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As indicated in the last issue, the vastly increased work schedule of the Society's Environment Group means, firstly, that reports on different issues will be given by those responsible for them, and secondly, that there is only space for a summary version in *Buzz*, and that a longer report will be put on the Society's website. This will result in no less information than has ever been available in our 3,500-word *Buzz* allocation, and more information through the website, not to mention a sharing of my own workload - I have been writing these reports now for 28 years!

First, my usual observations on what is going on in the wider world. The National Planning Policy Framework (henceforth NPPF), replacing all 3,500 pages of previous planning guidance with just 50 pages, has been with us for five months now, in a kind of "phoney war" phase, and it is far too early for its impact to be assessed, whether for good or ill. What remains particularly unclear is how its much more permissive and loose provisions will be interpreted in the light of the fact that in many cases it actually conflicts with existing legislation, which remains in force and takes precedence. However, we must come to terms with it and use its better parts – fortunately, the original disastrous provisions on Historic Environment and open space issues were significantly improved following a nationwide protest at what was perceived to be little more than a "developer's charter" – as best we can, not least in forthcoming major battles such as Athlone House. There was an alarming rumour, in planning circles, that Government had instructed Planning Inspectors to "allow more appeals"; this has been denied.

New legislation will be introduced in September extend the public's right to attend all meetings of a Council's Executive, Committees and subcommittees; we must hope that the provision that meetings can be closed in limited circumstances such as where they could result in the disclosure of "confidential" information will not become a regular means of getting round the change. Details can be seen at <http://bit.ly/OWnjLN-20> .

Another interesting, and seemingly welcome, development, according to recent press reports, is the proposal by the Government to allow any member of the public to recommend line-by-line changes to draft legislation. It is aimed at balancing the influence of lobbyists and organised interest groups – though it of course carries its own risks; submissions will be collated by civil servants and considered by MPs during the passage of the Bill. Given the quality of some recent legislation, I suspect that this is a process to which we, and other amenity groups, will increasingly want to have recourse.

On the subject of external web links which would, I am sure, be of interest to many of you, the London Forum is a member of *Heritage Alliance*, a grouping of about 100 national bodies with interests in the heritage and historic environment, which has grown to be a strong voice in putting national concerns and aims about the heritage to Government; I represent the London Forum on its Planning Group. The Alliance issues a monthly e-newsletter to members (which will include the Highgate Society, as a member of the London Forum), which always contains much of interest and concern; this can be accessed on <http://email.premmdesign.co.uk/t/ViewEmail/r/8BDBC6B7D690C949/044D6D7925D172AC148F9D201EEB5695>

As a part of its drive to deregulate planning, Government issued a consultation on “Improving” Listed Building Consent. The unprecedentedly short consultation period – one month, instead of the usual twelve weeks, over the holiday period, surely reveals either the low priority, amounting almost to contempt, Government has for our national heritage, or the pressure they are under from the development industry to make it easier to demolish or significantly alter Listed Buildings. Not the least worrying is the proposal to allow a Certificate of Lawful Works to a Listed Building to be granted on the basis of a description of the works provided by the developer’s own consultants, with permission to be automatically granted if the Local Authority does not make a decision within the time limit. Among the first cuts to be made across the country have been Conservation Officers, in Haringey’s case from 5 to 1 (and see the next paragraph), which will leave many local authorities without adequate expertise to assess the impact of proposals on Listed Buildings. The document is, as with most recent consultation proposals on heritage issues, deplorably ill-thought out; see the strong response from our umbrella body, the *London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies*, which can be seen on its website, [www.londonforum.org.uk](http://www.londonforum.org.uk) . Please also contact me if you would like a .pdf of the Forum’s excellent newsletter, full of articles and comment about matters of concern and importance to organisations such as ours.

And, as I finish writing this, news arrives of yet another impending Government to the misleading claims of the development profession that Planning is holding back development, with the announcement that developers are to be encouraged to build in the Green Belt to kick-start the economy. It is depressing how recent Governments, whatever their colour, have uncritically – even naively (or is it disingenuously?) - accepted such plainly self-interested misrepresentations and dismissed all the evidence which disproves it. But I have expounded on that at length in past reports.

