

ISLINGTON *news*

The Journal of the Islington Society

Covid ~ Chapter 6

Covid has again dominated the local news as Islington continued to yo-yo in the National league tables.

After months of enjoying the lowest infection rates in the country, despite the lowest vaccination rates, inner London shot to the other end of the league tables when the omicron variant arrived. The vaccine does not prevent infection, but limits its severity. At one point over 2% of the Islington population had tested positive for Covid, with estimates that the true figure taking account of untested residents was one in ten.

There was again fierce debate about what restrictions should be imposed. In the end the optimal decision may have been reached. "The science" is not the sole preserve of epidemiologists.

The science of psychiatry indicates that loss of income and strain on mental health are material considerations in the health of the Nation. The political considerations of back bench MPs may trump them both, especially when they find themselves newly empowered.

The measures that best control the spread of infection are those that have the greatest side effects: closing schools, followed by working from home. As Christmas approached, many were concerned that another lockdown was around the corner, but in the event the epidemiologists' predictions were wide of the mark. Even their best case scenario proved pessimistic in the extreme. Infection rates then fell for a week, but the decline was shortlived and there were reports of yet another variant. We hit omicron in the Greek alphabet only to avoid embarrassing the Chinese President by use of xi. The latest one is omicron mark 2, or BA2.

There have been research studies suggesting face coverings in school have had no benefit and that lockdown saved far fewer lives than previously thought. Like the studies that claimed great things for these measures, there is no hard data for any of these conclusions, since there has been no "control" group against which to compare effectiveness. On the other hand, the much lower rate of hospitalisation, ICU occupancy and death from the recent more transmissible

variant, does provide some evidence that vaccines have been effective. It is surprising that the government has not been more forthcoming about the different rates of admission/mortality for full partial or zero vaccination.

One effect of the continued uncertainty as we oscillate between optimism and pessimism is that the Society Committee has not felt able to organise a programme of face to face events. There has been no clamour from the membership to respond otherwise. Other organisations have been more bold, but if you are the Campaign for Real Ale or the Friends of the Almeida theatre your *raison d'être* is to come together under one roof.

The Society is however taking a first cautious step back to the new normal with an outdoor visit on March 2nd, Ash Wednesday. Details of the visit to the Clock Tower appear on the Society page.

There was some irony (heightened by "Partygate") in that the plan B measures encouraged work from home but continued use of hospitality over the festive season. In the event, pubs and restaurants were badly hit as office parties were cancelled. The recovery in use of public transport was swiftly reversed, particularly on the tube, just as another short term funding agreement was being concluded to keep tubes and buses running. We are in another "injury time" period as this is being written. However, the ending of "Plan B" and in particular the instruction to wear face coverings and work from home where possible has seen a welcome return to the buses tubes and pubs; and all restrictions could be lifted later this month.

We are approaching another period of *purdah* in which no decisions of any moment can be made about local services. The temporary cut in VAT for the hospitality sector comes to an end on April 1st, when fuel bills are set to rise and National Insurance payments increased. *Purdah* could coincide with the most testing period yet.

Islington Society News

For most members new year means subscription renewal and we are very grateful for the usual prompt payments we have received. If you haven't yet paid and received a reminder at the turn of the year please do so as soon as possible. Although most members now routinely receive Society information by email, a significant minority is missing out through not having - or not sharing - email addresses. If you are not receiving email communications from the Society and could do so, please email islingtonsociety@aol.com

As noted in the cover story, we return to meeting face to face with an outdoor visit to the Clock Tower on (Ash) Wednesday, March 2nd. Two visits have been arranged, at 10 a.m. and then 11.30. Spaces are limited and members are advised to apply via the society e-mail address emboldened above. Please state which of the times you are applying for and if you would be able to attend at the alternative time if the preferred one were fully booked.

We hope to hold a dinner in the Summer and to resume a fuller programme of events once rooms are available for booking and we have some indication that members are willing to return to face to face meetings. Observations from members on this point would be welcome. PK

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.islingtonsociety.org.uk

Next Newsletter

Copy date for our next newsletter is June 5th, 2022.

