

PLANNING CASES

Haringey's decision to grant a significant overdevelopment at Townsend Yard, given the high importance of the Listed early 18th century Shepherds Cottage and the number and intensity of objections – including a carefully-argued 8-page objection from the Society - under delegated powers was inexcusable. In Boroughs such as Barnet and Camden, more than five objections make an application automatically considered for taking to Committee; Haringey refuse to do so unless the application is what they consider a “major” one. We were particularly shocked by the demonstrably deeply flawed reason for granting permission, that the cottage is not visible from the public realm, so being hidden by the new development will not harm its historic significance. A brief visit will suffice to show (see photograph) that it is (a) totally visible to the public, and (b) an important element of the Conservation Area and historic; we can therefore only assume the case officer did not actually visit the site.

Fortunately, thanks to a major failure by the developers and Haringey, Listed Building Consent to demolish the garages attached to Shepherds Cottage was not applied for. Under our pressure, Haringey have conceded that this is necessary, and we have been awaiting an application for many weeks.

Importantly, they have also confirmed in writing that they will take into account “the desirability of preserving the building, its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.” We have advised them that we regard the matter sufficiently seriously to have engaged the services of leading planning barrister David Altaras (who guided us to victory at Athlone House). He has visited the site, expressed sympathy for our concerns, and issued an initial opinion; members will be aware of our appeal for contributions to defray our legal costs.

While we accept some form of mews development in Townsend Yard, the permitted scheme is a major overdevelopment and will seriously damage the setting of the important early 18th century cottage, which has now been given its own separate listing by Historic England following extensive research by Janet Jones at the London Metropolitan Archives. We will argue that the Listed Building Application presents the opportunity to remedy what our barrister agrees was a serious error in granting the original consent, and to seek a smaller-scale development which protects the cottage's setting.

We also notified the fire services that appliances will not be able to reach the Cottage if the development goes ahead, that their assessment was based on misleading drawings, and that a fire engine would not be able to turn in the yard. Their reply that they do not consider the fire aspects for adjoining buildings, and that it was a planning issue, and nothing to do with the fire service, is unacceptable, since case officers have no expertise in such matters. Despite pressing them since June, we have so far had no satisfactory reply.

On July 14 we met the developers of the proposed new home on the site of the former **Mary Feilding House**. We expressed concerns at the loss of the Home. We were told they were experienced healthcare operators and care facility providers; their homes included self-contained flats and they had received a number of awards. However, it became clear that it would not be a replacement for Mary Feilding, but an entirely different facility.

All structures will be demolished to provide a new 70-room facility. They assured us that they recognised the site's sensitivity and context, impact on neighbours, and their team included a heritage adviser. They had had pre-application discussions with Haringey, who broadly supported the proposals. They emphasised that the Mary Feilding operation had not been viable for some years, and that they would be retaining the care home in a more contemporary manner, though it became clear that it would not be a care home, but basically a facility for post-operative patients – effectively a luxury hotel with medical support.

Though the two new buildings were said to have been designed to reflect the differences in design on North Hill and View Road, and to avoid loss of privacy to surrounding areas, it was clear that neither was the case. They would overlook the gardens of Yeatman Road: something which Haringey clearly missed. It seems that Haringey insisted on buildings which reflect the supposed character of the area, though had we been given the opportunity to have pre-application discussions, we would have urged a good modern design.

The proposals also include a large basement, over 30% of which is for parking, but our requests for detailed information on proposed car use, delivery traffic, access by public transport, etc. were not satisfactorily answered.

They could not tell us what the height of the North Hill buildings would be relative to the adjoining Georgian Listed terrace. We were told that Haringey planners were happy with the scale, but our concern was about the poor design, which resembled nothing so much as a 1980s office block, and was completely unsuitable for a Conservation Area; we were told that they had been “working for months” with Haringey on this, which was particularly depressing and made the lack of earlier public consultation all the more unacceptable, as well as calling into question Haringey’s own understanding of the Conservation Area. We were also hugely disappointed with the View Road design, a poor pastiche of the neighbouring Edwardian styles; we made clear that we do not want pastiche and wanted to work with them on a better design. We once again expressed our disappointment that neither they nor Haringey had consulted local groups earlier.