This is a major concern on our own doorstep, where Haringey’s excellent Conservation Officer, Mortimer MacSweeney, is retiring at the end of September; but it has been very difficult to get a statement on how Conservation issues will be covered in Haringey after then. It is a statutory requirement for planning authorities to consult specialists on the historic environment; not to do so – e.g. by not having a conservation officer – would leave them open to Ombudsman complaint and investigation. The NPPF makes Conservation a core requirement for sustainability, and it is therefore vital that Haringey has the expertise necessary to assess proposals for the historic environment, such as the proliferation of proposals for demolition and rebuild in parts of Highgate. For such a historically important area as Highgate to have no access to Conservation Officer advice would be unacceptable. Indeed, English Heritage themselves are worried that Haringey could not cope effectively without experienced conservation advice. We have therefore asked our Councillors to seek a formal statement as to how Haringey proposes to address Conservation issues after Mortimer’s departure; initial reactions give some encouragement, but considerable clarification is still needed.

Camden are, at long last, producing a List of Locally Significant Buildings as a part of their planning guidance suite. These are buildings which are not on the Statutory List of historic buildings, but which are nevertheless considered to make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and the demolition of which would be resisted as damaging. We have had considerable input into nominating buildings in Highgate.

Our participation in *Highgate's Neighbourhood Forum* is reported on elsewhere by Maggy Meade-King. The process is a complex one, and misunderstandings about its purpose and powers can easily arise, and have arisen. For a valuable guide to what it is all about and the processes involved, I recommend Camden's Guide to Neighbourhood Forums, available on their website at <http://www.camden.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning>

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***Planning and Development Group Notes (Elspeth Clements and Michael Hammerson)***

We have, as ever, been immensely busy, with the number of applications remaining steady in Haringey, although those from Camden have dropped off. The major issue remains the constant threat to the Conservation Area from demolition of houses and construction of large mansions and basements in the "Bishops" Area, between Courtenay Avenue and View Road. As a result of sustained pressure from the Society, Haringey's Draft Basement Policy was adopted at a long Planning Committee meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> July. While the policy itself is generally welcomed, our representatives at the meeting raised major concerns, not least over the status of applications submitted before the adoption of the Policy. However meeting gave permission for a basement at 6A Grange Road, which has given us cause for major concern and, alarmingly, four others which could not be considered before time ran out were sent back to be dealt with under "delegated powers" – i.e. the case officer could make a decision without putting it to the Planning Committee - on the basis that there were "no objections". This appalled us, as both the Society and the CAAC had both objected strongly to all of them, and Gail Waldman and Susan Rose were present and had applied to speak at the Committee against these applications but were not given the opportunity. In view of what we consider to be the highly irregular conduct of the meeting, we are sending formal letters of complaint to Haringey.

Coming to the front as our major individual issue is *Athlone House*, where it is clear that the whole process of having to fight their relentless ambitions to demolish it is about to start over again. A public "consultation" by the developers during the summer left us in no doubt that they will merely be coming back with a slightly modified version of the previous design, which was aptly described by our historic buildings expert witness as "irredeemably vulgar". It was clear, from the unprecedented 550 objections to Camden and a further 650 to the Appeal Inspector, not only that the previous proposal was opposed by a huge proportion of people from Highgate and well beyond, but that there was immense public anger at the developers' making it clear that they had no intention of implementing the S.106 Agreement to restore the house, in return for their hugely lucrative planning consent for three blocks of luxury flats – an intention which most people made clear to us they considered ethically deplorable and epitomising the unacceptable face of the development profession.

Some of you will have read the astonishing headline in the Ham and High, summarising Camden's attitude as "We are powerless to stop demolition". We beg to differ, and the Athlone House Working Group will be sparing no efforts to establish that this is not the case. Once the new application is formally submitted, our Campaign Group will also be coming back into action to inform and advise the north London public about how they can support AHWG in opposing a development the implications of which will undoubtedly be disastrous not only for Highgate, but for Conservation Areas everywhere.

