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Islington Council seeks to reassure residents on impact of Finsbury Park concerts

By WILL PARKES

Members of the HCA have met the leader of Islington Council, other senior Councillors and Council Officers to discuss residents' concerns over the negative impact the Wireless concerts have caused to local Islington residents in recent years. During the meeting the Council leader, Cllr Richard Watts, sought to reassure local people that the conditions Islington have secured from Live Nation/Festival Republic for this year's Wireless concerts will help alleviate the antisocial behaviour seen in previous years.

Cllr Richard Watts was joined by Cllr Kaya Comer Schwartz (Executive Member for Community Development), Cllr Roulin Khondoker (Highbury West Ward), Cllr Andy Hull (Highbury West Ward), Cllr Gary Heather (Finsbury Park Ward), Cllr Michael O'Sullivan (Finsbury Park Ward) and officer Jan Hart, the Service Director Public Protection, Environment and Regeneration.

The Council defended their decision to withdraw their representations during Haringey Council's



Cllr Roulin Khondoker, Cllr Kaya Comer Schwartz, Leader Cllr Richard Watts, Cllr Andy Hull and Jan Hart (back row, left to right) met members of the HCA

licence review last year. Cllr Richard Watts said it was better to engage with the organisers to secure conditions to alleviate conditions for residents, especially as the council felt it unlikely Haringey would revoke the licence given the income they generate from hiring out Finsbury Park events. Cllr Watts also highlighted the fact that Haringey are in charge of licensing concerts in Finsbury Park and that Islington play

no role in Haringey's decision making.

For the first time, Islington Council now have a direct relationship with the concert organisers which they say will mean they can directly work with the operator to give residents reassurance that concerns will be better dealt with than it has in previous years. Islington council officers stressed that their expertise

Continued on page 2...

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Council reassures residents over impact of Finsbury Park concerts

...Continued from page 1

over many years handling large crowds from the Emirates stadium will be put to good use to manage the crowds leaving the Wireless concerts.

Cllr Watts said, "Islington play no part in organising the concerts in Finsbury Park, but our residents are impacted by them and we recognise the concerns raised by local people. The Council believes it is right that we have secured stringent conditions that will alleviate the impact on our residents in future years".

Each year, residents have experienced loud noise until the early hours, people urinating and defecating in local streets and private gardens, discarded drug paraphernalia, people using local streets to



Damage caused at previous Wireless concerts (and left)

wait for Uber bookings as well as other instances of antisocial behaviour.

Highbury West Councillors, Roulin Khondoker and Andy Hull, expressed their concern over the impact of the concerts on local residents in previous years.

Last year's problems were exacerbated as many of the issues were focused on Islington residents as Hackney Council had already secured conditions to alleviate concerns for their residents.

The HCA was invited to participate in a 'reference group' that will discuss the plans to be put in place to manage the impact of the concerts. This will

include a traffic management plan, parking controls, routes for festival goers to get public transport home, particularly directing people away from Arsenal station to avoid disturbing local people.

Additional street cleaning will take place with costs borne by the concert organisers. There will also be an additional noise monitoring location in Islington to better measure the impact on local people.

Cllr Richard Watts said if these new conditions do not deliver improved conditions for Islington residents, then the Council would look again at its stance towards the concerts.

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Gillespie Road one-way road scheme trial to begin

By GILL SHEPHERD

Changes to traffic flow in Gillespie Road and surrounding streets

The Council will trial a reduction of through traffic along Gillespie Road, a relatively narrow residential road. Introducing a 'point no-entry' on Gillespie Road maintains two-way traffic on the road but reduces through-traffic. The no entry will come into force by 18th February, with preparatory work a week before that.

The point no-entry will restrict access to westbound traffic along Gillespie Road at a point just west of its junction with St Thomas's Road. Due to the proximity of St Thomas's Road to the point no-entry, a right-turn ban onto Gillespie Road will be put in place on St Thomas's Road. The sections of

Gillespie Road either side of the 'point no-entry' will remain two-way to traffic, and cyclists will be exempt from the no-entry restriction. Signage will be installed throughout the area to ensure that the new restrictions are clear to road users, so that they can re-route their journeys.

