

David Richmond's Planning Group remains in a state of permanent activity, and, as always, we have been active on a wide range of planning cases, of which a mere selection of the major ones follows

The onslaught of unauthorised development continues unabated, no doubt encouraged by online advertisements from planning consultants such as the one we found proclaiming their skills in getting around the rules, and citing a Haringey example. Haringey's Enforcement section have responded to our requests to investigate several. One is for works reported to us by a local resident at **290-292 Archway Road**, and at **89C Southwood Lane**, where they have requested a retrospective planning application for an obtrusive glass terrace at roof level. At **10 View Road**, ugly security warning signs have been removed following our complaint to Enforcement, too.

Following complains from several nearby residents, we have also asked them to enforce the approved plans for **9 Grange Road**, originally the site of a small bungalow. The last approved plan was for a four storey house with basement and basement pool. However, the house that has been built is almost 1.5m higher than the approved plan. As a result, it looms over the neighbouring house, an original and important Arts and Crafts house, spoiling its setting; the approved plan was for a house of same height.

They have also refused several applications to which we objected, including proposals at **The Ferns**, at the Archway Road end of **Southwood Lane** to add a further storey to these 1920s flats; at **1 Church Road** to add an external rear staircase;

Importantly, they have refused a Certificate of Lawfulness (COL) application for works at the Listed **225 Archway Road**. However, the applicant has responded with a QC's opinion, maintaining that a start had been made before the expiry date; the documentation is so large that it cannot be accommodated on Haringey's website. We argued that COLs should not be allowed in Conservation Areas because, although they appear on planning lists, no time is allowed for consultation, which means that there is no obligation for Haringey to listen to anyone other than the applicant. Our view is that the law says Conservation Area principles cannot, as is claimed here, be ignored when considering COLs and permitted development. We have also asked Haringey to investigate the felling of a number of trees after the planning consent had expired.

We are also appalled by the stunningly awful bright red plastic shopfront installed at **52 Highgate High Street** by the new tenants, Shelter, without planning permission (see photograph). A national organisation must be well aware of the need to seek approval of new shopfronts in Conservation Areas, and we have asked Enforcement to take action.

While we normally welcome any refusal by Haringey, we are astonished by their refusal – and Islington's – of our alternative proposals for anti-suicide measures at the Listed **Archway Bridge**. Readers will be familiar with the shameless approving, by both authorities, of the appalling fencing proposed by Transport for London, which we and other local groups have fought for years as bad design, and with the much lighter and more sensitive alternative proposals put forward by our David Richmond. Unbelievably, both local authorities have refused our proposals, on the unconvincing grounds that they “would cause harm to the character and appearance of designated heritage assets and would adversely affect the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building”, contrary to national and local policies. How they can argue that their Gulag-style barriers, cobbled together with no design or conservation input whatever, are better passeth understanding, and we are likely to take both decisions to appeal.

We have also written questioning Haringey's interpretation of permitted development rights in relation to a Certificate of Lawfulness for a window in **6 View Close**. In allowing it, the Case Officer wrongly asserted that the impact on neighbours and the character of the area cannot be taken into account when assessing a COL. However, we are confident that Haringey has misdirected itself over permitted development rights: the law clearly states that Conservation Area principles must be taken into account. This is a serious issue which we have raised with Councillors.

The position regarding the widely-opposed development of 5 houses at **55 Fitzroy Park**, adjacent to the Heath and astride a stream feeding into the Bird Sanctuary Pond, remains unclear. Camden are still awaiting information not provided with the original application, so there is still no deadline for submitting comments. We recently met the Camden Tree Officer, who had clearly not appreciated the complexity of the application in relation to the numerous trees on the site.

A difficult one was a proposal for a new infill house at **50 Lanchester Road**. We have met the architect and discussed her design, which is quite good, but it clashes with Haringey's policy against infill development, and could only write pointing out these two conflicting aspects and leaving the decision to Haringey.

We are dismayed that, despite the latest application being granted, the developers of the **Victoria Pub** have appealed against the refusal for the original application to turn the building into residential flats. This surely calls into question their *bona fides* in maintaining, in the latest application, that the pub would be

retained, and we can only hope that the Inspector takes on board our comments about their failure to meet Haringey's requirements for marketing the pub.