We also asked if they were aware of the geological and hydrological complexity of the area, and the necessity for a thorough site survey to ensure that there were no impacts on neighbours. This, we were told, was “all in hand”. We also reminded them that the whole area had been brought within the revised Highgate Archaeological Priority Area and an archaeological assessment would be needed.

The **Winchester Tavern** has been made an asset of community value, giving the local community the opportunity to bid if it comes up for sale again. We consider another attempt should be made to obtain similar status for The Victoria.

477 Archway Road

This house has a large garden backing on to North Hill Avenue. The owner is understood to want to build a house in the back garden, with North Hill Avenue as access. The existing boundary wall fronting the Avenue was unsafe and taken down, but residents were alarmed by an application to fell a TPO-protected Lime tree alongside it. Everyone thought that it stood on land owned by Haringey, but further alarm was caused when it transpired that Haringey had sold the strip of land to the developer without giving other neighbours the opportunity to buy it. Concerns were increased when Haringey first instructed the developer to demolish and rebuild the wall, and then decided that it was permitted development which they could not control.

We argued that, given the tree’s streetscape importance, the wall could be rebuilt simply by leaving a sufficient space either side of the tree trunk, to avoid damage to the roots or trunk, and that felling would be an unacceptable solution. Fortunately Haringey agreed and the application to fell was refused.

Luxury developers Harrison Varma plan to replace two houses on **Hampstead Lane** by the Highgate School Far Field with an 85-bedroom nursing home in two six-storey blocks, with double basements. We understand that pre-application meetings with Haringey have already been held, and will study the plans carefully.

An application for a substantial extension and large basement at **15 Broadlands Road** drew extensive objections from the Society and neighbours, and was, as a result, revised and reduced – though it is still large - taking into account new evidence on drainage. This contradicted earlier evidence and showed that previous trial work had to cease because of groundwater, that the site is underlain by water-bearing layers and within 100m of a watercourse, and that the new basement will be below the water table, requiring new measures to prevent ground water problems for neighbours. However, while concluding that the basement can be built safely, it does not specify how, and an independent report suggests that a full and adequate understanding of the groundwater flows and levels is necessary; that previous ground water monitoring has been inadequate; that this needs to be done over time and varying seasons and that it is therefore premature to suggest solutions. It is claimed that that movement to existing and surrounding buildings should be no greater than “very slight”, which has been called into question by an independent assessment; hardly reassuring for neighbours? In addition, the extension, which will be glazed, will still result in light disturbance for neighbours and will significantly fill the existing gap allowing a view into the rear garden. Such gaps are characteristic of this part of the Conservation Area generally and must be maintained.

We have therefore maintained our strong objection. You can see, then, that the Society’s Planning Group has to develop our own expertise in ground engineering too; if any member has this specialist expertise, we’d love to hear from you!

We were particularly worried by an application for a large detached house in the rear garden of **12 Broadlands Road**. Claimed to be for use by the existing no.12 owner, a CIL exemption claim was included. Our concerns included loss of garden land, specifically barred under local policy; impact on the amenity of neighbouring gardens; the use of a CIL exemption in these circumstances; loss of trees; and the creation a very damaging precedent for backland garden development.

The house would be 3.4m higher than its neighbours. What is now a narrow footpath will become a paved access road 3.7m to 5.4m. wide, allowing two-way traffic into garden land and off-street parking in garden land for a total of 6 cars.

We are therefore appalled that planning consent was granted for this totally inappropriate development despite an objection by Haringey's own Conservation Officer, and will be raising this with them as an example of inexcusably bad decisions which are relentlessly undermining the Conservation Area.

We have also objected to a revised application for a large 3-storey side and rear extension to the Grade II Listed house at **15 View Road**. The application fails to provide drawings of the existing situation to enable Haringey to compare the proposals and should not have been validated. It has been dug further into the ground to try to keep the height down, while the drawings show the existing garden level significantly lower than on the previous application, giving the impression that the building will sit lower. However the result is a huge hole which will prejudice all the trees in this area of the garden and may threaten the structural stability of the Listed house. It will not enhance the setting of the listed building and, in our view, could easily become a separate three bedroom house.

