

HIGHBURY

COMMUNITY NEWS

Issue No 21 November 2000

NICE STADIUM, DANNY- PITY ABOUT THE SITE!

“Arsenal boss, Danny Fiszman, stunned the nation with the club’s plans for a new stadium.” No, in truth AFC held a rather downbeat presentation for national journalists a week late, and then failed to submit all the paperwork that makes up their planning applications. OK, it was bad luck they picked a day when the country was flooded, there was a spectacular diamond heist at the Dome and America failed to elect a president.

Even so, nobody was heard to deny that architects HOK Sport have produced a handsome building, if we can believe the glossy computer image splashed across the newspapers. Ignore the churlish critics who have pointed out that the background looks more like Docklands than Stoke Newington, that they have planted a forest on the railway lines and that the only person who could get to see this view would be the police-helicopter pilot. It does indeed look good on paper.

Two days later community representatives got a peek at the plans. In the Council Chamber around 90 invited people from Highbury, Holloway and Lough Road areas watched in wary silence a skilful video outlining the proposals for the three sites.

The mood was not so much hostile as deeply sceptical. Much was not news. As usual most of the attention was devoted to the glamorous stadium, with the 25 acres at Avenell and Lough Roads mentioned as an afterthought. The plans for Lough Road seemed particularly sketchy, with nervous consultants unable to answer questions from the floor. “Not decided yet,” “can’t remember,” “the technical details will be in the application” were phrases that got a good airing.

Lough Road residents were out in force for the first time; and you could see why the Council has been so reluctant to consult them - tough, articulate and well briefed, they were not afraid to speak

out and call a State-of-the-Art-Waste-Facility a rubbish dump.

They were not the only ones to be surprised to hear that luxury flats planned for part of the site may be 12 storeys high. Are these designed for very short people or will the blocks breach the 30 metre height rule (known as Policy D6 - or the one Council Planners think is not so important)?

Height was an issue with the stadium too. According to the consultants it is just under 30 metres - unless you measure it from ground level, in which case it is just under 35 metres; but they’ve raised the ground level, you see, to get in 600 parking spaces and avoid having to shift too much contaminated soil. So that’s all right then, isn’t it? Well, maybe not if you happen to do business in Queensland Road, and find you are on the the main vehicle route to this State-of-the-Art-Leisure-Facility.

At least the Ecology Centre and Gillespie Park only have to put up with emergency vehicles. Apparently these would go up the existing entrance road, across the railway at the top, with a neat hairpin bend to take them zooming down to the scene of a disaster. It’s lucky these guys who drive fire engines are so brave and clever. Ordinary folk struggle to get a Transit up and down without hitting anything.

Then there is the Highbury Stadium site. “We want a mixed development, not a gated, luxury enclave - and we want public access to the open space” councillors and HCA have said. What do we get? - a dense residential development with the sacred turf reserved for the new inhabitants of David Dein Court. And “how dense?” asked Gillespie Forum Chair, George Barrow. Not 250 rooms per hectare, not 350 but 450 we discovered. “In line with government thinking” cried the consultants. “Not in line with Council Policy”

retorted George.

“Where is the public open space on all these 53 acres?” queried Labour stalwart, Diane Burridge. Well, there’s a couple of tiny green bits in the middle of Lough Road, but nobody seemed sure if they were public or private - “and some paving somewhere here” said Roger Hopher, Arsenal’s lead consultant, pointing uncertainly at the map. And, of course, there’s the piazza (or is it the podium?) around the stadium. Big deal! - and take care not to fall on the railway line while you’re there - there’s not a lot of space round the sides.

What about jobs and regeneration, then? “3500 preserved and created” crowed the developer and £400 million spent. Ignoring the fact that the 2000 jobs on Ashburton Grove were not needing preservation until Arsenal came along, it’s easy to accept there could be 1500 new ones. But, hang on a minute - 1500 jobs from developing 53 acres of land a bare two miles from the centre of the capital, is this such a bargain? And this £400 million, does it really make sense to get involved in all this aggro and risk when all you want is a more profitable football ground you can open daily?