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Islington Society raises concerns on Holloway Prison development proposals



Developer's image of part of the proposed Holloway Prison re-development

The Islington Society has raised important concerns about the developer Peabody's planning application for the former Holloway Prison site in Parkhurst Road. The Society believes that too many residential units have been crammed into the site, making its building to plot ratio too dense. A density of 720 units was assessed by Islington Council as an appropriate level but this has been exceeded by 265 homes in the planning application. The effect of these additional homes is to make too many of the flats single aspect and to restrict the amount of sunlight in the open spaces. To correct this sense of overcrowding, and to enable a desirable increase in the amount of green space and light, the Islington Society proposes the removal of two blocks from the centre of the development. Unless the density is reduced, the Islington Society believes the application should be refused.

The Society also believes that public access should be ensured into the gardens at the centre of the site and through the site, to make it fully "permeable". Unless the developer gives commitments about open access from Dalmeny Avenue and from Bakersfield or through the City of London Corporation's Holloway Estate, again the application should be refused.

Similar concerns have been raised by the Community Group CP4H. The planning committee in February deferred a decision until

March 8th, seeking further detail on eight points including viability and permeability.

Letter to the editor

Join our lively Islington History Community

The Islington News (Autumn 2021) reports that the Islington Archaeology & History Society is 'dormant'. Like many organisations, the society stopped meeting in person during the pandemic – but became far more active online.

Interest in Islington's history has proved to be stronger than ever. Our Facebook group, which was already lively, has been going great guns over the past two years, attracting hundreds of new people. It now stands at more than 1,800 members. Our website which can be found at "<http://www.islingtonhistory.org.uk/>" was updated with more resources to help people start their research.

People from Islington and around the world are getting in contact, sharing memories on the Facebook page and asking questions about the borough's history. Walks, talks and other events as well as news stories are posted there.

Some truly wonderful and rare photos are being shared, including Victorian-era images of families, schools and workplaces, plus a wedding at St Mary's in 1965 being officiated by George Carey before he became Archbishop of Canterbury.

It is very different from how the society used to work and things may change again as things return to normal. It's a pity your writer did not get in contact (or get the name of the society correct). We would have been happy to update.

We look forward to welcoming Islington News readers to the IAHS group at:

"<http://www.facebook.com/groups/islingtonhistory>"
www.facebook.com/groups/islingtonhistory

Christy Lawrence (by e-mail)

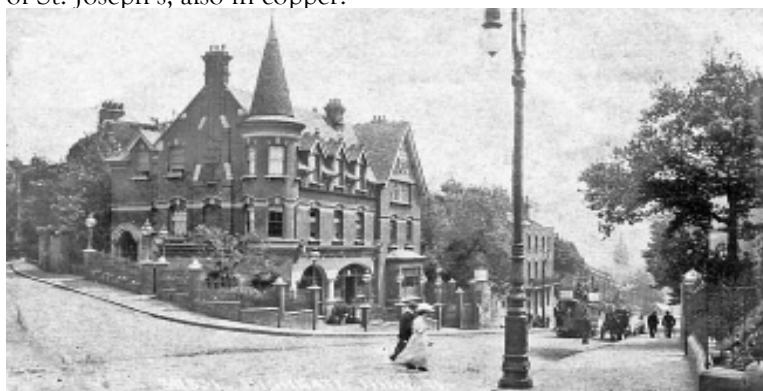
The editor welcomes correspondence for publication

A north Islington walk, starting and ending at the Archway Tavern

This walk starts in Navigator Square, in front of the locally listed Archway Tavern. It takes us up Highgate Hill to the borderlands with Haringey, along Hornsey Lane, down the hill on Sunnyside Road and back along St. John's Way. It is notable for what has been demolished as much as for what still remains. Two great institutions of Victorian poor relief, the Islington Workhouse and the Alexandra Orphanage, no longer stand. And many of the grandest houses along the Hornsey Lane ridge have been replaced with public housing. But enough remains to give a good idea of what the area was like; a mixture of Victorian municipal and charitable institutions and houses built to escape from the smells and filth of central London. The walk continues Andrew Clayton's series based on the updated version of Islington's Register of Locally Listed Buildings, completed in 2021 by the Islington Society..