A brief run-down of some other major planning applications:

- *4 North Hill*: this important Victorian building, formerly the lodge to Park House (a lost mansion where Hillcrest now stands) has been well-restored by the purchasers, who obtained it from Haringey in a state of deplorable neglect. Unfortunately a new application has been submitted for high boundary walls and railings, together with parking in the garden, and it appears that the work has already been carried out, in advance of any decision by the planners. We have submitted a strong objection to the proposals, which would not only be visually very damaging to the Conservation Area and to neighbours, for a variety of reasons specified in our letter to Haringey, but would set a seriously damaging precedent for transforming the whole character of the area.
- *46 Milton Park*: Here, a dismally badly-designed rear extension has been built, without planning consent, which has severely affected a neighbour's amenities. However, the combined efforts of the Society, adjoining neighbours and Councillors to get Haringey to accept that it is a major breach of planning control have so far got nowhere.
- *2 Church Road*: This was an application to build a two-storey house, including a deep basement floor, in the back garden of these flats. It would have impacted severely on the residents of the flats, been perilously close to an adjoining property, and set a dangerous precedent for back garden development. We supported concerned neighbours with a strong objection, and are glad to see that it has been refused.
- *12 Denewood Road*: By contrast, another damaging precedent has been set in the former "Fringes of the Heath Area of Special Character" by the granting of permission, against our strong argument urging refusal, for the demolition of this post-war house and its replacement with two large houses which will effectively destroy the large garden which is a vital part of the Conservation Area. We are trying to ascertain the reasons for this dangerous and perverse decision, which contradicts Haringey's own policies for the protection of the Conservation Area.
- *12 The Grove*: An unfortunate precedent has also been set on the Camden side, where an application to demolish the ugly 1970s flats and replace it with a replica semi-detached Victorian-style mansion has also been permitted. While we had no objection to the loss of the flats, we argued that The Grove is one of the area's most historically important streets, with its renowned early 18th century buildings. Therefore, any new building should be of a well-designed and sympathetic modern style, in order that Highgate's architecture should continue to show its history and development over four centuries. We are therefore dismayed at what is little less than an affront to the area's architectural integrity by the permitting of a mere pastiche. In this and other ways, the character and integrity of historic Highgate is being gradually eroded by poor planning decisions.
- *The Elms, Fitzroy Park*: Following our efforts over a long period, Camden have at length moved to take enforcement action over a major breach of planning control at this important site, where what has been built is far from in accordance with the original planning permission. Not unexpectedly, the owners have appealed against the enforcement proposals, and once again good planning in Highgate is to be left to the vagaries of the appeal system and, no doubt, the amount of money a well-heeled owner can bring to bear in employing consultants to argue his case.
- *66 Sheldon Avenue*: Similarly, Enforcement in Haringey, while unwell, is not dead, and orders have been issued for the removal of large gates, put up without permission on contravention of Conservation Area guidance.
- *Highgate School*: By contrast, again, the school's new building in North Road – the final version of which we supported, after considerable discussion with the school - is

not as overbearing as many feared, and could be considered quite a well-mannered building in the streetscape, particularly when compared with the rather brutal 1980s Garner Block adjoining it. The School also proposes to build a new Junior School to replace the now outdated, impractical and decidedly unprepossessing building on Bishopswood Road. The School sought the Society's views and allowed us to comment on the six schemes short-listed for taking forward, and we were pleased that the scheme selected was the one we had considered the best. Also of interest was the fact that, for the first time in its existence, the normally hyper-critical Haringey Design Panel, set up to comment on major planning proposals in the Borough, considered it a well-designed scheme about which it had no real concerns. Now work is about to start on the conversion of Big School to a Library, and the restoration of the Chapel, both Listed Buildings, the work to be completed by November 2013.

