

The **Planning White Paper** has had a generally highly negative reception, from a wide spectrum of respondents, including professional organisations, particularly on the assault on public engagement in Planning, the RIBA commenting on “removal of democratic oversight from individual developments and the impacts that this will have on both public trust and the overall quality of development.” Another notable response was from former Supreme Court Justice Lord Carnwath, who discreetly observed that “the planning system is soundly based and in general; has served us well, but has not been assisted by frequent changes of policy direction” which have added “complexity to the robust, but over-cluttered and under-resourced” planning system. Even the City of London have made an excellent and very strong response, focusing particularly on the inexcusable omission of Metropolitan Open Land from the proposed “Protected Land” category and the proposals to almost eliminate engagement in the planning system. Our highly critical 17-page response can be found on our website.

Meanwhile, it is “business as usual” for David Richmond’s hard-working Planning Group, the current pandemic having had little impact on the volume of work. Indeed, one outcome of the pandemic, perhaps not unexpected, has been a marked increase in applications for outbuildings in back gardens for use as home offices, which we need to consider both sympathetically and critically, for the precedent they could set for building in back gardens, which could have a long-term adverse impact on the whole character of the area, as well as having a serious impact on neighbours’ amenities. In the case of **60 Talbot Road**, the application was for an outbuilding with study area, play room and a toilet. Since this would have the potential for becoming a separate dwelling, contrary to local policies, we were glad that Haringey followed our recommendation of granting permission on condition that any use as a separate dwelling must require a further application. We have made a similar request for a similar application for a home office garden room at **66 Langdon Park Road N6 5QG**. In our response, we made clear that we would not wish to obstruct a process which may well be forced upon many people under current conditions. However, since the application was in excess of permitted development limits, and could set a new precedent for building in gardens, which is prohibited under the Highgate Neighbourhood Plan, permission should only be granted if Haringey are confident that it would not be contrary to the Plan or establish an irresistible precedent. We have also urged Haringey to urgently produce clear policy guidelines to inform future such applications and, given the hopefully short-term nature of the emergency, have suggested that permissions should be granted for a period of five years, with a further application at the end of that period if the need continues.

When we learned that it was proposed to carry out extensive repair works to the Grade I Listed **Cromwell House**, and found that the application showed little understanding of the complexities of restoring such an important building, we immediately asked to meet the architects for the Ghana High Commission. This was willingly granted, we were allowed to inspect the building and, as a result of considerable input from the Society, a much more sensitive and appropriate application has been submitted for urgent repairs to the windows and leaking roof. We were reassured to find that the building is otherwise structurally sound and can be made watertight without substantial work. Once this has been done, a properly-considered application for other necessary restoration works can be made.

Following long discussions with Haringey, **Highgate School** have now submitted an overall long-term development plan for their estate. This has now gone out to public consultation and we will comment.

Haringey issued an enforcement notice for a glass-fronted terrace erected on the roof **87C Southwood Lane** without permission. However it has still not been removed, and we understand that Haringey will now start court proceedings.

The owners of a new single-storey basemented house at **7 Church Road**, permitted despite our objections about excessive backland development, have now applied to add a first floor home office, and we have objected strongly on a range of grounds. In particular, the present house was allowed on the basis of an earlier appeal decision that, at only one storey above ground, its impact on neighbours would be minimal. The additional storey would be 3 metres higher, and impact severely on what was still basically a back garden setting. Its windows and terrace would over look neighbours gardens and properties. Further, since permission was granted in 2013, policies in regard to backland development have become stricter, both locally and in the London Plan. Haringey policy requires new development to relate positively to neighbouring structures; improve the character and quality of an area; safeguard neighbours’ privacy, and address concerns expressed by neighbours. This meets none of these requirements; indeed, the local consultation carried out met unanimous criticism from affected neighbours. The loss of the green roof originally provided, the absence of any trees on site, and the impermeable surface of most of the site despite the requirements of the 2013 permission, will reduce its

ecological and flood mitigation capacity. Since the new garage is glazed, we argue that it could be used as a workspace, obviating the need for a further extension.