As you walk up Highgate Hill you pass on your right one of the most imposing of Islington's locally listed buildings, the former Holborn Union Infirmary. It was built in stages between 1869 and 1885, though mostly in the 1870s. It was designed by the notable Victorian architect Saxon Snell in an imposing Gothic Rhenish style, strictly formal and symmetrical. It dominates the townscape on the north side of Archway and the approaches to Highgate Hill. The main blocks were built as a workhouse infirmary and include a main range, a front range, a north wing and a south wing (subsequently significantly extended) as well as a laundry and workshop buildings. It is forbidding in a slightly Transylvanian way but an important survival of pre-National Health Service social care. In 2019 the developer Peabody presented outline proposals for redevelopment which would have preserved the entire Saxon Snell edifice, but Peabody has since sold the plot on to another developer.

Walk up the hill to the corner with Hornsey Lane and you come to one of the area's finest pubs, the Old Crown (now Brendan the Navigator). There has been a pub on this site since the early 1800s, but this building is Edwardian Arts & Crafts with exceptional brickwork and an elaborate baronial corner turret with a copper spire. This complements the grander dome opposite of St. Joseph's, also in copper.



The Old Crown, Highgate Hill, 1908

Turn right onto Hornsey Lane and you pass a group of earlier houses, some of which are nationally Grade II listed. The first locally listed building is No. 12, on the corner with Thornbury Square, one of a group of early 1800s houses built to take advantage of the view over London and the fresh air above the stink of the city below. It has been enclosed in a range of later buildings but retains its Georgian character. The bay window is

clearly a later Victorian addition, as may be the Doric porch. In 1922 the Augustinian Sisters of Meaux opened a convent and nursing home here. Its sign can still be seen in a 1977 photograph at the Islington Local History Centre. It remains a nursing home today.

Walk over the bridge, with spectacular views south to the City. Haringey is on your left and Islington on your right. Hornsey Lane was described in the 1880s as having "first class villas all the way to Crouch End Station". Many of them have been lost and it takes a bit of time before you get to a group of the finest remaining ones. These are Nos. 88-94, two pairs of semi-detached red brick houses. They are similar in design to the terraces of Whitehall Park and Gladsmuir Road and it is worth a brief detour down Whitehall Park to see them. These were developed by R.W. Hill and begun in 1889. He used a variety of styles, with the best examples of his work at Nos. 109 and 110 Harberton Road and perhaps also these Hornsey Lane houses. On the other side of Whitehall Park, on the corner with Hornsey Lane, are two earlier villas, Regency or early Victorian, with substantial front gardens and their boundary plinths still intact. They have had garages inserted in their frontages but are otherwise much as built.

Walk on, past the junctions with Ashmount Road and Hazelville Road to No. 198 Hornsey Lane, and Sunnyside Road. On the corner stood one of the grandest of the Hornsey Lane mansions, Huntingdon House. All that remains is its locally listed coach house, round the corner in Sunnyside Road, now part of a car wash and garage. There are plans for the site's redevelopment for housing, and while the proposals may not be wholly satisfactory at least the coach house itself will be restored and preserved.



The Coach House, Sunnyside Road, 2019

The coach house gives an interesting clue about the people who lived here. On the chimney at the back, quite high up, is a stone carving with the initials WTS. The central T is carved as a rock pick. The initials are those of William Thomas Sargant whose sons were metal brokers in the City of London. The Sargants were prominent local landowners and Highgate residents who lived at Tray's Hill Hall, further back along Hornsey Lane, which does not survive. They sold Huntingdon House to a family called Francis, who themselves sold up in 1904. The advertisement for the auction describes a very grand house indeed with two conservatories, a palm house and a vinery. The stabling, it says, "is in keeping with the importance of the residence." Huntingdon House was demolished to make way for No. 198 Hornsey Lane.

Carry on down Sunnyside Road until it bears right round Sunnyside Community Gardens. In the area now occupied by the gardens stood the Alexandra Orphanage, begun in 1867 and occupied by the orphanage until 1905, when it was taken over as a workhouse by Shoreditch Board of Guardians.



