

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

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Blackstock Road Sainsbury's seen off for good



By CHARLIE ROBERSON

The years-long battle between Sainsbury's and local planners and residents has finally come to an end. The national supermarket chain had hoped to open a 'Local' store in the now disused Highbury Vale police station. But in October the Planning Inspectorate rejected an appeal from Sainsbury's regarding their use of the property, ending the issue for the foreseeable future.

The application had originally been rejected by Islington planners in February on the grounds that it would harm the vibrancy of the area. Sainsbury's appealed this decision but this latest judgement leaves them with no choice but to accept Islington's original ruling.

The main cause of the local outcry against the proposed shop was the risk it posed to local businesses.

Blackstock Road is home to a large number of small shops, off-licenses and speciality shops who would have suffered in competition against the national supermarket. Many of these shops have longstanding relationships with the area and are cherished by local customers. Sainsbury's have another small store just a few minutes walk along Blackstock Road.

Various developers have had plans for the Grade II listed building from as far back as 2012. An earlier attempt to convert the ground floor into a supermarket was abandoned after 2,500 signatures were gathered on a petition against it. When the issue re-emerged in 2015, many feared that there would be no way of blocking the development.

Speaking to the Islington Gazette, Town hall development chief Cllr Diarmaid Ward said, "We're very pleased the Planning Inspector has

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dismissed the appeal against our refusal. We had concerns about the highway safety of loading and unloading at the site, and also the impact of the proposals on the nearby Finsbury Park town centre."

Development has already begun on the building so regrettably it cannot be preserved in its current state. Some of the space will be used for flats. It remains to be seen what will happen to the ground floor that had been earmarked for the retail space.

The HCA have been involved with this issue from the start and are thrilled that the plan for the store has been rejected once and for all. Praise should be given to everyone who has been involved in the campaign. We hope that this judgement ensures the security of Blackstock Road's independent shops in the years to come.

SAVE THE DATE!
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Details of Highbury Fields building upgrades emerge

By GILL SHEPHERD

Islington Council has for many years hoped to make improvements to the buildings, including the Oasis Café and One O'clock Club, near the tennis courts on the northeast corner of Highbury Fields. However, in the ten years since issuing a "vision" for the area these popular facilities have inevitably deteriorated further. It is therefore good news that the Council has secured funding to develop proposals for their replacement.

The first step in the process was to appoint an architect so four shortlisted practices were asked to make a submission on 2 presentation boards each, showcasing their portfolio, their approach to the project and any ideas they had in response to the brief and potential sites.

The boards were on public display at Highbury Baptist Church on September 20th and 21st with feedback forms for visitors to complete to assist the council in making their selection.

Visitors would have benefitted from more guidance from the Council to help them. It would have been useful to have panels introducing the scope of the project and an explanation as to what the consultation's intention was. There

was also a lack of diagrams showing existing and proposed areas, any additional facilities, the strategy for removal of diseased trees and if their replacement is proposed (particularly memorial trees) and for the process to have a timeline explaining succeeding stages and procedures.

Council representatives present repeatedly said the consultation was



'to choose an architect and not a design' but people were heard asking one another what exactly they were supposed to be commenting on. More guidance from the Council to the four practices would also have made for more comparable displays.

The firm 'Levitata' has been chosen for the project - practice D for those who went to see the four presentations. Their suggestions for a simple and modest architectural approach were well received and

chime with the HCA's best-case expectations for the redesign. You can find out more about Levitate and their work on their website: <http://levitate.uk.com/>

We are looking to see a single building, low in height, with a reasonably small footprint based on an agreed brief, in sympathetic materials such as wood and glass, and in an accessible position near Church Path.

Our main current queries actually concern the Council brief rather than the choice of architect. The brief specifies 25 square metres for the kitchen, 10 m² for a servery, 10 m² for storage and 30 m² for the café. The back of house facilities is huge -the kitchen and servery are larger than the internal seating area - and seem to be based on space standards guidelines for a far larger building than that currently proposed. These facilities will be unnecessarily expensive to build, and will generate heavy running costs as well. These issues will need to be addressed further as the design process unfolds.

These concerns aside, the HCA is pleased to see substantial resources being used for this important local space. We will be covering the issue closely in future issues of the newsletter. More information is available online at:

www.islington.gov.uk/sports-parks-and-trees/parks-and-green-spaces/parks-projects/Highbury-fields



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'Highbury Heritage' display opens to the public in Christ Church

By JANET GILBERT

Highbury Heritage, the new audiovisual exploration of the heritage and history of Highbury, is now open to the public at Christ Church. There is a wealth of entertaining information available to explore via touchscreen, with films on subjects ranging from the Boer War memorial in Highbury Fields to an illuminating tour of Highbury streets to interviews with familiar traders from Highbury Barn.

