

# HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

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## TANIA WITTER: July 1937-January 2023

By SHEILA DILLON WITH VALERIE ILES AND TERESA ROBERTSON

*“What I feel was so remarkable about Tania (because so rare) was her radical acceptance of so many different kinds of people and situations. She didn’t waste any energy on making judgments, instead responding open-heartedly to whatever was unfolding.” Val Iles*

Which didn’t mean she was a softie—a less sentimental person (except about dogs) I’ve rarely met. She was kind to bores and the self-pitying —she knew they were bores and consumed by self-pity, but like the Maker in whom she trusted, she loved them anyway. As the activist C of E priest Martine Osborne said (she wasn’t a Rev or even thinking of it when she first met Tania as a member of the Christchurch congregation), “She was kind but tough. She didn’t always tell you what you wanted to hear, but what you needed to hear.”

She was physically slight with a clear voice that didn’t command but for 30 years she led change around Christchurch Highbury as an unpaid priest, or ‘non-stipendiary’ priest as the C of E has it. When she was ordained, coming to the church as the curate in 1996, not so long after those first 32 pioneering women were blessed into positions of authority at Bristol Cathedral in 1994, she was already in her 50s.

At Christchurch she worked with three (male) vicars & never stopped pushing them and the congregation for

the church to widen its loving role in the whole community. Out of that came the Night Shelter, part of a wider Islington church effort to provide dinner, bed and breakfast for those who found themselves homeless in the coldest months. And then the Memory Cafe, a weekly get-together over tea and cakes for people suffering from dementia, their families and carers. Her best physical monument is Christchurch’s new, handsome Community Centre with its ‘green’ roof, cafe, church offices and spaces rentable

(or for use free if the need is great) by anyone (weddings, birthdays, organising to change the world, bringing together refugees with local residents).

She raised money, she pushed with her usual determination, she encouraged. And what she said would result, has resulted. It’s a building now used by large numbers of people who would never have contemplated crossing the church threshold. “God works in mysterious ways,” as she might **not** have said, because she was always careful to avoid cliches.



She had four children (one died as a baby) and seven grandchildren—the eldest one of whom died in a swimming accident not long ago. She was deeply involved in their lives. She ran bible study groups, was the pillar of Christchurch’s commitment to visiting members of the congregation confined to home or hospital, and was also a member of the raucous and sceptical Christchurch Ethics Group to which we three belong. We meet monthly over dinner which suited Tania, who loved good food and good wine and was an excellent cook.

# TANIA WITTER

Continued from page 1...

*“The Tania phone call’ was a thing at Christ Church. My husband began to dread them, but even he might admit they have made our lives bigger: the call on your landline to ask you to do something, usually to help a particular person or do a reading, or help plan a service or do an artwork or play a musical instrument. Most things she asked me to do have pushed me out of my comfort zone but helped me embrace the joy of connectedness and love that follows. Crucially the phone calls could go back the other way though, too – she was who I would call first in a tricky situation. She would never inflate any drama – would always calmly talk it down and help one to see the best outcome. We are all going to miss her immensely. And the most fitting tribute from Christ Church members would be to try and take on whatever tiny bit of her energy, drive and determination we can.”*  
 Teresa Robertson

She has her memorial in the Community Centre, but what is much rarer is how she’s remembered by almost everyone who knew her. Knowing Tania Witter expanded all our notions of what’s possible in a life.

# Communication between Arsenal and its neighbours

By GILL SHEPHERD

Arsenal’s neighbours have often wished for greater clarity about club events and that ALL fixtures were listed on the fixtures list and not just the main matches. It has quite often been the case, for instance, that it was hard to find out



when Women’s Team fixtures were being played, and what the arrangements for opening and closing roads and camera filters would be on those days. (These are often different from arrangements on men’s team match days). This has become more urgent now that neighbours have to pay high rates to RINGGO for their visitors to park on match days. These problems have now been solved with the arrival of the following extremely useful website: <https://www.arsenal.com/the-club/local-residents-news>. Details are posted here about all fixtures.