- *21 Broadlands Road*: This major proposal, involving the demolition of a fine Arts and Crafts house within an intact row of similar houses, and its replacement with a new and extremely large house in imitation Jacobean style, with a large classical-style pavilion in the back garden, promises to become a test case for the Society and, indeed, for the future integrity of the whole of this part of the Conservation Area. Our concern is that, should this be approved, an irresistible precedent would be set rest of the houses in this architecturally unified street and the entire character of this part of the Conservation Area undermined. The Society has objected to both the Conservation Area Consent for demolition and the Planning Approval for the house on the basis of destruction of the character of the street, alien and inappropriate design which would seriously harm the Conservation Area, waste of the embodied energy on the existing building, destruction of trees, hydrological impact (there is an underground stream on the site next door), size, impact on neighbours and backland development. There has also been a good response from the neighbours.
- 268-268 Archway Road: this new application is for the shopfront design and signage for a new Sainsbury's Store in Archway Road has divided the community locally. Approval for a supermarket was given in March 2011, but no company was associated with it and, as the area is relatively small, it was assumed that this would be a small business rather than one of the big players. Opponents argue that it will drive the smaller convenience stores out of business and that there will be servicing problems with large lorries similar to those encountered with Tesco's in the village. Supporters think it will regenerate Archway Road and enable fresh food to be bought there. The current application is for details only, not the principle – which has already been established - and the Society is working towards ensuring that a shopfront and signage sympathetic to the Conservation Area is provided.
- *The Listowel Site, corner of Swains Lane and West Hill*:
- Ashmount School, Hornsey Lane: Islington have approved a Planning Brief for high density housing, despite vigorous opposition from neighbours and a petition of over 1000 names. The modernist pressure group, Docomomo, has written to English Heritage requesting that the main school is listed as a significant building of its period.
- *Rear of 269 Archway Road (adjacent to no. 1 Highgate Avenue)* – this is an application for a new house on the site of 3 garages which were formerly the stables for the adjoining houses. Whilst the design might, in itself, seem satisfactory, the impact on the Conservation Area of introducing a modern building and destroying an important element of the architectural history of the street is problematic. The problem is compounded by an existing approval for an extremely poor conversion of

the garages in a house. The Society feels that a better quality conversion would be the solution and has written to that effect.

- *CCTV in the High Street* – After yet another latest break-in to the jeweller's shop in the High Street, the traders have requested CCTV coverage. Somehow they have managed to acquire the view that the Society is against this which is most certainly not the case; our only concern is that whatever is installed must not be obtrusive, and very compact and unobtrusive equipment is now available, and a joint meeting will be arranged with this objective in mind.
- *St. Luke's Hospital site, Woodside Avenue*: Though very much on the edge of our area, what is done with this large site will have an impact on both the Highgate and Muswell Hill Conservation Areas. We are monitoring the situation carefully, and have already had a meeting with the prospective developers. The proposals are low rise and generally acceptable, subject to assurances on the retention of existing original buildings on the site. We have made clear that there could be significant archaeological implications for this site and that pre-development excavation is needed.
- *Alexandra Palace*: The Chief Executive of the new management trust invited the Society to see their outline proposals for the Park, and on the whole we are generally supportive.

#### *Haringey Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA):*

All local authorities are required to have a CAA, an essential part of its formal planning policies which describes the character and significance of the area in detail and sets out for developers how they should approach any development within their Conservation Areas. Since Camden produced theirs several years ago, we have been in the position of having a CAA for half of one of London's most important historic villages, since there is none for the Haringey half! This situation was not only ludicrous, but dangerous, since a developer can argue that, since there is no CAA to offer guidance, he can do what he likes.

As reported in past issues, following discussions with Haringey's Conservation officer, the Society has been working with the Conservation Area Advisory Committee to write the missing part of the CAA on behalf of Haringey

Several members of the Planning Group have been involved, focussing on specific parts of the area, and we have tried to do a thorough job and produce as watertight a document as possible. Mortimer MacSweeney, Haringey's Conservation Officer, has looked at our draft, pulled together the various parts, and returned it to us for further comments, and it is hoped that he will be able to present a final draft for submission to Haringey's Cabinet in October, hopefully for adoption as soon as possible, in order to give some added protection to the Conservation Area at a time when the planning system is being relentlessly weakened. The Draft has already proved its usefulness in dealing with the application for 21 Broadlands Road, reported on elsewhere here.

