

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

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This edition of the newsletter focuses intensively on the low traffic neighbourhood (LTN) which will begin in Highbury West on 11 January. Many aspects of it will bring huge relief to residents in roads which had been burdened by excessive amounts of through traffic in recent months.

The newsletter contains summaries of a range of views about the LTN, and the results of an interview with Islington Council about what will be monitored over the next few months.

We also have an article which thinks further ahead to options for bolder tree-planting as a result of the existence of the LTN.

Poignantly we include obituaries of two very well loved local Highbury residents as well as the normal range of other articles.

We would like to wish all our readers a very happy New Year as we move forward from 2020 to 2021. We look ahead to the time when we



gradually become eligible for vaccines, as the days lengthen and, despite the announcement of a national lockdown being in place until mid-February at the earliest, we can look after our families, friends and

neighbours through this difficult time. If Covid-19 has taught us anything, it is the importance of a community where people take care of one another. Please stay safe, look out for one another and help protect the NHS.



First responses to the Highbury West low traffic neighbourhood

A SUMMARY OF Highbury WEST NEIGHBOURS' VIEWS
compiled by GILL SHEPHERD

Introduction

A low traffic neighbourhood is being introduced, from January 11, in Highbury West ward to deal with a huge increase in traffic cutting through the ward in recent years. Current 'through' traffic, will be completely eliminated by the ingeniously sited filters being put in place in Gillespie Road, Avenell Road, Aubert Park, Highbury Hill and elsewhere. Excessive traffic flows had come into existence since satnav technology became so much more common, and since the redesign of Highbury Corner. These will now be halted to the huge relief of all and especially of residents of Gillespie Road, Avenell Road and Aubert Park in the centre of the ward, and Martineau Road and the upper part of Highbury Hill, where 700+ cars per hour were passing in the rush hour.

It was the 'Highbury Diamond' group which originally campaigned for the LTN. There is also a 'Keep Highbury Moving' group which, while welcoming the main purpose of the LTN, campaigns for the ward's

own car-driving residents to have a little more freedom than through traffic. Though opinions about the detail of the low traffic neighbourhood (LTN) vary, everyone is delighted to see the end of cut-through traffic.

The newsletter editor spoke to and was written to by a wide range of Highbury residents, and this is a summary of all their views. How inhabitants view the current arrangements depends on where they live in the ward; how busy the street they live on is currently; whether they have children, whether they have parents or other relatives whom they have to care for daily or frequently, how old they are and whether, in consequence, they feel the need of a car. There can be no one HCA position on all these issues. Rather the Association feels that the scheme as it currently exists should be piloted and monitored, and that feedback should regularly be given to the council about desirable modifications to the scheme as these emerge.

Impact on roads outside the LTN

Keeping 'through' traffic away from the roads inside LTNs such as

Highbury West will make a big difference to residents. But there is no way round the fact that those journeys will now take place on the main roads bordering the LTN, and will add significantly to traffic pollution just outside the LTN where footfall is higher, and where people still live, work, play and go to school. Additionally, air quality will not improve if road mileage increases

Traffic 'evaporation'

Over the months Islington Council hopes that some of the vehicle traffic displaced from the Highbury West LTN will disappear. This 'traffic evaporation' theory, suggests that if traffic is diverted onto main roads, and the main roads become clogged, then some of that traffic will cease to exist. It is not possible yet to know whether this will occur in a borough like Islington, so close to the centre of the city, and that is why monitoring will be so important.

These seeming evaporations have been recorded so far only in outer London boroughs like Waltham Forest and Enfield where drivers have a multitude of

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Highbury West low traffic neighbourhood

Continued from page 2...

other choices of route. So, the traffic may not have really evaporated (in the sense of ceasing to exist) but merely been diverted to other routes. From Enfield it is possible to come into inner London via Tottenham, Wood Green, Bounds Green, Muswell Hill and many more minor roads in between. It is only when drivers get closer to Highbury that they are inexorably forced onto the Blackstock Road or the Holloway Road as all those outer London routes converge.

