

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

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JUBILEE ROUNDUP



BY SARAH POTTER, VALERIE ILES, BETH MOIR, TOM RUBENS, KATIE DAWSON, GILL SHEPHERD

Highbury celebrated the Queen’s Jubilee widely in June, not least because Islington Council gave grants to help make events affordable for local groups.

Several streets in our area held street parties, and both St Thomas’s Church and Christchurch hosted well attended events with activities for children, food, and stalls for local organisations to set out their materials. Christchurch’s event was effectively the launch of its new Community Centre. The Roundhouse hosted a Jubilee social for pensioners, and several schools in the area held Jubilee events as well.

The Highbury Hill party was accompanied by music from the ‘50s through to ABBA and beyond, and also sported a genuine 1950s black-and-white television out on the pavement which (using techno wizardry hidden behind the hedge) ran the original black-and-white film of the coronation throughout the afternoon. Grownups talked, ate and drank; children tried out the cakes and played on the various toys which had been lent, or rented with Council grants.

Although the weather had threatened rain, it miraculously held off until well into the evening, by which time tables and chairs, gazebos and bunting, were being packed away anyway.

Many people remarked, that although this was the first Jubilee event they had ever been involved in, and were not necessarily royalists, they greatly enjoyed getting to know neighbours better and learning more about what else is going on in the neighbourhood. ‘When’s the next one?’ was the general sentiment.



Major Bus Change Proposals in Islington

BY BENALI HAMDACHE (AND ISLINGTON COUNCIL WEBSITE)

Why bus change proposals have had to be made

Because of lack of core funding from Central Government, and in part because the pandemic has changed the extent to which people use buses, Transport for London has proposed some major cuts to bus services throughout London, including Islington. TfL is the only transport network among the main capital cities of the world that does not receive major subsidy from Central Government, and the delays to a proper long-term funding deal are putting our buses at risk.

Why we should be supporting buses as a form of transport

It is tragically short-sighted of both TfL and of the government, to be doing this just when there's been a major push to get people out of their cars. Buses contributed just 3% of total greenhouse gas emissions by transport in the UK in 2019, while cars were responsible for 68%.

Buses are the cheapest most accessible form of public transport in Islington, with 17% of all journeys being made on them. There are multiple reasons why encouragement to walk and cycle more is not the solution for many bus-users and many bus journeys.

Proposed changes

The bus services being cut in Islington will greatly affect people's ability to get around the borough, and will disproportionately affect people on lower incomes, people with disabilities, those who must attend hospitals, and schoolchildren - all of whom may now have to take more than one bus to get to their destination.



The proposals include some very major changes

- Route 4 is due to be cut entirely: this withdraws from Central Islington, and from Highbury, direct routes to Archway and the Whittington Hospital northbound and to Blackfriars southbound.
- Restructuring the 259 service results in the loss of direct links between King's Cross and Finsbury Park, with significant interchange issues at Camden Road.
- Restructuring routes 254 includes a cut back from Caledonian Road to Finsbury Park.
- Route 214 will no longer run through the borough, and this will impact the ability of children to access their schools.
- Restructuring the 135 service, will lead to patients who must access Moorfields Eye Hospital having to make long additional walks from alternative bus routes.

The high value of lateral routes

It is especially depressing to see the loss of lateral bus routes.

Where nearly all tube routes and many bus routes aim straight for the central city hub, like the spokes on a wheel, lateral bus routes linking between tube lines (think of spiders' webs) are in short supply in London.



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Major Bus Change Proposals in Islington

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Thus, for instance, the 4 is vital for linking Tufnell Park to Highbury and Islington. The 476 route between Kings Cross and Newington Green is another invaluable lateral route – and with no tube substitute available. Killing off these bus routes limits connectivity enormously.

What you can do about the loss of our local buses

Local people have a vital role to play, and that is why Islington Council is urging local people to explain how proposed transport for London bus service changes would significantly affect their lives. You can make your views known until Sunday 7th August. Go to the website <https://haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/busreview> and respond to the survey. Or email your views to haveyoursay@tfl.gov.uk.

If you prefer talking to writing, you can also telephone on 020 3054 6037 to leave your name and contact number and someone will call you back. Please quote 'Bus Review' when leaving your message.

Help us keep our membership list up to date.

Let us know if you have moved, or have updated your email address.

Do you think your neighbours would like to receive the newsletter? Simply ask them to email us and we'll do the rest...

