

# ISLINGTON *news*

*The Journal of the Islington Society*

## Islington re-emerging from lockdown

Coming out of lockdown has proved more difficult than going in as government at all levels has struggled to find a consistent approach in the face of a changing scenario. Most worrying of all, whereas in the early days there seemed to be a welcome return of community spirit, more recent times have seen people fiercely divided on their personal approach to the pandemic, with one poll suggesting the divisions were more strongly felt than those over Brexit. Unfortunately, Brexit has not gone away either, with a Bill in Parliament to Get it "undone", or at least reworked.

The report of a woman confronting a man entering a shop as she was leaving, taking off her face mask and giving it to him when he said he did not have one illustrates the problem of not explaining the purpose and disbenefits face coverings bring. Relative risk, and the implications of time lag from transmission of infection to developing symptoms, hospital admission, death and recording of death are more complex concepts requiring more careful and detailed explanation.

Unless you hold to the view that a second lockdown is necessity whatever the economic consequences, or that more people have died prematurely as a result of the unintended consequences of the first lockdown and we should go back to business as usual forthwith, it is frankly impossible to put out consistent messages. There is agreement between central government and local authorities that more needs to be done to encourage walking and cycling, but the implementation has not met the same unanimity among residents of Islington. No amount of modal shift to walking and cycling would permit the same level of movement between home and work as was undertaken prior to the pandemic.

What then has been the impact of the pandemic on the Islington economy? The Islington Society participated in a survey of high streets co-ordinated by the London Forum. There has been no spike in the number of vacant shop units, but shops have been struggling for years in the face of growth in on-line sales and this growth has accelerated post-pandemic. On the other hand, the

growth in work from home should have had a beneficial effect on shops pubs and restaurants in residential areas of the Borough. The greatest negative impact of the pandemic is visible in central London with fewer people on the streets and more hospitality venues remaining closed after permission to open had been granted. People still eat, and "eat out to Help out" under which the government paid 50% of the first £20 per person has been deemed a success. However, new customers are offset by predominantly older people who are reluctant to venture out for all but essential purposes. The decline in real ale sales is greater than the decline generally and while it would be misleading to portray real ale drinkers as exclusively older people it is the tittle of choice of more people who have acquired the wisdom of age.

There is regrettably little prospect of the Islington Society resuming activities on the basis that obtained pre-pandemic for the foreseeable future. Some events are being held virtually. We are not publicising events organised by other organisations as they require internet use and the purpose of our events listing is primarily to provide a service to those who do not have access to the internet. We will be reviewing the impact of the pandemic on amenity societies when the pandemic has subsided and it becomes clear what permanent changes have been made.

Islington fared least worst of London Boroughs in the first wave, but this could be bad news second time round if relatively low levels of herd immunity exist. The controversial ten o'clock curfew could also have a more devastating effect on Islington's hospitality sector. It seems we just have to baton down the hatches and hope to emerge into a brighter 2021. AB

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## Islington Society News

### Annual General Meeting

The AGM will still be held on November 10<sup>th</sup>, but by zoom. Please e-mail the Secretary to attend.

### Annual Dinner

There can be no Annual Dinner in 2020; we hope for better in October 2021.

### Other events

The series of talks associated with the church building in Cloudesley Square commenced via Zoom on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. Future dates are October 21st and November 26th. Book via [islingtonsociey@aol.com](mailto:islingtonsociey@aol.com). There is also a Saturday exhibition on site each week until November 28<sup>th</sup> 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., maximum 15 persons at any time..

### *Islington Society: What we do*

- we support conservation planning work to preserve the borough's historic fabric and individual buildings of distinction
- we campaign for a high standard of design in new buildings
- we encourage best practice through awards for

good architecture in new or refurbished buildings

- we organise a varied programme of events including talks, walks and site visits
- we campaign for better public transport and for priority for people travelling on foot or by bike
- we produce publications that celebrate Islington's history and its social and cultural diversity
- we publish neighbourhood walking trails to foster exploration awareness and pride of place
- we build links between residents officials and councillors
- we send advisers to Council groups dealing with development, the environment and transport
- we are represented on the London Forum of Civic & Amenity Societies, which takes up cross-borough issues and is a member of Civic Voice
- we publish a regular newsletter The views expressed in the Islington Society's Journal are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Society's adopted policy.