An application has been made to convert the rear function room of **The Winchester pub** into a flat. We have sent Haringey a lengthy objection, including the following points:

- The developers suggest that they have taken on board many the recommendations we made at our meeting with them. They have however ignored our written statement to them that "the addition of a further flat would not be welcomed under any circumstances" and "the loss of space on the ground floor means that we would still have an insurmountable objection to the additional flat." The addition of this flat has already been rejected at planning and at appeal for good reasons, and the loss of this area from the pub will threaten its viability and future of the pub.
- We are dismayed that, having already obtained consent for 10 units through multiple applications, a further unit is being sought which, if stated at the outset, would have triggered an affordable homes requirement.
- Unlike the current function room, the proposed basement function room will suffer from loss of light and bar area, poor access and inadequate headroom, has no ventilation and poor natural light, no storage for beer barrels, and, with the extra flat, loss of ground floor space. The need for a disabled stair lift to the basement would reduce the area even more, and the fact that the new staircase would be the only fire escape is unacceptable; to provide a compliant fire escape area would reduce the pub area even more.
- The size of the proposed flat is less than the minimum of 51sqm required by the London Plan.
- We therefore believe that the proposals will threaten the viability of the pub as a community asset, and are no improvement on the previously refused scheme.

We objected to a revised proposal for backland development at **Jameson Lodge, 58 Shepherds Hill**. Though recommended by Haringey to consult with the Highgate Society and neighbouring residents, no consultation occurred. 20 mature trees will be felled, and the proposals contravene Local Policies requiring no net loss of trees, which here provide a dense screen for residents of the flats and for neighbours, while the proposed basement will affect trees in adjacent gardens; we have asked Haringey to place a Group TPO on the trees. One new Block will be built to the boundary, creating a 2 storey brick wall, the impact of which would be exacerbated by the steep fall of the land, so it will in effect loom over neighbouring properties to an apparent height of 3 storeys.

We have, yet again, had to press Haringey on the state of **37 North Road**, one of the Listed Ashburton Cottages which, though occupied, has for perhaps ten years been in a state of partial collapse. Reports from neighbours suggests that the occupant may be need of intervention from social services, but although we have raised this time and again with Haringey Social Services, we have been told that the situation needs sensitive handling. While this is understandable, the handling has been so "sensitive" as to be undetectable –i.e. nothing has been done, and the house is rapidly deteriorating. We have therefore asked our Councillors to take this up yet again. Despite being aware of the situation for many years, Haringey Social Services' lack of response has been deplorable.

We have also objected to proposals for a major infill overdevelopment on an open corner site at **30 Southwood Lawn Road**, which would detract from the setting of neighbouring buildings, would disrupt the existing rhythm of the street frontage, and harm the character and appearance of the conservation area. Although the applicant is a housing association, the proposed house will not be used as affordable housing but sold as a luxury development, which will do nothing to ease the shortage of affordable housing. While smaller than previous refused applications, it is still too large in relation to plot size, and the design would clash seriously with neighbouring properties. The proposed garden space – which will be mainly hard standing for a car, refuse bins and paths, with no trees proposed - is minimal, in contrast with neighbouring houses, and as the house takes most of the width of the site, it will affect daylight to the windows of the adjoining house, the report rather facetiously noting that the owner could add a further window to compensate. Finally, our experience of problems elsewhere in the area suggests that the application fails to properly assess the likely impact of the basement on neighbouring properties.

We have met with the **Jacksons Lane Community Centre** to discuss their ambitious and very welcome improvement programme, and hope to continue the liaison and offer whatever support we can.

We have raised concerns about a new application for a proposed garden gym building at **7 Sheldon Avenue**, in the Highgate Conservation Area. The former application was granted, without objections, subject to a tree protection and replanting condition. The new application is "inspired", we are told, by "a Japanese bathhouse and Turkish/Andalusian Bathhouse," with roof height ranging from 3.6 to 5.7 metres in height, and a separate plant building. While unconventional in design and style, it is not unattractive, and although significantly larger than previously approved, it is at the far end of a very long garden, and would be barely visible from adjoining properties. We have not made any objection, only asking that there should be conditions similar to those in the previous grant, regarding protection of tree roots and replacement of trees .