Stadium neighbours have also wished that there were better links between them and the Club, so that if and when issues arise, it would be

easy to know how to get in touch and who to talk to. This too has now taken a step forward. A local supporter with good contacts in the club has set up a group jokingly entitled NAG (Neighbours’ Arsenal Grievances) which will arrange meetings from time to time between senior club officials responsible for communications, and representatives from the immediate neighbourhood. The first meeting will be held on March 14. HCA is represented in this group and will report back in the next newsletter.

If you have an issue you want to have raised with Arsenal, please get in touch at any time, via the newly created email: [Neighbours.Arsenal.Grievances@gmail.com](mailto:Neighbours.Arsenal.Grievances@gmail.com) and someone will get back to you.



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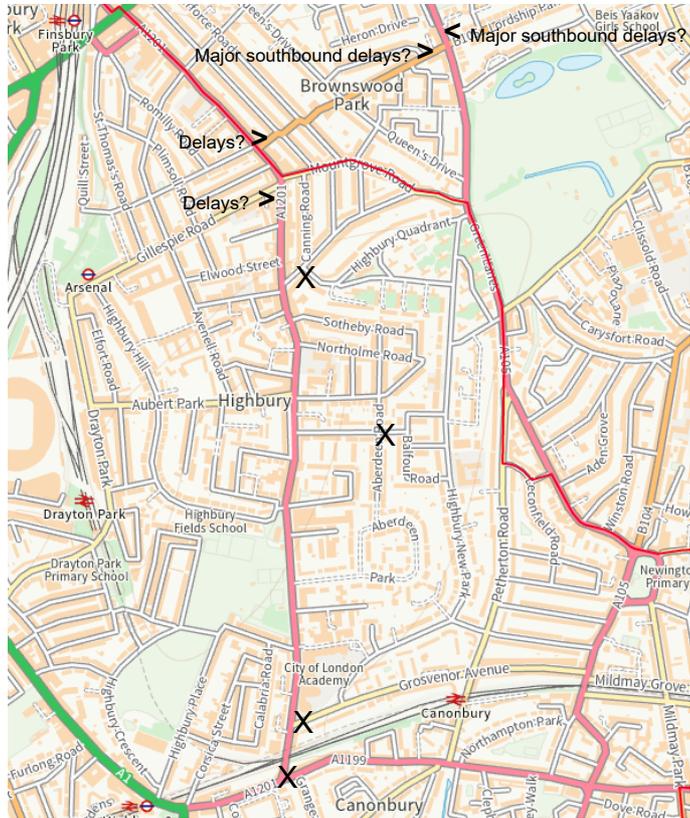
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# A 'liveable neighbourhood' in the Highbury New Park area?

By GILL SHEPHERD



- Our approach to liveable neighbourhoods is to introduce an area-wide scheme covering the local streets across a neighbourhood area. The rationale for delivering an area-wide scheme is to avoid introducing measures that would simply push traffic from one local street to the next, and instead to address the issue of through traffic across the whole

movement along St Paul's Road and Highbury Grove in addition to making the junction safer for people walking and cycling. This is a complex project and it is expected to take time before we understand the feasibility of making changes to this junction.

- We will be engaging with local people in due course to gather their views on how we should improve the streets in the Highbury New Park area. This will enable us to develop and consult on plans for a liveable neighbourhood scheme for the area.

**Comments and questions from those who live in or near this area include the following so far:**

**1. What are the actual benefits of this scheme?**

Benefits to those who only walk or cycle in this already quiet area will be

A statement about creating a liveable neighbourhood entitled Highbury New Park, from the London Borough of Islington, and issued in December 2022, runs as follows.

- LBI is committed to delivering liveable neighbourhoods across the borough to create cleaner, greener and healthier streets. It is our intention to develop plans for a liveable neighbourhood in the 'Highbury New Park' area between Highbury Barn, Brownswood Road, Green Lanes and St Paul's Road.
- In addition to developing public realm improvement measures such as street greening and better pavements and crossings, it is proposed that the liveable neighbourhood scheme will prevent through traffic cutting through local streets in this area, while retaining vehicle access to all addresses.

neighbourhood. The 'Highbury New Park' area is a large area and the project is expected to take time to develop.

