

NNA NEWS

SUMMER 2008



www.netherhallneighbourhoodassociation.org.uk

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South Hampstead High 'plans' highlight flaws in the process



Photos: Richard Selfridge

In commenting on the revised planning application for South Hampstead High School, Richard Stone hits on a broader matter which should be of concern to all residents and neighbourhood associations

THE VARIOUS applications for major changes at South Hampstead High School (SHHS) reveal a serious shortcoming in the current planning process at Camden Council. It is probably the same in other council areas and needs to be met head on.

My argument is that the focus of planning applications is too narrow. They can only address each *new* modification and fail to take account of the impact of a *series* of changes. The character of an area may radically alter within a decade, yet local residents will have been denied any opportunity to be consulted. The name I give to a series of

▲ No 3 Maresfield due for demolition?

unchallenged changes is 'Planning creep' or 'Creep' for short.

SHHS is a prime example of Creep. It must be the biggest building scheme in the area since 1967, when the Tavistock Clinic moved here from Tavistock Square. It takes in an area the equivalent of five or six local houses. It is double the size of the three houses in Fitzjohn's Avenue at the junction with Maresfield Gardens, two of the frontages of which collapsed, despite their preservation having been a condition of development.

The basic flaw in the SHHS schemes is that they are predicated on the idea that the site is big enough for the 700 pupils proposed. That number is already 40 more than at present, and about double what it was 50 years ago.

Just compare SHHS with University College School (UCS) in Frognal. As at SHHS, the number of pupils at UCS has doubled in the 55 years since I was a pupil there. The number of buildings

has also doubled. What was once a handsome area of open space around three classical-style buildings has become a hodgepodge of dull, functional buildings, with just a few vaguely modern, but still boring ones. These infills have removed from the area splendid terraces of grass, tennis courts, trees and open spaces. They "create a poor visual relationship with the main buildings", to use the wording in the SHHS application about its own 1987 Waterlow House development.

The SHHS site is much smaller than UCS, yet the plan is to cram in an even higher density of buildings than UCS with, for example, the need for playground space only partly met, and 30 per cent of that will have to be on a roof.

'Planning creep' describes pretty well what happened at UCS and is happening now at SHHS. A school brings in more and more pupils over the years, to the point that the buildings cannot cope. An application for new buildings is then submitted, based on a desperate need for more space. In fact that need is artificial, because it is a response to the school's unchecked enthusiasm for more pupils.

Precedent

Maresfield Gardens and this corner of Hampstead would benefit from the removal of a school of such a size, rather than having to live with an ugly consolidation of its presence. We already have 20 schools in the immediate neighbourhood. Just imagine how long it will be before the others use the precedent of SHHS in requesting consent to knock down their grand old houses to build with increased density on the sites.

The Maresfield site was originally approved in 1881 for a school in a single purpose-built house, No 3 Maresfield Gardens. There can't have been as many as 100 pupils in those days. Creeping expansion has already resulted in the

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NNA NEWS® welcomes news stories, announcements of events and ideas for articles. We will also accept a small amount of paid advertising. Please contact Susanne Lawrence, 47b Netherhall Gardens NW3 5RJ. Tel: 020 7435 4140 susanne.lawrence@ppltd.co.uk



Flagship shop nearly shipshape

GUEST SPEAKER at the NNA's 25th AGM in March was Kevin Shipley, manager of Waitrose John Barnes in Finchley Road, which reopened on 29th November. He described the background to and thinking behind the expansion of the shop into one of the business's three flagship stores (Marylebone High Street and John Lewis, Oxford Street being the other two) and answered questions about some ongoing 'learning' issues, including the layout and flow of the fruit and vegetable area, the number and position of entrances and use of plastic bags. He paid particular tribute to staff, who had to work through the noise, dust and disruption of the building process and then undergo significant training to cope with the new style store.

NNA CONSTITUTION

25 years on – AGM ratifies revamped constitution

Jenny White reports

IT TOOK nearly two years of deliberations and tinkering but, finally, a new constitution was put forward and adopted at this year's NNA Annual General Meeting.

'Constitution' – the very word is enough to make most people fall asleep. But it is an important document. It sets out the objects and scope of an organisation, its powers and how it is to operate, such as how much notice has to be given and to whom.

In a member body like the NNA, it also defines members' rights – for instance to request a general meeting. So in that respect it's protective. It is very much your document.

What was wrong with the old one?

The old constitution served the NNA well for 25 years. But, like anything else, things change and a quarter of a century on, it no longer reflected the organisation as we know it today. The NNA has fewer members and a smaller committee running it. And legal language is also changing. The old constitution, adapted from a general model, was written in a typically formal style. The new one is drafted in the modern idiom.

What's different about this version?