New films will be added regularly. Visitors are welcome on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays (term-time only) from 9.30 to 11.30am, and Sundays from 12.15 to 1pm, with access through the church's glass doors opposite the clock tower at the top end of Highbury Fields. Entry is completely free!

Highbury Heritage was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, in conjunction with Christ Church's recent successful project to restore its crumbling spire. For further details or to book group visits, please contact office@christchurchhighbury.com. We look forward to welcoming you!

Local orchestra treats Christ Church to concert

By CHARLIE ROBERSON

Haydn Chamber Orchestra, Islington's most prominent amateur orchestra, performed in Christ Church on November 25th.

They played Dvorak's *Symphony No. 8*, Britten's *Les Illuminations* and [Engelbert Humperdinck's Hansel and Gretel Overture](#).

Aidan Oliver was the conductor and distinguished Canadian soprano Gillian Keith was the soloist for Britten's piece.

The orchestra, founded in 1983, is made up of musicians from and Islington and the surrounding area in North London.

The orchestra is widely respected and its reputation ensures that it regularly attracts high quality soloists and conductors.

They play a range of music, from classical to contemporary, and perform regularly in the local area.

We would encourage Highbury residents to seek out one of their concerts at the earliest opportunity.

More information can be found about Haydn Chamber Orchestra on their website: <http://www.hco.org.uk/>



Canadian soprano, Gillian Keith, performed at Christ Church

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Christmas road works threaten disruption on Holloway Road

By CHARLIE ROBERSON

TfL will be closing a major stretch of Holloway Road for 3 weeks over the Christmas period, threatening disruption for commuters, road-users and other travellers. This drastic action is part of the ongoing efforts to turn Highbury Roundabout into a safer and more efficient stretch of road.

From Monday 18 December 2017 to Monday 8 January 2018, the A1 Holloway Road roundabout will be closed between Digswell Street and Highbury Corner roundabout. Highbury and Islington station will remain open as normal, although the Overground will not be running for eight days from December 23 to 30. Underground and National Rail services will not be affected.

These changes will affect pedestrians and all road users for the duration of the works. Traffic flow will be maintained on Highbury Corner roundabout but changes will apply to the way traffic uses the roundabout.

Northbound traffic will be diverted from Highbury Corner, down St. Paul's Road, along Highbury Grove and Blackstock Road towards Finsbury Park and then on to Nags Head. Southbound traffic will be diverted along the Caledonian Road to the Pentonville Road. Some locals fear this will cause a major increase in the volume of traffic on Liverpool Road and adjoining roads.

Buses will be diverted, and several bus-stops will be suspended for the duration of the road closure. Bus routes 43, 263, 271, 277, 393 and N41 will be affected. Problems for bus users are compounded by the lack of roads near

Highbury Corner suitable for diverting or turning buses.

Perhaps the biggest issues will be those faced by pedestrians. TfL have promised that an alternative walking route will be signed. However this may require pedestrians to navigate three sides of the roundabout to reach the bus stops on St. Paul's Road.

Three Arsenal home fixtures will take place during this period of disruption, although none will overlap with the dates when the Overground will be closed.

The original Highbury Corner bridge that carries Holloway Road above the Overground line was built in around 1850. The necessary repairs are making good progress and are expected to be finished by summer 2018. The new bridge has an expected lifespan of 120 years.

A map detailing the closures and suggested alternate routes can be seen below. TfL have given assurances that the work will be carried out as quickly and painlessly as possible. More information about the construction, including more information on the bus routes that will be changed, can be found on the TfL website: <https://tfl.gov.uk/status-updates/major-works-and-events/highbury-corner-bridge---a1-holloway-road>



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Do you have a local news story you would like to see in a future edition of Highbury Community News?

Please contact us at hcanews@hotmail.com

HCA response to the Mayor's draft environment strategy

Photo: Courtesy of the Islington Gazette



Problems caused by barbecues in local parks were highlighted in the HCA's response

By SARAH POTTER and LINDY SHARPE

The Mayor of London's Draft Environment Strategy aims for a capital city which by 2050 has more than half its area green, and which, by achieving National Park City status, ensures that all Londoners are able to enjoy the benefits of green space. The strategy highlights that half of London is now located in areas of deficiency in access to public open space.

For protecting and enhancing our green infrastructure, the strategy relies principally on the established land use planning framework and standards of access. The main concerns which the strategy addresses in its aim for a greener London are health, protection from climate change and future economic growth. Ambitious aims and policies

are set out in the strategy for air pollution, climate change mitigation, waste, adapting to climate change and ambient noise.