Islington has little control over the journeys made by vehicles passing through it from other boroughs, though probably most of the traffic on its roads is of this kind. Islington has the smallest percentage of car owners of any London Borough, yet its main roads are very heavily used indeed. This failure to consider wider traffic provenance contributed to the disaster that Highbury Corner became. Effort was focused tightly on the redesign of the one-time roundabout and the roads immediately entering it, and TfL took very little note of the impact of the redesign on wider traffic flows. Highbury West was its immediate victim.

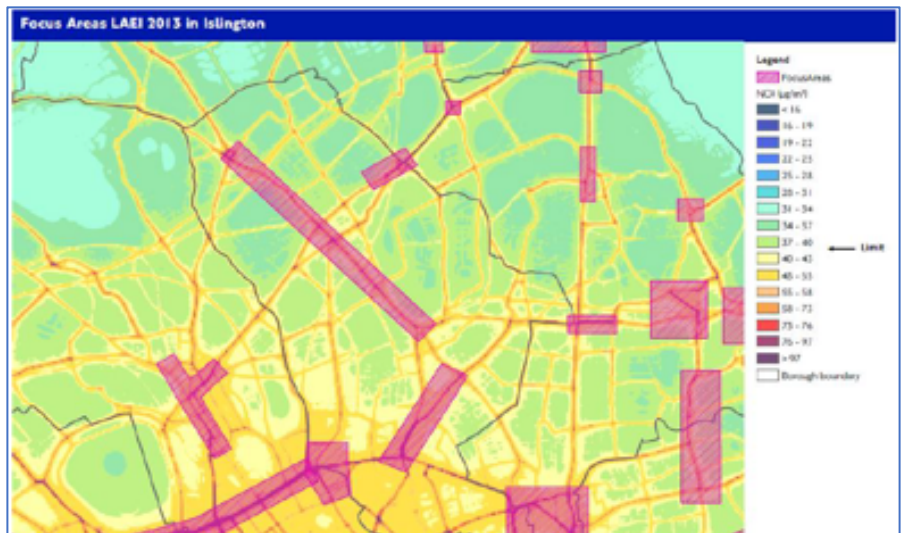
The failure to distinguish between cut-through traffic and local residents' journeys

Under current arrangements, Highbury West residents with cars cannot use them to traverse the ward, so those who have been allocated a single exit onto Highbury Park-the Blackstock Road cannot easily travel west to the Holloway Road and beyond, while those who have been allocated a single exit onto the Holloway Road cannot easily access the Blackstock Road and points east.

As residents point out, accepting a

longer journey time to get around Highbury, though inconvenient, is far from the most serious drawback to current proposals. There seems to be the assumption that reducing pollution within LTNs by stopping the movements of residents' cars will reduce overall emissions. But they only ever formed a tiny fraction of traffic volume. Not only will vehicles trying to get from one side of Highbury to the other now have to make a journey of 3-5 km to do so (3km via Highbury Corner, 5km via Finsbury Park) they will make the journey in slow moving traffic on roads and junctions which already bear a heavy freighting of emissions (see map below).

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Taken from 'Islington Air Quality Annual Status Report' 2019, p.4. Key focus area for monitoring pollution within Islington's borders and close to the Highbury West LTN, include Highbury Corner, Holloway Road, a section of Seven Sisters Road, and the road junction at Finsbury Park

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Highbury West low traffic neighbourhood

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Their journeys will contribute further pollution to totals on those roads.

Using number plate recognition technology

The Council has so far refused to consider the use of the ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) technology which is being used in several other London boroughs, to allow local residents' cars to pass through the filters in their own ward freely. In Highbury West, ANPR has been used for years by parking meter wardens during the week and on Arsenal match days, so it is not a new technology.

Such residents are disappointed that the Council makes no distinction between through traffic from other places, and those who pay for parking permits, and have a quite different relationship with the local community, local businesses and the local environment. Most walk when they can, but also use their cars when necessary for transporting heavy items, for taking those who depend on them for medical appointments and so on. Car owners are often older and may be disabled. As a younger resident pointed out, the Council's

reluctance to consider ANPR is both ageist and able-ist, and it does not sit well with the 2010 Equality Act.