Our web site is [www.islingtonsociey.org.uk](http://www.islingtonsociey.org.uk)

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## Boundary changes

The London wide elections planned for next May will follow the new Ward boundaries. This will affect where some people vote, but not the choice of candidates on the ballot paper.

### *Society publications*

[available from the Society at Resource for London, 356 Holloway Rd., London, N.7 or local bookshops]

*Twentieth Century Buildings in Islington*, by Alec Forshaw, £14.99, photographs by Richard Leoney, ISBN 0-9541490-0-9;

*An architect in Islington*, by Harley Sherlock, £14.99, ISBN 9-78-0-9541490-2-4; *The Story of Day Flats in and around Islington*, by Andrew Bosi, photographs from C.F. Day Limited and Oliver Craxton, £5, ISBN 0-9541490-1-7



## Dixon Clark Court



As we go to press the seven trees in the grounds of Dixon Clark Court at Highbury Corner, that are due to be cut down, are being occupied by Extinction Rebellion and have been the subject of a fierce preservation campaign

started at the end of last year by nearby resident Hugh O'Connor, who subsequently passed away. They are due to make way for a block of 14 private flats, forming part of, and helping finance, a Council development which would provide an additional 25 'affordable' homes on the site. Dixon Clark Court is a fifteen-storey brick-walled tower block completed in 1965 to an interesting angled design by the third generation of Monson architects who made such a big impact on Islington, including the nationally listed Town Hall, the neighbouring early housing developments of Halton Mansions and Tyndale Mansions, and the locally listed Brecknock Road Estate of a little later. The design concept of Dixon Clark Court shows that Monsons moved with the post-war times, building higher and with a lot more open space at ground level than earlier courtyard-based housing estates, reflecting the then-influential ideas of Le Corbusier and the Modern Movement. But this open space has attracted the attention of a Council now seeking to find any corner of the Borough where they can build extra housing units – even at the cost of having to sell a substantial percentage of them afterwards (35% in this case) in order to fund the operation. A significant part of what is currently public land will thus be privatised – an operation that has already been carried out at the King Square Estate, and earlier at the Barnsbury Estate (under slightly different circumstances). In other words, it is a policy that threatens to deprive existing social housing estates of their green amenities. The Islington Society has objected to it. JD

## Democratic involvement in planning under threat

Recent changes to use classes, and permitted development rights allowing two storeys to be added to existing residential buildings, have weakened the planning system. A Council spokesperson told the Society chairman that the Council is extremely concerned about the ongoing unprecedented changes to the planning system.

The Society has objected to further proposed changes - see page 10 - in a consultation which closed at the start of the month. Consultation on a planning white paper closes on October 29<sup>th</sup> - the Society's response will be reported next time. Of particular concern is that applications would no

longer be advertised in the press (to its detriment) or on lamp-posts. The 22% of people not on line would be excluded from consultation, though the Local Plan would be considered to have established what could be permitted already. The Heritage Alliance summary of the impact bears reading and can be accessed using this link:

<https://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Planning-for-the-Future-Summary.pdf>. Members are encouraged to make personal responses.



## Dr Pitcairn's Physic Garden and the Wilson Estate - Part 2

*In the Summer issue of Islington News Michael Gwinnell traced the origins of this corner of east Barnsbury. Part 2 traces its development to the present day.*

After the building of the Literary & Scientific Institution and Nos. 1-4 Almeida Street in 1837-8, the remainder of the estate was let as market gardens until 1846, when the Manor of Barnsbury granted licence to demise their copyhold property to Stephen & Josiah Wilson for up to 99 years "in consideration of building good and substantial dwelling houses of not less than the fourth rate or class, each house fronting Wellington Street not to be of a less annual value than £40 and each of the other houses not to be of less annual value than £25".

The four streets now named Almeida Street, Battishill Street, Napier Terrace and Waterloo Terrace were laid out and building leases granted on the north side of Almeida Street (Nos. 17-28) in 1846, both sides of Battishill Street (1846-52), the north side of Waterloo Terrace (1851-52), the south side of Almeida Street (Nos. 5-16) (1852), parts of Napier Terrace (1853-54) and four houses (later numbered 19-22) on the south side of Waterloo Terrace, originally named 1-4 Wellesley Terrace (1854).