- In order to develop a liveable neighbourhood scheme in the 'Highbury New Park' area, we believe we will also need to address an issue with existing banned turns which currently constrain vehicle movements at the junction of Highbury Grove and St Paul's Road. These banned turns would prevent traffic from circulating around the area on the main road network if we implemented a liveable neighbourhood.
- We are currently testing the feasibility of redesigning the junction of Highbury Grove and St Paul's Road. The aim of these design proposals is to improve traffic

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limited, but the inconvenience caused to those using buses, cars, or home delivery will be very substantial. There is not a lot of traffic in this area and through traffic has already been much reduced by lack of access through Highbury Fields and Drayton Park.

**2. Benefits for walkers?**

Mention in council objectives is made of benefit for walkers, but by far the biggest issue for walkers throughout this this area is the state of the pavements, not traffic levels.

**3. Newly allowing a southbound left turn at St Pauls/Highbury Grove junction?**

This will greatly increase the already considerable delays getting into St Paul's Road. This is especially important for buses coming from Highbury Grove because there will be a slowing effect from vehicles turning left.

**4. Newly allowing a northbound right turn at St Pauls/Highbury Grove junction?**

Will the scheme start to allow right turns from St Paul's Road into Highbury Grove, causing further congestion in St Paul's Road - another important bus route? If Grosvenor Road is closed it must do.

The Highbury Grove/St Paul's Road junction is already narrow and already congested for much of the day. There are no advantages to further loading traffic from alternative routes onto it.

**5. Impact around Brownswood Road**

a. If Brownswood Road becomes the only way for accessing the Blackstock Road there will be long queues of right turning traffic at the lights where Green Lanes crosses Brownswood Road.

b. Brownswood Road has become much more congested with westbound traffic since the closure of Stoke Newington Church Street for much of the day.

c. Brownswood Road is narrow, especially at the Blackstock Road end. If both these traffic flows are now

loaded onto it, there will be long tailbacks at the junction with Blackstock Road and east-west as well as north-south bus routes will be seriously affected.

d. Traffic going north in the afternoon in Blackstock Road is often blocked already by vehicles turning right into Brownswood Road. This would become much worse if other roads were blocked off.

**6. Overall**

Much is already being done on a wider scale to reduce pollution and road safety through 20mph speed limits, low emission zones and electric vehicles. Through traffic is already reduced and school hours restrictions have been introduced in Highbury New Park. What on earth is the advantage of moving pollution from these areas to Brownswood Road, upper Blackstock Road and St Paul's Road, where it is already bad?

The cumulative impacts of more and more vehicles being directed onto boundary roads by the creation of LTNs has not yet been seriously considered, but in this part of Islington it has massive implications. St Paul's Road and the Blackstock Road are

problem areas already, without adding to the challenges and delays that residents on them and users of them face daily.

A lot more benefit could be achieved by less ambitious actions, such as closing Highbury Grange and Balfour Road, and creating a yellow box junction at Highbury Grove and St Paul's Road.



**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
 We normally hold our AGM in April or May each year. This year we will be holding it in Autumn 2023. Further details to follow in a later newsletter.

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# Grand Opening Ceremony, New Highbury Roundhouse Community Centre, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2023

By SARAH POTTER



At 10.30 on 25<sup>th</sup> February, Jeremy Corbyn MP and the Mayor of Islington, Councillor Marian Spall, cut the ribbon to mark the opening of the new Highbury Roundhouse Community Centre.

This moment marked the final achievement of a project dating back to the early 1970s, when a local resident suggested that youths hanging round in the evening near the playground keeper's hut on Highbury Fields needed a youth centre. The use of the former bottle factory at 71 Ronalds Road was granted by the GLC, turning into a flourishing community centre. Indeed HCA used to keep its large high volume printer there in the days when we produced the newsletter in hard copy.

Unfortunately, this building was found to be dangerous in 2010, and was demolished in 2013, sited as it was, too near the railway. That year, planning permission was obtained for a replacement, and the Chair of the Trustees spoke at the ceremony to

thank the architects, builders and project managers for the outstanding new centre now ready for use in 2023. The Chair of the Building Committee revealed in his speech that the Centre is literally built on the foundations of the local community, since building had to commence within three years of planning permission being granted, and the only funds then available were those given by the local community, which just sufficed to lay the foundations of the new building. Jeremy Corbyn pointed out that there was never a guarantee of funding, but the Trustees raised greatly valued donations from the Lottery, the Arsenal Foundation and others.

