

While the number of planning applications has, in Highgate and elsewhere, dropped off lately, the complexity and seriousness of the workload with which David Richmond's planning group is having to contend remains relentless. As ever, there is far more to report than can be set out here, so please make a point of looking at the much longer and more detailed version on our website.

Our long-sought walkabout and discussion with Haringey Planners, to look at some of the sites and developments of major concern, took place on 8th November. We visited a number of sites: the Wellington Roundabout site; the Mary Feilding site at 109 North Hill a long-standing development of concern at 6a Grange Road; the outbuilding at 30 Grange Road; some of the prospective Highgate School sites (Mallinson Centre, Richards Music Centre, Dyne House); examples of bad consents, against Conservation Area policy, including 23 Sheldon Avenue; 44-46 Hampstead Lane; the rapidly deteriorating Listed House at 37 North Road; and, of course, Townsend Yard (See the report below for more detail on each). It seemed to be a positive and useful exercise and it was agreed that these meetings should be quarterly.

We also discussed ongoing concerns such as the interpretation of 'non-material amendments'; cross boundary co-operation with Camden (currently non-existent); obligations on developers to replace broken paving stones outside their developments; failure to notify us of the submission of amended drawings; and, importantly in the light of current experience, the disastrous failure of Haringey to persuade developers to have pre-application discussions with us.

The **Townsend Yard** battle continues. Following our pressure, on Dec. 2 Haringey issued a Breach of Condition notice on the developer as a result of planning conditions not complied with, with a compliance deadline of 5th January. The developers have started work before a Construction Management Plan has been submitted and approved; failed to provide a detailed programme of timing of deliveries to the site to minimise disruption to traffic and pedestrians on Highgate High Street, particularly at school drop-off and pick-up times; and have not given details of vehicle holding areas or vehicle call-up procedures, location of temporary hoarding, storage buildings, compounds, construction material and plant storage areas, or details of wheel washing and measures to prevent mud on the highway. The time limit for observing these conditions has expired, and we are now, with difficulty, urging Haringey to take appropriate action and order all development to cease.

As regards the vexed question of ensuring emergency vehicle access to Shepherd's Cottage, officers have confirmed that building control should not sign off the development unless building regulations on fire safety are complied with and agreed with the London Fire Brigade; but dragging of feet on this is proving frustrating and the issue of fire access remains unresolved, posing serious risk that this unique property could burn down. We have repeated continually that there is a simple solution – one even proposed by the London Fire Brigade - that omitting the end house would provide access, as well as a vital turning space for users of the yard, including emergency services (the yard being too narrow for them to turn, as required by law), as well retaining the cherished views of the listed cottage.

Yet our efforts to have these concerns discussed have met with complete silence:

- from Haringey Planners, with whom we have had extensive correspondence and discussion, but who appear to be embarrassed by what we believe they now accept was a bad planning consent and who show no willingness to address key issues which have come to light; their response to our Freedom of Information Act request for all correspondence between the Fire Brigade and offices shows little effort to try to address the major issue of fire access to Shepherds Cottage, other than to leave it for resolving under conditions once the final permissions have been granted;
- from Haringey Building Control, who we have now written to twice with regard to the fire aspects but who have failed to respond;
- from Haringey Transport advisers, who seem to have accepted at face value the developer's assertion that it is possible to turn even small construction vehicles around on site, when we have repeatedly pointed out that this is incorrect and that vehicles will not be able to turn or enter and exit the site in forward gear, which is the basis on which approval was given.
- from the London Fire Brigade, with whom we have also had long email correspondence making clear our concerns and recommendations and our view that the scheme cannot be built because of the lack of a workable turning space for construction traffic and lack of fire brigade access to the

Cottage; but despite having originally suggested the omission of one house, LFB are now refusing to talk to anyone except Haringey: not even the resident of the Cottage;

- from all parties, who are consistently resisting our calls for an urgent site meeting to resolve these issues;
- from the developer, who has refused to respond to our multiple requests for a meeting.

On 10th January, Chair William Britain published the following letter in the *Camden New Journal*:

“We’re beginning to think the government might be right and the planning system is broken.

In Highgate the long running saga of the development of mews houses in Townsend Yard... continues. There seems to be something of a war of attrition going on between the developer, the London Fire Brigade and Haringey planning and building control, and it is one that Haringey’s planners and building control seem at risk of losing.

There have been continued breaches of construction site rules with a litany of problems including working outside agreed hours, blocking access to Townsend Yard and holding up traffic while over-sized lorries unload or attempt to manoeuvre.

Finally, in early December, the developer was served with a Breach of Condition Notice by Haringey after a string of complaints from the Highgate Society and users of the road who sometimes had to wait 40 minutes to get in or out of their premises. Mead, the builder, was given until January 5 to comply with the Construction Management Plan. A cynic might think that.. there [could] just be a plan to move onto the next stage of works before Haringey’s planning enforcement can catch up?

