Lower Holloway and Finsbury Park. Run by volunteers it relies on donations. Send cheques to HCA Treasurer, 132 Highbury Hill, N5 made out to Highbury Community Association.