We were glad to see that Haringey refused a Certificate of Lawfulness in respect of **7 Wembury Mews** for an existing use, though neighbours were concerned that they were given no notice. In 2005, permission was granted to rebuild a garage, subject to a condition that it should only be used in conjunction with the house at 176 Archway Road. In 2007, a retrospective application was submitted for to retain the garage as residential accommodation with a loft space. This was refused as being inadequate for use as a dwelling. In 2010 the owner applied, and received approval, for it to be used for commercial purposes. However, according to the current application, "The building has never been used for commercial purposes and has only been used for residential accommodation since its construction," despite Haringey expressly forbidding such use. Haringey correctly determined that residential use was therefore unauthorised and issued an enforcement notice requiring the cessation of the unauthorised use.

Following our objection, Haringey have also refused another application for certificate of lawfulness to use a rear garden summerhouse at **10 Grange Road** as a separate residential dwelling, on grounds that no adequate evidence was offered to justify granting the Certificate. Separate residential use of this large structure would be excessive backland development, would have a severe impact on neighbours' amenities and on major nearby protected trees, and that enforcement action to secure its removal should be taken. In addition, the structure has two bedrooms without windows, contrary to Building Control requirements. We also argued that, given the inadequate evidence submitted, it should not have been validated by Haringey in the first place.

We objected strongly to an application for front boundary and garden work and the creation of front garden parking space at **44 Sheldon Avenue**, the application drawings failing to show the streetscape importance of the very pleasant open front garden. It is against policy to replace front gardens with paved parking areas, high fences and gates, and we are pleased that the application has been withdrawn. However, in a step backwards, a similar application for a new front wall with high railings at **31 Sheldon Avenue** was granted. Such inconsistency in applying local policies threatens to undermine the Conservation area altogether. However, Haringey did refuse an application to install front railings at **18 Stormont Road**, but the refusal has been appealed. The appeal documents claim the proposal is similar to what was there before, but it is not; but new legislation bars us from submitting further objections to the Inspector.

Another current threat to Conservation Area policies is posed by an application to demolish the original 1920s Walter H. Quennell house at **25 Sheldon Avenue** and replace it with a stereotyped and unprepossessing modern design which would undermine the while integrity of this part of the Conservation Area. We have submitted a strong and detailed objection. Despite Highgate's history of good modern buildings, the proposed design shows no understanding of its context. Such phrases, in justification, as "*This is a strongly client led design that echoes the existing streetscape in the early 20th Century villa style. The spirit of the design ties in with the existing but also seeks to reinvigorate with a minimalist approach to aesthetic through spatial design and material palette*", completely fail to recognise the character and qualities of the conservation area, and assumes that a flat roof and some columns will suffice, when what is proposed is in fact a pastiche modernist building which will neither preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area. The Quennell brothers were noted Arts and Crafts architects who built many houses in Highgate, Hampstead and The Garden Suburb, and an observer has noted that, despite too many bad permissions, the quality of the original architecture in Sheldon Avenue remains high and fairly consistent. In a conservation area the retention of the original houses is critical to the architectural and historical integrity of the road and their demolition is unthinkable.

There is widespread anger from numerous objectors at Haringey permitting a clumsy and excessive overdevelopment of flats on the site of the **Newstead Nursing Home, Denewood Road**. The Society, affected neighbours and a local Councillor spoke against it at a Zoom Planning Committee meeting. We have written to Haringey on record our concern that the objections raised had not be given sufficient weight and matters such as overlooking, the closeness of the huge basement to neighbouring properties, and discrepancies in drawings were ignored. It is of excessive density; it has a huge basement for parking, against Haringey's own no car policy in Haringey; it will result in the cutting down of 18 of 40 trees on site; surviving trees are so close to the development that there will inevitably be calls for their removal; and the basement poses a serious threat of damage to nearby houses at Willowdene, and even the Basement Impact Assessment shows groundwater 1.75m above basement level, which will have to be pumped off the site; what will happen if the pumps fail? And what was the point of adding chimneys? We can only conclude that, when Section 106 money is at stake, planning policies can be cynically sacrificed.

We were also worried about the conduct of the Zoom Planning Committee meeting, which appeared to us to be one-sided. Haringey's 20 minutes presentation fulsomely praised the scheme. The two objectors and councillor had 9 minutes between them to make their points of objection, and without the facility to explain our points using plans, it was very difficult to clarify what we thought were the scheme's many inconsistencies and failings. The committee asked questions for 30 minutes, to planning officers but not to objectors, the applicant was then given some 30 minutes to extol the virtues of his scheme, and the unanimous vote in favour seemed to be a foregone conclusion.