Please contact us at hcanews@hotmail.com

Arsenal's Student Tower – history and the current state of play

BY GILL SHEPHERD AND ROGER WRIGHT



In November 2009, Arsenal Football Club (AFC) applied to the London Borough of Islington (LBI) for planning permission to build a 25 storey, 78m high tower block to contain 450 student bedrooms on a piece of land at 45 Hornsey Street which they had purchased, but had found no use for. The proposal included the refurbishment of a row of railway arches which also formed part of the site. This application was not well received by LBI or residents and was subsequently withdrawn.

In 2011, the club tried again. They submitted two applications, one for a largely similar 78m building for 450 students and another for an 18 storey, 51m building for 393 students. Both schemes retained the refurbishment of the railway arches. Islington Council rejected both applications on the straightforward grounds that both were far taller than permitted by the policy on Tall Buildings given in the Council's Core Strategy (CS).

AFC appealed against both refusals and a Planning Inspector was appointed to consider the applications.

The Inspector rejected the appeal against the 18-storey building, but to great consternation, supported the appeal against the 25-storey building on the grounds that the "A building more than 30 metres high in this area would not be out of scale with its surroundings".

As a result, **in July 2013**, LBI sought a Judicial Review in the High Court. The Judicial Review was allowed and took place, with HCA attending as observer. Mr. Justice Mackie QC heard the case. He gave judgement in under a week, agreed with LBI, and quashed the result of the Planning Appeal, leaving the original refusal in place.

AFC sought leave from the Court of Appeal to have Judge Mackie's judgement overturned and this was heard **in March 2014**. Again, HCA attended as observer.

Arsenal's Student Tower

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The judgement was handed down in under two weeks and supported Mr. Justice Mackie's verdict in no uncertain terms.

AFC could thus either accept LBI's original rejection of their application or seek a fresh Planning Enquiry from the Planning Inspectorate. This they did, and it was held in **March 2015**. This time, the Planning Inspector rejected the appeal by AFC, on the grounds that the building was too tall with respect to policy CS.9 and that it was detrimental to the surrounding area.

The current picture. AFC then paused. However, they have recently put in an application for a 12-storey student block 37 m high on the same site. (Details can be found in the recently published *Islington Local Plan Site Allocations document*, September 2019, page 88).

It is vexatious to apply for a 37m building when it was repeatedly made clear by LBI and the Courts, that the Tower application was being refused on the grounds that it exceeded 30m. It is to be hoped that LBI will require a further height reduction so that the 30m limit continues to be respected.

That limit was defended successfully by LBI from 2009 to 2015 and it would be a great pity if their determination were now to falter. It would have major negative implications for further planning proposals in other parts of Islington as well.

Finally, the tower at its current proposed height would partially block a Protected View - that of St Paul's Cathedral and the City from Alexandra Palace - a view which has been stoutly defended from inappropriate development for a century.

For both these reasons applications from AFC should continue to be rejected, until the 30m height is accepted as a maximum.

It is their belief that community action and individual change can make a real difference, but that many people feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the climate change challenge, and feel unsure as to how to address it proactively in their own lives.

The Centre is housed in a shop unit - kindly donated for free by the Shopping Centre - next door to Wagamama on the first floor of the Angel Centre. It is open most Saturdays and some evenings and you can find out when the next sessions are to be held if you visit the website: islingtonclimatecentre@gmail.com.

The Climate Centre aims to engage, inform and connect with Islington's residents - and especially its families - via a series of lively events and workshops, swap shops and repair shops, talks and panels. The aim is to give them the knowledge and skills they need to address climate change issues. These include information on saving energy and reducing bills. There is a special focus on family friendly activities and games and - to encourage children and their parents to visit - a toy Bring and Take session every Saturday.

The Centre needs volunteers, if you would be interested in helping, you can get in touch via email (islingtonclimatecentre@gmail.com).

Islington Climate Centre

By BEL JACOBS, ANNA HYDE AND LINDY SHARPE

Unlike the Islington Environmental Emergency Alliance, which focuses on Islington Council, and helps to monitor its commitment to reach net zero carbon by 2030, the **Islington Climate Centre's** focus is, complementarily, on the borough's citizens.

The Islington Climate Centre is mainly run by Bel Jacobs and Anna Hyde, with a host of other volunteers, for the community itself.



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71 Ronald's Road: will it be shared by the Roundhouse Community Centre and a Gypsy and Traveller site?