The Alexandra Orphanage, Sunnyside Road, 1867

The orphans that the charity took on had to be nominated by one of the governors and then elected. They had to be privately funded and no one was admitted who was destitute.

Turn right on Hazelville Road and immediately left onto St. John's Way. On the right is all that remains of the old Islington Workhouse, which was demolished in the 1970s. The building that survives was one of the two gatehouses and is substantial in its own right. The main range of the workhouse, further back up the hill, was designed by R.H. Burden and built in 1869-70. This surviving building was the Eastgate Wing, built in 1889 as a board room and office block for the workhouse, designed by a Mr. W Smith. The overall design composition, particularly of the central part, is surprisingly powerful.



Islington Workhouse

As you can see from the Victorian print, the main workhouse building was enormous, dwarfing the remaining Eastgate wing. It was also set in what was then largely open countryside; Whitehall Park was not fully developed until the 1890s. This conformed to a pattern in Islington and other boroughs. Where possible, the institutions of municipal and private charity were pushed to the geographical fringes where they were out of site. And the residents of Hornsey Rise also wanted to live on the fringes, in their case to avoid the smells and dirt of Victorian urban life.

Continue along St. John's Way to return to the locally listed Archway Tavern, now thankfully fully reopened. AC

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 Leeny, ISBN 0-9541490-0-9

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

An architect in Islington, by Harley Sherlock, £14.99, ISBN 9-78-0-9541490-2-4

Visit to the Clock Tower

News of the forthcoming event provoked the following story from our member Dave Taylor

I was born in a street called Corral Road in 1948. Corral Road was located right in the centre of what became Paradise Park. My parents, myself and two brothers were rehoused by Islington Borough Council some years later in 1956 and we moved to the northern Islington borough boundary close to the top of Crouch Hill.

Corral Road with Hollingsworth Street & Chalfont Road were demolished and replaced by Paradise Park in the late 1960s. Chalfont Road had been bombed in the war with damage extending to the neighbouring streets.

In the 1950s, my two brothers and I used to walk through via Mackenzie Road from Corral Road to Caledonian Road, turn left, walk through to Market Road, turn right and up Market Road (passing the Clock Tower in the market on our left) to the top of the road where there was a children's playground. I will now relate one particular incident that sticks in my memory. I would have been about six years old.

Even today, if you stand outside Caledonian Road Underground station, with your back to the station and look across the road you will see the road bridge which crosses the main-line railway at an angle, that being the main line out of King's Cross. Look at the wall to the right of the bridge and just before Cottage Road (then Lough Road) you will notice that the bricks in the wall are of a different colour and texture because it's a (relatively) new piece of wall.

At that point in the wall, there used to be a pair of wooden gates. Behind those gates was a ramp which led down to track level. At track level there were some sidings with a number of cattle-pens. I understand it was known as "Holloway Cattle Dock". Now all long-gone and swept away. Until the early 1960s, cattle were off-loaded from trains into those pens. Cattle were then driven up the ramp, through the wooden doors and into Caledonian Road. The cattle were driven along Caledonian Road to Market Road, right into Market Road and along to one or more of the Abattoirs based in Market Road. Amazingly, these Abattoirs had out-lived the closure of the Caledonian cattle-market many years before.

Originally the Caledonian Market was secured from the street (Market Road) by a very tall, cast-iron (I

think) black metal fence with railings, each railing about nine inches or so apart, running the length of

the road. At some point, possibly in late Victorian or early Edwardian times, to increase security a high brick wall was built approx. twelve to fifteen inches back from and behind the railings. This was carried out I think because occasional damage, possibly from road vehicles, had resulted in holes in the railings. So to picture the scene, you had the pavement running up Market Road. At the inner edge of the pavement away from the road you had the heavy tall metal railings. Behind the railings was a strip of rough earth, about fifteen inches in width. Then behind that was a tall brick wall. Parts of both the metal railings and the wall survive to this day.