In the HCA's response to the recent consultation on the strategy, we strongly endorsed the priority given in its aims to addressing health and inequality. While our local area in Highbury is well provided with parks, our borough is densely populated and built up, and has high levels of air pollution and inequality.

We underlined the intrinsic value of a green environment as well as its monetary value in terms of natural capital, which is an approach endorsed in the strategy. We expressed our concerns on a number of local environmental issues, including the use of barbecues in local parks, the presence of tree diseases in local park trees, the need for planting of trees with large canopies in the area, and the noise pollution caused by pop concerts and police helicopters at football matches.



The Draft London Environment Strategy can be found at this link: <https://www.london.gov.uk/WHAT-WE-DO/environment/environment-publications/draft-london-environment-strategy-have-your-say>

The **Highbury Community Association (HCA)** represents local residents and businesses living and working in Highbury, Lower Holloway and Finsbury Park. **Membership is free.** Members receive bi-monthly newsletters like this one. New members will receive the newsletter by email (unless you don't have email). To join or talk to us about anything Highbury-related, visit our website, or email hcanews@hotmail.com. The HCA can also be contacted on Facebook and Twitter.

The opinions expressed in Highbury Community News are not necessarily those of the HCA.

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Friends of Finsbury Park lose Wireless concerts appeal

By CHARLIE ROBERSON

In a blow against campaigners for tighter restrictions on what London's public spaces can be used for, the Court of Appeal in November upheld the use of London parks for major ticket-only entertainments. The case in question was regarding Haringey Council's use of Finsbury Park for the Wireless Festival - a local case of national significance.

The appeal was heard at the Royal Courts of Justice before Lord Justice Treacy, Lord Justice Hickinbottom and Lord Justice Singh.

A silver lining to the judgement was that the court found that the Council holds Finsbury Park on trust for the public. This means that any money raised by the Council from the hire of Finsbury Park must be spent only on Finsbury Park.

Writing on their Crowdjustice page set up to finance their legal costs, Friends of Finsbury Park say they will be asking Haringey Council to account for all the monies they have raised by hiring out Finsbury Park. The Friends are concerned that in fact the Council has been using the revenue for its general parks budget.

The Friends of Finsbury Park also maintain that a local authority's power to exclude the public from a park is limited by the restrictions on space and time as set out in the Public Health Amendment Act 1890, section 44 (closure of a park for no more than 12 days in a year or 6 consecutive



days on any one occasion) and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government Provisional Order Confirmation (Greater London Parks and Open Spaces) Act 1967, Article 7 (max of 1/10 of park to be closed).

They have applied for permission to take this additional challenge to the Supreme Court and are continuing to raise funds for any costs that prolonging the battle will incur.

This verdict is particularly troubling at a time when budgets for parks and outdoor spaces are shrinking and councils are being forced to turn to income from events to maintain basic services. There are huge question marks over whether this approach is sustainable and it comes with added risks and damages to the spaces used.

The primary criticism of Wireless Festival is that it requires organisers to wall off a large portion of the park for several weeks during the height of summer. Additional concerns include noise, antisocial behaviour, travel disruption and damage to the park itself (see Page 7).

Wireless 2018 will now go ahead as planned on July 6th-8th. Expect more stories about in future newsletters. We look forward to working with the Friends of Finsbury Park and all interested residents to ensure that our parks are treated with the care that they deserve.

A silver lining from the judgement is that all money raised by Haringey Council from the hire of Finsbury Park must be spent only on Finsbury Park.

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What is Finsbury Park for?

By KATIE DAWSON

What do you think is the role Finsbury Park, our largest local green space and one of London’s oldest parks? Is it a valued oasis for the residents of a densely populated area, many of whom do not have gardens? Is it an escape from a noisy and built-up urban environment, somewhere to relax and unwind amid trees and birdsong, to enjoy wide open skies and views across to the city, to exercise, do sport or play with children? Or would you describe it, as Haringey Council (rather excitedly) do, as “One of London’s top outdoor event destinations!”?

The question of whether our parks should be protected as vital green sanctuaries for residents, or used as an economic resource by local authorities, was one of the issues being considered in the Court of Appeal.

The case was brought by park users group the Friends of Finsbury Park following a particularly chaotic and violent Wireless festival in 2015. In addition to taking over great swathes of the park, that event featured a mass gatecrashing, in which hundreds of people overpowered security staff, while fighting (and several incidents of knife crime) spilled over into surrounding streets.

Anti-social and criminal behaviour has been a by-product of the Wireless weekend every year since it first came to Finsbury Park in 2014.