Highbury Councillor Caroline Russell thanked all previous Highbury councillors for their support for the Roundhouse, and praised the way that it had kept going during the pandemic. Councillor Una O'Halloran stressed, as Executive Member for Homes and Communities on Islington Council, that it was essential in future for her to work with the Centre in delivering services to the local community. Leader of the Council, Councillor Kaya Comer-Schwartz, also stressed the value of the Roundhouse's warm places and foodbank, and the provision for children and the elderly, given the high level of child poverty, and of deprivation among older residents in Islington.

After the Ceremony held in the Main Hall, and lunch in the café, which is open to the public, those attending explored the building, which has a dance studio, a youth club room, and a learning room as well as an Early Years Centre.

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# ‘Active, efficient and sustainable travel’: the pandemic and after

By SARAH POTTER

Researchers at the Centre for London have examined recent evidence on whether the marked growth of cycling in London during the restrictions of the pandemic is being maintained ([Centre for London | Cycling in London after the pandemic](#) Mahmud and Mitchell). Policy makers were uncertain that it would be, now that the great impact of these restrictions on the use of buses, the underground and major roads is diminishing.



This issue arises because successive London mayors have promoted cycling, given its importance in other world cities, and achieved a 5.8% annual increase 2000-2017. Cycling levels doubled in London in this period while, nationally, there was no significant change. Census data echoes this disparity. In 2011, 4.3% of Londoners aged over 16 travelled to work by bike, rising to 5.1% in 2021. In England and Wales as a whole, only 3% cycled to work in 2021.

To set these figures in context, the picture on types of transport use (in the Travel in London report 15) to 2021 was as in the table.

*There was a steady increase in the use of public transport and decrease in the use of private transport between 2000 and 2019. ‘Active, efficient and sustainable’ travel (public transport + walking + cycling) was 52.2% of all travel in 2000, and had risen to 63.4% in 2019 just before the pandemic. It dropped to 60.2% during the pandemic as people chose the safety of private transport if they could, and fell again afterwards to 57.7%, in 2021.*

Trips by type of transport 2000-2021				
Year	Public Transport	Private Transport	Walk	Cycle
2000	27%	48%	24%	1.2%
2019	36%	37%	25%	2.4%
2020	22%	40%	34%	4.2%
2021	23%	42%	31%	3.7%

TfL Travel in London Report 15 p.63

Both walking and cycling dropping back a little and the use of public transport was still well below pre-pandemic levels, as many people continued to work from home.

By October 2022, cycling was at 140% of its (low) pre-pandemic baseline, with buses at 84%, the tube at 82% and traffic on major roads at 94%. In addition, the London Travel Demand Survey, which measures travel trips, found that according to data collected in late 2022, cycling was 20-25% higher than during the pandemic on weekdays and 90% higher at weekends. In the survey between April-September 2022, walking represented 41% of all trips - above its pre-pandemic share, but below the level achieved during the pandemic.

This gain in walking is of especial note. The researchers found the increase in active forms of travel encouraging.

The Mayor’s current targets are that all Londoners should walk or cycle for 20 minutes a day by 2041, and that 80% of all trips should be active, efficient and sustainable. This target has already been met in Islington. (Islington Transport Strategy 2020 – 2041: 2021 Monitoring Report).



# Proposed changes to national planning policy and their impact on London

By GILL SHEPHERD



The February edition of the London Forum’s online newsletter ‘Insights’ contains worrying detail about proposed changes to national planning policy, currently being debated in the Lords.

**Firstly** the already existing National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) must now accommodate the proposed creation of National Development Management Policies (NDMP) replacing some parts of the NPPF. These National Development Management Policies will, if they come into conflict with policies in a Local Plan be resolved in favour of the NDMP. The proposal amounts to a national centralisation of planning policy with policies determined by the Secretary of State having precedence over those determined through local democratic processes. This is contrary to the government’s stated objective of devolving powers to the local level.