A new garden building is proposed at **9 North Hill** to replace one destroyed by fire. However, the situation here is complex. The previous building has been demolished, and since it was originally allowed on a temporary

consent, it would be backlands development, contrary to policies. The proposed building would impact adversely on the outlook and amenities of surrounding houses, and the choice of materials - blackened timber, fibreglass panels and corrugated metal frieze - are alien to local character. The application drawings are inadequate, only giving a vague indication of what the building would look like, and give no indication of how its size compares with the original building, which we think was smaller and lower, and was obscured by trees which no longer exist. In addition, the description, "New building on site of previous garden dwelling house", suggests that it was built as a separate dwelling, which is not the case, as it was built, and intended, as a garden house for the main house. If this is the case, it would be unacceptable as backland development, aside from issues such as parking, absence of a separate access, and fire access. This should be refused and any future application should be predicated on a smaller and better-designed building, used solely as ancillary to the main house.

We have also been corresponding with Haringey on the fraught and complex issue of **Certificates of Lawful development**, in which developers apply for confirmation that what they are proposing does not require planning permission – a process which does not invite public consultation. We are concerned that Haringey should scrutinise such applications more closely than they have been doing, particularly when it is claimed that the works in question were carried out more than four years ago, which bestows an automatic permission. These applications could be used to legalise works carried out in defiance of planning regulations, of which we consider there have been some flagrant examples which Haringey have allowed through, and we are pressing Haringey, through our Councillors, on this very serious matter. In the absence of a satisfactory reaction we may have to refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Local residents have been seeking our help on a further application at the **Avenue Nursery, 2 Highgate Avenue** for another classroom in the garden at the rear of this house, as they are worried on several aspects:

- Pupil movements, many by car, are already causing congestion at the end of Highgate Avenue, and this will be exacerbated by a proposed increase of 20% in pupil numbers from 75 to 90;
- The school, originally on the ground floor, has expanded over the years to the whole house, from an original 46 pupils to a current 75. A subsequent application for a two-storey rear extension was refused because of the effect on neighbours, but a single storey full-width extension was allowed, against local policies;
- since less than half the pupils live in N6, it cannot be argued that increased numbers will meet a local need;
- while it is stated that the new classroom will be the same size as other structures in the garden, we calculate that it is considerably larger, and as there are no proposals for relocating the existing buildings, it is unclear where they will be accommodated;
- The remaining green space left is less than before, which is against local policy DH10.1, particularly in a conservation area. This new proposed classroom takes up a large percentage of this, and the matted playground area which it replaces will presumably need to be moved, covering even more green space;
- The 30 or so dwellings backing onto the playground already suffer considerable noise during school time, and this has increased as numbers have been grown, giving rise to numerous complaints. The noise barriers proposed will make little, if any, difference;
- The new classroom is set on sloping ground and will directly overlook houses on Highgate Avenue, already overlooked by a tall play structure erected in the middle of the playground.

We therefore consider that the existing school is already at maximum size, and any further increase will exacerbate problems already being experienced by neighbours.

We have objected to proposals to demolish two original Edwardian Villas at **76/78 Great North Road**, on the boundary with Barnet but within the Neighbourhood Plan area. The pair of villas marks the end of a row of similar properties which we consider are positive contributors to the character of the area. Their loss and replacement by an overbearing and poorly-designed modern building would set a dangerous precedent for the whole road. The CGIs accompanying the application, and purporting to justify the scheme in design terms and context, in our view achieve the opposite, revealing a bulky and inappropriate building out of keeping with neighbouring properties and failing to meet local policy requirements in terms of design, massing, bulk and materials. We also consider that demolishing existing properties which could be refurbished to provide flats or family housing does not meet the test for sustainable development. London transport policy also indicates that a development in a location of this type, very close to public transport facilities, should be car free; yet it proposes three off-street parking spaces and will clearly create further demand for on-street parking. The proposals also include a basemented house in the rear garden, resulting in loss of green space, contrary to policy, and the house's close proximity to the Underground line would impact on its quality of life, so the statement that the house would absorb some railway noise and provide a sound barrier for the flats is somewhat flawed. Neither would the development meet Neighbourhood Plan requirements to take account of existing front and rear building lines. The application fails to comply with the Neighbourhood Plan in multiple respects and should be refused.