Monitoring

As the trial period for the LTN continues, and monitoring begins to yield more data (not least from wards where an LTN was implemented earlier), some aspects of the LTN will no doubt need to be revisited. We include a separate item here about monitoring.



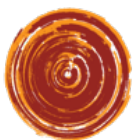
Islington Council image showing the barriers they will construct to block traffic from using Avenell Road

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Monitoring the low traffic neighbourhood - questions from HCA to Islington Council

1. We gather you are monitoring modal split: do you have a current picture of Islington bike, car and walking as your baseline so we can see how that changes? What are the locations at which these have been monitored in the past on which your baseline will be based?

Baseline monitoring of the traffic volumes for both the Highbury West and Highbury Fields schemes was undertaken in mid-November, with follow up monitoring surveys to be completed in June 2021, November 2021 and May 2022. The data from these follow up surveys will be compared against our baseline figures to measure the impact of the scheme, for inclusion in a report.

The first report will be published approximately six months after the scheme has become active. This report will contain a comprehensive analysis of our findings, including details of the methodology used to analyse our monitoring data. A report from our first people-friendly streets scheme in St. Peter's, will be published around late January. This report will provide

an indicative view of the methodology that will be applied to subsequent schemes, including Highbury West and Highbury Fields.

Our traffic surveys monitor volumes of traffic, and categorise by type of vehicle and bicycles, as well as vehicle speeds. We do not have pedestrian monitoring in the Highbury area because the measurement of the numbers of people walking would require a significant investment in cameras to produce statistically verifiable data to cover all walking routes into and out of the area. A list of the precise locations where traffic surveys have been carried out in the Highbury West and Highbury Fields schemes will be published in the council's six-month monitoring report around June 2021.

2. For how many places do you have numbers of vehicles passing per hour, (or whatever), so that you can measure 'traffic evaporation' on main roads. if this occurs?

The monitoring locations will be detailed in the monitoring report

which will be released in around June 2021 and will include traffic counts on the main roads surrounding the area.

3. Do you have a way of distinguishing Islington cars on main roads against through traffic from other parts of London? (It could easily be done by number plate recognition) so that we can see if Islington car use goes down?

This aspect of monitoring is not explicitly included in our surveys.

4. Which locations will be using to monitor emission change? We know emissions will go down inside LTNs, but we don't yet know what will happen to emissions on main roads.


The council is monitoring air quality at a number of locations both within the area and across the borough. The location of these sites will be published in around June 2021 in the first monitoring report for the Highbury West and Highbury Fields schemes.

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Trees and low traffic neighbourhoods

By ROBIN HULL

Current city trees are largely the product of Victorian concerns for people’s wellbeing. They are now large and perform many environmental services from cleaning the air, providing shade and beauty, and supporting many other species from the small to the microscopic. They will not last for ever, and there are good arguments for new planting now, to give future generations the benefits we enjoy.

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTN) hold some promise in this regard. The LTN document states, ‘If the measures are made permanent, there may be an opportunity to improve your area with permanent features such as greening, tree planting and play-spaces.’ LTNS actually offer a variety of potential locations for species which would grow into large trees. The time to think about this is during the trial period, so that sites could be identified. Opportunities (depending on site) might include:

- trees rather than bollards;
- build-outs in the road that could sustain a large tree;
- widening of pavements, giving more room for pedestrians, and spaces for new trees further from house foundations;
- existing wide roads to be planted with central lines of trees;
- species chosen for their eventual crown size, not for prettification.

Current control over outdoor spaces is distributed between highways, planning, parks, housing and the tree service. The need is for an additional clause in the Council’s tree policy to bring tree planting possibilities together during the development of LTNs. The current LTNs have an 18 month trial period. This is a good time for making plans to use new LTN opportunities to enhance the neighbourhood with larger trees.