This change will be especially damaging in London, where the London Plan and London’s Strategic Development Framework will be diminished, and the power for both the GLA and Local Planning Authorities to meet their development needs will be weakened.

**The second concern** relates to the proposals for an Infrastructure Levy to replace the current Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) used to deliver infrastructure and affordable housing. IL payments would be made on the completion of work rather than at the outset, exposing buyers to financial risk likely to inhibit the delivery of affordable housing.

**Thirdly** a 35% increase in the target for new housing in London is to be retained, to be met by increased densification. Most boroughs, especially inner-city boroughs, have limited capacity to take on increased housing targets without the loss of even more green space and without high-rise development. The target for London as a whole of 93,000 new homes annually is more than twice the number achieved in any year this century.

**Fourthly**, the government fails to recognise the huge pressure borough Planning Departments are facing, with many losses of experienced staff to the private sector. Funding for planning and development has been cut by more than 60% and as a result costs have fallen to local taxpayers to cover. This should not be allowed to continue.

**All of these** represent a weakening of the power of local authorities to consult democratically and to devise local schemes in consultation with local people. The London Forum will continue to follow developments closely and report back on them.




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# Annabelle Sreberny: 1949—2022

By TOM RUBENS



Annabelle, a local resident who was also a Professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, died on December 30<sup>th</sup> 2022. Her connection with our area was not confined to residency: she was politically active, as a member of the Islington North Constituency Labour Party; and was also a close friend of Jeremy Corbyn, who has posted an online tribute to her. Another local link lies in the fact that she was the daughter of Margot Sreberny, who was a founder of, and for many years a leading light of, the Finsbury Park Action Group: an organisation which was much like our own in seeking environmental improvement in the vicinity.

At SOAS, Annabelle's Professorship was in Global Media and Communication. Also, she was Director of the Centre for Media and Film Studies. As writer and scholar, she covered the themes of globalisation, communication and culture, with special emphasis on international news, and issues related to Iran—a country in which she had a special interest. Over a period of 34 years (1980—2014), she authored 5 books and edited 5 more.

Clearly, her work was a potent factor in, among of course many other ways, strengthening our locality's standing in the intellectual sense!

# The old Barclays Bank building at the bottom of Highbury Fields: submitting an objection

Plans were originally submitted to the Council's Planning Department for the upper floors of this building to be converted into an HMO (house in multiple occupation) with nine ensuite rooms sharing one kitchen. The Council made it clear that such a proposal was unacceptable and these plans were withdrawn.

A new proposal has now been submitted proposing nine ensuite rooms with two communal kitchens. Many will feel that this too presents completely inadequate living arrangements, as well as being a poor use of a landmark building. A smaller number of studios each with their own kitchen would be one possibility, or no more than three rooms sharing a kitchen another. It has also been suggested that bicycle storage should be an integral part of the proposed plan.

Local consultation was inadequate and there is still to time submit an objection, if you are quick, even though the official date for consideration of objections has passed. If you wish to do so, head your email **Planning Application P23022/4274/FUL Old Barclays Bank Building**, and address your objection to Jake Shiels, Senior Planning Officer, [Jake.Shiels@islington.gov.uk](mailto:Jake.Shiels@islington.gov.uk)

# New parking payment arrangements on Arsenal match days

Now that payments for visitors have to be made via RingGO on match days, Green Councillors are keen to hear from any members of the public who are having difficulties with the system. We have heard of elderly people having trouble setting up a RinGO account, of promised codes that do not arrive and of people who have not heard that any changes have been made and who therefore risk fines. If you or anyone you know has had difficulties, Benali Hamdache, the Highbury Ward councillor, would love to hear from you ([benali.hamdache@islington.gov.uk](mailto:benali.hamdache@islington.gov.uk))



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# Examination of the London Borough of Islington Strategic and Development Management Policies and Site Allocations Development Plan Documents

## 22 February 2023



### GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITE ALLOCATIONS GT1, GT2 AND GT3

The Inspectors, Jonathan Manning and C Masters, have stated: 'we consider that all three allocations cannot be considered sound, the reasons for which are set out below.