The passageway at the end of Almeida Street through to Milner Square was created when the east side of the latter was built (also by Dove Brothers) in 1844. Gough and Roumieu, architects of the Lit & Sci, were also the designers of Milner Square. At one time William Spencer Dove resided at 20 Milner Square, whose front door originally opened onto the passageway, being relocated in recent times because of repeated vandalism. Dove leased the whole of the west side of Napier Terrace for 82 years in 1849. A house at the end of Waterloo Terrace with the garden and conservatory in Napier Terrace shown on the 1871 OS plan (see Part 1) was leased (probably also by Dove) for 79 years in 1852.

### The Lit & Sci and its successors

By the 1870s the Islington Literary & Scientific Society was struggling to continue as the changing demography of Islington reduced its middle class clientele, and eventually it was wound up. The building was sold in 1875, being operated as the Wellington Club until 1885, when it was purchased by William Booth and radically altered

for use as a Salvation Army Citadel. The original lecture theatre, library, museum and reading room were replaced by the present conventional theatre layout of stalls and balcony with boxes at the sides and a stage in the semi-circular apse, with stairs either side to provide access to the balcony.

The Salvation Army ceased to operate there in 1956 after which the building was sold to Beck's British Carnival Novelties and used as a warehouse and factory to supply their shop at 139 Upper Street. Only minor alterations were made to accommodate their machinery. Following the murder of the Beck's proprietor in 1972 (by his son-in-law who was appalled to discover he was a transvestite) the building was sold and went through various owners as a warehouse.



Salvation Army Citadel 1953      Beck's British Carnival Novelties 1967

Attempts by several organisations to gain planning consent for theatre use finally bore fruit in 1981 when the Almeida Theatre Company was formed by Pierre Audi and friends newly-graduated from Oxford University. They acquired the building with financial support from Pierre's father, a Lebanese banker, and the Almeida Theatre opened that year.

### Modern changes to the Wilson estate

During the 1960s Nos. 5-7 Almeida Street were acquired and Nos. 5 & 6 demolished by the General Post Office, the flank wall of No. 7 being supported by two massive buttresses. This was to enable additional access to the site of the Northern District Post Office which had been built in 1905 on the former builder's yard and sawmill behind Nos. 1-16 Almeida Street, previously only reachable via Studd Street and the alleyway between 133 & 134 Upper Street. The whole Post Office site was redeveloped between 2005 and 2020 as Islington Square, a mixed use retail, residential, office and leisure complex.

Around 1970 Battishill Gardens were created by Islington Council as part of a wholesale redevelopment of the central block (excluding the Almeida Street frontage) with a small park fronting Battishill Street and



pairs of maisonettes along Napier Terrace and at the south end of Battishill Street. Designed by Helen Stafford, project architect, they have integral garages, small back yards for the lower maisonettes, and balconies for the upper ones. The original Battishill Street houses were small with tiny back yards, many taken up by WW2 Anderson Shelters, and can be glimpsed at bottom right in the 1947 aerial photograph below (which also includes Premier House and the De Dion Bouton garage opposite it - to be discussed in part 3 of this article).



Stone frieze in Battishill Gardens

A small paved area on the Napier Terrace side of Battishill Gardens includes a 19th-century stone frieze originally carved by Musgrave Watson in 1842 for the Hall of Commerce in Threadneedle Street, which was demolished in 1922. There is a tablet recording the opening of the gardens by Sir John Betjeman in 1975.

The present terrace of 11 three-storey town houses with integral garages on the west side of Napier Terrace was built in 1980/81. It reprised an award-winning design by Michael Brown Associates which had been used in their 1972 development in Hippodrome Mews, W11. The terrace replaced an industrial building and yard which was attached to the British Syphon Company's factory (that later became a greetings card factory). This was built around 1897 on the site of the former Islington Proprietary School fronting Barnsbury Street and in 1936 expanded into Nos. 1-4 Milner Square. The factory was demolished in 1984 and redeveloped in 1987 as Waterloo Gardens, a block of flats and ground floor commercial, with a rear entrance to its courtyard at the end of Waterloo Terrace and including a reconstructed Nos. 1-4



1947 Aerial photograph with Waterloo Terrace on left, Battishill Street in foreground

entrance from Waterloo Terrace shown below, at Milner Square. It seems the developers failed to honour their pledge to reinstate the ornate hough there is an iron arch over the present entrance which echoes the outline.



Waterloo Terrace west end in 1980...