So imagine the scene. I and two brothers had just reached Market Road and were walking along when I (less than three feet high) became aware of cattle in the road to my right. More to the point, the cattle became aware of me, this small child. They mounted the pavement, trying to sniff and lick me. I was terrified! I managed to push myself against the railings and when I found a gap in the railings caused by damage, I squeezed through and was now on the earth strip, between the railings and the brick wall. This didn't stop cow after cow pausing when it reached me, stopping for a sniff or sometimes a lick, before being forced to move on by one of the drovers.

This is an experience I have never forgotten and even now, at the age of 73 years, I am still nervous around cows. DT

Books from our President and late Vice-Presidents

Suicide of the West, by Richard Koch & Chris Smith, £14.99 and available on Amazon, ISBN 0-8264 9023-9.; *A History of Islington*, by Mary Cosh, published by Historical Publications at £18.95, ISBN 0-948667-974; *53 Cross Street - the biography of an historic house* by Mary Cosh & Martin King, photographs by Pauline Lord, published by the Islington Archaeology & History Society; *An architect in Islington*, by Harley Sherlock, £14.99, ISBN 9-78-0-9541490-2-4

Transport News Round-up

Northern line closure

The Northern line is closed between Moorgate and Kennington until mid-May, to enable significant capacity improvements at Bank station. There is also a reduced service through Angel station. There is a replacement double decker bus, route 733 operated by Abellio, but it only runs from Monday to Friday. Probably because of this limitation, it does not feature prominently on TfL literature and nor does the Jubilee line. It seems that TfL is worried it will be swamped with passengers exiled from the Northern line, and so is promoting more circuitous alternatives.

The "Drain" which had been closed again due to Covid related staff shortages re-opened when the Northern line closed, but again only Monday- Friday peak periods.

Save the 21 petition launched

Proposals to remove the 21 from Mildmay Park and Southgate Road, and divert it to Holloway (Nags Head), removing altogether the 271, have been met with dismay and a campaign to save the 21 launched. Its publicity mentions the loss of the 277 and the resultant inaccessibility of Highbury station as a result, as evidence that a connection to Old Street is more vital. They also highlight the already crowded state of the 141 which would be the only route left.

For many years there were stops in Essex Road that were frequently passed by full buses during the morning peak. For a while the improvements on Southgate Road offered a better alternative, but very quickly the conversion of small flats to smaller bed-sits transferred the problem there.

People in the St. Peter's area wishing to travel to Bank have already lost the 76 service, while older people who find their journey split between two routes may decide not to travel. The hopper fare is an irrelevance if you have a freedom pass or exceed the daily or weekly fare cap. There are however newly created through routes under these proposals.

Having reprieved the night service on the 271 in recognition of the needs of Whittington Hospital patients it seems odd to suggest the 271 is not needed during the day. Night services would remain as the N271 which would be extended to North Finchley.

TfL budget

Having had most of his proposals rebuffed by central government, the Mayor has been obliged to propose a hike in the precept to the London Authority which forms a small but growing part of the council tax bill. He has expressed support (at last) for road pricing, but seems to think the technology it would require is still years away. The "temporary" restrictions on the

freedom pass remain, even though this cost TfL (the Boroughs pay), and the over 60s pass introduced by his predecessor phased out. A more questionable proposal is phasing out of the travelcard for people purchasing rail tickets from outside London: it flies in the face of the target to reduce journeys by private car. The budget should be approved by late February.

Crossrail opening

The optimism displayed by Andy Byford before Christmas has dissipated. Despite a determination to start to raise revenue in the current financial year, there is still no firm opening date although we are assured it will be before June 30th. Bond Street will not be open when the first fare earning trains run through the central section. It had been hoped to open one of its planned two entrances. The second edition of local author Christian Wolmar's book on Crossrail will be available by the time you read this. Opening the central section is the third of five phases, but only Bond Street will not have a Crossrail service. The other nine new stations have been handed to TfL. There have been delays to the upgrade of Network Rail stations at Ilford and Romford, but they remain open to passengers.

Low traffic neighbourhoods

The East Canonbury scheme appears to have been well received, although the consultation identified the need for a small change affecting Elmore Street. There will be more concessions to the holders of Blue Badges. The next two schemes for review may be more controversial, as both are compromised by the disastrous Highbury Corner scheme.

