

# VIEWPOINTS

## Developers set for go-ahead to plunder canal

**MANY Camden residents might be surprised to know that Camden planning department will soon be considering the possibility of a development which will mean plundering one of the most pleasant amenities we freely enjoy.**

The proposed plan is to squeeze a pair of six-storey buildings in between the canal and St Pancras Way on the site opposite the Parcel Force building.

This high wall of buildings will plunge the towpath into shade for most of the year: so walkers, anglers, locals, tourists, cyclists – you will no longer enjoy the light and the vistas. Instead you will be hunching your shoulders as you proceed along a towpath which will become rather boggy and sad.

Some residents were asked to present their views of this possible development last week at the first meeting of the Camden Development Control Forum on November 23.

Those invited were advised beforehand that the meeting “will be helpful in identifying and focusing on the issue and that it will give you an opportunity to ask questions. However... there is no requirement for the developers to take account of the discussions”.

At the meeting we were told by the chairman that local people “shouldn’t have their amenities taken away” and we wondered if privacy was an amenity.

## Recycling boost must go further

CONGRATULATIONS to Islington Council on gradually getting its kerbside collection recycling act together. Following the recent addition of a new brown bin, our house can now recycle glass and plastic bottles, cans, paper, cardboard, and garden and kitchen waste – which ought to be at least half and possibly even three quarters of a typical household’s rubbish. When they’ve added household batteries and other plastics, such as yogurt pots and food packaging, to the service I’ll be one happy recycler.

Of course now they’ve got the systems in place the challenge really begins! A quick survey down my street last week showed less than half the properties bothering to put their recycling out at all, so there’s a big task of persuading, encouraging, informing to be done. But even more important is working out how to provide a similar level of service to the estates, which make up so much of Islington’s housing. Flat-dwellers have as much right to a proper recycling collection as house-dwellers.

The government’s target for Islington this year is to recycle or compost a rather pathetic 18 per cent of our waste, which we probably won’t reach! This compares with more than 40 per cent which the best UK councils are achieving. *Andrew Myer, Islington Green Party, Horsell Road, N5*

**The prize crossword has moved... turn to P28 to see our new crossword**

The architect proceeded to inform us that foremost in his mind when approaching the design of the buildings was “tranquillity”. The buildings would create “an active presence on the canal”, he was “creating rooms”, “seeking canalside characteristics” to inform the design.

He also said that the buildings would provide a “human intimate canal frontage” and that they were “tucked in behind Star Wharf”. On the St Pancras Way side the development would “reinforce the street edge” and “one will see it at speed”, and he asked the meeting to “try not to see it as a wall”.

But it will look like a wall, it will seem like a wall, it will be a wall. The six storeys will loom over the canal, spoiling the enjoyment of all who use the towpath and the canal.

Were the staff of the Jubilee Waterside Centre invited to attend their canoeing classes are held on the reach of the canal which will be most affected by this wall. Their water activities will be shadowed by the wall.

The architect justified the height of the proposed wall in terms of two neighbouring buildings.

The first is 18 St. Pancras Way. This building fell into disuse for a few years apart from when it was used for weekend raves. Then we noticed that additional

storeys were being added to its height – all work done at weekends. None of us could track any attempts to consult with local residents about this added height.

The second is the building on the corner of Pratt Street and St Pancras Way. One weekend some years ago the old Thames Water building burnt down, and it was then replaced by this much taller and very ugly warehouse-style block for north African refugees.

When the “Big Ugly Brown Building” (previously Royal Mail) was built 20 years ago, its height was aligned with all the other buildings along the canal. Why spoil the canal vistas with this new wall which will be as high as the warehouse block?

Will a six-storey wall enhance the environment? No, not for local people and not for visitors, not for the barges, the tourist boats, the wildlife. And the locals know this because they saw the two mature rowan trees cut down soon after the developer’s sign was displayed at this site. Those trees provided “significant amenity value to the local environment” and had been there for 20 years.

If this wall goes ahead, the canal environment will be spoiled for everyone who uses and enjoys its amenity. *— Helene Fawcett, Rosendale Way, NW1*

## DON'T TAKE CHRIST OUT OF CHRISTMAS

I WONDERED how long it would take Islington’s Liberal Democrats to emulate other barmy boroughs in taking Christ out of Christmas (Gazette, November 17)

I do not adhere to any particular religion, and I acknowledge that the Christmas festival has been hijacked by aggressive commercialisation and consumerism. However, it is still a Christian festival, which can be enjoyed by people of all faiths and none.