We were interested to note that Haringey came fourth in a national survey of **Enforcement Notices** issued by local authorities in 2018, with 101. Camden were 19th, at 37. Top were Barnet, with 179. While they are very overstretched, our experience is that Haringey normally react quickly to our requests to investigate breaches of planning control.

We still await the final revised **Haringey Local List**, for which we made a thorough survey of the area. However, we have strongly opposed their proposal to remove a number of buildings, including important 18th and 19th century ones. It is essential that they remain until the Highgate Conservation Area Character Appraisal is updated in 2020, when they can be identified as 'positive contributors'.

We had an enjoyable couple of visits from **LSE Urban Design students** to discuss their class project to identify new uses for several sites around Highgate including the station land, the Muswell Hill Road Buildbase and the Bowl.

The issue of **Archaeology** in Highgate remains critical. Despite Highgate village being an officially designated Archaeological Priority Area (APA), where Historic England should be consulted on all applications, Haringey rejected our request for an archaeological condition on proposed works at 50 Highgate High Street. Historic England were not consulted; they recommended a condition when we alerted them, but even they were ignored.

Our ward councillors took this up for us, but received a most unsatisfactory response. Haringey argued that they had to set conditions that were reasonable and an excavation might cost too much, though they had no idea what the cost might be. This is incorrect; in an APA, the local authority can legitimately request an archaeological. The owners of 64 Highgate High Street commissioned archaeologists to advise on the likely impact of basement works and to carry out excavations of any features revealed, as did Highgate School in North Road. It is unacceptable that a planner with no archaeological experience or knowledge should make such a decision autonomously, and our councillors have suggested that a training session be held for their planners, at which we, and Historic England, would give a presentation.

Indeed, despite the site's Conservation and APA status, no Heritage Assessment accompanied the application. We did not object to the application, and even supported it; our only comment was on the need for an archaeological monitoring and, if necessary, excavation. However, the case officer chose to reject our request on the grounds that "the level of excavation is not considered to warrant archaeological investigations or conditions – a completely uninformed value judgement made on the basis of no evidence, and without even consulting the Conservation officer or requiring an assessment from the developer. The 1m+ depth of excavation would in fact be sufficient to destroy most archaeological deposits existing there. Astonishingly, our supportive local Historic England Archaeological Adviser informed us that "they don't have any obligation to justify their decisions to me."

This crisis is heightened by an application for redevelopment in Courtenay Avenue, well outside the APA but very close to the site of the hunting lodge of the mediaeval Bishops of London, described as "castle-like" in its day and with the outline of its moat still visible on Highgate Golf Course. Given its size and importance, being owned by one of the most powerful mediaeval Bishops, it is likely to have been surrounded by workers' and administrative buildings. We have therefore written a detail submission to Haringey, opposing the virtual demolition of one of the last original Quennell Arts and Crafts houses in the area, but also insisting that an archaeological condition is essential. An equally close site, at the top end of Courtenay Avenue, was lost some years ago without any archaeological investigation, and we are determined that this should not happen again. The Heritage Statement accompanying the application appears unaware of the proximity of this major mediaeval building.

Encouragingly, our request is being supported by Historic England, who have emphasised the site's possible importance and urged an archaeological condition on any permission requiring a detailed scheme of archaeological investigation. Surprisingly, the remains of the mediaeval Lodge are not protected, and we have therefore asked Historic England to consider designating it a Scheduled Ancient Monument

demolition or development shall take place until a written scheme of investigation (WSI) for archaeological groundworks monitoring has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. For land that is included within the WSI, no demolition or development shall take place other than in accordance with the agreed WSI, and the programme and methodology of site evaluation and the nomination of a competent person(s) or organisation to undertake the agreed works.

With the relentless weakening of the planning system, and the inability of planners to resist such damaging works as painting of historic brickwork, front garden walls up to 1m high, and vehicle crossovers, we have been pressing Camden and Haringey to introduce **Article 4 Directions** taking such works out of permitted development and requiring applications, such as cover Hampstead. Both are reluctant to do so, claiming lack of resources to do the work or to update Conservation Area Appraisals which will identify more buildings as "positive contributors". Camden have no Local List, maintaining that Conservation Area protection provides equal protection, but we are not so sure, and since adequate resources are not going to be available in the foreseeable future, we have to keep pressing for Article 4 Directions and an early update of the CAAs if we are to have any hope of fending off bad development or thoughtless alterations.