#### *Highgate Neighbourhood Forum and Plan*

The Society took the initiative in getting this set up and, as a major affiliate, will continue to feed into it. The Forum is currently consulting the community, through leaflets which have been circulated to every household and business within the Area. The Prince's Foundation, one of the bodies empowered by the Government to help communities set up Forums, has approved the Forum's application to it for help with guidance on producing the Plan, and a further application is pending with the Design Council/CABE. "Placemaker" Walkabouts are planned for later this month; they are aimed at familiarising the wider Community with the varying aspects of Highgate

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***Basements Update (from Gail Waldman)***

We started to become concerned about the proliferation of basement applications in both Camden and Haringey nearly a year ago. Incidents of underground streams, previously lost, being found; the impact on little known hydrology, especially close to the Highgate Ponds; and the cumulative effects of more than one basement in close proximity suggested caution. We were passed a very useful map of underground water courses on the Heath which indicated a complex and dense hydrology which must be typical of what lies beneath the built up areas surrounding the Heath. Previous reports in *Buzz* have highlighted our major concerns about the serious implications for Highgate of their relentless proliferation.

Camden had a policy in place, based on a Consultants' Report prepared by Arups. We passed this to Haringey along with the Heath map and encouraged them to enhance their own policy. Haringey produced a 'Draft Basement Development Guidance Note' on which we were consulted. As a result two important changes were made: all applications except those which fall under 'Permitted Development' would require both hydrological and hydrogeological reports and, in Highgate, the cumulative effects of basements would be looked at with every application. We were unsuccessful in pressing for an Article 4 Direction to remove the 'Permitted Development rights' to excavate basements, although we made the case that it was illogical to assume building under one's own house was less risky than a developer doing the same exercise next door. However the matter of these 'Permitted Development rights', when it comes to national policy on basements, is emerging and, at present, far from clear cut. We will be seeking clarification on this, working with other groups, and will press Haringey to take a cautious, rather than an optimistic, view in our area where many basements are sought but little is known about underground and 'lost' streams.

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***Traffic and Transport (from Richard Webber)***

*The 271 turnaround, South Grove*

The Society has learned that Camden Council and TfL have been holding discussions regarding the relocation of the 271 turn-around and bus stand. One alternative which was decided might warrant more detailed consideration would be for the 271 to turn round outside St Michaels School and then to stand on an extended parking bay outside Highgate School.

A representative of the Society was invited to attend a site visit to this new location, along with councillors and council officials from Haringey as well as Camden. A TfL operational manager was also present.

Whilst pleased that TfL were at last willing to consider the relocation of the stand, there was by no means unanimous support for the new location and it was agreed that whilst it might or might not be better than the current one, it too suffered on many counts. Some time was spent on considering the merits of the Esso garage at the foot of North Hill as a potential turnaround and stand for the 271. No doubt much more will be known about the status of these discussions before the next edition of *Buzz*

*Realignment of pavements outside The Flask*

One of the more positive changes in Highgate in recent years has been the reorganisation of the junction between Highgate West Hill and South Grove outside St Michaels Church. The new system of priority is an unqualified improvement over the old and the relaying of the kerbs has done much to smarten up this previously neglected corner of the village.

Since then, Camden Council have received “Section 106” funding from the owners of Witanhurst, and it has been agreed that this should be used to extend the improvements as far as the slip road which runs in front of The Flask.

Camden’s proposals, which will shortly go out for public consultation, involve the renovation, realignment, resurfacing and widening of the pavements in such a way as to make it much easier and safer to cross the various roads in front of The Flask.

One benefit of these works will be to remove parked cars from the slip road in front of The Flask thus providing more pleasing views of The Flask, St Michaels and The Old Hall from across West Hill. These changes can be effected without any net loss of car parking spaces.

*Pedestrian lights outside Jacksons Lane Arts Centre.*

The pedestrian crossing leading from Jacksons Lane and Highgate Avenue to the Underground is one of the most fraught with danger in Highgate. Perhaps for this reason, it has been selected by Transport for London as one of ten test sites for a new pedestrian countdown system. This system, which many readers may have seen for themselves in the US or Spain and is now in place on the Archway Road, alerts the pedestrian to the number of seconds until the pedestrian green phase ends. We would be surprised if the experiment is not considered an unqualified success.