Night services

The all night service at weekends was restored on the Overground from Highbury to New Cross Gate, unfortunately just as Omicron related curbs were being imposed. Night tube services remain the subject of a dispute with the RMT union. The union claims its alternative proposals are cost neutral and if so it is regrettable that TfL cannot agree. There are more difficult issues ahead as the government demands reform of the pension scheme as the price for continued financial support.

Farewell New Routemaster?

TfL owns the New Routemaster buses because none of the private companies wanted them. They are due for their mid-life refit (like the trains on the North London line) but there is no money. They cost more to operate, the number of buses in service is likely to be reduced, so the option of running them into the ground and retiring them in four years is under consideration.

Inspector backs developer in Sunnyside Coach House appeal

The Planning Inspectorate has backed the developer against Islington Council over the redevelopment of the historic coach house site on Sunnyside Road. The developer, Sunnyside Road Land Ltd, had proposed to restore the coach house itself and redevelop the rest of the site with two residential blocks. The Council refused the application partly on the grounds that one of the blocks was too high and would have overwhelmed the comparatively small-scale coach house.

The Islington Society supported the Council in this appeal arguing that the block in question was nearly double the height of the coach house, contravening the Whitehall Park Conservation Area Guidelines which say that new buildings should conform to the height, scale and proportions of the

existing buildings in the immediate area.

The Inspector disagreed, saying that the scale and siting of the relevant block (Block A) "are appropriate to the Coach House and [...] there would be enhancement and opportunity for greater views and experienced appreciation".

The Victorian coach house is locally listed and currently in poor condition, part of a car-wash. For this reason, its restoration is to be welcomed. It is a high-quality building and was once part of the now demolished Huntingdon House.

There are more details about the coach house, and a photograph, in "A north Islington walk" on page 4. The Islington Society was represented at the appeal by committee member Emma Smith.

From the Editor

The Elthorne Estate in Archway, designed by the G.L.C. Architects in the early 70's has matured into comfortable familiarity. It embodies many of the principles we aim for in our housing and our environment - residences that are good to live in, green space, views, playgrounds and community facilities on site, public investment in social housing.

John Allan's account of the story of how an exemplary, thoughtful estate of this quality came to be designed and built - in particular the establishment of a green, breathing park frontage along St John's Way - deserves wide publicity and we are enclosing it as a supplement to the Islington News. Although there are four fewer pages in this issue, we hope the Supplement more than compensates.

We have now had two years, and thus six editions of Islington News, with the pandemic that has changed our lives for all time. Although some may feel there has been a superabundance of news of the pandemic in the National press, I thought posterity would welcome a chronicle of how it affected Islington, which has often been something of an outlier in the

data both for recorded infection rates and levels of vaccination.

With the announcement that all restrictions might end later this month, this should be the penultimate issue to be dominated by the subject. This assumes the relaxation will not prove to have been premature.

Over 400 people in Islington have died with "Covid" recorded on the death certificate. Some of these might have died in any event, and others will have died of other causes which could have been ameliorated had Covid restrictions not been in place.

That the pandemic will shape our future is without doubt. The Council is currently considering a major planning application on a site that exists as it does because in the 1830s it had been earmarked for the burial of cholera victims, which in the event was not required. (There must have been a doom-monger like Professor Whitty around then too). Had the cholera outbreak not occurred, the land would not have been secured and subsequently made available to the City of London for a prison. AB

Stop Press- Torrens Street development

As we go to press, further information on the proposed development of the prominent site at the foot of Islington High Street, but widely referred to as Torrens Street, has emerged. Two months ago the Society learned of proposals for this site which appeared to address the fundamental objection to the current buildings, which replaced amongst others a Crown Post Office around forty years ago; namely, that the right of way is concealed by a building that seems to say "keep out". Some members of the Committee were inclined

to welcome the proposals, but having now seen the detail, it is fair to say that the initial enthusiasm has waned. The developer revealed these details in a consultation which closed on February 15th, giving little time for public reaction. The significance of this site at the heart of the Angel cannot be understated, and we anticipate that many of our members will be moved to search out this application on the Council's planning web-site if and when a formal application is made.