The new constitution

- uses simpler language and shorter sentences
- breaks up the material into smaller chunks and adds headings
- fills some gaps and corrects some inconsistencies
- puts things in a different order to make them easier to follow

There are some other changes. For instance, the NNA committee used to be up to 20 strong. That's come down to 15. To encourage new blood, no one can be in the same role for more than five years, and after 10 years on the committee they must stand down. Also, members can now ask to see the committee's minutes

We've streamlined the notice requirements for AGMs and other meetings. Ten members can now request a special general meeting, instead of 15, and that's the new quorum (the number who need to be present for a meeting to be valid) for special or annual general meetings. Decisions are based on a majority vote, unless they relate to changing the constitution or dissolving the association, for either of which a three quarters majority is required. Because of the importance of the constitution, the appropriate ways of making any future changes to it are now spelt out in a separate clause.

The new constitution is on the NNA website – www.netherhallneighbourhoodassociation.org.uk – but please ask if you'd like a hard copy. New members will get one automatically. Have a look at it – it's there to help you. Let's hope it will last as long as the old one.

HAVE YOU GOT NEW NEIGHBOURS?

We need them in the NNA. The more residents we speak for, the greater weight we carry when putting over our views, plus, of course, more subs means we can do more. If you spot someone moving into the area, please notify Membership Secretary Jenny White on 020 7794 5886.

Maples for the town garden

Stephen Williams, who with his wife Linda opened their Maresfield garden to the public again this year, reveals some of his favourite varieties of acer

When once asked by friends what to do with a problematically large sycamore, I advised them to 'Chop it down!' It's the poor man of the acer family. Conservationists dislike its promiscuous habit of setting seed everywhere, stifling the indigenous trees in our native woodlands. To see how common it has become since its introduction into Britain from Central Europe around the fifteenth century, you need only look out of the train window on your next journey. In autumn, this 'weed' definitely drops the 'wrong sort of leaves'.

However, there are those who love this relatively short-lived tree. In Tolpuddle, the TUC have adopted and care for the 'Martyr's tree' beneath which dissenting villagers met before marching.

From China, the paper bark maple, *Acer griseum*, is a magnificent small tree with peeling red bark along with brilliant red autumn leaves, whilst the bark of the snakebark maple, *A. silver vein*, is attractively striped.

North America gives us the big leaved maple (*A. macrophyllum*), together with the sugar, mountain and Pennsylvania maples.

But for our gardens today we rely on plants discovered in the Far East.

The serene Japanese maple is the Shogun of the plant world with its fiery autumnal reds, oranges and yellows. It is one of a limited number of plants, called *niwa-ki*, which the Japanese use in their gardens. Using a simple palette of form and colour, and keeping to strict rules of line, space and balance, they seek to reflect wild nature.

Creating an authentic Japanese garden is beyond all but the most dedicated orientalist and, even then, its setting can disturb, as seen in the otherwise exquisite garden the Japanese designed and created in the heart of Holland Park.

Texture and elegance

This shouldn't prevent us from using the Japanese maple and its Chinese and North American relatives. Their generally small size, slow growth and light canopy are ideal for the town garden, adding texture and elegance as few other plants can.



I have always planted acers in my gardens. They associate so easily with other plants, lending an ethereal feel against more solid-leaved plants such as hydrangeas, tree peonies, viburnums and daphnes.

From Japan we have *A. palmatum* with its wonderful sub-species *dissectum*. Colours vary from brilliant red to acid yellow green with many varieties of leaf shape.

A. deshojo is a favourite with its bright red young spring leaves set strikingly against the dark green leaves of the camelia Jury's Yellow. Recently planted beside our side garden gate, *A. 'Villa Taranto'*, named after the famous North Italian garden it came from, has green

leaves with pink overtones turning yellow in autumn, which gives it an unusual character that always fascinates me. I love *A. 'Kinshi'* so much that I have planted one both in the rear garden and beside the front door. It has the most feathery bright green leaves available. *A. 'Viridis'* also gives an ethereal lace effect together with *A. 'Filigree'*, a similar delicate form.

Focal point

Slow growing for me is the variegated *A. 'Ukigamo'* (Floating Cloud'), which has a small green leaf, tinged pink and white. *A. japonicum 'Aureum'*, now called unpronounceably *A. shirasawaum*, is also a slow growing shrub with bright yellow leaves in spring retaining their colour throughout the summer. I use it to brighten up a dark corner or make a strong focal point in the rear garden in front of the dark green yew hedge. The beautiful *A. Chitoseyama* has a weeping habit, which looks good draped over one of our water features.

The list is endless and our garden has many other maples thriving in the Hampstead soil, which many of you were able to view when we opened the garden under the National Garden Scheme on the afternoon of Sunday, 18 May, and again on 14 and 15 June as part of the Good Garden Guide openings.

We hope to welcome you when we repeat the exercise next year.