Through the Society's Infrastructure Group, we have also initiated a project to cheer up those dirty, rusting, graffiti-covered hulks defacing our streets, namely **Telecommunications Control Boxes**. Looking at examples elsewhere, particularly abroad, we have approached BT, who advise that they do not object in principle to such

initiatives and actually have a standard contract covering such works. Our idea is to experiment with one or two boxes, decorating them with local historical themes, and we are currently talking to a couple of local artists to try and take the project forward.

Ironically, when we asked BT to let us have a map showing their Boxes in the area, they advised that they could not do so for security reasons! We have pointed out that their locations are hardly a secret, and the fact that they are willing to countenance artworks on their boxes does rather presuppose that we should know their locations.

We were worried when parts of the fine **York Stone paving** between Waterlow Park and Lauderdale House vanished during pavement works and were replaced with tarmac. However, we are assured by Haringey's Transport section that it was taken up to prevent it being damaged during construction and will be replaced on completion of the works, the cost being covered by the developer.

Trees form an integral part of our remit, and under the new system whereby Haringey's tree work is outsourced to Islington, there have been several encouraging decisions.

The *Times* for March 23 reported an excellent court decision in which a householder in Poole illegally pruned a tree near his home to give more light to a balcony he had recently built. He was fined £1,200 for wilful damage to a protected tree. However, under the Proceedings of Crime Act, he was fined a further £21,000 representing the increased value of his house as a result of removing the tree, plus costs, a total of £37,200. They clearly take such things seriously in Dorset.

We objected an application to fell a TPO'd Eucalyptus at **14 Denewood Road**. We felt that the reason for felling, that it causes loss of light, was not sufficient as it is not on the south side of the house; nor was the assertion that a new house has been built next door, since the tree's existence would have been taken into account when permission for that was being considered. Encouragingly, the application was refused.

We objected to heavy pruning work to a magnificent mature Holm Oak at **13 North Grove** and requested that it should be placed under a TPO. This, we are glad to say, was done, but it brought a rather frosty reaction from the owner, which we endeavoured to address as positively as possible. Fortunately he passed the correspondence to his tree surgeons, Harrisons, a long-established local firm with a sound reputation for good practice and professional integrity, who sent us a long and friendly email explaining that, since the TPO had been applied, they had had discussions with Haringey resulting in a revised application for less drastic works which had since been approved. He assured us that the owner, a businessman with other properties with trees associated, with whom he has worked for many years, is genuinely dedicated to the care and conservation of trees, sometimes to his own financial detriment, and that the tree is in safe hands. We responded in kind, signalled that we were content with the revised work as agreed with Haringey comment, and explained that our reaction in this case was prompted by our surprise that such an important tree was not covered by a TPO.

Yet another tree application has been refused. An application was made to fell and replant a Sycamore at **87 Southwood Lane** for the reason that it was in poor condition and close to the property. It was, however, a large tree, visible to a considerable number of dwellings in the surrounding area and therefore a valuable landscape element. No evidence was given to support the statement that it was in poor condition, and there was no suggestion that its closeness to the property was the source of any problem. We considered that it should be protected by a TPO, in order that Haringey could have control over whatever work was necessary, and were delighted to see that a TPO was indeed applied, for the reasons that "the tree contributes materially to the amenities of the locality, playing an important part in providing a sense of scale, maturity and textural diversity to the immediate vicinity. The tree has been managed by cyclical crown reduction in the past and there is no reason why this maintenance would not be appropriate in the future. There is judged to be no sound... reason to justify the removal of the protected tree [and] he proposal would result in the unacceptable loss of a protected tree of visual and environmental merit.

We have to object to another poorly-constructed application to fell a TPO Lime tree in the front garden of **30 Southwood Lane**. Though maintaining that the tree is "only a few decades old and is of no historical importance", it is clearly substantial and at least 75-100 years old, while the "historical importance" of a tree lies in its size and contribution to the character of the historic streetscape, and large old Lime trees are characteristic of the area. The reason for felling was of impact on a dwarf garden wall, though no cracks were visible, and only a slight bowing. The assertion that it may collapse and cause injury was clearly an overstatement, although we conceded that, if it were to fall, it could possibly injure a Dachshund passing injudiciously close to it.