We objected strongly to an application for Prior Approval to change the use of **222 Archway Road** Prior approval application for change of use from office to residential, though since we objected, the new Class E permitted development rules have come into effect, allowing virtually any shop, office or similar use to be changed to housing; a highly controversial Government measure which has drawn almost universal condemnation as potentially leading to the destruction of High Streets across the country. However, it may still be possible to oppose it grounds that it will provide substandard residential accommodation. The living accommodation will be in a full basement; there is no direct window for the bedroom or living room; and the only ventilation to the living room is through an existing window in the shop front, to which extensive alterations would be necessary to meet this requirement; and even then, the window faces directly onto Archway Road with its high level of pollution. The means of escape is also inadequate.

While we did not oppose an application to build a new house on a large garage site at **37 Lanchester Road**, the proposed design is clumsy, out of character and harmful to the character of the road. Further, calling into question Haringey's own processes, it is another case where the drawings were inadequate and should not have been validated. It will severely affect mature oak trees adjacent to Highgate Wood; the City of London has objected for this reason. However, yet again, despite objections from 35 neighbours and the Society, we were not consulted on amended plans, Haringey's reason being that they do not reconsult where amended plans are smaller than the original plans. To widespread anger, it has been permitted.

We have also objected to an application to demolish an original C.H.B.Quennell House at **Branksome, Courtenay Avenue**, one of the diminishing number remaining, and replace it with a larger basemented pastiche. The CAAC, and even the Ancient Monument Society and the Twentieth Century Society have also objected. Quennell was an important Arts and Crafts architect, whose houses are a vital element of the Bishop's sub-area of the Conservation Area, where there has been relentless pressure for demolition and replacement with tasteless overdeveloped mansions. The loss of many original houses, by Quennell and architects of similar repute, for which the Bishops' sub-area was designated as part of the Conservation Area has been disastrous.

The applicants' outrageous assertion that Branksome was 'only' designed by one of Quennell's assistants is unsupported by any evidence that it was not designed by Quennell himself; and even if that were the case, it is inconceivable that it would not have been approved by him. The proposed replacement is an oversized pastiche of the original.

The applicants' Heritage Statement also makes some fundamental errors. Its current poor condition is because it has been left empty; no justification is given for the claim that the house cannot be made habitable. They state that the only archaeological site nearby is the Bishop's medieval moated hunting lodge, "half a kilometre away", though it is no more than a couple of hundred metres. The surrounding area may contain extensive remains associated with the estate of one of the England's leading mediaeval ecclesiastics. Fortunately the whole of the Mediaeval Park is now within the Highgate Archaeological Priority Area, and we were delighted that Historic England agreed and have insisted on an Archaeological Condition on any consent.

Though designated as 'neutral', the Highgate Neighbourhood Plan states that "proposals to demolish buildings that are non-designated heritage assets will be subject to a balanced judgement with regard to the scale of the loss and the significance of the asset. Any proposed replacement should make a positive Contribution to the conservation Area." This application would destroy one of the few remaining original heritage assets and replace it with a pastiche.

When an application was made on the **Barclays Bank Building at 54 Highgate High Street** to remove an old condition requiring the upper office floors to revert to residential should ceased to be a bank, we objected, pointing out that it was an ideal opportunity to secure more residential accommodation in the village, particularly since Haringey have recently been censured by Government for not permitting enough housing. We were therefore dismayed when they allowed the application, particularly as it is proposed to use the building as a day nursery. This is surely not an ideal spot for such a use. Children will be running out into a major through route across a narrow pavement; there is a controlled crossing outside the premises which will make dropping off and picking up by car illegal, and with opening hours of 7am-7pm, the inevitable delivery of children by car will cause huge congestion. Since it is proposed to use the garden as a playground, adjoining residents are worried about noise. Unfortunately, in a taste of what is to come, this is Permitted Development under the Government's new Class E, and we cannot object to it; we understand that Haringey planners share our concerns.

We objected to a new house on an empty site at **10 Fordington Road**. While a house there is acceptable, the design is clumsy and asymmetrical, resembling half of a pair of semis, with a strange chimney in the design. Neighbours are also worried about the impact of the large basement in an area with a history of surface water drainage problems and a network of streams. For this reason, we urged Haringey to obtain an independent assessment of the Basement Impact Assessment. A meeting with the architect to improve the design did not achieve anything and it has now been permitted.

We objected to substantial alterations and extensions at **69 Shepherds Hill** as overdevelopment. Though citing several similar developments approved nearby, these had been against Conservation Area Policies and should not be a reason for further proliferation. Fortunately Haringey listened and it was refused as damaging to the scale of the group of properties of which it was a part; covering an excessive part of the gardens; and likely to cause overlooking of neighbours because of its size.