#### GT1: 207A Junction Road and GT2: 154 Junction Road

These sites are owned by Transport for London (TfL) and Network Rail respectively. Neither organisation have plans to sell their sites.

#### GT3: 71 Ronalds Road

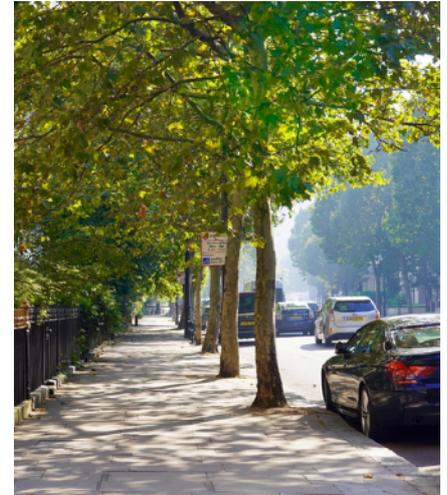
The site, whilst in the ownership of the Council, has several constraints. This includes close proximity to a railway line and a tunnel that runs directly below the site. Detailed evidence has been provided that questions the suitability of the site for gypsy and traveller accommodation due to potential adverse noise and vibration from these constraints.

We note that the Council is of the view that such matters can be addressed through detailed design at the planning application stage. However, in the absence of any evidence to show that there is a reasonable likelihood that such adverse effects could be suitably mitigated (bearing in mind the nature of gypsy and traveller accommodation) and that suitable living conditions are possible, we are unable to find the allocation sound.

#### Next Steps

Given our findings above, we would like to gain the views of the Council with regard to its suggested way forward, including the potential for an early review for all gypsy and traveller matters (that would need to be set out in the Plans), particularly given the late stage of the examination and the significant length of time the examination has already been running.

## Islington's Trees



The Islington Society has arranged a talk on Islington's trees by Jon Ryan, the council's Arboricultural Manager, and Gavin Rees, Tree Officer on Tuesday 4 April at 7 PM in the Town Hall (Committee Room 1). They will be talking about tree canopy cover within the borough and highlighting some of Islington's particularly notable trees. No prior notification or booking is required.

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

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HCA News  
Issue 127  
Feb-Mar 2023

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Editor: Gill Shepherd  
Layout: Susana Liveras  
Published by the HCA

# Book Review: The Story of the Grenfell Tower Tragedy

By SARAH POTTER



For so many people, the inferno at Grenfell Tower on June 14<sup>th</sup> 2017 in which 72 residents lost their lives is the most horrific event they have ever witnessed. Peter Apps, in his recent book *Show Me the Bodies: How We Let Grenfell Happen* (Oneworld, 2022) reminds us that it was also 'the most serious crime committed on British soil this century'. He writes as the editor of a magazine for those working in the social housing field, who had been publishing a series of articles on fire safety in 2017, and who was planning an investigation into the fire safety of cladding systems on tall buildings that summer. His book arises from his sense that he had not done enough by that time to raise the alarm or to work for change.

He documents in detail how commercial companies continued to sell highly flammable cladding and insulation used to improve warmth retention in ageing residential tower blocks such as Grenfell, even though tests and actual fires had shown that they were highly dangerous. He also reveals that many of the doors of the flats at Grenfell Tower, which should have been self-closing to prevent fire spreading, had either not been installed or were not working properly, even though the London Fire Brigade had told the council in Kensington and Chelsea that these should be installed in all its 650 tower blocks. As Apps points out, Grenfell's exterior was flammable because of its cladding, and inside, defective fire doors spread the fire and prevented residents from escaping.

He places particular emphasis on the damaging context of deregulation in housing, first in 1984 when a housing bill removed prescriptive rules on fire safety in the interest of minimal regulation by government and more self-regulation by the building industry, and again, under the coalition government in 2011, which emphasised deregulation and wished to stimulate housebuilding to revive the economy after the banking crisis.

Apps considers that deregulation ruled out any effective response to a cladding fire that occurred in 2009 in Southwark (with the loss of six lives). Nothing changed, similar cladding work was completed at Grenfell in 2016, and opened the way for the disaster a year later.