This year local residents reported open drug-dealing and drug-taking, people using front gardens as toilets, excessive noise late into the night by groups of drunken festival-goers and from helicopters which hovered low for many hours after the event had finished, not to mention choked public transport and a trashed park.

It is worth noting that most of the fall-out from Wireless is felt in the area south of the park, ie Islington and Hackney, rather than Haringey. Clearly residents from

other boroughs are paying the price for decisions made by Haringey Council.

Undeterred by the pleas of residents and park-users, Haringey has even more major events lined up for 2018. These envisage the closure of large areas of the park for at least 10 weeks over the summer months. This figure is expected to increase.

The current David and Goliath legal battle between the Friends of Finsbury Park, a small community group of volunteers funded by donations, and Haringey Council, with its associated commercial and political interests, hinges on the application of the Greater London Parks and Open Spaces Act of 1967.

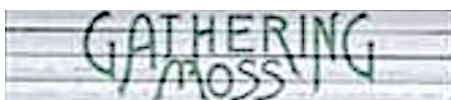
This states that no more than 10% of a public park can be given over to commercial events. (The Wireless festival alone put around one-third of the park’s total area out of public reach for some three weeks.)

Many people feel that by renting out huge swathes of the park for extended periods to the highest bidder, Haringey Council is failing in its duty as custodian of a historic public space created for the benefit of all.

The current legal action, which is supported by local MP Jeremy Corbyn, is a test case of critical importance for parks and open spaces throughout London and across the country. It is not about banning commercial events in these places, but rather about restricting their size and number to a level that preserves our parks as areas of tranquillity and natural beauty, free and open to all.

The Friends of Finsbury Park would be very grateful for any donations towards the costs of the campaign. These can be made at www.crowdjustice.com/case/protectlondonparks

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Poem: volunteering at Islington's Ecology Centre, Gillespie Park

PHILIP TSAROUHIS, a regular volunteer at the Gillespie Park Ecology Centre, has kindly contributed something a little different to this newsletter. We hope you enjoy his poem about his experiences in Islington and his time volunteering at Gillespie Park.

Of course, we can't remember our conception, into this vast cosmic womb, that is perhaps like a beautiful pond surrounded by a paradise park.

Yet as days pass, more our imagination sees, that with a big bang, we were conceived, along with countless young atom siblings; that develop into life.

We huddle together into groups, like penguins to keep warm, to become the bright Light of the fiery stars within this watery cavern, of wintery darkness.

As we gestate we grow, and leave the homely glow of our embrace, like smoke leaving a chimney, only to cuddle up again, into earthly spheres, near to the stars.

Where earth grows limbs of rivers, oceans and trees, and limbs of birds and bees, and limbs of creatures like elephants, bears and human beings.

Fourteen billion years after my conception, I metamorphosed like a caterpillar, into a human being and was born from mother's womb, at Whittington Hospital.

I then lived in a bedsit with my family at Hazellville Road and then later at Wheelwright Street next to Pentonville Prison and finally at St Thomas's Road.

At St Thomas's Road, the sun shone higher than at any other home. The garden had tall green grass, deeper than myself. The first day there, I leapt and swam

Into the wild pool, of fragrant, lush meadow. At last, I was in paradise on earth. To the end of the garden, was a towering wall of shimmering, dark green ivy.

Through the back fence, we glimpsed through gaps, the wonder of the abandoned railway sidings, we imagined no human had discovered before.

Years passed, we grew tall enough to climb the living wall, and we saw a sea of multi-headed purple lupines, together lovingly chattering, in the summer breeze.

We plunged below, dwarfed by the many-headed purple people, greeting us with great love. Beneath dwelled steel snakes, long as the world, called railway tracks.

Mountain ranges of prickly bushes, full of sweets called blackberries. We picked them for mother, she made into pies, jams, black milk; we ate, drank all summer.

Thank you and festive greetings



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We urge our readers to shop locally this Christmas, and enjoy Highbury's high standard of choice and service and its continuing parking facilities.

We charge a very reasonable £45 per ad for three issues. Charity notices are free (one per edition). If you have a local business or service to advertise, please contact hcanews@hotmail.com

Highbury Community Association

Annual General Meeting 2018

Saturday 24 March at 7pm

Christ Church, Highbury

All welcome - come along to see what the community has been up to for the last year

Food and drink

Auction and raffle for a local good cause

At thirteen I started my Saturday and summer holiday job on Holloway Road. Depriving me of heaven, which was later named Gillespie Ecological Park.

When at last I'm born from this celestial pond, into its surrounding Garden Paradise; I hope our true Heavenly home, is twice as nice as Gillespie Park.