We supported residents concerned about proposals to replace the **garages Behind Wembury Mews** with four houses and remove the trees on the site, which comprises part of the gardens of Wembury Road and Langdon Park Road. We considered it overdevelopment, poorly designed, and of excessive density harmful to the amenity of residents whose gardens back onto it due to the increased number of cars in what is presently a quiet area. We felt that three houses would be more appropriate, and would also avoid loss of trees and maintain the character of the Mews.

We objected strongly to an application for retrospective permission for a high front boundary wall and gates erected without permission at **5 Grange Road**. Though the works were claimed to be minimal, it was clearly far from minimal in comparison with the previous ones, and very harmful to the semi-rural character of the road. The drawings submitted were also inaccurate. Haringey agree and refused it as damaging to local character.

We noticed that Homes for Haringey had disfigured the fine cobbled yard in front of the historic **Old Fire Station Flats** in North Road with painted hatched yellow lines which, we were advised, was to prevent parking in front of the fire access to St. Michael's School. However, we soon noted that the lines were wearing off, and people in any case continuing to park there. We have suggested that the lines be removed, and a clear sign erected explaining that it is a fire access and must not be blocked.

We have objected to an application to build an outbuilding in the front garden of the Listed **Apothecary House, 47 West Hill**. This will be visible from the road and would be unacceptable.

Haringey's refusal of an extra story on the new backland development at **7 Church Road**, to which we objected strongly, was appealed, and the appeal refused. The Inspector ruled that, while it had been carefully designed, it already has a significant impact on neighbours, and although it would provide improved living accommodation and its appearance was acceptable, its benefits would not outweigh the harm to neighbours' amenity.

Peabody Estates have abandoned proposals to redevelop the old **Holborn Infirmary campus** at the Archway and sold it for £200m to SevenCapital for residential development. They seem to propose keeping the existing buildings, for which we and Better Archway Forum have sought Listed status, with additional building 'in the same style', though something imaginative, sympathetic and modern would be more appropriate. We need to find what pre-application discussions have occurred with Islington, and to urge Islington to produce a planning brief for the site.

We supported residents of **Tudor Close**, off Hornsey Lane, angered by Homes for Haringey's over-development of the site and the serious inadequacy of the Construction Management Plan, which has

drawn over 150 objections. Disturbingly, while arnet, Camden and Westminster bring applications to Planning Committee for decision when more than five objections are received, Haringey refuse to do so, however many objections are made. Concerns include development of the existing car park, despite inadequate assessment of parking need, resulting in major parking stress in adjoining roads; the presence of contaminants such as asbestos, yet the soil contamination assessment seems to have been based on samples from surrounding places which will not be developed; and the crass erection of site hoarding blocking current residents' windows.

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MISC. HIGHGATE NON-PLANNING

Concerns about Planning Procedures continue to place difficulties in the way of liaising constructively with our local authority planners, and we aim to have meetings with planners from Camden, and the new planning team at Haringey, to discuss these. Foremost among these are Article 4 Directions to counter the potential damage from ever-widening Permitted Development rules, including the introduction of the new Use Class E which covers almost every town centre use and which, by permitting any shop or office to be converted to housing without the need for consent, threatens the viability of high streets and are relentlessly taking control of local issues out of the community's hands and placing it in those of developers. Camden propose to introduce these throughout, in order to counter the worst impacts, as do other boroughs such as Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea, while Islington have taken the lead by issuing a legal challenge to the Government's whole Permitted Development agenda: something which we will all watch anxiously.

Other matters which concern us are the misuse of 'non-material amendment' applications, light pollution, and a number of what we consider to be seriously bad planning consents. Haringey's reluctance to bring contentious applications to Planning Committee is of particular concern. Barnet and Camden automatically consider taking anything to committee which brings more than five objections, enabling affected residents to put their case directly, and most other Boroughs have a similar approach; but Haringey will not contemplate such democratic action unless the development is a "major" one - i.e. very large; they would not even consider taking a development in Hornsey Lane which drew 150 objections to Committee. They need to be much more sensitive to context, and to understand that something like Townsend Yard - or even a single building in the wrong place - can set a drastic precedent and have a disastrous effect on a sensitive Conservation Area; in planning terms they have an equal duty to protect these. They are currently giving the impression that planning in Highgate doesn't matter, while both Boroughs seem to regard Highgate as only 'half' a village on the edge of their territory, and have signally failed to liaise to ensure good planning, comprehensive consultation (when Camden introduce traffic measures in the village, they do not consult anyone on the Haringey side of the High Street) and town centre management. Indeed, one of our long-standing concerns has been the absence of any **Camden-Haringey collaboration**. The two local authorities should combine to provide town centre management guidance in the same way that they would for any other local centre; despite the presence of a neighbourhood plan and a legal duty to co-operate on cross-border concerns, they do not - traffic control measures being just one example