“How do we know you won’t run out of money like Canary Wharf or get the business plan wrong like the Dome?” came a stern voice from the back. “We won’t start unless we have the money in place and we have to convince ourselves and the City that it all stacks up” replied Ken Friar. Just like Tony Blair convinced himself and the Reichmann brothers convinced the City, presumably.... so no problems there, obviously. Then there’s the transport. “It works” claimed the consultant, crossing his arms and looking at the floor; and “Arsenal will put pressure on the Council to make the parking work” added Ken. Even Council Planner, Graham Harrington, could not resist a smile at this. ▣

Sir Arthur Keith (1866-1955) Highbury's scientific celebrity By Stella Mason

On the front of 17 Aubert Park is a familiar blue plaque that commemorates a famous inhabitant. However, it is likely that most people are none the wiser after they have read the name. Sir Arthur Keith was a surgeon who worked at the Royal London Hospital but he was better known for his work as an anthropologist and indeed achieved some celebrity when he was associated with the 'Piltdown Man' affair.

During his medical career Keith became fascinated by osteology (the study of bones) and the origins of Man. Ever since Charles Darwin published his *Origin of the Species* in 1859 scientists had been obsessed with finding the 'missing link' between apes and Man. In 1911/12 an amateur archaeologist, Charles Dawson and his friend, Arthur Smith Woodward, Keeper of Geology at the Natural History Museum discovered a cranium and mandible (lower jaw) of a hominid while digging at Piltdown in Sussex. At the time of the discovery Keith had left the Royal London and was in charge of the Museum at the Royal College of Surgeons where he could carry out his research.

The discovery was a scientific sensation. Keith along with most other eminent anthropologists entered into the fierce debate about whether the fossils were closer in type to an ape or a human. It was not until some 40 years later that the forgery was unmasked and the remains revealed to be those of an orang-utan. All the chief protagonists were suspected including Sir Arthur Keith (he was knighted in 1921). Subsequently it has been established that the real hoaxers were – Dawson, Smith Woodward and Barlow based at the Natural History Museum. It was an academic prank that went too far when all the distinguished scholars were completely taken in.



The forgers, who had even used specimens from the RCS to aid their deception, fooled Keith along with everyone else.

How did Keith come to Highbury? In 1897 No 40 Leigh Road was the home of his fiancée and he moved in there after they were married in 1899. By 1906 they were looking for a larger house, "...our choice fell upon a house that stood (and stands) in a corner where Leigh Road joins Aubert Park, right on the brow of the hill looking towards the north.... In the background, far to the north, was Epping Forest; in the foreground, on the far side of Aubert Park, was St John's

Divinity Hall, a training college for the Church of England. Down below, in the middle foreground, was the rumble of trains from the north as they rushed at all hours through Finsbury Park station.... ultimately I had to pay £515 to become its owner.... There was an abbreviated garden with stone steps leading up to a front door which opened on a narrow hall on the ground floor. The front room on this floor became our "dining-room"; the spacious back room, which looked out on to a long narrow garden, was chosen to be our sitting- or living room. The half-submerged basement under the ground floor was devoted to kitchen, scullery and coal cellars. Mrs Gray [mother-in-law] was installed in the front room of

the second floor, while the rear part of that floor provided Celia and me with a bedroom. The third floor both back and front was utilised as a study, and gave ample space for books and papers. The top floor, under the roof was divided into bedrooms for maids. How many steps the maids had to ascend when they climbed from the basement to their beds in the attics I never counted, but it was a great number. Coal had to be carried from the basement, water to all floors above the first. Yet I never heard the maids complain of stairs. There was no escape from stairs – London was made up of such houses as ours."