Second, and more importantly in the long term, there is still no sign yet of revised plans which will give Fire Brigade access to Shepherd’s Cottage. In December 2021, the Fire Brigade submitted a report to Haringey pointing out that they require access for their fire tenders via Townsend Yard to Shepherd’s Cottage... In Summer 2022 the builder indicated to the owner... that some access would be provided – however despite many approaches to Haringey... there has been no confirmation of this, or revised plans submitted. This is an intolerable situation for the homeowner as she fears for her own safety and that of the historic listed cottage. An underlying problem... is that the developer... Sean Meadows, has refused throughout to speak to the community...

We continue with our campaign. Please sign our petition – there is a link on our website <https://highgatesociety.com/townsend-yard-petition-highlights-fire-safety-risk/> ...”

We continue to encounter similar frustrations with Haringey’s proposed development of mainly affordable housing at the **Wellington Gyrotory system**, which we consider appallingly unsuitable for residential development for reasons of pollution, overlooking, parking, amenity space, and generally a substandard living environment for families. At the latest on-line public consultation meeting, on Nov. 30 – held at minimal notice, due, we were told, to “a lot of teething problems in the new system”, we were repeatedly assured that “this is not the final scheme – it is very much work in progress and cannot be finalised until we have had meetings with the Quality Review Panel” – on past experience, in itself sufficient cause for alarm.

There will now be 16 affordable units, none for private sale. On the subject of air quality on this major traffic route, we were assured that “the conditions improve dramatically as you move up”, but since several of the units are on lower floors and the whole development is only four storey, this was unconvincing.

On Conservation Area context, they assured us that they have had “dialogue with the heritage team on heritage context and views” and the planners; but their assertion that the main character of the Conservation Area was “Red Brick Terraces” is just completely wrong, as even a cursory look at the area will show; this does not inspire confidence for a start.

The CGI views of the site from up and down Archway Road and Baker’s Lane showed clearly that the building was massively out of scale. Then they showed a “third view of the site, from the Conservation Area” [i.e. the North hill junction with Baker’s Lane]. *Are the planners and their own Conservation Officer not aware that **all** of the Archway Road is within the Conservation Area?*

Appallingly, most of the photographs of comparative developments used in assessing streetscape character, and hence justifying the dreadful design, are nowhere near the site and are from much further down Archway

Road in an area of high density. Worse, no examples were used from North Hill to show the true character of the area; all examples were from Archway Road, often far down it and not visible from the site. Even worse, their “comparable” examples of similar developments were in fact all large mansion blocks from elsewhere in central London, out of scale, not relevant to this setting, and stretching their feeble explanation that they were trying not to look at the site in isolation to breaking point. We were assured that the design of the building “got its inspiration from these examples. We responded that we could not see any “inspiration” whatever in what was an extremely dull design, more like an office block, and completely unsatisfactory for a Conservation Area.

In a sad effort to insert some ecological credibility into the scheme, we were told that the minimal planting on the rear courtyard would be of “local indigenous species”. We asked what species exactly, and could we see any ecological report produced. An explanation that the trees were deciduous and their purpose was to provide a permanent screen for the houses on North Hill was unconvincing, since deciduous trees shed their leaves.

We were repeatedly assured that the scheme was far from finalised and there would be more opportunity to comment, but we felt that this was inadequate and that a site visit with the development team to discuss the whole scheme in detail was essential. We emphasised that, if the scheme is still at its pre-application stage, this was the appropriate time for community engagement; this was accepted and a site meeting has now been arranged.

Given our opposition to this scheme, we emphasised that we are not against affordable housing in Highgate – on the contrary, it was desperately needed, but this was the wrong site for housing of any type.

We were, however, dismayed to learn that the Quality Review Panel – an independent panel of “experts” *paid to make recommendations on the design of development*, have actually approved this new design, which shatters any residual confidence we may have had in their judgement; have they actually *seen* the site? In response that opinions of design were only a matter of opinion, we responded that it was not, emphasised our 50-year experience of local, regional and even national planning issues, and believed that we know our area at least as well as the planners, the Conservation Office and the QRP, and many of us are professionals in the field; so the suggestion that views on the design of the building is “all a matter of opinion” is a rather cheap evasion. To give them due credit, they took it without trying to argue back! This only increases the concern we have had for some time about the decisions of the QRP; they are continually undermining us by pronouncing on developments before we have been consulted, in a way which clearly suggests that their view will override ours. This is yet another aspect of Haringey flouting national guidance on community consultation.