The application also suggested that the Lime is "possibly self-seeded"; but the seed of most hybrid urban Limes planted as street trees in Britain in the 19th and 20th centuries is not viable; and, far from being "inappropriate for the street scene", as suggested, there are many such trees in similar situations in Highgate, which are an integral element of the street scene, and it was surely deliberately planted to become a feature. Finally, since photographs suggest that the wall is relatively recent, we felt that a better solution would be to rebuild the wall up to the tree, leaving a gap for the trunk to function as a part of the boundary, as has been done elsewhere.

We gave other reasons why the application was unacceptable, and were pleased to see that the Tree Officer agreed with us and has refused it.

We were also concerned about an application to fell a fine Beech implicated in cracking in a rear extension at **84 Talbot Road**. Since the building is on a slope, and the Beech appears to be well uphill, it is unclear whether it would be responsible for drawing sufficient water from the soil to be the cause of the cracking. The fact that the house itself is built on a steep slope could suggest some downhill movement, while the fact that the cracking appears to be restricted to 25-year-old extension, while the tree is possibly as much as 50 years old, suggests that the problem could be with inadequate foundations to the extension. We have therefore ask the Tree Officer to look into it to carefully and, if necessary, to impose a Tree Preservation Order in order that a proper solution can be found.

We commented on an application to fell two oaks on **Highgate Golf Course** said to be in a dangerous state of decay. While the safety of users of the golf course is clearly critical, photographs suggest that these are large and important trees, possibly original veteran hedgerow oaks from the pre-golf course days, and we are surprised they were not already the subject of a TPO. Such oaks, when old and decayed, are extremely important wildlife habitats, particularly for nationally rare wood-feeding invertebrates. Felling should therefore only be considered as a last option, and it is unfortunate that there was no arboricultural report giving details of the actual state of the trees and possible alternative solutions. We therefore asked the Tree Officer to determine whether felling is the only option, or whether an appropriate level of reduction could address the problem and enable their retention for their ecological and historic value, to achieve a satisfactory resolution while meeting safety requirements.

A heated debate has arisen over proposals to erect a memorial, at Kenwood, to **Humanitarian Aid Workers** killed in the course of their work. The proposed site is on the Stable Field path from the Stable Block and Walled Garden, which would be visible from many places on the Heath. English Heritage frankly told the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee (HHCC), who are vigorously opposing it – as are the City of London – that the site was chosen because it would not fit in with the main Kenwood estate, but, of paramount importance, it would be widely visible and therefore attract people from across the Heath to Kenwood, while a representative from the Memorial Appeal Committee added that it was chosen precisely because of its visibility from a distance; indeed, visibility was its motivating factor, though this seems difficult to reconcile with the other stated aim, that it should provide a place of quiet contemplation and remembrance for the friends and relatives of those who died. The fact that it has already been rejected by several more central sites added to concerns,

Whilst no judgement was made on the worthiness of the cause, agreeing to it could open the Heath up to requests from other equally worthy causes, and HHCC were concerned that it directly contravened the aims of the 1871 Hampstead Heath Act to preserve the Heath's wild and natural aspect and to avoid any new structures, and would therefore fit in even less with the Heath, from which it would be exclusively visible. The location also has minimal transport links from London, and HHCC were in no doubt that a site closer to Central London should be used.

The design itself is a rather childlike circle of 15 two-dimensional bronze figures, holding hands, with gaps to allow visitors to walk through it; rather like the cut-out chains of human figures you used to make out of folded sheets of paper, only life-size. To add insult to injury, it appears that Kenwood was chosen because several other, more central, site, including the Royal Parks, had rejected it.

Since **Oak Processionary Moth** (OPM) was identified on the Heath in 2015, there has been a huge increase in the number of nests, from 15 nests in 2015, to over 2000 in 2018, and over 70 in Highgate wood. However, it is recognized that the blanket spraying adopted until now as a control causes huge collateral damage, since it is a bacterial agent which attacks butterfly and moth larvae indiscriminately, and has to be applied to affected and neighbouring trees. This would mean spraying a huge area of the Heath; City staff have been looking at ways to reduce sprayed, and this year they have received Forestry Commission approval to limit spraying where there is a heavy concentration of Heath users, for example along a few main paths, car parks, near cafes, sporting grounds or areas where children may come into contact; thus there will only be 10% of the spraying done in 2018. Further, only individual trees will be sprayed. In Highgate Wood, only two oaks overhanging the playground will be sprayed. The City will also aim to raise public awareness of the hazards posed to humans by contact with OPM – the trees themselves are not harmed by defoliation, though they will monitor veteran oaks to see whether it affects them. Meanwhile research is focusing on a parasitic fly which has followed OPM from the Continent, and could be an important future control.