By TONY MILLER (ROUNDHOUSE) AND GILL SHEPHERD

Islington's Local Plan has been in preparation for some years, but because of changes required by the Planning Inspectorate, the start of the consultation period has been much delayed.

Initially the Local Plan made no provision for Gypsy Roma and Traveller (GRT) pitches, and the Inspectorate insisted on an allocation for them. Three sites have been identified: two on Junction Road and one in Highbury, at 71 Ronald's Road, on part of the site originally allocated to the Roundhouse and housing.

As most Highbury inhabitants know, the Roundhouse – a vibrant local community centre – has been through a 10-year period of fund-raising from the public, the Lottery and a variety of charities.

It has been imaginatively rebuilt on a tricky site looking down into the Olden Garden, on the railway embankment. It is a beautiful building designed to meet a very wide range of local needs. It plans to reopen its doors from September 2022.

At a late stage, concerns were raised by Islington Council about ensuring that fire engine access was possible, and the current solution to this is shown in the accompanying diagram.

Consultation on the redesignation of this site will be limited to whether the site designation should or should not contain an additional GRT component.

Unfortunately, consultation has to take place during a six-week period over this summer, and so will be rushed and limited in extent.

If the Planning Inspectorate approves the redesignation as part of approving the wider Local Plan, the council will start planning work on what a traveller pitch might look like on the part of the site closest to the road. Since the site is so small, it would accommodate no more than two or three caravans, together with access to dedicated mains water, sewerage and electricity.



Providing access to the Roundhouse, including safe emergency vehicle access, will be fundamental to the site design.

If you would like to be more closely involved with the local residents' group engaged in this issue, send an email to communityronaldsroad@gmail.com.



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Crossrail from the Inside In brief

By SARAH POTTER

Transport historian Christian Wolmar’s book *Crossrail: The Whole Story* (Head of Zeus, 2022) traces this transformational London project from the emergence of the east-west Crossrail concept in a British Rail discussion paper in 1980, up to the end of 2021, when the final stage of testing was reached, prior to its opening in 2022. Wolmar draws extensively on his interviews with many key actors over this period to identify the key turning points and setbacks in the story.



In 1988, serious overcrowding on London’s rail and tube services prompted another transport paper, including an east-west Crossrail option with the strongest cost-benefit ratio among the schemes discussed. By then, however, a new key actor had emerged in our city, the developers of Canary Wharf, needing transport services for their towering office blocks in Docklands.

These developers benefited from the support of the Conservative government of the time, which was promoting the regeneration of Docklands, and the developers’ pressure and offer of money led to priority being given to the building of the Jubilee Line Extension. Parliamentary opposition to Crossrail also grew, and it was thus delayed for nearly twenty years.

A change of government in 1997 brought about a new rail body concerned with strategic planning and a mayor for London, with responsibility for transport and, together with strong growth and travel pressures, there was sufficient impetus for the development of a new Crossrail

scheme, with Parliament passing the necessary bill in 2006, and a funding deal in place in 2007.

Wolmar’s account of the building of the tunnels and stations, enhanced by colour photos, is fascinating and impressive, and he explains how signals, trains and stations are controlled digitally in a single control system.

His view of Crossrail’s failure to meet its December 2018 opening date and its budget overrun is that the ‘can do’ approach of the management ‘masked the fact that Crossrail was a more complex enterprise than any that had been undertaken before.

Ultimately, Crossrail’s leadership were guilty of a failure fully to understand their own project’ (p. 283). Wolmar’s verdict on Crossrail, stated in his Preface, is, nevertheless, that it is ‘everything a modern railway should be’.

Planning application P2022/2160/FUL concerns a proposal to turn the old Barclays Bank building at the ottom of Highbury Fields into an organic supermarket. This is potentially a good use for a landmark building. But it is within a conservation area and, more concerningly, within the Highbury Fields LTN.

Access from the Holloway Road side is out of the question for delivery lorries but there are also considerable difficulties in supplying such a store from the Highbury Fields side. How would lorries reach it and be able to turn around to come out again?

It is also very near to the small Waitrose round the corner on the Holloway Road.

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Readers' letters - in response to the suggestion that the Blackstock Road to Holloway Road route via Aubert Park should be reopened

By GILL SHEPHERD AND OTHERS

LETTERS

From Andrew Willett:

"Your proposed 'improvements' would make life a misery for those living on Drayton Park and Aubert Park. It would also run completely counter to the result of the local election. In my view that would be an affront to democracy while solving traffic problems by making driving easier is not actually a solution".