For interest, the QRP’s conclusion, with which we disagree, was:

“The panel finds much to admire in the proposals for 505-511 Archway Road which promise good quality new homes on a difficult site. It suggests some final refinements, which it is confident can be addressed in liaison with Haringey officers. The height and massing of the building responds well to its context. The panel would encourage further work to create a generous arrival sequence, and to ensure that the cycle store feels secure. It also feels that the balcony designs should be reconsidered to allow views out for residents, as well as mitigating overlooking of neighbours. The architectural expression is evolving well, but there remains scope to strengthen the building’s detailing to create more interest in long and short views. A warm, textured choice of brick may help. Where different options have been explored for the corner of the building, the panel agrees that the angled design appears most in keeping with the architectural language.”

On our major concern about the terrible pedestrian environment, they said that that they had tried to contact Transport for London but that “TfL are reluctant to engage in conversation”. We thought that this was totally unacceptable – indeed irresponsible – and that, if they cannot get TfL to the table urgently, they should ask Haringey’s Chief Executive, or Leader, to approach them and failing that, they should ask the Mayor of London to intercede. They evidently had not thought of that and nodded gravely.

Another concern was that the development was, inexplicably, presented to Haringey’s Planning committee on 7th November, though there is as yet no application, the public had no right to any involvement in the

discussion, no public Development Management Forum has yet taken place and, if it is to be changed, they would be briefed on the wrong scheme.

We were able to use the visit to the former Mary Feilding site at 109 **North Hill** to show the planners the enormity of the consent they gave for this vast overdevelopment and, importantly, the disastrous impact it will have on neighbours, which was pointed out before the permission was granted but completely ignored. Now the neighbour has been compelled to seek a Judicial Review of the decision; the developer's reaction has merely been to put in a duplicate application, to which we will strongly object, and which surely cannot have any validity if the Review is successful?

By the time this is published, we anticipate that the application by **Highgate School** for its rolling seven-year development programme will have been submitted. Aspects on which we will seek clarification include:

- Given the scale of work, and the impact on local traffic and local residents, a carefully planned sequence of construction which addresses the inevitable impact on the community as well as those of the school needs to be agreed. A Construction Management Plan must be a part of the permission and not left to post-permission condition. Where sites adjoin, work should proceed on those simultaneously. Points needing covering include hours of working, noise and dust control, and vehicle access, especially in the case of Dyne House, where space for receiving and storing materials is not clear.

- since arrangements for temporary classrooms are shown on games pitches, how does the school propose to manage the temporary loss of these facilities?

- what requirements will there be for road closures?

- much of the land involved is Metropolitan Open Land, and loss, and land swap, of any of this should be made clear;

- some of the playing field proposals involve replacement with artificial grass. It is becoming more widely recognised that this should be avoided.

- The most significant design issue is likely to be the frontage of Dyne House, which we find disappointing, as well as its impact on adjoining residents. Windows along the south and north side of the site below Dyne House, to be developed with classrooms, must not result in overlooking of neighbouring gardens and properties.

of terrace where access should be limited so that it is accessed only for maintenance purposes.

- on pupil numbers, the school assured us at a meeting that these would remain the same as currently;

- we are particularly unhappy with the proposed design of the new Richards Music Centre, at the western end of the Bishopswood Road Junior Field, which has been compared to an Edgware Road showroom rather than a model school building in a Conservation Area. While the existing building is not suitable for modern needs, it has a much more timeless quality and any replacement should reflect that quality. We have found much better examples of buildings recently completed by the same architectural practice which could be used as a starting point.

- The new sunken five courts by the Mallinson Centre, and the new proposed sunken playing field in the Orchard, will radically reduce the water flow to the important hedgerow, with its veteran oaks, which runs between the Mallinson and the Orchard. It is shown on the 1869 ordnance map and is the last surviving pre-development hedgerow in the area. The idea of sinking a playing field in the Orchard to double as a flood event sump seems very risky. There is an active spring right next to it, and the water will either be diverted into the main field or adjoining gardens, or will simply flow into it and create a semi-permanent pool which will make it unusable as a playing field. We are not convinced it will have any practical value; where will the water come from, and how will it be dispersed? Ecologically it will also seriously diminish the value of the Orchard, which is currently a valuable ecological area which the school should be using for educational purposes. What is needed is a better drainage system.

- Some of the areas to be developed will certainly require archaeological investigation, as the whole area is in an Archaeological Priority Area.

We have been approached by the architects for a prominent vacant corner site at **29 Milton Park** regarding a proposed infill development – a case which illustrates the difficulties in balancing views and concerns. Theoretically it could be developed with a suitable, well-designed, in-scale building – and, certainly, what was originally proposed met none of those criteria in our view. However the majority – though not the only –

view among local residents is that the gap is an important break in the local built form of the streetscape and should remain, and this has been underlined by the opinion of Haringey's Conservation Officer, that development would not be appropriate, that the current form and location of the site makes it a heritage asset, and that the architects must come for further discussions – which they have not yet done, hoping to seek the Society's support. Our line must therefore be that, until a resolution has been reached with Haringey's Conservation Officer, we should make no further comment.