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CRIME AND NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

BURGLARY AND motor vehicle crimes in Netherhall and Maresfield Gardens and Nutley Terrace have fallen significantly in the past 12 months, Frogna! & Fitzjohns Safer Neighbourhood Team (FFSNT) *Sgt Phil Hewetson* told *NNA News*.

However he is concerned that people are still leaving articles on display in their vehicles. Sat navs should be removed, he warns, and the mark left by them should be wiped. Nor should loose change be left in cars.

Hugh Isaacs, NNA Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator, who recently joined Barinder Sahni as a member of the FFSNT, adds that rear entry theft had

been a problem earlier in the year with tools from garden sheds being used to gain entry. Local police advice was to keep sheds locked, he said, and windows curtained.

Looking beyond the immediate NNA area, communal dwellings, especially in Arkwright Road, have caused problems where self-closing front doors have not been completely shut.

There has also been a series of petty thefts from the nearby backpackers lodge and the YWCA, as well as robberies, mainly of mobile phones, from boys at UCS in Frogna!.

The next meeting of the FFSNT will take place on 17th September.

Environmentalist extraordinaire

In the third of our series on noteworthy neighbours, Richard Selfridge talks to local planning guru-cum-internationally-known environmentalist Mayer Hillman

Once you notice the Boar's Head placed at the gable end of Mayer Hillman's converted coach house on Netherhall Gardens, it becomes a reassuring presence guarding the junction at Nutley Terrace. It is a curiosity. Hillman's explanation is both straightforward and revealing. During their courtship, his future wife Heidi began to notice that Mayer had a distinctly focused and tenacious side to him – somewhat like a wild boar. The more one finds out about him, the more one realises how unusually apt was this characterisation.

Hillman's life's work, including writing over 40 books largely on public policy on transport and the environment, has had a considerable influence, not just on the NNA neighbourhood but across the country and internationally. Few people have books dedicated to them during their lifetime. However, the level of respect that Hillman inspires in his peers is such that his 70th birthday in 2001 was marked with the publication of just such a book, *Ahead of time – birthday letters to Mayer Hillman*.

Born in West Hampstead on 30th October 1931 to Scottish Jewish parents, Mayer is the youngest of three boys born within the space of three years. Their mother Annie was a local GP and their father David a portrait painter and stained glass artist whose own father was a rabbi, who had fled to Glasgow from Lithuania to escape the pogroms; by 1914 he had been appointed Head of the Jewish Law Courts in London.

David remained orthodox and indeed "oppressively authoritarian", as Mayer told journalist Anne Karpf for a *Guardian* article in 2002. As a consequence, Karpf wrote, "all three (sons) came to challenge authority and Mayer counts himself a 'militant (Hillman prefers the word 'devout') atheist', though feels very Jewish and is proud of his origins."



▲ Mayer has not travelled by air for 11 years and rarely drives. When cycling, which he does a lot, he goes without a helmet. Helmet-wearing gives cyclists a false sense of security, he says

At the age of 11, Mayer decided he would become an architect. From University College School in Frognal he went to University College London's Bartlett School of Architecture, where he qualified in 1954, and was soon a partner in a newly-established firm of architects in Hampstead.

In the early part of his career he also obtained a diploma in town planning at UCL. His design of a largely traffic-free new town in an architectural competition shortly afterwards indicated an interest which was to grow increasingly important. Ten years later, he read Colin Buchanan's seminal report, *Traffic in Towns*, which was to change his life dramatically, as

he violently disagreed with its recommendations.

Buchanan's report was a response to the growing issue of motorised transport and its impact on our towns and cities. Buchanan recognised that something dramatic had to be done about the 10 (now well over 30) million cars on the roads, and his report led to many car-friendly planning initiatives, including the building of ring roads, by-passes and urban clearways. It also led to penning pedestrians behind barriers and separating them from vehicles by building under- and over-passes. In the mid-1960s Hillman was London Chair of the Conservation Society and active in opposing proposals for an inner London motorway which would have swept away large parts of Swiss Cottage and Belsize Park.

Personal mobility

After 13 years in his practice, Hillman decided to switch professions and applied to do a doctorate at Edinburgh University – to examine the relevance of the social and environmental aspects of personal mobility to urban planning.

Unfortunately, his ideas were considered too controversial and radical to attract a grant, so he and Heidi (née Krott), who had married in 1964, had to live for three years off the rental of their London flat and her part-time earnings (she was a journalist, who later edited the NNA newsletter).

During this period their first son, Josh, now 39 and Assistant Director of the Nuffield Foundation, was born and their second, Saul, was conceived. Heidi's family had fled to England from Vienna in 1938 when she was just one, so it is a nice touch that Saul, now 37, is a research psychologist and post-graduate teacher at the Anna Freud Centre, whose founder also came to England from Vienna as a refugee in 1938 (*see article, page 6*).