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### ***Open Spaces***

The Society is closely involved with the various open spaces in our area, being represented on the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee, the Highgate Wood Consultative Committee and the Ken Wood Landscape Forum, and we work as necessary with the Friends of Waterlow Park and the Friends of Queens Wood. Certainly, from the feedback I receive from members, and the signal lack of complaints from anyone, the general feeling I perceive is that people believe that Hampstead Heath and Highgate Wood are well managed, and having represented the Society on both Consultative Committees for many years, I have no doubt that this is the case, that both are run with an efficient management and dedicated and knowledgeable staff, and my experience is that the City are far more conscientious in listening to the views of their Consultative Committees – made up of representatives from a large number of local and London groups – considerably better than our main local authorities. In addition, the Heath and Hampstead Society has quarterly walks over the Heath with the City to look at Management issues; these are very productive, and give a good insight into the complexities of managing the Heath, and a representative of the Highgate Society is always invited to attend. It is good to be able to report that Highgate Wood and Hampstead Heath have both once more won Green Flag and Heritage Green Flag awards this year – in the case of the former, for every year since it was initiated.

*Hampstead Heath:* By far the biggest matter for debate for the foreseeable future will be the issue of the Heath Ponds Dams. The situation is immensely complex, and we are all struggling to grasp its implications. As a result of stringent new legislation, all dammed lakes and ponds in excess of 10,000 cu.m. are classed as Reservoirs, and requires that, where there is any possibility of any loss of life as a result of their dams bursting, the dams must be capable of withstanding a 1 in 25,000-year catastrophic rainfall event – i.e. that the dams will not be eroded to the point of collapse by a sustained overtopping. As a result, all the Heath ponds have been brought under the definition of “reservoirs”, and if their dams were to collapse – which could cause a chain reaction of dams lower down the chain - and cause flooding in the residential streets below the Heath, the City management would be personally liable for the results. Since the dams are mostly 300 years old, and built of earth, this has given rise to major concerns.

The initial Haycock report on the dams pictured a worst-case scenario, based on statistics which are still being hotly contested, and proposed a programme of reinforcement

works on the dams which gave rise to some horror, both from the viewpoint of impact on important parts of the Heath – it was proposed to raise the dam of the Bird Sanctuary Pond by 3m, which would have created major visual and ecological damage – and cost: the City are, understandably, not keen to have to meet the suggested £15 million cost of the works if they do not have to. The situation is complicated by the conflict between the 1975 and 2010 dams legislation, and the 1871 Hampstead Heath Act, which is still valid and a linch-pin for the sensitive management of the Heath, in stating that the “natural aspect” of the Heath must be maintained, and its principles cannot be compromised by the new legislation.

While much concern has been voiced abroad about the perceived “destruction of the Heath” – the work will focus only on the dams of the Highgate Chain – insensitive works could still have a major impact, and attention is focusing on establishing the minimum work necessary to ensure the dams cannot collapse. Detailed debate and discussion is still going on and will for some time, but a time will be reached when the City will legally be obliged to take whatever steps are necessary, and this highlights a potentially dangerous situation in that, if, for example, they declined to do so, in the belief that the dams are perfectly safe, the Environment Agency could, if they considered otherwise, take the matter into their own hands, move onto the Heath and carry out the work themselves, without any understanding of the needs of the Heath or the concerns of its users, and pass the City the Bill.

It is generally felt that the initial proposals for the dams were excessive and insensitive, and that there are other, much more sensitive options, which are now being explored; but, as stated at the beginning, the issue is immensely complex, in both legal and engineering terms. The Heath and Hampstead Society, with an array of legal and engineering expertise and advice, have taken the lead in analysing all these issues and endeavouring to establish what work, if any, is needed on the individual dams, and I rather think that all the groups on the Consultative Committee will need to follow their lead, advice and findings – unless there are any Highgate Society members out there with the requisite expertise.