To our surprise, a revised, slightly smaller application has been submitted for the proposed massive redevelopment of **44-46 Hampstead Lane**, opposite Kenwood, which has been outstanding for over a year. However, it remains egregiously badly designed, out of scale and damaging to the conservation area we are maintaining our objection for many reasons:

- The Conservation Area Character Appraisal makes clear that that “most of the existing buildings contribute to the homogenous character” of the area; yet the map of the area offers a hostage to fortune by identifying precisely zero buildings as positive contributors- a grave error, suggesting that all the buildings are neutral contributors - a developer's charter to demolish buildings throughout the area, fatally damaging the Conservation Area but meekly allowed by Haringey time after time. The developer's interpretation that “neutral contributors” can be demolished is utterly wrong, and in other parts of Highgate the positive and negative contributors are properly identified. The two threatened houses very much contribute to the character of the street.

- The proposal is a gross overdevelopment of the site. The floor area is still more than four times that of the two large houses. The damage that will be caused to the conservation area by setting this scale of increase as an acceptable precedent would fatally threaten the Bishops part of the Conservation Area.

- The application drawings give a muted depiction of this enormous increase in size, using faint grey lines on the elevations in particular. We have had to shade in red the additional size on the plans so that the vast increase in size is clear for Haringey's planners to see.

- We are particularly dismayed, once again, by the comments of the The Quality Review Panel, who have been persuaded that the building is set well back and that the two existing houses are large anyway. But, a is common practice, the artistic impression provided by the developers with the previous application makes it look reasonable; but the reality, as shown by the verified images we requested, is that the proposal is far larger and less hidden by trees. The scale and bulk vastly exceeds anything else along Hampstead Lane and the image superimposing the existing large house on the new development makes plain the enormous difference and the irreparable harm it will cause to the Conservation Area.

- The impact and overshadowing of the four-storey building, which will be south of the neighbouring house in Courtenay Avenue will be significant.

- The proposed garden area for residents is set on the north side and will receive little or no sunlight.

- critically, this site is directly opposite the Grade 1 listed Kenwood Estate and the Kenwood North Wood, a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The vast new building will may impact adversely on the Estate and on views from within the wood. The extensive additional lighting may have an extremely adverse impact on the wildlife in the wood, and the vast basement could seriously affect the flow of ground water to the Wood.

- Several TPO trees will be lost and the proposed basement and ground level changes will threaten other trees.

- The site is now within the expanded Highgate Archaeological Priority Area and close to the important Mediaeval Bishop of London's Palace in the Hornsey Great Park. Archaeological assessment, and possibly excavation, will be necessary.

- This revised application refers constantly to a 2019 planning consent on 42 Hampstead Lane - in itself a terrible mistake by Haringey, granted despite flouting Conservation Area protection. To allow this to be used as the starting point for adjoining sites elsewhere in the Conservation Area sets a precedent which will completely destroy the open leafy character of the Conservation Area. Developers love to quote precedents. The conservation officer describes this part of the Conservation Area as being a mixture of modern homes with few original Arts and Crafts houses left, but this is not a reason to allow more to be lost, and if they are, then surely the Conservation Area status of the Bishops sub-area should be revoked. There is nothing of architectural merit in these new mega-mansions to justify conservation area status.

The loss of the two houses has not been justified by any benefit to the local community outweighing the damage, and it must be refused; but we cannot help worrying that we may, yet again, have been ‘stitched up’ by pre-application discussions between Haringey and the developers, since there has been no public consultation whatever, despite our repeated requests.

We have supported neighbours in objecting to an application for a certificate of lawfulness at **2 Woodside Avenue** for a rear garden building which could be likely to result in the creation of a separate self-contained potentially habitable dwelling accessible from Lanchester Road. An application for a similar building was refused on appeal in 2020 on grounds of damage to the streetscene and the character of the local area, and would also create a highly damaging precedent throughout the area if it were to be approved, while the loss of trees and mature vegetation on the site – currently a fenced-off part of the garden of 2 Lanchester Road - would also be harmful to amenity and sustainability, so it is an unacceptable attempt to circumvent the Appeal decision by claiming that it has permitted development, which it very clearly is not.

We also showed the planners the state of the Listed **37 North Road**, still rapidly deteriorating despite our efforts over several years to secure action from Haringey, who seem incapable of taking any action; we are once more pressing as hard as we can for them to take immediate action.

We have objected to an additional storey on the side extensions of **67 Shepherds Hill**, which would contravene Policy stating that the gaps between buildings, often providing views of mature rear gardens, are an important feature of the conservation area. The application argues that the gap is heavily obscured by the presence of two trees "which will be retained if at all possible", effectively admitting that they may be felled, and use of several similar developments in the vicinity as precedent is not a reason for undermining Conservation Area Policies.