It was the Keiths' home until 1933 when they retired to Downe in Kent. By that time they felt that Highbury had become "...down at heel and multi-tenanted". ▣

POLICE CLOSE TUBE

Holloway and Highbury residents were annoyed to find themselves unable to use Holloway Road tube for an hour during the Man U match recently, after police closed it for safety reasons.

Highbury PC, Sue Haynes, explained to the Nags Head Forum this was to prevent a repeat of an incident last year when a serious attack in the station put lives, including those of officers, at risk.

Supt. Andy Smith, who is in charge of football policing, apologised for the inconvenience caused to residents by the large police presence, particularly for the helicopter. He said this was necessary to prevent trouble. "We were able to identify about 400 hooligans who align themselves with Manchester United and about 250 connected to Arsenal."

He added that he only calls on the helicopter when he has to. "Without

the helicopter we could not have kept the hooligan groups under observation and they would have thwarted our attempts to keep them apart."

Police have powers to close stations for reasons of safety or over-crowding. Since they are not upgrading it, Arsenal have stated this may happen at Holloway if the new stadium is built. Consultants claim that this does not matter as the station is ordinarily used by only 100 people per hour. ▣

MORE GROUPS DECLARE THEIR HAND ON STADIUM

◆ **Islington Friends of the Earth** spokesman, John Ackers, has described Arsenal's Transport proposals for their new stadium as "disappointing and unimaginative" and added "the Council asked very little from Arsenal and they have got what they asked for." ISFOE is very critical of the absence of infrastructure improvements and the lack of a Green Travel Plan.

◆ **AGAB**, a group that represents business owners on Ashburton Grove, has been widely seen as supportive of AFC's plans; but spokesman, Tom Reed, declared his members had decided they could no longer go along with the scheme, having seen what is proposed for the businesses.

◆ **Highbury Terrace Mews Residents Association**, which represents Highbury's most rustic

and seemingly isolated road has joined forces with ISCA. Too remote to be reached by the Council's consultation leaflets, they are not too remote to suffer disturbance from football fans. They are sceptical of the "regeneration" claims and find match-day parking and access to the tube a particular problem and realise this can only get worse if Highbury and Islington Station is to become a main transfer point.

◆ **The No to Dirty Business Campaign** has been set up to counter the threat posed by the possible relocation of the Waste Station and multi-storey Council vehicle depot to Lough Road. They are justly annoyed that the Council refused to include their area in the consultations that have been going on all year.

◆ Also angry are residents who see they may be on the lorry route from the Lough Road site. They are setting up a **Freegrove and Cardozo Residents Association** for people in that area of N7. ■

HCA WINS THE LOTTERY



If you find this newsletter is easier to read than recent issues, there's a good reason. It has been produced on the Association's new laser printer, brought to you by courtesy of a Millennium Award

from the Lottery Commission.

HCA has received a grant for £2,552 towards the purchase of a printer, scanner and other computer equipment for the benefit of the Association.

This came just in time for us all, as our usual copy shop has ceased business; and they were the cheapest for miles around.

Having an HCA printer means better quality and lower costs; and better quality means we can use more pictures - So, many thanks to the Lottery!

Many thanks also to those who answered our appeal for computer gear. We are still looking for a low-end Pentium machine. How about that old one, you stuck in the cupboard? It would be going to a good cause - with the money we have for upgrades, it could have a new lease of life. ■

SELF DEFENCE FOR WOMEN IN ISLINGTON by Pauline Gerlis



A young woman who has herself been a victim of crime is running successful self defence classes in Islington.

Elizabeth Clark decided, after her own horrific experience in 1986, that she was not going to continue to be a victim. She began training in self-defence in 1995. She was looking for a system of REAL self-defence and not a "traditional" art form. In her view these latter systems teach outdated techniques

which were originally taught for the samurai on the battlefield many centuries ago. Unfortunately, today's aggressor has changed somewhat so she feels that the application of what you are taught should be in direct relation to what happens in today's society.