From Dylan Thomas:

"I would be interested to know what percentage of the total number of residents who live in Drayton Park and Aubert Park are in favour of your proposal to reopen their roads to through traffic".

From Eileen Willett:

"I suspect that no one will campaign for more traffic on their street, which in turn would indicate that the problem is too much traffic, not the LTN. If that is the case, the solution for all streets is to find ways to encourage people to use their cars less, not to encourage drivers to use alternative routes. As your proposal would allow a free for all for cars again on the impacted roads



you are also simply encouraging people to drive through Highbury whether they live here or not, providing no benefit for the vast majority of local residents."

From John Ackers:

"Whether or not to make Aubert Park and Drayton Park a boundary road was discussed very early on as a Highbury ward meeting with Rowena Champion before the council set out its plans.

Although the Drayton Park traffic would return to pre-LTN levels, traffic on Aubert Park would increase because it would be taking traffic that previously used the other routes

between Blackstock Road and Holloway Road such as Highbury Hill and Baalbec Road. I don't believe that council or TfL engineers are able to run models that would indicate whether Blackstock Road would be given significant relief"

From Barry Needoff:

"HCA referred to the suggestion (of others) to restore Highbury Corner to a full roundabout. It's not clear where this remarkably common-sense suggestion originated, but it would likely take away some of the unwanted congestion and the rat running the LTNs were supposed to prevent.

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Readers' letters

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Splitting the current LTN with a new boundary road along Drayton Park and Aubert Park would be a quick low-cost and simple solution which might help to relieve the congestion at Highbury Corner.

However, dealing with right turning traffic from Drayton Park requires more thought. To manage this, the Holloway Road/Drayton Park Crossroads might be improved by equipping it with right turn filter traffic signals. The HCA suggestions both have some merit, but should only go ahead after rigorous consultation with affected residents and businesses has shown that they favour the change.

RESPONSE

Some interesting points are made here.

Response at LTN Level

Firstly, it is clear that people inside an LTN, who have benefitted enormously from their location, do not think very much about the fact that others, living on boundary roads, have suffered enormous disbenefits. And of course, if they were asked whether they want to forego some of the benefits they currently get from living inside the LTN, they would say no.

So, the acute and unjust boundary road problems we see for schools and residents alike – where levelling up is profoundly needed, cannot probably be solved by the council without the imposition of some unpopular measures on those living inside LTNS.

The bigger picture

Secondly there are strategic issues, and these have a history. It is perfectly clear that the congestion and pollution currently experienced on the Blackstock Road cannot be solved on

the Blackstock Road. The road is partly congested because traffic has been diverted onto it from the adjacent Highbury LTN, and partly because St Paul's Road in the south is so congested, blocking the steady flow of vehicles onto it. St Paul's Road in turn has received additional traffic from its adjacent LTNS which contribute to that congestion.

The biggest problem of all derives from the redesign of Highbury Corner as a peninsula instead of a roundabout. When TfL did this, it knew that traffic would be slowed, but had no idea that additional traffic would in due course be added when the Highbury and Canonbury LTNS were created and the traffic which had evaded Highbury Corner by going through those two areas was stopped from doing so.

The Highbury LTN relieved those living at the top of Highbury Hill, and those living in Gillespie Road of cut through traffic, which was one of the original reasons for the creation of LTNS. But we are now, as a result, left with far too few key east-west routes. The Seven Sisters Rd on the northern edge of the borough is one, and St Paul's Road is the other. The loss of the Drayton Park-Aubert Park route has removed what used to be the third.

So, there are only two solutions for easing the burden on the Blackstock Road and St Paul's Road. Either Highbury Corner is converted back to a roundabout (which is a decision for TfL, not Islington Council) or the Aubert Park-Drayton Park route is re-opened as suggested.

The use of ANPR, which Islington Council has avoided contemplating so far in this context (though it is used all the time for parking tickets of course) would make it possible for the Aubert Park-Drayton Park route to be opened selectively: to local businesses, local residents and carers for instance, but

not to all the vehicles transiting through the borough. A six-month trial would show whether this made a useful difference to vehicle movements on the Blackstock Road and St Paul's Road, and if it did, much congestion and pollution could be satisfactorily eliminated.




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