During 2021 we objected strongly to a prominent large shed erected without permission on the Broadlands Road boundary of the garden of **30 Grange Road**. Despite our argument that it was erected without permission, Haringey insisted that, since the entrance to the house was on the other side, the site constituted its back garden and it was therefore permitted development., even though it patently fronted onto the main road, and refused to take any further action. The building has since remained incomplete and a blot on the landscape, but an angry neighbour has resuscitated the case and has persuaded Haringey that, while the case is not a straightforward one, there is a good case for refusal and that their decision should be reviewed, not least because of its highly detrimental impact on the Conservation Area. The argument centres on what is defined in Government guidance as “principal elevation” which Haringey have taken to be statutory, though it is only guidance. It states that “in most cases” the principal elevation is that that part of the house which fronts the main highway serving the house, adding that this will be the one that sets the postcode for the house concerned. While the house has a Grange Road, not a Broadlands Road post code, its main elevation does not front Grange Road, and the only elevation of No 30 that “fronts” ANY road is the south-east elevation which fronts onto Broadlands Road. The Guidance goes on to state that " the principal elevation will be what is understood to be the front of the house”, and while that there will usually only be one principal elevation on a house, on an example like this, on a corner plot, the position is less clear cut. It is also clear from appeal decisions that only in unusual cases is an elevation not fronting a road the principal elevation.

The original house at No 30 is on a corner plot; is perpendicular to the road serving the property, the elevation facing Grange Road clearly being a side elevation; the entrance is in the northwestern elevation which is not at all prominent from any public highway, while the southeastern elevation is prominently visible from both Broadlands Road Grange Road. Finally, the house is part of a terrace of three which together face only one road - Broadlands Road. The argument is therefore that the Broadlands Road elevation is the principal one.

Complex stuff; but we have urged Haringey to reconsider their decision and to take enforcement action against what is currently a real eyesore blighting the Conservation Area.

Back in May, 2022, we alerted Haringey to the fact that a large extension on the roof of **417 Archway Road**, to which we had not objected because the original post-war building is most uninteresting and the drawings suggested it would be tolerable, if not any enhancement of the Conservation area, appeared to have been constructed significantly larger, bulkier and oppressive than the consented scheme. In particular, it has been constructed across the entire width of the property, instead of the much more limited width shown in the approved drawings, and the drawings show clearly that what was permitted was only very marginally higher than the adjoining houses, while what has been built is enormously higher and overwhelms its neighbours.

While Haringey’s wheels can grind exceedingly slow, they have in this case ground exceedingly sure, and we learn on this month that they agreed that it was sufficiently non-compliant to warrant Enforcement

action, which was taken; but, inevitably, the developer has appealed on the grounds that it would cost them too much to put things right. It is immensely frustrating that developers can perpetrate such a departure from their consent and use the appeal system as a second throw of the dice, and we will certainly endeavour to support Haringey's refusal and persuade the Inspector to uphold it and to avoid the damaging precedent allowing it would establish.

The application to make the **Upstairs at the Gatehouse** theatre an Asset of Community Value has been granted. Despite residents' concerns, a new licence was granted to incorporate the vacant restaurant premises in Hampstead Lane into the **Gatehouse pub**. However, we learn that, due to changing conditions, the Gatehouse have abandoned the proposals and the premises are once more on the market.

We have tried for several years to get Historic England to give the imposing Victorian buildings of the **Holborn Infirmary buildings** at the bottom of Highgate Hill Listed Status. To our dismay, HE have now notified us that the information provided was insufficient and they have simply dropped it. This is completely unacceptable; the site within which they sit was designated a Conservation Area purely because of the buildings, so to decline to List them is illogical in the extreme and we will press the matter. In the meantime, an application has been made for temporary use of the buildings as art studios, which seems an eminently suitable use.

Islington Council consulted on what they amusingly called "environmental improvements" on **Highgate Hill at St Joseph's Primary School**. Proposals include "colourful artwork" on the approaches to the school, widening of pavements into the main road, partly to accommodate a café and restaurant and play features (though who would want to sit and eat, or play, on this main through route with heavy traffic labouring up the Hill and the significant pollution which would result?) and "roadside greening". The proposed narrowing of the road at such a steep point on the hill will increase traffic tailbacks, with inevitable pollution, and also make it difficult for buses to pass. This is a steep and narrow section of main road for traffic, yet no assessment on the impact on traffic over a wide area has been done and community organisations in the Archway Road area, which will almost certainly be adversely affected by traffic displacement, were unaware until we notified them. Indeed, the slowing down of traffic will have severe pollution impacts on the School itself. The consultation deadline was 18 December and we have heard nothing since; but we have objected strongly to the proposals as they stand, asking:

- For a proper consultation event to be arranged, and the consultation period extended;
- For traffic collision statistics to be provided for the affected stretch of road and taken into account;
- For the safety risks of installing a play area adjacent to Highgate Hill roadway to be considered;
- For current and future air quality to be assessed;
- For the waiting area for carers on Highgate Hill to be moved to inside the School grounds, not placed along to the roadway;
- For the safety implications of the proposed easier access for children from the pavement to the roadway to be assessed;
- For the effect on 2-way traffic of widening the pavements to be considered.