There will be a statutory 6-month period during which objections will be considered. Changes can be made during the trial to any of the restrictions, before the Council decides whether to continue (or not) with the changes brought in by the experimental order on a permanent basis.

A pedestrian crossing will be installed near the junction with Highbury Hill immediately opposite Arsenal Station. The point no-entry will be enforced with cameras. Additional temporary signage will be

used to explain the new layout.

Monitoring

Traffic data and feedback from the general public will be monitored throughout the trial period to review the impact of the trial arrangement on surrounding residential streets. To understand this impact, traffic surveys will be conducted at regular intervals in various locations along Gillespie Road and the surrounding area. The monitoring will be reviewed at various stages to assess how well the trial has worked. If significant negative impacts are identified during the trial, e.g. excessive traffic is displaced to neighbouring roads, mitigating measures will be considered and implemented, if required.

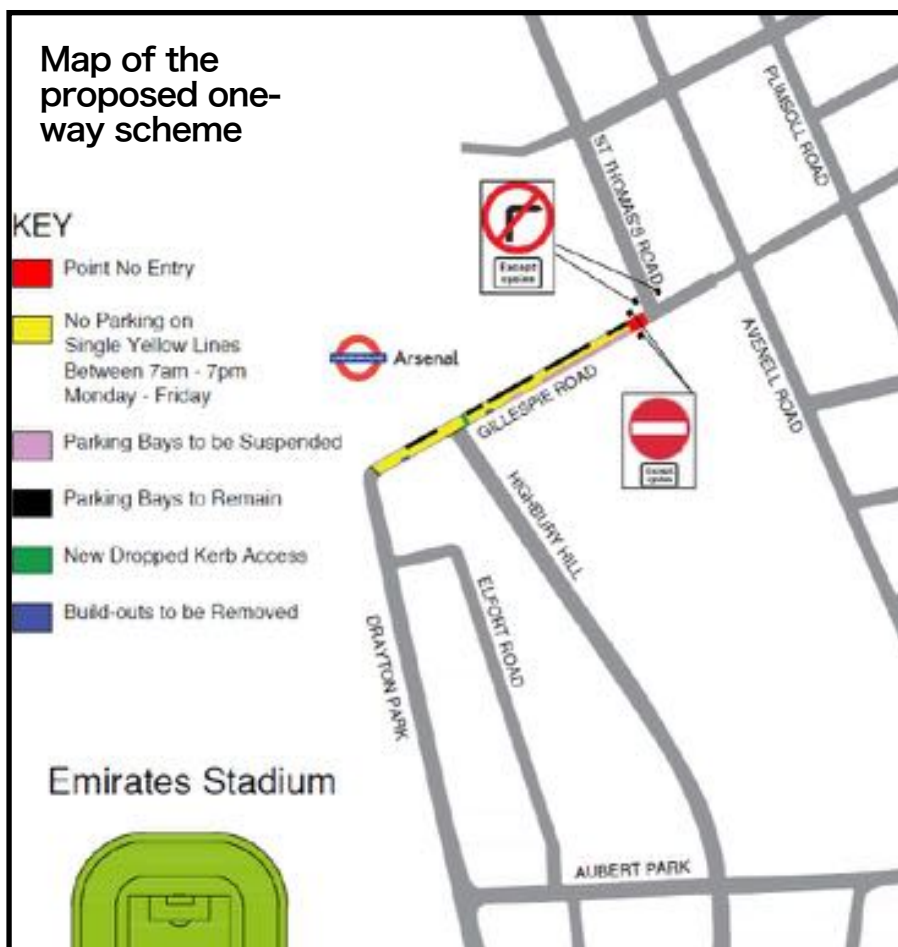
Reducing the volume of vehicular traffic on Gillespie Road should significantly improve cyclist and pedestrian comfort on Gillespie Road and Drayton Park, helping to make cycling and walking in this area appealing to many more people.

What needs to be learned from the monitoring period

While there is every reason to disperse through traffic on Gillespie Road more widely, it will be interesting to see the impact. East-West and West-East traffic are forced to go through the Drayton Park/Holloway Road pinch point whatever they do, because there are so few railway-line crossings in the area and that is the only one in Highbury.