Aberdeen Park has been made more people-friendly with build-outs growing plants and shrubs. This type of action could make the planting of substantial trees a possibility



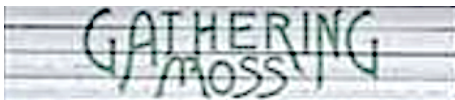
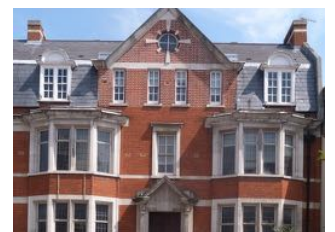
The junction of Ellington Street and Liverpool Road has a successful planting of two plane trees with flowering plants and a bench. Opposite, beside the pub, there is a good-sized built-out that would benefit from having a plane tree to complement those opposite

Andrea Levy

You will remember that, last year, we celebrated the life of the prize-winning British Caribbean novelist Andrea Levy, who grew up in Elwood Street in Highbury. It is good to know that she has become the first writer of colour to have her pen added to the Royal Society of literature’s historic collection it joins the pens of such writers as George Eliot and Lord Byron.

Planning update

Islington Council announced in December that planning applications had been received to turn the ground and lower ground floors of the former police station on Blackstock Road into residential flats.



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Disappearing trees in Highbury West

By DIANE BURRIDGE

Nearly 60 trees have been felled or have died over the past few years in just one part of Highbury West as surveyed by HCA committee members. Despite repeated requests, only a few of these have been replaced: a frustrating situation when one sees neighbouring boroughs, notably Hackney, implementing ambitious tree-planting programmes. Yet Islington recently launched a policy to increase tree canopy from the existing 22% in the borough to 25% by 2030. (Islington Vision 2030)

In the latest correspondence with the Council, their response (November 2020) includes these points:

- The reason we haven't replaced all the tree historic losses in Highbury West is because we haven't had the budget to do so. We love planting trees but don't have a fixed budget for tree planting. Applications for borough-wide tree planting funding are in place and hopefully will be provided so that we can achieve the canopy cover increases the council is committing to, to combat climate change.
- Our funding for tree planting this year has been secured via S106 (mitigation for tree losses via planning applications) and ward improvement funds allocated by ward Councillors.
- We are looking to use funds provided by the Housing New Build team to mitigate tree losses on their development sites to try and replace 20+ trees in Highbury West. Once we have confirmation of the funding we will allocate sites and aim to get trees in the ground over this and next Winter.
- The mortality rate is higher than we expect and we're trying to work

out why this is and aiming to improve each year till it gets down from 12.5% to around 5%. We are working on how to get more public help with watering and will build on this next year. We're ordering smaller trees as there is a heightened risk of failure in transplanting larger trees and we're ordering the trees earlier and pushing the contractor to try and get the trees into the ground early. This gives them more time to get roots out before the end of Spring and therefore to be more drought tolerant.

- We are hoping to set up a tree warden/ tree champions project in the coming year to give us better engagement with residents who care passionately about trees.

The HCA is are eager to see what trees appear in the next month or so.

Meanwhile there may be other opportunities to consider in the future.



Only stumps remain where there used to be trees. Islington Council say they don't have the budget to replace them



The 'House of Hodge' bookshop

By SUE SEARLE

'The House of Hodge' is a lovely well-stocked second-hand bookshop on the Blackstock Road located between Hurlock Street and Gillespie Road. It exists to raise money for cat and dog charities such as the local RSPCA Harmsworth Hospital, Blue Cross, Hearing Dogs and the Rhodes Minnis cat sanctuary. It also helps indigent pet owners pay vet bills. Having to put your pet to sleep because you can't pay for treatment is heart-breaking, and those who manage the shop feel that the welfare of animals extends to their human owners as well.

And the name? Hodge was the name of Samuel Johnson's cat (inset picture above). Johnson was a writer who also compiled the first ever English dictionary (in 1755), so the combination of books and cats was an inspired name-choice. There is a nice story about Johnson and Hodge, told by Johnson's biographer Boswell:

"I recollect him one day scrambling up Dr Johnson's breast, with much satisfaction, while my friend, smiling and half whistling, rubbed down his back and pulled his tail; and when I observed he was a fine cat, saying 'Why yes, Sir, but I have had cats whom I liked better than this'; and then, as if perceiving Hodge to be out of countenance, adding, 'but he is a very fine cat, a very fine cat indeed'".