...and the arch today - with 1-4 Milner Square in the background  
Part 3 will cover developments at the Upper Street entrances to the Wilson estate: Myddelton Hall and Wellington Hall in Almeida Street and Premier House (No. 1 Waterloo Terrace) and Bouton Place in Waterloo Terrace.



## A walk round some of Islington's villas

*This walk takes in some of central Islington's finest villas, in Canonbury and Highbury. It continues Andrew Clayton's series based on the updating of Islington's collection of Locally Listed Buildings, recently completed by a group of volunteers.*

These villas, built in an intense period of activity between 1840 and 1860, are concentrated in a comparatively small area, bounded by Canonbury Road, the New River and St. Paul's Road, with a detour to Highbury Crescent. The walk gives us a chance to look at the work of two of Islington's most important Victorian developers, James Wagstaffe and Charles Havor Hill, who built many of the villas in this area, some compact and homely, others large and imposing. Islington is perhaps best known for its residential terraces, but its villas are just as important.

We begin on Upper Street, opposite the Town Hall, at No. 176. This is now a shop, perhaps originally a dwelling, converted in the 1830s or 1840s. It was occupied in the 1840s and 50s by James Wagstaffe, described in the lease as estate agent, auctioneer and surveyor. He was also an architect and developer, with a builder's yard at Highbury Corner. The upper floors are decorated with Italianate stucco window surrounds which may have been added while he occupied No. 176. In the 1970s it was famed for garments sold at pre-decimal prices. Walk north to Canonbury Lane, through Canonbury Square and Canonbury Place to Alwyne Villas.



A pair of Wagstaffe's Alwyne Villas.

Wagstaff had a development lease from the Northampton Estate for the area between Alwyne Villas and the gardens of Canonbury Park South, which had been developed earlier in the 1840s. Nos. 2 & 4 were the first of his villas, begun in

1848, and are locally listed. The remainder on this side of the road, the even numbers up to 16, are nationally listed Grade II. Wagstaffe usually built his villas in pairs, with grand entrances. He varied the details to give each group individual appeal. These Alwyne Villas houses are on a slightly smaller scale than those round the corner in Alwyne Road, for example, and Nos. 2 & 4 are a little plainer than their neighbours. They have two main stories, with a stucco semi-basement and dormers in the roof. They have stucco side entrances and grand front doors, with rectangular fanlights above. No 16 has an elaborate porch, perhaps added later.

At the end of the road turn left onto Alwyne Road, passing pairs of Grade II listed Wagstaffe villas on either side. Cross Willow Bridge Road, to a sequence of locally listed villas which show Wagstaffe at his grandest, Nos. 20 to 24.



One of Wagstaffe's Alwyne Road villas.

These show all the strengths of the James Wagstaffe Canonbury and Highbury villas. They are well proportioned, with individual detailing. The entrance bays are set back slightly, with curved stucco mouldings above. The ground floor windows have segmental pediments supported by brackets, and there is a strong cornice at roof level.

Retrace your steps to Willow Bridge Road and turn right towards Canonbury Place. Here are two groups of locally listed Wagstaffe villas, Nos. 16 - 22 and Nos. 1 - 5. Wagstaffe developed his lease of Northumberland Estate land between 1848 and 1860. These villas come towards the end of that period and the stucco decoration has become more elaborate, particularly around the doorways. The entrances are now on the main façade, rather than recessed to the side, though this doesn't make them any less opulent.

At the junction take the second road on the right into Canonbury Park North and step a few years back to the early 1840s. Here we come to a development by Charles Havor Hill who laid out three roads, Canonbury Park North and



South, and Grange Grove, and built 50 villas on them. Like Wagstaffe he offered these mainly in pairs, generously spaced, with front and back gardens. Their simplicity makes a marked contrast with the more florid and Italianate Wagstaffe villas, with no stucco round the windows, and the doorways more purely classical in their detail. The best of them are some of the most distinguished buildings on this walk.



No. 44 Canonbury Park North

Almost all of these Havor Hill villas are nationally Grade II listed and the locally listed houses are mainly those built under a second round of leases granted in 1850 which may have been distributed to other builders. Nos. 49, 51 and 53 for example are more elaborately decorated than their neighbours.