If we allow po-faced Lib Dem politicians to ban Christmas, it will surely then only be a matter of time before they thrust their pettifogging beaks into the affairs of the borough’s other religious festivals. Indeed, I’m surprised they haven’t already recruited uniformed Christmas wardens to prowling our streets in platoons of latter day Scrooges, on a mission of municipal misery. *— Councillor Dave Barnes (Labour, Highbury East), Highbury Quadrant, N5*

■ I AM a 74-year-old Christian. Christianity is my culture and, as

such, I find it deeply offensive of the council to look upon me and other Christians as second-class citizens. I voted Liberal Democrat only twice in my life, for the present council – but never again.

Their record of selling off buildings, big wage rises for themselves and the horrific parking regulations is not a very good record. And now we have them interfering with Christmas.

What should be a Christmas message of love, peace and goodwill to all has been spoiled by nit-picking pettiness and political correctness. *Mrs. C. Tiernan, Peckett Square, Highbury Grange, N5*

■ CHRISTMAS festivities seem to be coming to an end if people like Councillor Laura Willoughby and others have their way!

Over the years, many religions have settled here. They accepted our ways, we theirs. Even enjoying each other’s festivities! Merry Christmas *Mrs. M. Gibson, Ormond Road, N19*

## A strong voice

EMILY Thornberry has made an impressive start as for Islington South and Finsbury in her first six months. She was elected on a commitment to be a “strong voice in a Labour government” and she has shown herself to be a principled and effective parliamentarian.

Principled enough to second the motion that defeated Tony Blair’s 90-day detention without trial plan: it took courage for a new MP to vote against the Prime Minister because of her strong belief in the principles of British justice.

Effective in that she has stopped a proposal to swallow up our local Islington Health Care Trust (the PCT) inside a proposed massive bureaucratic edifice which would sprawl over north London. She did this by going directly to the Prime Minister and Secretary of State and persuading them to intervene – showing how seriously her voice is taken where the decisions are made.

We are truly fortunate to have an MP that is principled enough to stand up for what is right, and effective enough to get results for Islington. *— Will Tanner, St John’s Lane, EC1*

## Don’t rob police

CHRIS Keating asks “which party doesn’t believe in ASBOs?” while Councillor Jyoti Vaja demands that your correspondents “get their facts right” about the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (Viewpoints, Gazette, November 24). Well, here are the facts. It is official Liberal Democrat policy to oppose Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs).

Only two months ago, the Lib Dem national conference stated their opposition to ASBOs. Guess who moved and seconded the motion? None other than two of Islington’s full-time Lib Dem councillors, Laura Willoughby and Bridget Fox. Their motion opposed ASBOs, declaring that other methods of tackling crime work better. When the Lib Dems oppose ASBOs, they rob the police of an effective power. *— Paul Convery, chairman, Islington South and Finsbury Constituency Labour Party, Barnsbury Street, N1*

## Putting safety first

I AM delighted to see that a Safer Neighbourhood police team has begun work in the Archway area – or Junction Ward to be precise.

This means that there is now a dedicated team of officers for this neighbourhood, consisting of one sergeant, two constables and three police community support officers (PCSOs).

This sort of community policing is one of Ken Livingstone’s greatest achievements as Mayor of London because it means that local communities have a real say in deciding the priorities for their area, allowing the police to provide local solutions to local problems, while maintaining a focus on reducing priority crime.

All over Islington these locally based police teams have become very popular with local people and they are very welcome in Junction Ward. If you need to contact them – their Sergeant is Andrew Henthorn and their phone number is 020 8721 2941. *— John Wyman-White, Pemberton Gardens, N19*

## So soft on crime

COUNCILLOR Jyoti Vaja is either kidding herself or everyone else if she thinks Islington’s Liberal Democrat council is tough on crime (Viewpoints, Gazette, November 24).

Ever since they were first elected, the Lib Dems have been soft on crime. They have not invested in CCTV, been weak on introducing ASBOs and have even returned money to the Government which they were given to fund anti-crime Community Wardens. The Government has given councils a range of new powers to stop crime and the Lib Dems here have hardly used any of them.

Many people have their lives blighted by crime and the fear of crime. They will get no help at all from the current Lib Dem run council. *Richard Watts, Wray Crescent, N4*

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