There seems to be little internal co-ordination. It is unclear how many important applications are referred to the Conservation Officer - despite our regularly noting in our responses that they should be consulted - and in one case a development was granted despite a recommendation for refusal by the Conservation Officer. Neither is it clear how many applications for tree work are actually referred to their Tree Officers and are simply decided by case officers with little tree expertise. Too many development which will impact on trees are not referred to tree officers because the trees are not mentioned in the application. This is why we take great care to consider tree impacts in any application.

In reply to their query, our Ward Councillors were told that, "in theory", all applications can be called in for consideration by Committee, the criteria being whether the proposal is a significant development causing substantial local interest; if the recommendation is for approval contrary to policy; and whether the application is recommended for approval. Most of the contentious developments permitted recently come into this category; yet none have been called in to give the community, and particularly neighbours who will be badly affected, an opportunity to make their case.

Under **Traffic and Transport** issues, it is at least a relief to report that Camden's contentious proposed changes to the CPZ hours of operation on their side of the High Street, imposing weekday parking restrictions from 8.30 a.m. to 6.30 p.m., have been dropped, citing "the very significant level of objections... particularly in the Highgate area." It generated an overwhelmingly negative response among

traders, businesses and residents, including on the Haringey side, where there was considerable anger at the lack of consultation.

We recognise the complex parking problems facing Highgate, but felt strongly that this was not the appropriate response and would have had a significant adverse effect on businesses in Highgate. Our petition demonstrated that 99.2% were opposed to the change, and it is very welcome that, after two years, the uncertainty for local traders, businesses and residents is over.

However, all is not yet well. Camden are now well aware of local anger at its equally ill-considered one-way scheme on Millfield Lane, and its illogical banning of right turns into Pond Square, have created increased problems of car, cyclist and pedestrian conflict, increased traffic and pollution for residents on West Hill, rat-running through Pond Square, and dangerous traffic conflict at the top of West Hill; all this to encourage cycling up London's steepest hill.

Yet despite the overwhelming criticism of these schemes, and Camden's own admission that it has increased traffic and pollution, they are still going through the charade of consulting on whether to make the changes permanent. The deadline for objections will have passed by the time you read this, so we hope you have been monitoring our website for details of how to object, and will continue to make clear to your Ward Councillors that these changes must be reversed.

We have been communicating our major concerns about the Government's proposed Planning Bill, as well as their permitted development changes, to MP Catherine West, and have received a very supportive response; it is clear that she is among the many MPS who condemn the proposals as damaging and undemocratic, and we have urged her to work with MPs of all parties to maximise opposition.

The **Archway Road Action Group**, formed to revitalise businesses along Archway Road, has been revived by Councillor Morris and our past Chair Elspeth Clements sits on it.

Highgate School have joined with Haringey to close the eastern stretch of Bishopswood Road between Broadlands Road and Hampstead Lane during school run hours. While clearly aimed at increasing road safety for the Junior and Pre-Prep schools, there was no prior consultation with residents in local streets, who are concerned that it will simply move the already heavy, and congestive, school run traffic onto neighbouring streets and they will be monitoring whether there will be any adverse impacts. We have also submitted detailed comments to Haringey on **Highgate School's Travel Plan**, which clearly has good intentions but offers insufficient detail on how the requirement for pupils and staff to use public transport or the School bus service, or to walk or cycle to school, relieving school run pressure on North Road and streets in the Bishopswood Road area, will be achieved. There is little analysis of present travel patterns, and it is not clear how it is intended to address the 20% of staff who drive to school, given the lack of parking. Indeed, an observation "highlighting the number of cars parking on the zigzag lines outside the School travelling the wrong way down the road, and... drivers... using their horns unnecessarily" gives some idea of the driving behaviour of some Highgate parents about which local residents frequently complain.