(Nearest alternatives are Finsbury Park or Highbury & Islington). So they will use Brownswood Road, Blackstock Road and Aubert Park on their journeys. Traffic on Aubert Park will go up, and it is hard to see why there would be any reduction of traffic on Drayton Park. Northbound journeys which currently approach Finsbury Park via Gillespie Rd and St Thomas' Rd, will be diverted onto Aubert Park and Avenell Road or Blackstock Road.

It will be interesting to see what pattern emerges over the next few months.





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Grin and Beer It: a review

By DAVID BRAINE

There's a new tap room and bottle shop at 172 Blackstock Road called Grin and Beer It, offering an alternative to more traditional pubs. It opened on 7 December 2018 as the first venture in the licensed victualling trade of two ambitious entrepreneurs Will and Tony, who share a passion for craft ales.

Their premises are on the site of a former fitted-kitchen business and it took six months of looking for such suitable premises. The tap room has two levels: ground floor and basement. The basement area is the principal bar. The maximum capacity of the tap room is 40 people who, as a condition of the victualling licence, must be seated. At the moment the décor is minimalist and well-illuminated. There are plans to decorate the downstairs bar with murals to add character. This area will also have board games. As well as selling beverages they offer a take away and delivery service using Deliveroo.

Lucky customers have over 180 different canned and bottled national and international beers to choose from, and six craft beers on tap. Some of the beers are gluten-free and alcohol-free. A selection of wines and spirits are also on sale, and light snacks will be available soon.

Will and Tony's tap room and bottle shop is a welcome addition to the drinking establishments of Highbury: I hope they make a success of their venture, as there is an increasing demand for more variety and choice of beers. I will be taking some friends who are very knowledgeable about craft ales for an evening of beer imbibing at Grin and Beer It, and will report back in due course. Here's drinking to their success.

See: grinandbeerit.co.uk through Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. They are open six days a week (not Monday) from 11.15 till 21.00 (Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday) and 11.15 till 22.00 (Thursday to Saturday).



Il Cavaliere: a review

By DAVID FENTON

In Highbury and close by we have a pretty good selection of restaurants. For many years San Daniele was one of our regulars but after it closed we started to explore. I had passed Il Cavaliere (81 Blackstock Road) many times but as it is usually closed in the daytime and is situated in part of Blackstock Road where there are no other shops or businesses you might not even notice it is there. However once we found Il Cavaliere we have become regulars.

On our first visit Antonio, the owner and head chef, immediately made us welcome. We first ordered minestrone soup which he made fresh and it was delicious and the calamari fritti is the best I have ever had, followed by pasta carbonara which was excellent and the lamb cutlets - so good.

Antonio is assisted by his wife Verona and son Gino. There is an extensive menu with a range of pizzas and pastas; but also a good choice of meat: lamb, chicken, beef, calves liver and fish dishes: sea bass, scampi.

There are some delicious desserts, sometimes not on the menu, as Antonio often prepares something special from in season fruits.

Antonio is a keen gardener so many of the vegetables are home grown. As a pre-starter you sometimes get some crusty bread and olive dip - delicious. It's these little extras that make Il Cavaliere special. There is a good selection of wine.

The restaurant is open for lunch only on Arsenal match days when there is then a slightly restricted menu for the day.

Il Cavaliere is a hidden gem and if you like Italian food and a friendly welcome then I recommend a visit.



Help us to support local bars and restaurants

Have you recently been to a new local restaurant? Know of a great pub or bar?

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How many more tall buildings will we see?

By DIANE BURRIDGE

Once upon a time Islington Council limited building heights to 10 storeys (30 metres) outside the Central Activities Zone.

But it now proposes, in its new Local Plan, to encourage tall buildings around the borough. (Policy DH3). Four tall buildings are proposed around Finsbury Park Station, for instance. The sites are above the station; 221-233 Seven Sisters Road; Wells Terrace East to the Yellow Car Wash site; and 113 to 119 Fonthill Road. Of these, one will be a 'landmark building of up to 25 storeys.'