Turn left from Canonbury Park North into St. Paul's Road and you come to three groups of villas which rise rather gloomily behind the trees. These are of the Wagstaffe type and date, three storeys plus semi-basement, though much more sparingly decorated than those in Alwyne Road or Willow Bridge Road. They are nonetheless handsome, though you don't often get more than a glimpse of them in St. Paul's Road's busy traffic.

Most of the surviving terraces on the right-hand side of St. Paul's Road as you walk towards Highbury Corner are locally listed. But pass them by to get to the grandest of all Wagstaffe's villas on Highbury Crescent. The best are the first ones you come to, Nos. 7 to 12. Of these Nos. 7 and 8, and 11 and 12 are nationally listed Grade II. That leaves Nos. 9 and 10 locally listed.



Nos. 41 & 43 St. Paul's Road



No. 9 Highbury Crescent.

These are large semi-detached villas dating from 1848-50, developed by Wagstaffe and James Goodbody, and probably designed by Wagstaffe himself. They are generously spaced and richly decorated, leading towards Fieldway Crescent, where the pairs either side of the junction have towers. These villas show James Wagstaffe at the height of his powers, placing him securely in the list of Islington's greatest 19th century architects, along with Sir Charles Barry, Roumieu & Gough, and George Truefitt. Charles Havor Hill perhaps made less of an impact, but No. 44 Canonbury Park North (illustrated) is the building that leaves the strongest impression at the end of this stroll round some of Islington's villas.

You can either return to Upper Street via Fieldway Crescent and Holloway Road, or go back the way you came to Highbury Corner.

*The information in this walk is based on the efforts of the volunteers who worked on the project to revise Islington's list of locally significant buildings. This work is now complete and ready to be submitted to the Council.*



## Low Traffic Neighbourhoods



Many of us have felt there has been ever more traffic on side roads. Department for Transport statistics prove this conclusively. In the last decade motor traffic in London has increased by an astonishing 70% on unclassified roads while declining on main roads. The main reason? The Iphone 3G, introduced in 2008, shortly followed by Waze.

Unsurprisingly, councils have responded. In May, Islington Council announced its intention to proceed with People Friendly Streets (PFS) (also known as Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs)) 'to make it easier and safer to walk and cycle, with healthier and greener streets for all, and to support social distancing'. The aim was particularly to support children, young people, and people who are vulnerable. The policy had in essence been announced in the Labour Manifesto for the 2018 borough elections, which referred to closing roads to through traffic to prevent rat-running, and was repeated in the 2019 draft Islington Transport Strategy. In June 2019 the Council issued a Climate Emergency.

The Covid pandemic acted as a catalyst. The reduction in motor vehicle use created greener, less polluted and more pleasant streets. As lockdown ended, with a reduction in public transport capacity and the threat of a large switch to cars, streets would become even more unsafe and unhealthy than before

unless action were taken. The first scheme was created in St Peter's Ward in June and was followed by Canonbury East in July and Clerkenwell Green. These involve preventing through traffic, but not emergency services, by bollards or enforcement cameras. Schemes have been announced for Canonbury West and Amwell, and more are to follow.

The new measures have been contentious. There is considerable support in Islington and a London-wide TfL survey found 51% supported such measures with 16% opposed, but also vocal opposition with demonstrations, and angry emails to councillors. Well-known dignitaries have pronounced against proposals. Sir John Tusa claimed that Canonbury was being turned into a gated community and shopkeepers would be ruined. There is much assertion and disagreement about the facts.

But there is a substantial body of academic evidence about the impact of LTNs from Walthamstow where there are established schemes. Nearer to home, roads in De Beauvoir have been closed for years, as have parts of Islington, such as Myddelton Square. There is also emerging, admittedly anecdotal, evidence, from the early schemes in Islington. So what do they show?

Among the biggest beneficiaries are pedestrians. In Waltham Forest, a study by the



University of Westminster shows that the LTN programme led to people walking over 30 minutes per week more, and certainly in the streets of St Peter's I see more people walking. We know the more attractive it is to walk, the more people will walk. The potential for reducing car journeys is huge. 1.6 million, or 22%, of all car trips made by London residents every day are under a mile and many could be walked. Significantly, car ownership in Walthamstow LTNs has declined, so other modes of transport should have increased.

Health: it goes without saying that if more people walk and cycle and fewer use their cars, there will be health benefits both from increasing exercise and reduced pollution. A King's College study found 51,000 households in Waltham Forest were no longer living in areas with dangerously high levels of air pollution compared to a decade ago. On a personal note, my daughter suffers badly from asthma; she desperately needs a network of clean air routes to allow her to walk round the borough.

