

# HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

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## NEW PLANNING POLICIES MAY OVERRIDE LOCAL PLANS



### LONDON FORUM BRIEFING BY SARAH POTTER

The London Forum is a charitable organisation which brings together the Amenity and Civic Societies of Greater London including the HCA. Its aim is to improve the quality of local life, including planning, design and infrastructure.

Of considerable recent concern to the Forum has been the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, largely concerned with planning matters, which reached its committee stage in Parliament this summer. The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, then headed by Michael Gove, included in the bill generic National Development Management Policies which would replace many or most local planning

policies, on the grounds that local plans are often out of date. (Though in the case of Islington, the Local Plan is currently out for consultation and in the process of being revised.)

The London Forum's view, in its briefing on this proposal, is that it will strongly affect Londoners' ability to "influence and tailor" local plans to meet the needs of local communities, and it has consequently worked to amend the bill to limit the impact of the proposed national policies.

The Forum is not alone in its concern. The Mayor of London considers that the Bill undermines his key planning powers in the London Plan, affecting the delivery of affordable housing, and shutting out local communities from the planning process. The Chair of the Levelling

Up, Housing and Regeneration Committee, Clive Betts, wrote to Michael Gove, suggesting that the Bill 'radically centralises planning decision making and erodes public participation.' The Chair of the Royal Town Planning Institute considers that one single national development policy would have negative consequences for many communities.

London Forum's briefing can be found on its website (<https://www.londonforum.org.uk>)

by clicking on News, then Updates, and scrolling down to Levelling Up Bill – update July 2022, where all these contributions and others can be found.

Yet more uncertainty over the progress of this bill has now arisen due to the replacement of Michael Gove by Greg Clark. Media reporting of the new government's mini-budget indicates that there will be a planning and infrastructure bill for speeding up the planning of major infrastructure projects and increasing the supply of housing by overriding local objections. Green policies could be affected.

Investment zones are also proposed, in which planning rules on height regulations, environmental protection and affordable housing will be changed.

# Waste stops here: striving towards a circular economy



BY CAZ ROYDS,  
ISLINGTON ENVIRONMENTAL  
EMERGENCY ALLIANCE

The “Waste Stops Here!” event at Union Chapel on Sunday 25th September was a first: a collaboration between the IEAA (Islington Environmental Emergency Alliance), Islington Climate Centre and the Union Chapel, with support from the Council. It had the ambitious aim of outlining the principles of the circular economy - one of the targets of the borough’s net zero strategy.

A circular economy, where everything is reused and nothing goes to waste will involve us all in massive behaviour change and, if we are to live differently, the most important thing will be to reduce the amount of waste we produce in the first place.

The clothes swap proved extremely popular, as did Leah Thorn’s Subversive Catwalk which takes a hard look at the garment industry and

the ‘not fast fashion show’ and in which local people modelled clothes they had bought second-hand, made or mended.

In the Chapel’s huge Sunday School, a beautiful room bright with waste from different angles. The Home of Sustainable Things, based in the Liverpool Road, sells work made by artists from waste, and Nourished Communities sells seasonal food and food made from surplus produce on the Blackstock Road and in Canonbury.

There were stalls about composting, reusable nappies and period products and food waste apps. There was advice on use by dates, chilling your fridge, and advice from the Council on energy saving and recycling. To many people’s amazement, there was even a demonstration of marmite-making from fermented waste bread.

Ella Shone in her TopUp truck was parked outside, an electric milk float which delivers plastic-free refills to your street.

Judging by the numbers who came, there’s a real interest in reducing waste in Islington - and the event demonstrated that lots of people are already doing it in interesting and challenging ways.



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# 'THE SOUP KITCHEN'

## The help being provided with the cost-of-living crisis by St John's Church, Queen's Drive N4

BY TOM RUBENS

An interview with Nick Wilkinson, Administrator of 'The Soup Kitchen' held twice a week at the church.

### Age ranges of people served

We help a wide range of people, spanning from 18-year-olds to people well into their 80s. The lower limit accords with DBS regulations, which exclude unaccompanied minors from the service we offer. There's no obvious majority of any one age-group, though I can't be precise on this because we don't keep actual figures.