With the removal of much equipment from the **BBC Highgate Mast** at the top of Swains Lane, accounts have been circulating that the BBC may be planning to sell the site. This raised major concerns for what a development might intend to put there – on a prestigious site with views over Hampstead Heath and London, if the building is tall enough – but it appears that new contracts are being granted and there may as yet be no threat.

A useful decision in terms of precedent has come from Barnet, which has refused an application for a new **telecommunications mast** at Lyttelton Court, Lyttelton Road, in the Hampstead Garden Suburb Conservation Area. It was refused as imposing prominent and visually obtrusive features within the street scene and causing street clutter, and would therefore have significant adverse impact on the character, appearance and visual amenities of the conservation area and adjacent locally listed building. They also note that the applicant did not come to Barnet for any pre-application advice service, stating that "in accordance with paragraph 189 of the NPPF, the applicant is encouraged to utilise this service prior to the submission of any future formal planning applications, in order... to discuss possible solutions to the reasons for refusal."

The Society has also responded to the recent **Boundary Commission Parliamentary Constituency Boundary Review proposals for London**, which would place the Camden side of Highgate into a new Kentish Town & Bloomsbury constituency, and the Haringey side into a new Finchley & Muswell Hill constituency.

Whilst it is not our remit to argue on any political grounds, we have taken the opportunity to point out that Highgate is a single community and should be in one constituency, and that the 2017 Highgate Neighbourhood Plan states: *"For many years Highgate has been divided by the Camden/Haringey Borough*

boundary. Our Vision is to unite the community across this artificial administrative border to deliver a more cohesive and joined up approach on planning and transport policies."

We therefore expressed our disappointment that the Review perpetuates the division of our neighbourhood along the current anachronistic, artificial and illogical boundary running down Highgate High Street. The whole of Highgate belongs in one constituency, yet despite the Neighbourhood Plan, we still find it difficult to persuade Camden and Haringey to work together, as a result of which they still 'forget' us when producing proposals for such issues as cycling, traffic, transport and shopping.

While recognising that constituency numbers are a prerequisite, our Chair William Britain provided statistical analyses of how realistic boundary could be set. Highgate is a single postal district, N6, which provides further evidence of a single Highgate community, while Highgate High Street, together with Archway Road, are the main shopping areas in Highgate and the High Street is a unifying feature. While we realise that the review does not affect the Borough boundaries, we urged that to include the whole of Highgate in one parliamentary constituency will continue the momentum towards unification established with the formation of the Neighbourhood Plan. See the full letter on our website.

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TREES AND OPEN SPACE

Local residents were anxious about a threat to a group of trees at **5 & 9 Milton Avenue and 38 Langdon Park Road**. We supported them, and Haringey have as a result imposed a group Tree Protection Order. Haringey Council has objected and recommended TPO status.

After 30 years service with the City of London, the **Superintendent of Hampstead Heath, Bob Warnock**, has retired. The Heath and Hampstead Society generously hosted a farewell party for him, at which their Chair, Marc Hutchinson, and I were among those giving short addresses appreciative of his time there. Bob maintained the tradition of consultation and openness, and of listening seriously to the concerns and suggestions of its members which has characterised the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee - we can only recall one serious disagreement - and which has been a model which we wish our local authorities would follow. His interim replacement is Richard Gentry, previously Head of the Heath Constabulary, whom we know well and have worked closely with on the Consultative Committee (HHCC), and we understand a permanent post will be advertised in the new year. During the summer, the City held a series of free public events to mark the **150th Anniversary of the Hampstead Heath Act of 1871**, which saved this irreplaceable amenity for London, and we were also among those invited to a very enjoyable reception at Keats House to commemorate the event. As their contribution, the Heath and Hampstead Society provided the splendid set of season information signs which you will have seen at four entrances to the Heath.

As ever, a vast amount of work goes into the task of managing **Hampstead Heath**; I have long wished that there could be some way of informing a wider sector of the public about the huge complexity of the task, and am pleased that the City are now looking at a programme of public walks. The Heath is happily starting to recover from the extensive erosion and trampling inflicted upon it as a result of people's needs to get out into open space during the Covid pandemic, and pools and playgrounds etc, as well as Keats House, have been reopened, though the huge demand to use the swimming pools has put those facilities under pressure, with five life-saving rescues in June; there was also a night-time invasion of the Men's Pond for a noisy party. The recent high rainfall blocks the outflow from the ponds chain, and causes a higher bacteria count in the swimming ponds, which means they have to be closed, and there are more staff absent due to self-isolation than at any previous time.