Children: in my lifetime children have been driven from our streets; in Hull, where I grew up in the 1950s, we could play football and cricket there. The same was true in Islington. In St Peter's I begin to see a return to better days; walking to school now looks a pleasure. Lockdown led to the glorious sight of families with young children cycling; this ended, but is seen again inside the PFS schemes.

The vulnerable: we see people on mobility scooters and with zimmer frames not confined to narrow bumpy pavements, and blind and partially sighted benefit from less traffic. Disabled people are less likely to use a car, but those who do or use taxis or PHVs will find their journeys take a little longer. However, all homes can be accessed by motor vehicle. Much concern has been expressed about ambulance and other emergency vehicle response times, but these services have agreed to all the schemes and in Walthamstow some response times improved following the establishment of LTNs.

Social justice: PFS policies appear highly progressive: over 70% of Islington households do not have access to a car and twice as many households in AB social groups have access to a car than in DE groups. 44.6% of borough trips are made by walking, only 7.4pc as a car driver. Some have claimed that

poorer people live on main roads, but this is mere assertion. A house on St Pauls Road (A1199) is currently for sale for £1.65m; many housing estates are on rat-runs and would benefit significantly from a PFS scheme e.g. in Mildmay, the Highbury Estate on Grosvenor Avenue, the Mayville on Mathias Rd and Tudor Court on King Henry's Walk.

Shops: the evidence is overwhelming that most shopkeepers benefit from LTNs, which is why the largest estates, such as Capco in Covent Garden, support road closures. But there are always fears before implementation: in Walthamstow, protestors marched through the borough with a coffin. In fact, shops in Francis and Orford roads have thrived since through traffic was removed. A survey found that businesses in Lea Bridge Road believed 63 per cent of their customers arrived by car; but only 20 per cent had done so.

Main roads are a real concern. Improvements for residents on main roads must come as soon as possible. But the view of the 'antis' that traffic will not 'evaporate' is not supported by the evidence. Studies of a large number of road closures by distinguished academics such as Professor Goodwin show that a very significant proportion of the traffic has disappeared when roads have been closed. In Walthamstow bus journey times (on main roads) have not significantly increased following introduction of LTNs.

Given the evidence, why the vociferous protests and angry emails? Some drivers get angry at any delays, and people are genuinely alarmed as they often are by change. But these alarms have been seized on and amplified by right-wing commentators in the Mail, Telegraph and Sun and others. Of course, it is possible that PFS schemes will not work, that we will not be able to create a better world for our children and that people will not walk more and people will not switch their car journeys to walking, cycling and cargo-bikes. But the beauty of the policy is that it is undertaken under an Experimental Traffic Order, which runs for 18 months. Unlike the heavily engineered Highbury Corner scheme, which the Society objected to, PFS schemes can readily be amended or even reversed.

DH



## Islington Society response to proposed changes to the planning system

*Extracts are reproduced below - the full response is available to members on request.*

The Islington Society does not agree that there is a need for a new method for assessing housing requirements or to change the current proposals for new housing provision in the London Plan.

### The Current Assessment of Local Housing Need

The London Plan takes into consideration both demand for housing (by means of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment) and the capacity (by means of Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment), drawn up by the London Boroughs together with other key stakeholders. The assessment of additional housing demand in London at 66,000 dwellings a year (dpa) closely matches matched by available capacity of 65,000 dpa was included in the current 'Intend to Publish' New London Plan'. This approach was challenged at the Examination in Public and the London Plan subsequently reduced the London-wide housing target to 52,000 dpa but this did not include any windfall sites. It must be noted from this that the principle of the London Plan is that the targets for individual boroughs, which result from the reallocation of the overall housing target for London, are based on their need for housing and their ability to accommodate additional housing.

The Islington Society supports the existing method of assessment of housing requirements used in the current London Plan based on a balance of need and capacity. The Islington Society supports the London Plan approach in which housing targets are set by the partnership of the Mayor of London and the London Boroughs.