Another pest, more of concern to gardeners, is the **Box Tree moth**, which is causing serious damage to Box shrubs – for an example, see the shrubs in front of 10a, from which I picked 229 very hungry caterpillars a few weeks ago!

The City of London celebrate **30 years of managing the Heath** this year. They will be staging events to commemorate it. The Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee, on which the Society has been represented for the whole 30 years, has been a very successful way of securing community input into the way the Heath is managed and, to their credit, it has been the experience of its members that the City have been significantly better at listening to community views than any of our local authorities.

Litter on **Hampstead Heath** (see photograph) is a major problem. The City collects 300 tonnes per year, including a staggering 50-70 tonnes of dog waste, and annual collection & disposal costs £250,000. This money could be far better spent on protecting the Heath; do all you can to avoid littering the Heath, and persuade everyone you know to do likewise.

There have been discussions about having a few **Dexter Cattle** from Mudchute Farm on an enclosure on the Heath for a few days, or educational purposes; several possible locations are being considered. Alternatively, if it proves impractical, Sheep might be considered; these have a much longer history on the Heath.

The Redington Froggnal Neighbourhood Forum is promoting the restoration of “**Constable’s Pond**”, in the hollow at Judge’s Walk. This has the support of the Consultative Committee.

Our colleagues on the Heath and Hampstead Society are helping the City in fighting two appeals for against refusal of development on the **Vale of Health North and South Fairgrounds**; the outcome will be extremely important for the future of developments on the edge of the Heath.

Though outside our “territory”, the Highgate Society has long taken a keen interest in the future of **College Farm, Finchley**, as we believe that it is an important asset for the wider north London community. It was therefore encouraging to learn that the Finchley Society have succeeded in having it designated as an Asset of Community Value. This means that, should it come onto the market, the Society will have six months to raise the value to purchase it; and as it is covered by an Agricultural tenancy, that value should not be out of reach.

Should we now be questioning whether the word "Planning" should be used any more, since the Government’s relentless onslaught on our planning system means that Planning, in the sense we have always understood it, is now very difficult. The Government continues in its weakening of communities’ safeguards against bad development, particularly through the use of **Permitted Development Rights (PDR)** for purposes for which it was never intended. Originally intended to allow very minor works without the necessity of tying up planners on trivia, it is now used as a means of promoting housing development, though it is evident to most that this is not working, is destroying the ability of communities to plan their areas properly, and has resulted in the proliferation of sub-standard private housing. As we have reported so often before, there is no shortage of housing; only of *affordable* and *social* housing, which is what is needed, but which the changes in planning are signally failing to achieve.

In the latest folly, temporary rules allowing **large single-storey rear extensions** without planning consent are being made permanent; additions to terraced and semi-detached homes can be up to 6m, while detached houses will be able to make extensions up to 8m. Yet, totally illogically, neighbours will still be consulted and can object; so what, then, is the point?

Combined with rights to change shops and offices to housing without permission, the impact on high streets and communities, and on the quality of housing, is becoming serious. Even the Royal Town Planning Institute has again urged the Government to consider the impact that the new PDRs will have on our ailing high streets if takeaways, launderettes and other shops are allowed to become residential. “No one would argue against the need for more affordable homes, or that high streets must adapt, but change must be part of a planned, local vision. Expanding PDRs will neither help deliver thriving high streets nor high quality affordable local housing,” but will impair the ability of local authorities to manage development according to the needs of local communities. Indeed, by removing the requirement for a planning application, the local community will be excluded from having their say.

Having encouraged the stripping out of offices from town centres (probably leaving the vacant and underused out of centre offices untouched) the Government is not recognising its mistake, but allowing other town centre uses to be stripped out in favour of shopfront offices in compensation. Some of the changes have an element of a “moral tone” – takeaways, betting shops and pay-day loan shops – but why are they victimising launderettes? In some areas they are an essential local, community service. A few London boroughs have Article 4 Directions to retain control over the loss of launderettes to housing; now others need to start taking this potential purge more seriously, not least Haringey.