### Social backgrounds

These are varied, and linked with the variety of age-groups. There are no obvious signs of 'class' difference. And we don't receive any information about our guests' social backgrounds because they are not referred to us by official agencies of any kind.

### Food offered

Although we are called the Soup Kitchen, in fact soup is not our main item. We chiefly offer vegetarian meals, including curries, stews, and pasta-based dishes. Also, in addition to these meals, we provide foodbank provisions twice a week.

### Where do the foodstuffs come from?

These come partly from an organisation called 'Bankuet.' It sells foodstuffs to the Soup Kitchen at 'cash and carry' prices and we then provide them to our guests free of charge. But we also receive donations from two local shops, both in Blackstock Rd. One is Whites, the Greengrocer which gives us their surplus unsold stock;



and the other is the 'Bahia' bakery, which supplies freshly baked bread once a week.

### How do guests feel about coming to the soup kitchen?

Some clearly feel less comfortable than others. But the ones who are most at ease regard coming to us as a social event - a big opportunity for socialising.

### What other services are needed, to build on all the work you are currently doing?

Organisations like ours need to be able to provide other services as well as meals. People need help with form-filling, utility-bill negotiations, and other kinds of administrative help. Already, some of our volunteers have a wide range of skills.

In general, an increase in volunteer numbers and expertise will be called for; and this will require further public funding to help the process along, especially in the provision of IT equipment, for instance.

## COMMEMORATING THE QUEEN? What are your views?

There has been some debate on the HCA Committee about whether - and if so how - to commemorate the passing of Queen Elizabeth II. This arose in part because Highbury Fields Association plans to do so both by refurbishing the signage on Queen Elizabeth's Walk - the pathway across the fields that the Queen traversed when she visited Highbury during her Silver Jubilee in 1977 - and by cash donations of £500 apiece to 2 local food banks.

In HCA, there's been a proposal for a commemorative bench close to the Ecology Centre (which the Centre would be very pleased to receive). This would cost about £1000 including installation on a proper base. Alternatively HCA too could make cash donations to local food banks such as the one reported on here by Tom Rubens, and/or to Elizabeth House. HCA's reserves are adequate for such expenditure.

We would greatly appreciate some views on these ideas from HCA members. Please drop us a line at [hcanews@hotmail.com](mailto:hcanews@hotmail.com) so that we can discuss your views at the next Committee meeting.

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# London and the 2021 Census – has there been undercounting which will affect borough-level investment?

By SARAH POTTER

The freelance consultant Richard Brown, who writes for the website OnLondon, has recently identified some notable changes in London’s population in the preliminary results of the 2021 census.

- First, in comparison with 2001-2011, there has been a decline in under 5s, especially in Inner London, between 2011 and 2021, although there is growth in outer London boroughs.

- Second, in the 15-30s age group, while one third of London’s total growth was due to this group in 2001-2011, there was a loss in the next decade, though this may be reversing now.

- Third, however, there was also a marked percentage growth in the 50-59 age group 2011-2021 in London, rising by 45%, compared to 27% elsewhere. This group grew by only 13% in 2001-2011.

- Fourth, the over- 70s are growing more slowly than the national average, although they will increase.

- Brown’s fifth finding is that the year 2021, when the Census was held, was



affected in ways as yet unclear by the pandemic, and that a recession, and immigration and political changes may also affect London’s population.

Brown’s analysis is available on the invaluable OnLondon website at [Richard Brown: What has the 2021 census told us about London so far? - OnLondon](#).

London’s population on Census Day, 21 March 2021, was 8.8 million, growing more slowly than both East and South West England. An estimate by the Office for National Statistics for mid-year 2020 had given a figure of just over 9 million. £4 billion’s worth of funding for London’s council services is either directly or indirectly linked to

figures from the Census, and our councils have warned that the overall population totals in their areas are likely to be undercounts ([Census figures for London should be treated with 'extreme caution' says cross-party body - OnLondon](#)).