### The New Standard Method

The new method's algorithm, however, gives high levels of growth to London, regardless of whether there is the capacity to deliver the numbers or not. This appears to be on the basis of the flawed argument that "high house prices [In London] indicate high demand, therefore more houses are needed". This is nonsense. Generally, house prices are high because the place is full and only a few more houses can be fitted in. For Islington, the new Standard Method calculation comes up with:

an increased provision of 186% over the requirement in the need/capacity balanced allocation in the current 'Intend to Publish' New London Plan: 2,218 dpa instead of 1,770. That is already up to 140% of the current of the Current London Plan requirement

for the borough. This despite the statement in para 2.25 of proposal 4 in the Planning White paper that "The housing requirement would factor in land constraints" and "the practical limitations that some areas might face, including the presence of designated areas of environmental and heritage value". This is particularly pertinent in Islington with its 42 Conservation Areas covering 50% of the borough. The Islington Society is opposed to an algorithm based Standard Method of assessment of housing requirements that does not balance need and capacity.

The Islington Society is opposed to a national, top down algorithm based Standard Method that does not set housing targets in partnership of the Mayor of London and the London Boroughs.

### Other considerations

It must also be noted that, there is no indication of what policies will be overridden by the proposed new presumption in favour of development in the White Paper, and hence this consultation, to enforce the housing requirements. In addition, there is no discussion in this consultation of the problem of housing delivery, as set out in the Government's own his analysis of housing supply and demand of October 2018. It's an easy option to set high targets, but if developers get consent and do not deliver all of the housing they have permission for, there will be a growing number of unimplemented housing consents (300,000 unimplemented permissions in London at present). Thus, higher targets do translate into higher rates of delivery of housing, let alone affordable housing, if developers decide not to build the dwellings they have consent for.

### Conclusion

The Islington Society supports the current method of assessing housing requirements in London and commends targets in the current 'Intend to Publish' New London Plan. The Islington Society is opposed to a blanket, top down algorithm based Standard Method that does not balance need and capacity nor set housing targets in partnership of the Mayor of London and the London Boroughs.

*[contd. over*



Q1: Do you agree that planning practice guidance should be amended to specify that the appropriate baseline for the standard method is whichever is the higher of the level of 0.5% of housing stock in each local authority area OR the latest household projections averaged over a 10-year period? The Islington Society considers that delivering a 0.5% increase per year in the housing stock in each London borough has not been achieved in many London boroughs in the last 20 years.. This arbitrary percentage is difficult to achieve in London where 95% plus of sites were formerly developed, except through large-scale projects in Opportunity Areas. Those sites, however, tend to take a long time to build out. This approach may work elsewhere in the country, where an increase in site allocations would be possible, but not in most London boroughs.

The alternative, based on the latest household projections averaged over a 10-year period, which would equate with the “objectively-assessed need” approach, would be the most appropriate for London as a whole, but not necessarily at borough level, other than as a starting point before redistributing housing numbers within London. The London Plan approach of redistributing growth between boroughs is more likely to achieve a higher overall target for London. The Islington Society:

- considers that borough-by-borough targets based on all boroughs adding 0.5% pa to their housing stock – may not produce this level of growth; and
- supports an approach based on “objectively-assessed need”, but this needs to be redistributed between boroughs according to capacity, as the London Plan does now.

Q3: Do you agree that using the workplace-based median house price to median earnings ratio from the most recent year for which data is available to adjust the standard method's baseline is appropriate? If not, please explain why.

No – not in London, as almost anything built in London will be “unaffordable” in these terms. (80% of new housing is only affordable by 8% of Londoners). Increasing housing targets because of unaffordability could only make sense if the goal is to make house prices more affordable through increasing supply. There is no evidence that this will bring house prices down in the most expensive parts of London, yet these areas have been earmarked for

the largest increases, yet have the least capacity to deliver this scale of housing.

#### **Delivering First Homes**

In para. 45, the consultation paper states that Help to Buy and Right to Buy have helped to make “the dream of home ownership a reality.” Unfortunately, in London Help to Buy has increased the prices of houses and flats. Right to Buy has reduced the number of low-cost rent homes for key workers faster than additional social housing has been delivered in many areas.

According to the London SHMA, 47% of all new homes are required to be of the lowcost rent type but that has not been achieved since the assessment was published.

Only 35% of new homes need to be homes for market sale according to the SHMA. That has been exceeded by delivery in developers’ housing schemes, yet First Homes are for ownership. By mandating them as 25% of all affordable homes, it is most unlikely that the total new affordable homes would meet the requirement of being 65% of all new homes delivered and with the required mix of types.