Finally, we showed the planners the damage caused by their permission given several years ago for the demolition and rebuild of **23 Sheldon Avenue** – yet another example of the loss of Arts and Crafts houses in the area and their replacement with inappropriate and over-scaled behemoths with basement pools etc., and resulting in loss of front gardens to car parks, loss of character, and high boundary walls and railings, all, appallingly, against Haringey's own clear Conservation Area policies. Courtney and Compton have been already been irreparably damaged by the mega-mansions of the overly wealthy and are a lost cause.

We have already been dismayed by press reports of Haringey's demolition of their widely-opposed Cranwood development site before the planning conditions had been fulfilled (<https://www.hamhigh.co.uk/news/23259388.haringey-council-care-home-demolition-broke-planning-rules>), and of the ongoing policy inquiry into the nature of payments made for properties on the site. Now we learn that Haringey received the greatest number of complaints to the local government ombudsman during the period 2016-22, runners-up only to Birmingham with 3,300. They have also topped another list: the roundup of Archaeological Excavations in London during 2021 reveals them to be the only borough in Greater

London not to have required any archaeological excavations in advance of development; the majority of Boroughs imposed from 5 to 26 archaeological conditions, but Haringey were the only one to have required none. We have already been advised by them that, although the Highgate Archaeological Priority Area has been substantially expanded to include much of the N6 area, they will not recognise it until it can be included in the new updated Local Plan, which could be several years away; their indifference to Haringey's historical and archaeological heritage is dismaying.

However, one positive is that our pressure for a strong archaeological condition has been supported by, and insisted upon, by Historic England, since the consent, in referring to London Plan policies, states that "The site is located adjacent to the Highgate Wood and Queen's Wood Archaeological Priority Area)... The Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service... advises that the development could cause harm to archaeological remains and... recommends a condition to ensure that a site evaluation is undertaken [and if remains] of archaeological interest are found, [excavations] shall take place prior to the commencement of works".

You will by now be familiar with the farce surrounding the re-naming of the bottom of West Hill as **Boris Nemtsov Place**, after minimal public consultation and no direct discussion with local groups. No support has been expressed by any residents in the immediate area, who feel strongly that this is not a suitable site for this purpose, and we understand that Kensington and Chelsea were originally approached with the same request, which they rejected.

Our Chair William Britain wrote to the Leader of Camden, Georgia Gould, whose personal project this appears to be, pointing out that it has been very contentious and that:

- It seems that the decision, and plans for the ceremony, were made even before the consultation has taken place;
- The very short timescale made it impossible to canvass our members' views;
- Boris Nemtsov appears to be little known locally; Alexei Navalny, for example, much more so;
- There are concerns about traffic safety and sight lines resulting from additional street furniture and planting, and additional general street clutter in a Conservation area;
- Highgate already has a monument to an assassinated Russian, Alexander Litvinenko, in the cemetery. How many do we need?

In reply, Cllr Gould offered a meeting – far too late – and offered a lengthy explanation that that the project, followed in some other cities abroad, was to encourage naming locations near Russian embassies and consulates after the assassinated democracy campaigner, Boris Nemtsov.

The Society of courses recognises, and deplores, the enormities committed by the Putin regime both within and beyond its borders, and, indeed, has had its own fundraising and clothes collection projects as its contribution towards the appalling situation in Ukraine. However, we are not aware that either the Russian Government or its employees in the nearby Trade Delegation are move done iota by such gesture politics; indeed, they could argue that the renaming is not supported by local people, which would rather be shooting oneself in the foot? If anyone is to be commemorated and supported, let it be the current leader of the Russian opposition, Alexei Navalny, currently imprisoned in Siberia, in the hope that it might eventually lead to his release; and let the consultation as to the place and form of the memorial be put out to proper democratic consultation, and not decided upon by the same methods used by Mr. Putin.

A new government pledge to halt wildlife decline includes a commitment to increase the proportion of woodland cover in England to 16.5% by 2025, from 14.5% in 2020; reducing pollution flowing onto rivers; and halving the waste sent to treatment plants. A Natural History Museum report finds that the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, with only 53% of its biodiversity left, as against the global average of 75%.

We continue to comment on a wide range of tree works applications, and our comments *can* make a difference; for example, at a Courtenay Avenue site, where we considered that an application to fell a protected Lombardy Poplar because of "significant structural damage to property" was untenable, and it has been withdrawn.