We have also had to flag up with Haringey what appears to be a substantial garden room being built in the rear garden of **30 Grange Road**, on the corner of Broadlands Road without permission. It can be clearly seen from the street, and will have a harmful impact on the streetscape, and possibly on a large mature Beech tree next to it.

A number of applications for replacement doors and windows have been submitted by Homes for Haringey on a large number of houses owned by them on the **Story Road estate** off North Hill. On past experience, we have had no alternative but to object as they completely fail to have any regard for the original character of the houses. On past experience, too, we expect the applications to be waived through, to the detriment of another part of the Conservation Area.

We objected to proposals to extend **32 Hampstead Lane**, because the photograph accompanying the application marked "existing" showed an ancient oak screening the house, which was felled ten years ago and the extension, narrowing the gap between two houses, would be far more visible from the public realm. The application was nevertheless approved.

We have objected to proposals for a substantial 4-bedroom annex with basement swimming pool at the Listed **15 View Road**.

Alarmed residents of **Eton Court, Shepherds Hill**, have appealed to us to help them fight an application to install telecommunication equipment on the roof of their flats; astonishingly, it appears that telecoms companies can just do this, without the consent of the owners, if they get permission.

Haringey's refusal of a new house in garden land next to **2 Lanchester Road** has been dismissed at appeal; we objected on both occasions. Though outside the Conservation Area, the Inspector's reasoning is an important decision for the area: "Whilst I do not find harm would arise to the character and appearance of the area as a result of the loss of a small portion of garden... I do find the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area in other regards, and unacceptable living conditions for the occupiers would ensue."

We also objected to an application to add large extensions to **48 Yeatman Road** and replace the garage with a new dwelling. Haringey's refusal has been appealed, and we have written to the Planning Inspectorate supporting Haringey's refusal.

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There have been encouraging developments with regard to **Archaeology in Highgate**, the neglect of which has been a major concern to us and resulted, we believe, in the loss of numbers of important sites. Contractors Oxford Archaeology, who have been asked by Historic England to help them with the London-wide project of reviewing Archaeological Priority Areas, contacted us to ask if we can give them some detailed information about local archaeology, and particularly the mediaeval Bishop's Park, where we have long been concerned that sites are being lost. We have sent them a large amount of information: probably much more than they anticipated!

Haringey have taken on a second Conservation Officer to help with updating the Haringey Local List, which we and the CAAC wrote for them over two years ago. We are told that the new List could be published this autumn, though autumn is now somewhat advanced. In the meantime we continue to press Haringey – as we have done for years – to introduce **Article 4 Directions** which would remove permitted development rights for vital works such as walls, railings and painting original brickwork.

Traffic and Transport (T&T) See also 3.7 and 3.8

Haringey's repair works to the historic elevated section of **North Hill** are now finished, ahead of schedule, and the work looks very good, with a pleasant brick facing to what was previously rough concrete and the old railings, at least 140 years old, well restored. However, an alarmed resident noticed that the original granite kerbstones along The Bank were being replaced with concrete, without our knowledge. She sought our help, and as a result of her own efforts, we had a meeting with Haringey senior engineer Dana Rasheed, who halted the removal of the kerbs and happily agreed to restore as many of the original

kerbstones being replaced as possible, though some had deteriorated beyond repair. We felt that it was a pity to throw away good granite which, at some 3 billion years old, was a good example of sustainability.

The new no right-hand turn at the top of Swains lane into Pond Square, introduced without any consultation by Camden under emergency Covid-19 works, supposedly to improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists, has been completely pointless and has resulted in motorists rat-running through Pond Square, going in wide circles via West Hill to get to the High Street, and performing U-turns in South Grove. Camden refused to respond to concerns expressed by ourselves and Pond Square residents.

The closure of **Barclays Bank** leaves Highgate without a Bank, and we understand that the Hampstead Branch is also closing. Local Councillors are seeking somewhere which could host an ATM machine; if you can suggest a location, please let us know. We objected to Barclays' application to Haringey to close and fill in the ATM, though more on principle than with any hope of success, submitting that:

- the ATM is an important part of local infrastructure;
- some 17% of the UK population – over 8 million adults – use cash as a matter of necessity and cannot use digital banking;
- Highgate has a large elderly population many of whom have no access to online banking.
- the Government's own report recommended that: "We need to start considering cash to be a core part of Britain's national infrastructure, and not just as a commercial issue;"
- the Highgate Neighbourhood Plan aims to maintain the vitality and viability of the area's commercial cores to meet the day-to-day needs of the community;
- Barclays Bank have not properly considered alternatives to the closure of the ATM (We have since heard, through Councillors, that they have made contact with a view to trying to resolve the problem).

