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St Helens Residents Association St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum

Welcome to 2023

This issue gives an update on the St Helens Gardens streetscape works. This long-running saga is raising a new series of problems for residents and businesses in the street and in the wider neighbourhood - some of which look hard to resolve.

It was back in 2021 that we held an open Zoom session attended by 35 members, which discussed a response to the OPDC consultation exercise held at that time - using Zoom polls to reach views on parts of the scheme supported and opposed. Our response to the consultation had an impact on some elements of the work, but not on others (see more below). Once the works are fully completed we will hold a further open meeting to assess reactions to what has been put in place.

St Helens Gardens streetscape works

It was back in April 2014 that StQW/SHRA members discussed at one of our church hall meetings the idea of occasional weekend pedestrianisation of the stretch of street outside the church. A slide illustration showed how the street might work with a farmer's market and traffic diverted. The St Helens Festival held annually in those years involved a temporary traffic closure. The idea was floated via an image in the StQW Neighbourhood Plan as a possible 'action' for the future. Since then one-off closures have been infrequent (e.g. for 2022 Queen's Jubilee street party).

Fast forward to 2021, when RBKC consulted locally on a permanent set of 'public realm improvements' for St Helens Gardens. There was then a long gap before a RBKC letter in May 2022 notified residents in the immediate area of a programme of works that would start in June. The works were due to run for 20 weeks.

The details of the background to this project, including the RBKC consultation material and the StQW/SHRA response, are [included in a new post on the StQW website](#). We supported some elements of the scheme (particularly the new zebra crossing in St Quintin Avenue) and opposed others.

As of January 2023 the project remains uncompleted. Night-time working to resurface the street caused sleepless nights for those living in the street. Bad weather and delays in supplies of materials are reasons given by RBKC officers for the extended programme.

The near completed scheme is now in operation with the traffic diversion removed. The issues which are causing the most concern with the works as built are:

- **safety from traffic**, especially for children at the Kelfield/St Helens Gardens junctions. Kerbs have been entirely removed and replaced by what the consultation leaflet referred to as 'continuous crossings' and in the May 2023 notification letter as 'Copenhagen crossings'. Not many of the public are familiar with these terms used by traffic engineers.
- **a worsening scenario on the number of vehicles mounting the footway and driving across to the privately owned forecourts** at the front of the shops, in order to park or for deliveries/collections. The consultation leaflet referred (in text and in its images) to '*bollards to prevent informal parking on the forecourts*'.
- **Doubts about the construction of the areas of 'rain gardens'** and whether planting in these areas will survive, coupled with uncertainty over the future of the existing (but aged) timber planters outside the shops.

An onsite meeting on January 15th convened by ward councillor Emma Dent-Coad involved RBKC transport officers, some residents of St Helens Gardens, and Henry Peterson with (briefly) a busy Steve Divall from the StQW committee. The meeting went on for two hours. RBKC officers were left in no doubt that residents in the street are not happy with the design and layout of the crossings and the removal of all kerbs at the Kelfield/St Helens junction. One of the shop owners joined the meeting to explain the consequences of not being allowed to park vehicles on private forecourts, in terms of business viability.

RBKC officers promised an early traffic safety audit of the scheme. We asked for some temporary CCTV coverage to monitor driver behaviours, on use of the junctions and on driving onto the footway to park. The fact that there has been nil enforcement against what is a traffic offence (crossing the footway rather than parking on what is private land) is a big issue for most of those running the shop units.



What became clear at the meeting was that RBKC do **not** currently intend to install bollards or any measures to stop vehicles cutting corners where the road way and pavement are now a 'continuous crossing'. Similar crossings are becoming more common in London, we are told. Traffic engineering theory is that the 'ambiguity' of the layout encourages drivers to proceed with caution. The extent of tyre tracks on the new paving suggests that reality is otherwise. The fact that the 'raised tables' at the junctions are barely noticeable to speeding drivers has not helped. Permanent CCTV cameras (as installed in North Pole Road via a StQW/SHRA funding bid) may help to solve problems with the scheme.

RBKC officers argue that the safety audit will show that the design has been well planned, and that plants will grow in the rain gardens once some drainage problems are resolved. Time will tell. In the meantime if you wish

to comment on any aspects of the scheme please email sthelensassn@aol.com if you want an alternative to contacting the council direct.

A brief email needed to support 'redesignation' of the Old Oak Neighbourhood Forum

This neighbourhood forum (known as OONF) started life when the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation took over planning powers for parts of the three Boroughs to our west. The OPDC boundary extends from Wood Lane/Scrubs Lane to the far side of Park Royal and includes Wormwood Scrubs.

StQW/SHRA has always worked closely with OONF, in trying to influence the content of the OPDC Local Plan and in resisting planning applications with extreme residential densities and building heights - including a series of towers in Scrubs Lane.