The 2021 Census population figure for Islington was 216,000, for instance, which is 30,000 fewer than the Council had expected. Islington, Camden and Westminster councils are campaigning for a recount on which their funding should be based (Islington Tribune, Friday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2022). The Economist (July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2022) also warned that London without strong population growth may have less claim on infrastructure investment.



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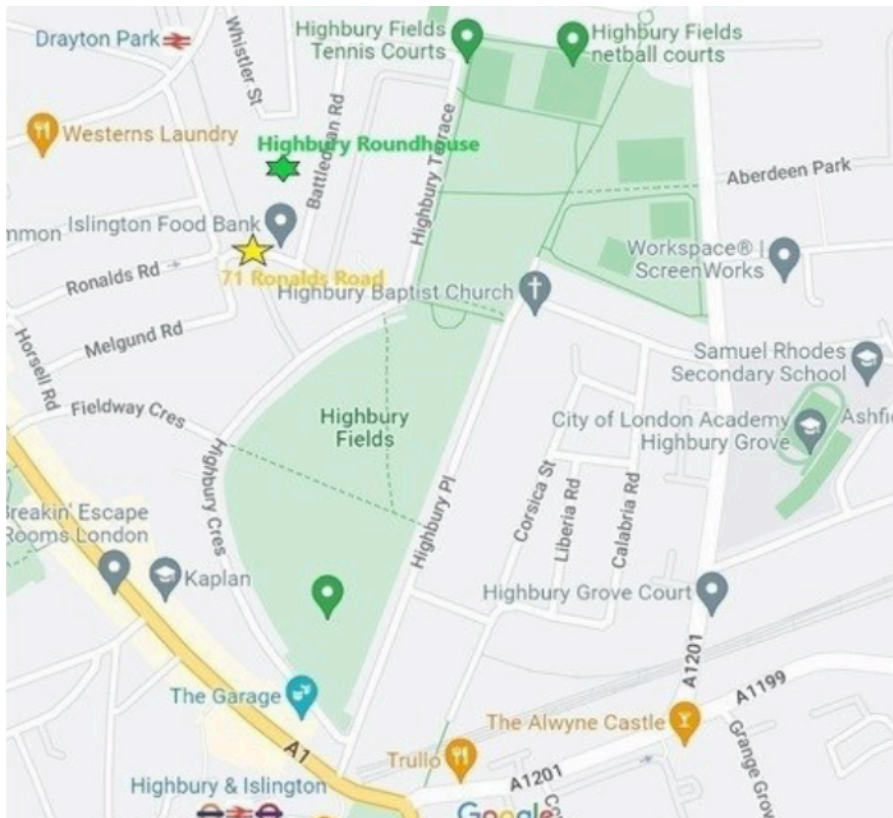
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# The Creation Of A Small Caravan Site For Gypsies And Travellers At 71 Ronalds Road?

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heritage of the local area – in close proximity to the Highbury Fields and Whistler Street Conservation Areas and Olden Community Gardens.

- The site would be an **inefficient use of the land compared to its current designation for social housing** with quality engineering – hard buildings would also efficiently protect residents of the site from disturbance of the railway and overlooking properties. According to data shared by Islington Council with MyLondon, there were 14,530 people on the Islington Council waiting list for social housing in 2021 and only 7% are housed each year.

- The **consultation process has been inadequate** – Islington council failed to write letters to a significant number of residents in close proximity to the site and much of the consultation process has fallen during the summer holiday period.

You can object up to 30th October. Those who live nearby have launched a petition against the proposed site. Please sign and share.