Much is happening, as ever, on **Hampstead Heath**.

- there is a plan for wilding the dull and municipal area around the Lido, with a wooded strip to provide an ecological corridor to link to the Murphy's Yard site, and a stream to reduce the persistent problem of waterlogging.

- The deteriorating Parliament Hill running track will be restored to Olympic standards;

- Following a series of incidents of disregarding the rules and threatening the Heath swans, fishing licences will only be issued to those who join the fishing club;

- a total of 90 licences are to be issued to professional dog walkers, and measures are being looked at to address pollution from dogs in the ponds.

The Heath's contribution to addressing Climate Change is under scrutiny. The City plans to adapt the Heath for climate resilience and to mitigate the City's own climate change contributions. Predicted climate change will involve an increase in high summer temperatures and drought, more intense summer rainstorms and a growing risk of erosion and flooding, while winters are also predicted to be warmer and wetter, and some of these impacts have already been seen on the Heath in the past two years. Actions involve *mitigation* and *adaptation*.

The City will use its 4,500 ha of open spaces to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions; their open spaces currently capture an estimated 16,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide, some 40% of the total produced every year.

However, simple tree planting comes at the expense of other habitats, which would reduce biodiversity, itself in steep decline nationally, so further loss on the Heath, arguably the most biodiversity-rich landscape in Central London, would be undesirable. Further, many new tree plantings have failed to establish due to inappropriate local soils and conditions; during the hot conditions of 2022, recently planted trees required watering up to three times per week.

There will therefore be only a modest amount of woodland creation, through natural extension of existing woodland. Woodland spread is natural feature of the Heath, and only careful management prevents its meadows becoming scrub and woodland. Early photos of a much-less wooded Heath illustrate this. Any natural extension will rely on locally seeded saplings from, which are adapted to local soils and conditions.

A presentation was given to the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee by Anna Eavis, Curatorial Director, English Heritage, of their proposals for Kenwood. As background, it must be remembered that English Heritage was made a separate charity in 2015, with no Government funding and an obligation to become financially independent this year – a tall order, and a sad demonstration of the Government's lack of commitment to England's heritage. Headline priorities are:

- make it a centre for lifelong learning and an outstanding cultural centre. The current education programme is minimal, and must be widened;

- conservation of the house, collections, landscapes, all of international importance;

- implementation of the Landscape Management Plan;

- involve more people in volunteering;

and, of course, financial sustainability. They are obliged by the original terms of the donation to keep free entry, so need a supportive commercial model which will not conflict with or undermine management of the natural landscape. They will consult publicly on a draft report, recently released and will explore fundraising potential.

In discussion, it was emphasised that the Heath and Kenwood used to be managed together, and must liaise as closely as possible to avoid conflict, particularly given that they are now both charities. We said that the issue our members and the wider public raise with us most frequently is that of restoration of the estate after concerts. They have permission for unlimited concerts of up to 9,999, which could theoretically result in 365 large concerts a year. What arrangements are in place for the repair and recovery of the grounds between events and at the end of the season, and can they notify the public in advance of how many days there will be only restricted access to the grounds during the events season? We were assured that they are aware of those issues; the aim will be to equip Kenwood to cope with events.

How successful were the Christmas events? We understand that only 20% of the tickets they needed to sell, at £19 a ticket and little family discount, were sold. And why are the running costs for Kenwood withheld as "commercially sensitive? And is it adequate to be assured that assure they will "try to uphold the demands of the bequest". They are surely legally obliged to do so.

However, the reminder that English Heritage is being cast adrift by the government on March 31st is a sobering warning of the undoubted problems which will lie ahead for them, and of their need for as much community support as possible.

We are also on the Consultative Committee for our other open space gem, **Highgate Wood**. The new conservation area north of the play area has now been enclosed for ten years to enable the severely compacted and eroded area to recover; fortunately the public reaction has been supportive. This is the 10th Conservation area to be established in the Wood; the first was in 1977 and their creation has had important conservation benefits. A recent soil survey showed clear links between nature recovery and soil condition, with compaction adversely affecting the woodland ecology.

The Conservation Management Plan expires this Spring and a new draft plan, including a Woodland Management Plan, will be presented at the next Consultative Group meeting.

The Friends of the Highgate Roman Kiln (FOHRK) Charity has now submitted a Heritage Lottery Fund application to return the kiln to Highgate Wood, supported by the City. It is hoped to display the Kiln in a refurbished Visitor Information Centre, with displays on the significance of the Kiln, the wider archaeology of the area, and the natural environment of the woods.

Control of Oak Processionary Moth continues, though the former blanket spraying of affected areas is immensely damaging to wildlife and is not being implemented. Currently they are monitoring the impact of a parasitic fly which appears to have followed the moth – its victim – from the Continent and appears to be reducing OPM nest numbers on both the Heath and Highgate Wood.