It has been particularly bad at weekends for litter, the Heath teams doing a great job in clearing it, though on one occasion the collection company failed to turn up, resulting in an almost unmanageable amount of compacted waste. Other Incidents include illegal camping, fires, public sex, indecent exposure, drug abuse, fighting and stabbing, fence demolition, illegal swimming and paddle boarding, and three constables injured by a drug dealer. On the East Heath car park, people are even regularly stealing the drain covers. And don't forget the Lido **Athletics track**, which needs new lighting and a new surface. Managing the Heath is more than just pruning trees and telling people to keep their dogs under control.

Refurbishment of most of the playgrounds has been completed. In response to the problem of ever-increasing **Professional Dogwalking** and its undesirable impacts, a licensing scheme is being introduced and a working group, including HHCC members, will establish the criteria, likely to be a maximum of our dogs per walker; not unexpectedly, this is being vigorously opposed by the Professional Dogwalkers' Association; but why should they profit from the use of this public facility without making some contribution to its upkeep? Another factor impacting on the Heath is the growth of **Forest Schools**. While

these have the laudable aim of introducing children to nature and the concept of living in the open air, their popularity is causing severe erosion in the formerly wilder parts of the Heath (and Highgate and Queens Woods) which they use; a group will define areas where they may operate and surveys of bird habitats will help establish these limits. A further problem is erosion of pond banks and harassment of water birds by **dogs**, too often condoned, and even encouraged, by irresponsible dog owners; signs will be used to make clear where dogs are not allowed, and wildlife areas protected by dead hedging to deter them.

There is pressure to allow large groups of schoolchildren to cycle across the Heath, and the City is also looking at ways of deterring the use of e-bikes on it. Another threat to the Heath's amenity is the use of **Drones** and the City are being encouraged to make clear that their use will as a rule be banned. JB said that the new guidance in the papers did not include the strong wording of the 2017 guidance,

On the planning front, I urged the City to oppose the Government's proposed weakening of the planning system, which poses a major threat to the ability to protect Metropolitan Open Land, the urban equivalent of Green Belt, of which the Heath is a part. As a result, they made an extremely strong response to the Planning White Paper consultation, and will continue to work with us to establish what more will need to be done. Camden's refusal of two **houses on the Jack Straws' Castle car park**, fought hard by the City and the Heath Society, was unfortunately overturned on appeal. However, the development will necessitate access to Heath land, which the City will resolutely resist.

The Heath has been given an award for being a "quiet park". Ironically, a drone flew over the inspectors while there, but they disregarded it because it was swiftly intercepted.

We also sit on the **Kenwood Landscape Forum**, run by English Heritage to keep local groups informed about the management of the Estate; our representative is Arlene Polonsky.

English Heritage were congratulated for managing to keep the estate open during most of lockdown. They intend to introduce their own Professional Dog Walkers Licensing scheme from October 2021. CW also highlighted the amount of work completed during the past season and praised the Garden team. Work includes opening up of estate views lost through uncontrolled tree and shrub growth; regular fence repairs; removing ivy to protect the foundations of the stone bridge; reduction of overgrown rhododendrons; seedling removal in the grassland and new planting in the wood; clearance of self-seeding trees in the Sphagnum Bog, an important SSSI; removing birch trees growing into the canopies of the mature oaks; and a range of other landscape works, including wear and tear from vastly increased visitor use during the pandemic. There is also a need to train a new Senior Gardener, the post currently being vacant. A new habitat management project on the Estate is being run in cooperation with the Heath & Hampstead Society and the City, which will address erosion and compaction; enhancing the Kenwood Ponds habitat; wildlife monitoring; and the management of Forest Schools. It will also study the threat to Green woodpeckers, one of the most significant bird conservation species but endangered as they are being pushed out by the increased footfall on the Heath.

Closure of the House during the pandemic gave the opportunity to undertake comprehensive renovation work, and there is a new Volunteers manager who liaises with Kenwood volunteers and prepared the House for the reopening in May. The summer concerts went ahead in June. We are reminded that The English Heritage Trust is a charity, no. 1140351, and needs to raise money for its existence