Already we are seeing the negative impact of tall buildings at Finsbury Park: the City North development of two 21-storeys linked by a 12 storey building is now rising up and overpowering the area. Agreed by Islington (against their own policies at the time) the developers have sold most units off-plan overseas, leaving only 12% for social housing (47 of 355 dwellings), and with hardly any play-space.

Since 2017, the Wells Terrace entrance to the Underground has been blocked because of building works, causing the station to be closed (fully or partly) 83 times in the first six months alone. The re-opening of this entrance has been delayed to the end of 2019: and this is the busiest transport interchange in London outside Zone 1.

Elsewhere, at Highbury and Islington station, Islington is encouraging decking over the railway lines so tall buildings can be built. More closures during rush hour will be inevitable.

No-one will deny the need for more affordable housing. Half of projected housing need in Islington is for housing at or below social rent levels. (Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2016) Islington, the most densely populated borough in the country, with the second least amount of open green space, has a net housing delivery target of 1,264 dwellings per annum until 2024/25 - as set by the Mayor's London Plan. But where to build?

Islington commissioned the 'Urban Initiatives Studio' in 2018 to prepare a Tall Buildings Study. Four areas (outside the Central Activities Zone) were identified in Phase 1 of the study as having some potential for tall buildings - Archway, Finsbury Park, Lower Holloway and the Angel. After much analysis (Phase 2) the study states that none of these areas were suitable for tall buildings - due to the prevalence of low rise residential architecture, the need to maintain local landmarks such as Arsenal's Emirates Stadium, and the need to preserve viewing corridors. (Page 21).

Despite this conclusion, and other well-known problems

with residential tall buildings, Islington is proceeding to encourage them. Tall buildings cost more to construct and maintain; they provide 'less scope for meaningful communication and engagement - essential for community life - and few have adequate play and sports areas. Most families would like access to a garden if they could. So tall buildings do not address the needs of the people whom Islington needs to house, and they are not necessary: residential densities of 200-450 units per hectare can be delivered with buildings of less than 10 storeys. Above all, new units in tall buildings in London are mainly being sold overseas (nearly 80% of them in 14 developments analysed by Transparency International in 2017).

Highbury Community Association has responded comprehensively to Islington's Local Plan, (co-ordinated by John Egan, fellow Committee Member), flagging up objections to tall buildings along these lines.

References:

- *Residents' Experience of High-Density Housing in London.* London School of Economics for the GLA, June 2018.
- *Tall Building Study.* Urban Initiatives Studio for London Borough of Islington, October 2018.



Artist's impression of the new City North development at Finsbury Park

A summary of the HCA's response to the 'Planning Islington's Future' consultation

By GILL SHEPHERD

Nag's Head and Holloway

•We support the retention of retail use but suspect that this may prove challenging with the expected loss of Marks and Spencer, an anchor store, and agree that further betting shops and takeaways should be resisted.

•We oppose buildings up to fifteen storeys, as being too high. These have been proposed at several locations around Finsbury Park and along the Holloway Road.

•We support the removal of the Isledon Road/Tollington Road gyratory system and provision of a new cycle route.

Finsbury Park

•We should like to see early completion of the station works, the re-opening of the Wells Terrace entrance to the station, and much better signage.

•If Finsbury Park Station and its transport interchanges are to be redeveloped, it is vital that there is proper consultation with local communities.

•We strongly support the protection of Fonthill Road as a unique shopping area.

•The area's night time economy can be strengthened, but needs to be policed as many people find it intimidating at present.

Highbury Corner and Lower Holloway

•The station frontage is poor and a new frontage of perhaps two or three storeys with improved retail use and perhaps a hotel might be appropriate. The re-opening and development of the old station entrance on the east side of Highbury Corner is supported, retaining The Garage, an iconic venue.

•Further disruption to travel arrangements, as happened during the bridge rebuild, would be unacceptable; local residents and users of the station have suffered enough.

•We strongly support the protection of Highbury Fields and views from it as the area continues to be developed.

Thriving Communities and housing

•We understand the need for higher density housing in Islington, but there must be sufficient space, especially play space, nearby.

