

## **The Planning and Development Control Group – An Overview**

### **Elsbeth Clements**

Regular readers of Buzz will know that The Planning and Development Control Group is very active in the Highgate Society and may have wondered how the Group sees its work at the moment. The remit of the Group is as follows:

- to run a Saturday planning surgery;
- comment, where appropriate on applications;
- present evidence to public inquiries (e.g. the appeal on the demolition of 21 Broadlands Road was a recent success);
- campaign on national and local issues

Since I became chair, I have seen a gradual evolution in the committee's workload. The Saturday morning surgery at 10A South Grove is busier than ever, with sometimes 4-5 people coming in with problems each week. The main issue now seems to be extensions and basements, the latter of which cause considerable concern. Whilst Camden has a policy on basements, Haringey has prepared draft guidelines, largely as a result of lobbying by the Society, but has failed to adopt them. WE are continuing to push on this.

Another area of change is the eastward creep of Bishop's Avenue style mansions. We are seeing a steady replacement of elegant arts and craft houses in an open, green setting with large neo-classical mega-mansions. These hide behind walls and high gates and are often built to the boundary, thus eroding the open, leafy suburban feel that is so special to Highgate. Since these are damaging, not only to the environment but also to the local community, the Society objects whenever they are submitted.

Members of the Planning Group have been working with the CAAC on the Haringey Conservation Area Appraisal. This is currently nearing completion and will help to strengthen the protection of the Haringey part of Highgate Conservation area.

Much of our energy has recently been taken up ensuring that the planning departments carry out their duties. We have become increasingly frustrated that deeply flawed decisions result in the destruction of fine houses, substandard accommodation, insensitive additions to listed buildings with no regard to objections from, not only the Society but, others as well. We have held recent meetings with Haringey's new chief executive and the two heads of planning and are also continuing to press on enforcement issues where we feel planning regulations have been flouted.

Another recent activity has been to respond to Haringey's draft Development Management Policy Document in conjunction with the Highgate Neighbourhood Forum. To this effect we made a submission and met with the chair of planning and the head of planning strategy. The document is coming to committee in the autumn and, although we have yet to see the final draft, we hope that some of our initiatives will be adopted.