<https://www.change.org/p/stop-the-designation-of-a-gypsies-travellers-site-on-71-ronalds-road-highbury>

While we strongly believe in inclusivity for all cultures in Islington, we see **71 Ronalds Road (near Highbury Fields)** as **totally unsuitable** to be designated as a caravan site for Gypsies & Travellers because:

- The site sits **directly above the entrance to a heavily used railway freight tunnel** (1,450+ trains running on the track every week), so is highly exposed to noise, vibration and pollution from diesel locomotives, which regularly idle there for long periods. This exposure inevitably raises serious safety risks for occupants including children.
- Gypsies & Travellers would suffer from disturbance and a lack of privacy, as the site is quite small for the proposed purpose and both hugely

overlooked by **numerous residential properties and on a busy pedestrian route.**

- The proposed site sits next to the **new Roundhouse Community Centre** which is expected to regularly welcome busy events. Access to both sites would be significantly constrained by that activity which will impact uncomfortably all parties.
- A number of **mature trees are at risk** as the council will not guarantee their retention.
- Islington's plans fail to take into account the character and

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# APPLE DAY Gillespie Park

## Live music, freekids' activities and apple pressing: 23 October

### ECOLOGY CENTRE

Apple Day returns to Gillespie Park with live music, free kids activities and hundreds of apples to be pressed! Hosted by Islington Ecology Centre and the Friends of Gillespie Park, come along to this free, family-friendly community event and help make and taste fresh apple juice, listen to live local bands, and get your bike fixed with Dr Bike.

There'll also be free craft activities run by The Garden Classroom, plus stalls from local makers and charities.

The event is free to attend but please bring cash for food, face painting and the stalls – there will be no card machines at the event. And don't forget your bike, if you want it fixed by Dr Bike!



# Barbecues

By GILL SHEPHERD

Islington Council has recently been conducting a review of its Barbecue policy where Highbury Fields are concerned. All of London's boroughs bar two (Islington and Camden) ban barbecues, and many parts of Camden such as Hampstead Heath and Regents Park (which are managed by the City of London or Crown estates) also have barbecue bans in place.

LBI's official statement says: "we are currently reviewing our policy, including reviewing the impacts that barbecues have on our green spaces and those who use them, as well as wider environmental issues. Barbecues are not permitted while this review is ongoing. We will update our policy once the review is complete". Issues which are under consideration include the high costs of tidying up after barbecues, the damage to the Fields, air pollution and other ecological issues.

It is worth writing to the Council ([Rowena.Champion@islington.gov.uk](mailto:Rowena.Champion@islington.gov.uk) , [Barry.Emmerson@islington.gov.uk](mailto:Barry.Emmerson@islington.gov.uk)) to stress the many good reasons why barbecues should no longer be allowed. Such letters are welcome, and strengthen the hand of decision-makers. The Council are much more receptive to these arguments than they were in the past, and it is highly likely that the council will not be letting barbecues back onto Highbury Fields.





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# The Conversion of the Barclay's Bank building at the southern end of Highbury Fields

By GILL SHEPHERD AND CLLR. BENALI HAMDACHE



As briefly mentioned in the last newsletter, it is proposed that the Barclays bank building becomes an organic food shop on the ground floor. A separate application by the firm CADOO, based in Finsbury Park, has been made for the conversion of the upper floors to a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) with 10 ensuite bedsits sharing one kitchen.

**The shop** would be known as 'Harvest N5' and would follow the organic supermarket model of Harvest N 16 and Harvest N 19. The ex-bank is in a good location for a high-quality organic shop with lots of potential customers within walking distance.

There are potential problems however: the front entrance is narrow and has steps up to the door, which may not comply with Disability legislation. The one-time side entrance (which has a ramp) will not be available since this will form the front door of the HMO. Other 'Harvest' shops form part of Deliveroo's business and this may mean that a lot

of e-bikes and motorbikes hang around on the pavement outside the bank building.

Unfortunately, it seems there is little planning leverage that can be applied. Harvest N5 will be able to operate without the need for planning permission by virtue of the occupier changing use from a bank (Class E) to a retail enterprise (also Class E). The introduction of Class E by the government in September 2020, allows for a number of uses to change without the oversight provided by planning permission from the Council (<https://www.planningportal.co.uk/permission/common-projects/change-of-use/use-classes>)

## HMO Accommodation

The accommodation proposal looks much less satisfactory. The council will assess the housing standards and quality of accommodation against policy DM3.9 of the Council's Development Management Policies Document. Several individuals have commented that this application looks like over-development, with the