While it seems difficult to persuade people, the fact is that the City's resources are fixed, the Heath and Highgate Wood are designated Charities, and gift aid to donations is very much needed to take forward proactive projects aimed at enhancing the spaces and their interpretation. Nevertheless, both Highgate Wood and the Heath have won Green Flag and Green Heritage awards every year since they were introduced, an amazing achievement showing the commitment and hard work of the staff and volunteers.

On **Queens Wood**, things have gone very quiet since we objected to Haringey's proposals for major flood relief works, but we understand that Haringey have now commissioned an Environmental Impact Assessment on the proposed works, and that another consultation will take place.

In the wider world, we have been working through the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies to get a Third Party Right of Appeal included in the Levelling-up Bill. There is a growing appreciation among some MPs that the community are disgusted with the Government's approach to community engagement in planning, and that more needs to be done to change government attitudes towards planning and listening to communities, and recognition of how hard communities have tried to fight bad planning and bad development, and to get the right development in the right place, for which the Government and others have branded us Nimbys; they have been supportive, particularly Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) and Bob Seeley (Isle of Wight), who calls us "local patriots, not nimbys".

Other demands are for greater protection of the heritage and its setting; stronger enforcement powers for local authorities, including the right to serve Urgent Works Notices (see 37 North Road); removing the obligation on local authorities to pay compensation if they serve a Building Preservation Notice on a threatened building while awaiting Listing; a requirement for developers to report annually on build out rates for housing permissions; and better protection of Green Belt; and an obligation for local authorities to require developers pre-application discussions with local communities – the absence of which has been disastrous in Highgate (e.g. Mary Feilding, 44-6 Hampstead Lane, Townsend Yard). Westminster, for example, have issued a policy stating that they will not have pre-application discussion with developers unless they can show that they have previously had meaningful discussions with the local community.

The Government are resisting a Third Party Right of Appeal, on the totally flawed ground that it will slow down development. On the contrary, it will in fact have the opposite effect; if it enables communities to appeal against developments granted against local and national policies – of which we see far too much in our own area alone – it will improve the quality of developments coming forward, which can go forward with public support, and without the confrontation and months or even years of fighting to which we are all too often subjected. It may not, therefore, get through this time; but it is now on the agenda and we will ensure

that every opportunity is taken to get a Third Party Right of Appeal enshrined in law; its absence is, in our view, a breach of human rights.

The last London Forum Open Meeting was on **The Future of Our High Streets**, the high attendance underscoring it as of major concern for civic societies. Points included:

- more High Streets are encouraging leisure and social activities to bring people back;
- it is vital to bring together public and private landowners and businesses to agree on adaptation and regeneration. The predominantly multiple landlords (investment companies, pension funds, etc) are not interested and merely want the maximum possible rents;
- local authorities must therefore work with the community and businesses;
- grants are needed to bring vacant units back into use;
- improvements to the public realm are important, as are youth facilities and community meeting rooms;
- Heritage must be recognised as a driver of regeneration. Southwark has a Heritage Centre. Walworth has a Heritage Action Zone and a lot of Conservation Areas, has produced a 200-page Historic Area Assessment, and is working with Historic England to produce an architectural, community and cultural history of Walworth. Highgate clearly needs something like this to replace the increasingly inadequate Conservation Area Appraisal, but working with *both* local authorities; it is farcical that we still have to put up with totally different policies for both sides of the High Street and a complete failure to liaise. Remember that Haringey would not even contribute to our successful tourism map, even though 60% of it covers their area. It also provides the justification for a Highgate Heritage Centre.
- more pocket parks; we can identify some, such as the area between Shepherds Hill and the station, and the Highgate Station land;
- Heritage improvement includes *consistency of shop fronts* to create a more attractive realm - something where Haringey have been completely derelict, particularly in Archway Road, which has been allowed to deteriorate to the point where its Conservation Area status is in doubt. Walworth has obtained a £750,000 grant for improving historic shopfronts. Local authorities have an important role to play here, and large chais are often the worst offenders.
- Walworth produced a report for the local authority on “What Walworth Wants”; do we need one for the Highgate Neighbourhood Forum area?
- Walworth work with the Department for Transport on road improvements. Transport for London seem to treat the Archway Road as an independent fiefdom unconnected with the surrounding community.
- Some suburban centres, such as Sydenham, have benefited hugely from Working from Home; bars, pubs and hairdressers are very busy; and the trend looks set to continue;
- retail shops are clearly most affected by on-line shopping, and particularly clothing shops;
- In Kentish Town, Camden gives priority to housing, but not workplaces; yet High Streets depend on the custom of people who work in offices and other High Street uses. It is the mix of uses which drives the High Street. We must press Camden and Haringey to make town centre management advice available to the Village and Archway Road.