•We support the need to ensure that all residential units are occupied.

•We support the provision of genuinely affordable and high-quality housing.

•We note that Islington has consistently had the highest rates of student housing delivery in London in recent years and would support the restrictions now proposed.

•We strongly support the retention of all the borough's adventure playgrounds, and the provision of free publicly accessible play space on all major residential developments.

Retail, leisure and services, culture and visitor accommodation

•We are glad to see that the importance of local shopping areas, such as Highbury Barn, is recognised.

•We support keeping pubs which meet policy criteria.

•We support plans to resist proposals for hot food takeaways within 200 m. of schools and a concentration of hot food takeaways, betting shops and gambling facilities in any part of the borough.

Protecting open space

•Development should not be permitted on any public or private open space and open space on housing estates must be protected.

•All new housing developments should include publicly accessible green open space.

•Islington has the least open space of any London Borough, so what we have must be protected, and opportunities to add spaces should be sought.

Environment

•Street trees lost, from whatever cause, must be replaced as soon as possible.

•We support all realistic efforts to reduce or eliminate greenhouse gas emissions and to improve air quality, which is poor in Highbury.

Enhancing the public realm and sustainable transport

•We support all measures to encourage walking and cycling.

•We agree that public transport must have priority and be both safe and accessible.

SPECIFIC SITES

Highbury Vale Old Police Station

•We do not support retail use here, for which planning permission has twice been refused. We support some form of community or educational use.

12-24 Highbury Corner and Highbury and Islington Station

•We support the re-opening of the station entrance on the east side of Highbury Corner.

Highbury Delivery Office 2 Hamilton Lane

•We have no objections to residential development.

•Any business use would have to respect the fact that this is a residential street.

Highbury Roundhouse

•The community centre is now largely complete and we see no objection to some residential infill to the Ronald's Road frontage.

The full response by John Egan and the HCA Committee is on the HCA website



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Can you help turn 'Ron's Yard' into a new green space for all to enjoy?

By ANNETTE FOERGER

Many people around Highbury Fields will remember Ron Pace, who used to keep horses and pigeons in his yard in Ronald's Road. He was a real Islington character and a daily presence in the neighbourhood, always ready for a chat. Ron is now quite elderly and has not been able to come to Highbury for a while. His plot has been unused and neglected since the end of 2016. The tenancy went back to Islington Council at the end of last year. There is now an initiative by local residents to open up Ron's Yard for the local community with a gardening and wildlife project while the council makes long term plans for the site. We want to use this green space in the heart of Islington for the Highbury community. The site would be ideal for growing fruit, veg and herbs, and to garden for wildlife. We dream of Highbury residents coming together here, getting to know one another and creating a space to grow things together. Talks with Islington Council have begun and we have many ideas but need help putting it all into action! If you are interested in getting involved, please contact annette.foerger@gmail.com or Caroline.Russell@islington.gov.uk

Aubert Court residents' association seeks closer community links

By GILL SHEPHERD AND SYDNEY NASH

Aubert Court was built for Islington Council between 1948 and 1953 in the midst of an idealistic golden age. Nikolaus Pevsner called it a 'magnificent display of the supreme confidence of post-war council housing'. It has 110 flats of various sizes, some privately owned and some rented from the Council. It has its own precious Community Centre (HCA's launch meeting in 1997 was held in it) and substantial grounds which cannot be built on because they are the site of a graveyard dating from the 19th century when the whole area belonged to a non-conformist Theological College.

The Tenants' and Residents' Association has recently been revived after a dormant period and has been

reaching out to the community around it, looking to encourage local primary schools to use the grounds for gardening and nature protection. It also organised community events such as summer fun-days to bring its own residents together and is keen for engagement of other kinds with the broader Highbury community, not least to protect the community centre by demonstrating its value.

If you have questions or thoughts, get in touch with the Chair of the Tenants' and Residents' Association: sydnevgcnash@gmail.com

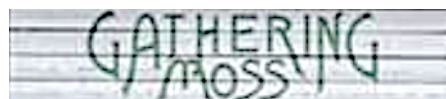


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