The Islington Society is in full agreement with the RTPI response in March 2020 to the Government’s consultation on First Homes. They wrote in para. 3 “As proposed, First Homes will impact on the ability of Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to meet all types of housing need through the planning system.”

.If First Homes 30% discount is to count towards developer payment of Infrastructure Levy or there will be an exemption, Councils will have less income for developing the social infrastructure and facilities, including public transport, that the occupiers of First Homes would require. That would make their delivery unsustainable in terms of the NPPF’s para.8 b) social objective.

A price cap of £420k after a 30% discount would indicate the full market value as £600k. In the response by the GLA to the First Homes consultation in March 2020, it was pointed out that First Homes in London would be affordable only to the richest 2% of households which are those with incomes over £76,000, assuming a 30% discount. With a 40% discount, only 4% of Londoners could buy a First Home.



## Transport News Round-up

### Crossrail update

After all the talk of a more open board of directors, and of more realistic target dates, it was particularly disappointing to read that the central section of what is to be the Elizabeth Line would not now open until the first half of 2022, effectively re-setting the deadline to June 30th of that year. Covid-19 has had an effect, but it did not stop HS2 demolition work and the government has boasted that some engineering work carried out by Network Rail has been speeded up because of running fewer trains.

The new Transport Commissioner, Andy Byford, is determined to deliver Crossrail by the end of 2021 and has been given control with a TfL committee meeting in public replacing the Crossrail Board meeting in private. Despite the hostility between Government and City Hall on other matters, the DfT warmed to this idea, so dismayed were they by the latest announcement.

The additional cost (£450m.) of this delay is relatively small in the overall context but adds to the financial woes of TfL. Byford has pledged not to seek any more, or any further delay.

### TfL finances

Like all public transport in Britain, TfL services need additional central government funding to maintain the present level of service with social distancing. Ending the annual grant compelled TfL to reliance on fares and with buses only allowed to fill one third of normal capacity fares income is no longer available on the scale anticipated in the TfL budget. It is more difficult to enforce social distancing on tube trains but fortunately (if it is indeed needed) people are wary of travelling by tube and not conned by blandishments that it is now safe. People seem less wary of the Overground, either because they have no alternative or because the frequent opening of doors refreshes the air inside in a way that is not possible in deep tube trains or even on buses designed to protect idiots from sticking their heads out of windows.

The April agreement with government compelled an increase in fares, but some are calling for a National fare freeze in order to persuade people back to public transport. The planned ending of free travel for all under 18s has

still to be agreed, though there is a suggestion that it will take effect after half term. The difficulty, aside from the fact that the Mayor does not want to do it, is that many under 18s are entitled to free travel by virtue of central government legislation. If the cost of providing it to a limited number is greater than the cost of a universal scheme only spite could justify going ahead.

TfL seems resigned to having to pause Crossrail2, the Camden Town redevelopment and the Jubilee line extension in favour of maintaining and enhancing existing services. They are still pressing for a DLR extension deemed essential to a major housing development.

### Bus services

All buses have been converted to front boarding, even if with readers clear of the driver. Additional services have been provided to meet the demand from schoolchildren. On some routes, mainly in outer London, school only buses run on which the 30 person limit can be ignored. Islington school children have a plethora of routes to school and do not form a majority of users on one particular bus. The arrangements for packing children of all ages on to buses seem at odds with the costly measures schools have been told to take to segregate year groups, even in the open air.

### Tube services in Coronavirus

Tube services have returned close to normal, although a few stations and station exits remain closed. There was an increase in patronage as schools reopened, coinciding with an increase in numbers testing positive for Covid-19.

### Overground timetable changes

Service on the Overground was restored on September 7th to meet the government policy of the time to encourage people into their offices. At the time of writing no National Rail cuts have been announced to reflect the reversion to "work at home if you can".

### Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

The April settlement with government required TfL to fund measures to create low traffic neighbourhoods, using temporary schemes which do not need public consultation. This has enabled Islington to catch up with Waltham Forest and Hackney in making places safer for pedestrians and cyclists. The emergency services have been consulted. Some of the detail will be wrong and schemes must be tweaked during the temporary period. If they are to be made permanent, consultation will follow and it would be more meaningful if conducted in the light of experience rather than on the basis of preconceived ideas. Only a minority have access to a car or bike and it is time roads built for pedestrians were reclaimed for walking. AB