Elizabeth found during her training that she could not only help herself but other women too. She wanted to stop others suffering as she had. She stresses that women CAN do

something positive about their personal safety, whether they have been a victim of crime or not. She feels strongly that they should not have to learn the hard way as she did.

Now a fully qualified self-defence instructor with the Self-Defence Federation, she also holds a 1st Degree Black Belt and Chief Instructor's qualification with the Dynamic Self-Defence Association. She is the head instructor of the Women's Self Defence section for the DSDA. By herself being a victim of crime, she feels she truly understands what is required within the remit of a women's self-defence course. She has also trained with some of the top instructors in the UK and has attended a day's conference in verbal aggression with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust.

Elizabeth's courses, workshops and seminars are designed in such a way that the average woman can understand the physical and psychological aspects of a confrontation in respect of themselves and their would-be attacker.

To discover more, you can look on Elizabeth's website at www.womens-selfdefence.co.uk. Currently there are courses in The Angel Primary School in Ritchie Street N1; and she is starting two new ones at the Sequin Park in Upper Street in November 2000 and January 2001.

Phone Elizabeth Clark: 07967 243667 ■

Seasonal Special Offer for Music lovers

A newly released CD featuring music by Highbury composer, Rachel Stott, is being offered to HCN readers on special terms in the run up to Christmas.


For every copy ordered at £10.00, £1.00 will be donated to Queensland Multi Media Arts Centre. Local delivery is free. The CD 'Airborne' was recorded in July by the group Coeur Simple (Rachel Godsill, Oliver Webber and Rachel Stott).

It has an entrancing sound, beguiling the ear with the human voice and a range of stringed instru-

ments: violin, viola, viola d'amore and kantele, a five stringed harp from Finland which has been unanimously voted 'cool' by Highbury teenagers!

A must for all poetry lovers, the disc includes settings by six living British composers of poems by William Shakespeare, Emily Bronte, Emily Dickinson, Stevie Smith and Edgar Allan Poe.

To order, phone or fax **7704 0147** giving your name, address and phone number and stating that you are an HCN reader.

Further information about 'Airborne' can be found at www.singingspace.co.uk 

Community Centre Cuts Confirmed

The Council has finally confirmed the expected cuts to North Islington's community centres. These were tabled in the summer, but not all were formally approved before the meeting had to be abandoned when tempers flared.

Blackstock Advice Centre has already closed. Finsbury Park Action Group, one of the few groups to escape cuts, has expanded its advice service to try to cover the gap, but it does not yet have the resources or experience in this field that Blackstock could claim.

Highbury Roundhouse is looking at

ways to restructure its finances and services and is setting up a "Friends" scheme to raise the centre's profile and gain more local support.

Queensland Multi-Media Centre lost all its Council funding; but, if the Council hoped to close it, they have been disappointed. The Centre remains open and is still expanding its facilities. It is currently offering accredited IT training courses for all levels of skill, from basic typing to web design. To find out about these and the wide variety of other activities on offer, see

www.Geocities.com/qmmac - or ring **7619 0459** 

When does consultation start on Arsenal's plans for 50+ acres ?

AFC put in applications for 4 major developments on 7th November but vital papers were missing.


Council will not register applications until Arsenal completes the paper work.

When applications are deemed complete, Council intends to:

- Send summaries to people who responded to Planning Briefs.
- Request comments from the public, by leaflet drop.

- Hold public meetings
- Put full applications on view in Central Library, Planning Dept and other public places

Information so far shows that AFC's applications may breach Council UDP Policies on all 3 sites. Islington Stadium Communities Alliance will be calling on the Secretary of State to hold a Public Inquiry so that LBI does not determine these major applications. An independent assessment of the effects of the proposals on Islington and other boroughs is needed.

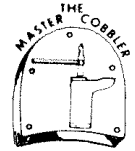
For further details see ISCA website - www.RedCard.org.uk 

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Send letters and articles for next issue to:

HC News, 10 Stavordale Road, N5 1NE
or email: pauline.gerlis@talk21.com by 14.12.00

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.