When Doreen Rolph founded the shop, most of the

money made for the charity came from selling books at fetes, book fairs and festivals. The shop itself was little more than a store, with books piled everywhere. However, volunteers over time have worked to make the books more accessible. The appointment of a volunteer manager, Sam, has made all the difference and we are thrilled to say that the shop is now open 7 days a week, and is run as a co-operative by some 10-12 energetic and knowledgeable volunteers and Trustees - all book and animal lovers.

The staff have put in modern bookshelves but the shop still retains the wonderful atmosphere of a large home library, with just about every genre including: Fiction, History, Current Affairs & Economics, Politics, Biography, Children's books, Cookery, Philosophy & Psychology, Art, a great stock of classics, Travel, Self-Help, Photography, and unique antique books. It's a cosy book cave - with something for everyone and many almost new items.

The House of Hodge relies on book donations from the public, and its customers are from all walks of life and all ages. People are turning back to books again - more than ever during the pandemic - and they buy from us because they care about the charities that House of Hodge supports and love the shop's atmosphere and excellent eclectic stock.

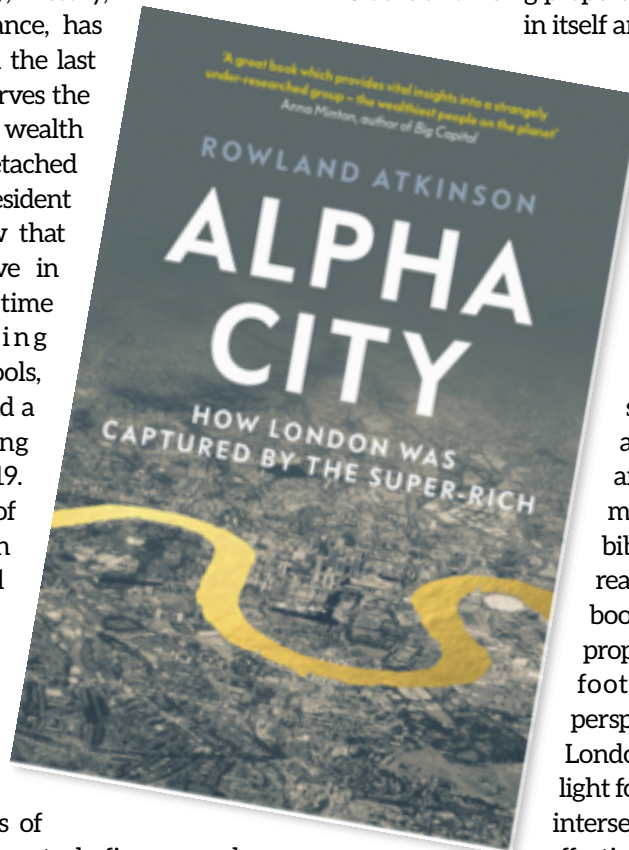
We are always looking for volunteers willing to give some of their time to help. If you're interested, please contact Sam by email: househodge174@gmail.com.

Review of Rowland Atkinson’s ‘Alpha City’: how the super rich captured London

By SARAH POTTER

Professor Atkinson’s recent book (Verso, 2020) argues that London, with its stability, history, culture and financial significance, has undergone dramatic change in the last twenty years so that it now serves the interests of a form of global wealth which operates in a manner detached from the welfare of London’s resident population. He aims to show that conditions for many who live in London have at the same time worsened, with declining expenditure on health, schools, youth services and policing, and a quarter of households living below the poverty line in 2019. He calls for an understanding of these forces at work in London which will enable a plan based on fairness, inclusion and social justice to be put in place in our city.

The book provides evidence on the changing face of wealth from the traditional aristocratic holdings of the past to new industries such as tech, finance and commodities, and international wealth from Russia, Turkey, Nigeria and China and Arabia. While more traditional wealth holders and the state provided London with amenities and infrastructure to maintain social order and welfare, Atkinson sees the current super-rich as disconnected from the city in interest, lifestyle and neo-liberal ideology. Evidence of the link of this new wealth to the problem of money laundering in London from countries with problems of governance and corruption is



discussed.

He documents the impact of the super-rich on London’s buildings with growing number of towers and exclusive blocks and rising property prices, since London property is in itself an investment for the super-rich in

London’s stable environment.