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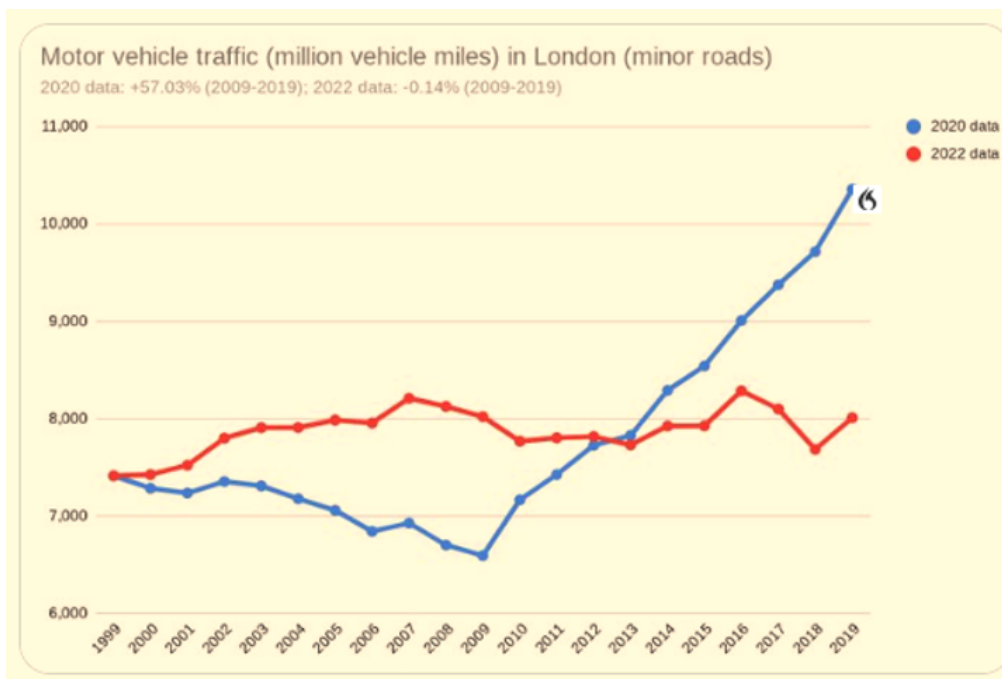
Ideally a much higher quality development application should be sought, for what is an outstanding neighbourhood landmark building.

# New Department for Transport data on minor roads in London and on traffic volumes for all roads in Islington

By GILL SHEPHERD

## London's Minor Roads

Just-published revised data on motor traffic miles travelled on London's minor roads has shed new light on what has been a very unclear picture. The figure of a 72% increase in traffic on minor roads was cited as an early justification for the creation of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (subsequently revised downwards to 56%). A data error was spotted first by Paul Lomax (Chief Digital Officer at the Newspaper Licensing Authority, the NLA) two years ago, and then by TfL. Together they persuaded the Department for Transport to spend a year auditing their data. Multiple errors were found and this is the new report. **The actual figure is a 0% change between 2009 and 2019.**



<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/road-traffic-estimates-in-great-britain-2021/minor-road-traffic-estimates-review-technical-report>

## Traffic volumes in Islington

As far as traffic volumes for all roads in Islington are concerned, the earlier data showed a rise between 2009 and 2019 of just under 5%. The new data shows that in fact there has been a **drop of 9.5% in traffic volumes in Islington over the same period.**

LBI - ALL ROAD TYPES, ALL VEHICLE TYPES				
Original data	2009	Difference	2019	% INCREASE
Islington (million miles)	265.1	+12.9	278	+4.87
New data	2009	Difference	2019	% CHANGE
Islington (million miles)	267.4	-25.3	242.1	-9.5

<https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/local-authorities/96>

In all cases the cut-off year chosen was 2019, so that subsequent disruptions caused by the Covid 19 pandemic were excluded from the data.

<p>HCA News                  Issue 125                  October 2022                  © HCA 2021</p>	<p>Editor: Gill Shepherd                  Layout: Susana Liveras                  Published by the HCA</p>
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