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We continue to look at a lot of **tree applications**.

We objected to an application to fell an unusually large Mimosa tree at **32 Hampstead Lane**, said to be causing minor cracking to a wall, and asking for a Tree Preservation Order to protect it. As a result, Haringey decided that only minor pruning would be acceptable, and that if it was intended to proceed with felling, a Tree Preservation Order would be applied. If they wish to do further works, a Tree Preservation Order will be imposed. This was followed by an application for a 33% reduction, which we still felt to be unnecessarily drastic, and we have suggested that, in view of the tree's importance, it should be placed under the protection of a TPO and alternative means found of addressing any issues connected with the wall. We opposed a similar application to remove 2 fine TPO'd Spruce trees next door, **at 30 Hampstead Lane** on the grounds that their roots were lifting paving stones. This too has been refused. In yet another instance, our objection to felling a fine mature Plane Tree in front of **1-10 Parklands, Cholmeley Park**, resulted in a TPO being placed on the tree

It is proposed to fell four trees and a Privet Hedge at **449-451 Archway Road**. While we concede that the trees are too large for the small garden and that removal is probably advisable, the removal of all greenery will harm the streetscape, which features well-maintained Privet Hedges along most of the frontages, and in such a busy, noisy and polluted road as much greenery as possible should be retained. We have argued that, although hedges – regrettably – have no legal protection, most urban Privet hedges are almost certainly the same ages as the houses and original plantings – in this case, in the 1890s, and therefore possibly 120 years old, and we have suggested that the overgrown privet hedge be pruned and retained to maintain some element of greenery in the street

There is an application for substantial tree thinning and removal in the woodland area between Athlone House and the Heath Orchard. However, as it is an overgrown, unmanaged and heavily shaded environment of little ecological value, it seems to be a good woodland management proposal which will promote a better ground flora and we have no objection. We did point out that the historic mediaeval boundary between Hornsey at St. Pancras, runs through this woodland and that one or two 19th century boundary markers survive, which should be retained.

It is pleasing to report that, with yet another Green Flag Award, **Hampstead Heath & Highgate Wood** have won the accolade in every one of the Awards' 24-year existence. However we, like the other members of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee, were surprised by the recent **City of London governance report** by Lord Lisvane which, among many other proposals for modernising the City's long-standing management structures – some of which may well be justified - also recommends abolishing all the Consultative Committees, with no clear reason given other than there are too many of them. His Lordship seemed unaware that the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee is a statutory one which cannot simply be abolished, and shows a signal lack of understanding of the purpose and value of the Consultative Committees. The Chair of the Committee, City Alderman Anne Fairweather, shares our

concern, and has promised to register her disappointment that the value of Consultative Committees and the input they receive from their external Members, let alone the Heath Committee's statutory role, are not reflected in the report.

While outside our immediate area, we were glad to see that Camden have refused proposals to build two houses on the car park site next to **Jack Straw's Castle**, at the highest point of Hampstead Heath. However, in their refusal Camden inexplicably made no mention of the fact that the development abuts the Heath, which is Metropolitan Open land, and would clearly harm the quality and openness of the Heath; they only mention its impact on the adjoining Conservation Area, which is the tiny cluster of historic buildings around Jack Straw's. Such an omission is dismaying, and could give the developer some advantage in any appeal. An Appeal will presumably follow, which the City, the Heath Society and other groups will fight.

Work on the Heath in 2020 has been made hugely complex, and trying, by the pandemic. Recognising the importance of access to the Heath at this time, the City have protested to the Minister against the enforced closure of the swimming ponds. There has certainly been more activity by groups on the Heath, resulting in extensive vandalism, erosion of the more sensitive areas of the Heath where people do not normally go, and a huge increase in litter. Pollution in the ponds has been caused by leaking waste water in pipes running down from Kenwood and from water running from Beechwood via the Fitzroy Park allotments, where there are large manure heaps.