There are intriguing chapters on the increase in security protection for the homes of the wealthy, and the rise of luxury cars, private jets, yachts and helicopter transport in London which serve mobile lifestyles.

In his Afterword, the author states that the book ‘has offered an impressionistic view of a city and its increasing colonisation by many of the world’s wealthy’. The bibliography provides a selection of readings, but in many places in the book, for example on the rise of property prices, the evidence needs footnoting. His compelling perspective on the nature of change in London undoubtedly provides new light for the reader. Tracing the complex intersection of the global and the local affecting our lives is however a real challenge for both theory and research.

Thank you!
Regular advertisers are advertising for free in this edition of the newsletter in recognition of their service to the community in difficult times.

WARNING! - huge increase in thefts around the neighbourhood

Residents are warned to be on their guard against phone thefts. These have rocketed over the last year. Individuals and teams are becoming more and more adept at snatching phones on Highbury Fields and in other local parks. The most shocking raid was on those queueing outside Godfrey’s and Bourne’s at Highbury Barn at Christmas: a team of three white adults on bikes, two in the road and one on the pavement stole phones from those in the queues for each shop. Thefts were reported to the police and they have been involved in devising new anti-theft strategies.

There have also been many reports of stolen bikes and a worrying increase in break-ins. The police advise that bikes should never be left locked up in public areas overnight, even indoors in blocks of flats. The police stress the importance of encouraging people to report phone and bike snatches immediately: if they have officers in cars nearby, they may be able to respond rapidly.

Goodbye to well-known Highbury residents: Tim White and John Hills



By DIANE BURRIDGE

Such sad news that Tim White (pictured left, above) has died after 18 years of gruelling treatment for myeloma. Tim and his brother Nick (pictured right) started a fruit and vegetable stall in Chatterton Road in 1979 and in 1981 bought the shop - White's Brothers Fruit and Vegetable shop - near the corner of Blackstock and Gillespie Roads. A true local asset, now managed admirably by their friend John and his team of friendly staff.

Tim, having been born near Waitrose on the Holloway Road and with his mother having lived in Hamilton Park West, was a true local boy - mad about the Arsenal. Trained as a Telephone Engineer, Tim was persuaded to change to the fruit and vegetable business by the father of his wife, Lorraine, who ran a stall in Inverness Street, Camden Town. This stall had operated for generations, with the extended family all involved in some way. And more specialist knowledge of fruit and vegetables was also provided by Tim's brother Nick, who had worked in Covent Garden selling farmers' produce. Over the years, their business expanded to three more shops and also supplied wholesale to local restaurants.

White's Brothers has been a treasure during our various lockdowns this year- keeping open throughout, and delivering to people at home. The staff are always polite and friendly, and shopping there lifts the soul. We are so lucky to have this gem of a shop. More people are realising how important local shops are, and recognising the dedication of people, like Tim, who run them.



By GILL SHEPHERD

Professor Sir John Hills lived in Hamilton Park West off Aubert Park. He died in December 2020 at the age of only 66. After research posts at H.M. Treasury and the Institute for Fiscal Studies, he joined the LSE as Professor of Social Policy, spending his working life working on inequality. He was appointed as Director of the Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion in 1997 just as Labour came to power and there was more interest in poverty and exclusion than there had been for many years. He worked on fuel poverty, council housing, pensions and the welfare state.

In 2015 he wrote 'Good Times, Bad Times: the Welfare Myth of Them and Us', a very readable book challenging some attitudes to the Welfare State which assume that some pay for and do not benefit from the Welfare State while others benefit and do not pay. He shows how everyone needs and uses the welfare state at various stages of their lives. One chapter asks: 'Have the poor have got too expensive?' After a careful survey of public expenditure and the pressures on incomes, it answers with an emphatic verdict: 'If anyone has got too expensive, it has, in fact, been the rich.'

His work was infused with his commitment to decency and justice, and he was at the same time one of the warmest, kindest most approachable men you could ever meet. His students were devoted to him for his capacity to mentor and encourage. He was very happily embedded in marriage and family life, and we offer our sad condolences to his wife and daughters.