However, in an effort to ensure that community concerns are voiced and channelled into the process, the City have set up a “Water Management Stakeholders’ Group”, made up of 16 of the Consultative Committee representatives. This will feed its views of the proposals, as they develop, to an independent Strategic Landscape Architect”, to be funded by the City but to act as an entirely independent representative of both the City and the Community Stakeholders, whose remit will be to champion the landscape and environmental aspects of the scheme and to challenge any emerging engineering solutions which he (the candidates for the post are male!) considers, after discussion with the Stakeholders, fails to respect these aspects. He will be independent of the engineering design team taken on to carry out the works, and will ensure that the Stakeholders’ environmental and landscaping concerns are addressed. The Stakeholders will be proactively involved in whatever is proposed.

Management of the Heath is an immensely complex task: a few current issues are:

- after three years’ excellent service as Chairman of the Management and Consultative Committees, Michael Welbank has stepped down and will be succeeded by Jeremy Simons.
- Dog control: as a result of some serious incidents involving dogs, the City tried to act as police authority for the Heath but was unable to do so as that function fell to Camden. They have now obtained Statutory Authority Status and will be able to police dog incidents more effectively.
- Management plans for the Sandy Heath and the Flagstaff Gorse sites have been finalised; see the City’s website for the full text of all their area management plans for the landscape and ecology of the Heath.
- The City remains concerned about the same major redevelopments around the Heath as we are; large buildings enable their wealthy owners to have spectacular views over the Heath,

but damage the rural atmosphere of the Heath for its users, while their basements have a serious impact on the flow of ground water to the Bird Sanctuary and Ladies' Ponds. A particularly serious problem arose with the redevelopment of the massive and dismayingly visible Fitzroy Farm, at the sensitive top end of Millfield Lane where, despite assurances by the developers' engineers, there have been two water pollution incidents affecting the pond. Given the weakness of the Planning System to effectively control such incidents, there seems to be no solution to this increasing problem. Despite the Heath and Hampstead Society's Court of Appeal victory three years ago, yet another attempt is being made to build a basement under the Garden House in the Vale of Health, the developers claiming that it is "permitted development".

- A Plane Tree fungus has spread to Britain and is currently affecting many Planes throughout the area. While it does not kill them, it can seriously weaken heavy branches, and these will inevitably have to be lopped to prevent potentially fatal accidents.

- Should you happen to see a long line of furry caterpillars going up the trunk of an oak tree, report it at once. This is the Oak Processionary Moth, a serious defoliator of Oak Trees on the Continent which has now reached Britain, and its spread would be catastrophic. Don't touch them, though; their hairs can cause serious skin rash.

Much else goes on, on the Heath – proposed additional works to maintain it, its landscape and infrastructure for 2014-15 totals £720,000; more in a future report.

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### ***Sustainable Homes Group (Catherine Budgett-Meakin, Chair)***

The Sustainable Homes group, one of the newest subgroups of the Environment Committee, has had a busy summer. By the time Buzz is published, the group will have run a weekend event: **21st century homes: character – comfort – low carbon**, supported by a grant from the Haringey 40:20 programme.

Most of the houses we live in weren't designed for 21st century lifestyles, so it's natural that we want to make changes. And the choices we make can have a big impact on the appearance, the comfort levels and energy costs. Plans for the Saturday include a conference with a dozen speakers on how to make your house more comfortable and energy efficient, with about 15 suppliers and manufacturers demonstrating their techniques and exhibiting their products. There will be information tables, including one from the Society's Planning Group. Transition Highgate, the Highgate Neighbourhood Forum, the Muswell Hill Sustainability Group and Sustainable Haringey will also be represented. The Society is, once again, very grateful to Channing School for hosting this.

On the following day, the Sunday, visits to several local houses whose owners have implemented many of the house improvements discussed the previous day will take place.

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### ***Projects Group***

In recent reports, I have published lists of a range of projects which we would like to undertake for the improvement of the local environment, ranging from simple to complex, and looking for volunteers to help implement them. This has brought just one response, from a volunteer who is keen to take forward the proposal to cultivate the Highgate School Chapel churchyard as a wildflower meadow (which will get under way as soon as Haringey let us have the long-promised key to enable us to gain entry!). Without participation of our members and others, none of these projects can proceed. By contrast, Richard Webber's Northern Heights initiative has been an outstanding success which has reflected huge credit on the Society, and it will be taken forward in a number of new ways.

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