Illogically, all this is contrary to the Government’s own National Planning guidance, para. 92 of which requires planners “to guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs”.

From 25 May, too, new PDR rules will make the situation worse. Shops, takeaways, betting offices, payday loan shops, and launderettes can be converted to offices under “prior approval”, and takeaways to housing. Ironically, having taken on board widely expressed concerns about the blanket right enabling office conversions to residential, these latest changes could increase the supply of offices.

Local authorities will have some control, in that they are allowed to assess whether there is adequate provision of the existing use, and can require evidence that applicants have tried to attract occupiers, and can reject

proposals if they would undermine the sustainability of its shopping area. The existence of a well-developed town centre strategy could enable councils to resist change of use, but they will have limited controls over premises' external appearance. In fact, the administration of "prior approval" applications will effectively as much officers' time as a full planning application; but the fee would be much less." Even the British Property Federation have expressed concerns about impact on high streets, while a leading planning consultancy has warned against continual changes to the planning system. "We need to give policies time to come into effect and have results rather than tinker year on year."

While the residential aspects do not apply in Conservation Areas, shops can still be turned into offices unless there is an Article 4 Direction. Camden have introduced one on their side of the High Street, but Haringey seem unable to move on doing anything on their side.

SAVE Britain's Heritage have expressed grave concern at the government's response to its successful 2017 Court of Appeal case which ruled that ministers must give reasons for their decision to call-in a development scheme to determine themselves. Secretary of State James Brokenshire has overruled his own published advice and announced that no reasons will now be given either for calling in or not calling-in planning applications. In 2001 the attorney general ruled that reasons must be given "in the interest of transparency, good administration and best practice".

Marcus Binney, executive president of SAVE, called the decision "a slap in the face for openness in planning decisions in favour of arbitrary government, ... skewing the planning system in favour of development at the expense of environmental concerns. Developers have an automatic right to appeal against a refusal of planning permission but those with environmental, architectural, historic concerns have [none]. A leading firm of planning lawyers said "The refusal to give reasons is not in accordance with the principles of good administration; the giving of reasons leads to decisions that are better thought through and as a result can be justified and explained."

Yet the Government has announced that its priority is "to ensure faster decision-making within the planning system" and "will publish an Accelerated Planning Green Paper later this year that will discuss how greater capacity and capability, performance management and procedural improvements can accelerate the end-to-end planning process," to include "recommendations to reduce the time taken to conclude planning appeal inquiries, whilst maintaining the quality of decisions."

In the light of all this, the Government's removal of PDR for new the combined telephone kiosks and advertising monoliths defacing more and more of our street seems insignificant.

Indeed, more than half of the top 20 local authorities which saw offices converted to (private) housing under PDR in 2018 were in London, with Barnet top of the list. The policy has been criticised by bodies including the Royal Town Planning Institute, the Town and Country Planning Association and the Planning Officers Society, who have warned that resulting homes are too often of poor quality and, worse, that it allows developers to avoid paying planning obligations or providing affordable housing. Even the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors concludes that office-to-residential permitted development rules have allowed the development of "extremely poor-quality housing".

Those of you interested in the protection of Green Belt, and its critical value for London, should download "**London's Protected Land: the extent, location and character of designated Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land in Greater London**", published by the CPRE in 2018. This survey shows how important Green Belt is for nature conservation and the protection of ancient woodland, and outlines the growing pressures facing London's Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) which is meant to have the highest level of protection from development in planning policy. Some of the key findings include:

- 49% of the Green Belt and MOL is of local, national or international importance for nature conservation.
- Over 97% of ancient woodland is in Green Belt or MOL.
- Outdoor sports facilities account for a quarter of MOL and 13% of Green Belt land.
- Despite increasing criticism of the value and condition of Green Belt and MOL from the development lobby, it shows how valuable the land is and plays a major role in improving the environment and quality of life for Londoners, as well as wildlife protection.

A former Chief Planner for the City of London warns that **London's skyline** is in danger of being dominated by a forest of derelict residential towers in 100 years' time, since there is a danger that funds set aside from service charges for major renovation work will be insufficient to cover what was required. "In 80, 90, 100 years' time I fear we'll have the Thames lined with derelict towers."