The OPDC meanwhile sticks to its 2015 target of 25,000 new homes at Old Oak and continues to grant planning consents to scattered speculative developments. Incoming residents find little by way of shops, health and education facilities. The latest position is that OPDC's plans for a new 'major town centre' to the north west of the HS2 interchange (on Old Oak Lane) cannot begin to be built until HS2 release their current 'construction compounds'. The latest date for the main site at Channel Gate is 2032, if all goes to plan. OPDC are now saying that a decade is '*the short-term*' for big regeneration projects.

OPDC are currently [consulting \(until February 3rd\)](#) on the Forum's application for 're-designation' under the Localism Act. A number of StQW/SHRA members are also OONF members, and the same applies to members of the Friends of Wormwood Scrubs. OONF needs to maximise public expressions of support, from anyone living around Old Oak, to ensure re-designation. The Forum in recent years has criticised the way OPDC has undertaken its regeneration role, ever since the OPDC's abandonment in 2019 of more plausible plans for a new town centre on the Cargiant land at Hythe Road. So OONF and OPDC are not the best of friends, and the re-designation decision lies with the [OPDC Board](#).

The Hammersmith Society and local residents groups are sending in expressions of support. More from individuals will help. You don't need to use the OPDC 'consultation' platform to respond (this involves 'registration' and completing an online form). **OPDC has accepted that a simple email to planningpolicy@opdc.london.gov.uk is sufficient. You need to include your name, an email address, and postcode but no further personal details. Please copy to oonforum@gmail.com so that the Forum has some idea of the level of consultation responses. February 3rd is not long away.**

Apart from expressing support (or opposition if you wish) to the continued designation of the Old Oak Neighbourhood Forum, you may want comment on the impact on North Kensington of the intrusion of tall buildings on the skyline of the Scrubs. The main current developments are at the 'North Acton Cluster', Channel Gate/Atlas Road on Old Oak Lane, and the towers going up in Scrubs Lane. Or you could question the merits of encouraging residential towers a decade before any local amenities (and better public transport) will follow.

Government planning reforms are finally promoting 'gentle density' and forms of new housing that the public want to live in, along with more community influence on 'simpler' local plans updated more often. In the real world, a downturn in the London housing market is likely to have the biggest impact on what happens between now and the opening of

the Old Oak Common rail interchange (2030-32).

Next month's newsletter will include an update on the plans of developers Ballymore/Sainsburys and Berkeley Homes/St William at Kensal Canalside. Both sets of developers have been making changes to the plans following a public meeting at Barlby Primary School in November 2021. Ballymore/Sainsburys are restarting consultations before submitting their planning application. A similar scenario to that at Old Oak. More news next time.

Secret Cinema's plans for Wormwood Scrubs this summer

Secret Cinema started as a London-based company showing films with audience involvement and specially built sets, at locations such as deserted industrial buildings. Locations were disclosed to ticket-buyers shortly before performances - hence the 'secret'.

The company is now owned by a US company [TodayTix](#) and bills itself as a world leader in the 'immersive cinema experience'. Secret Cinema have been holding discussions with Hammersmith & Fulham Council about staging one of their major events on Wormwood Scrubs in August 2023.

The Friends of Wormwood Scrubs, with its two members who sit as observers on the Wormwood Scrubs Charitable Committee, have been following these negotiations. This [piece on the FOWWS website](#) gives information on the current state of play. The view of FOWWS is that the company is well run and does charitable and community work, but that the Scrubs is not the right place for such an event.

Audiences would be around 4,700 a night, for 3 weeks in the summer, coming to a pre-built set in the northern part of the football fields. The nearest Underground stations are at White City and East Acton. The film to be shown is not yet known but is understood to be family friendly. Will such an audience come by public transport? What will be the noise levels this side of Scrubs Lane?

FOWWS are the organisation best placed to address all these local issues, including the impact on the wildlife of the Scrubs. StQW/SHRA will continue to liaise with FOWWS. Our understanding is that no decisions have yet been made, albeit LBHF seems keen on the revenue that would come to the council.

We think that planning permission will be needed as well as various licensing approvals. OPDC and not LBHF is the planning authority for the Scrubs, although OPDC could choose to delegate a planning application.

Next steps on RBKC's new Local Plan for the Borough

Previous newsletters have given updates on the preparation of new Local Plan, to replace the currently adopted 2019 version. Consultation on a 'Regulation 19' Draft Plan ended just before Christmas. Use this link if you wish to see the RBKC [consultation materials](#) are at

Our draft response to the RBKC consultation was made available on the StQW website. It was submitted on time, and can be [read at this link](#). The Council has yet to publish all the responses that were sent in. The next stage is for RBKC planning officers to review these and decide on any changes to their Draft Plan. The Council will then submit the final version to the Secretary of State and a Planning Inspector will be appointed.

An Examination in Public (EIP) will then be held and there will be a chance for any respondent to ask to attend and to

answer questions put by the Inspector. He/she then reports on whether the Draft Plan meets the tests of 'soundness' in the National Planning Policy Framework. Subject to any further modifications required by the Inspector, the Council will then adopt a new Plan for the period 2023-2043. The Draft Plan supports all the policies and site designations in our own neighbourhood plan, which remains in force as part of the Development plan for Kensington and Chelsea.

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