▲ Boar's head outside the Hillmans' coach house - a fitting feature for its male inhabitant, some might say

In 1970 the family returned to London and Mayer joined PEP – Political and Economic Planning (now the Policy Studies Institute) – as Head of its Environment and Quality of Life research programme; he is now a Senior Fellow Emeritus.

At first, Hillman was closely involved with issues surrounding personal mobility and the benefits of discouraging consumer-based lifestyles, including dependence on motorised transport. Indeed, as a reflection of the fact that he practises what he preaches, he has not travelled by air for 11 years, rarely drives and cycles on most of the journeys he makes. And, for the record, he has been a vegetarian since his early teenage years.

Many strands of his research have identified areas of resource waste and the policies needed for its reduction. The issue of daylight hours fits well into this. In the late 1980s, he carried out a wide-ranging study of the consequences of achieving a better match of daylight and waking hours. It concluded that the advantages of moving clocks forward by an hour from their current setting in winter and summer would far outweigh the disadvantages. The proposition almost reached the statute book.

Later, Hillman worked on his influential report *One False Move: A Study of Children's Independent Mobility*, which alerted many people to the reduction in children's freedom because of parental fears about the dangers of traffic. The study noted that, in just 20 years, the number of children aged 7 and 8 travelling unaccompanied to school had fallen from 80 per cent to just 10 per cent. While the number of children killed had fallen, this was not explained by roads becoming safer. Together with

two colleagues, he established that it had far more to do with the fact that today's children are not allowed to get about on their own until a much later age than in previous generations, with damaging effects on their development.

Hot on the heels of *One False Move*, Hillman wrote the report *Cycling: Towards Health And Safety* for the British Medical Association. This focused on the benefits of cycling, in spite of the increased risk of injury resulting from the continuing rise in traffic. Hillman calculated that the 'life years' gained through promoting health by regular cycling outnumbered the 'life years' lost in fatal injuries by 20 to 1.

Never one to take anything at face value, Hillman also conducted research on cycle helmets. His finding was that helmets hardly help in the kinds of crashes which cause serious head injury – in the main, being hit by a car or truck. Helmet wearing gives cyclists a false sense of security, which affects the extent to which they take risks. An enthusiastic cyclist himself, Hillman does not wear a helmet when riding around London.

Mayer has lived locally long enough to remember the 1930s when our roads were not dominated by traffic and when both the Swiss Cottage Odeon and John Barnes – now Waitrose – were built. He also, of course, recalls the 1950s when the lower end of Netherhall Gardens still opened on to Finchley Road, although he did not move to Netherhall until 1976. His life-long connection with NW6 and NW3 has informed his views about the importance of local life.

Good neighbours

Hillman became involved with the NNA at its start some 25 years ago. He was one of the people with whom Pat Whitehouse first discussed the proposal to form a residents' association, the two having met in Netherhall Gardens. From the beginning one of the aims of the association was to bring residents together and promote a spirit of good neighbourliness, something Hillman's work approached from the opposite direction – how do the decisions made in town planning affect the communities in which we live? He remains convinced that

neighbourhood associations have a valuable role to play in making urban life more enjoyable and less anonymous by involving people living and working in the area to improve our quality of life and the built environment.

Hillman is probably best known by his neighbours as the person who long represented the NNA on planning and traffic matters, helping to prevent many ugly developments. In addition, through his efforts, we now have the effective cul-de-sac, achieved when Netherhall Way was closed to cars in the early 1990s. Hillman was also instrumental in persuading Camden to make the junction of the lower part of Maresfield Gardens and Fitzjohns Avenue one way and to paint yellow boxes at road junctions in Fitzjohns. And not least his work on Camden's School Run Advisory Panel has contributed to easing the problems posed by those who choose to drive their children to local schools.

Carbon rations

Although officially retired, he is as busy as ever. Hillman's work during the last two decades has been focused on climate change, which he considers the most important issue the world has ever had to face. He has been at the forefront of those seeking to develop realistic solutions – without engaging in wishful thinking that technology has all the answers. He was the first proponent of personal carbon allowances whereby individuals would be equitably allocated an annual ration based on a national carbon budget. The paperback of the American version of his Penguin book *How we can save the planet* in which he discusses this concept has just been published in the US.

Hillman believes strongly that there is the distinct prospect of ecological catastrophe, as there is little evidence of either government or the public agreeing that our use of fossil fuels must be vastly reduced – and then acting on it to a sufficient extent, for instance by stopping flying. Whilst some of his ideas may seem strange to many of us now, his track record suggests that carbon rationing, at least, will be adopted by government sooner than we might think. **NNA**

*For more information see: www.mayerhillman.com

The legacy of Anna Freud

A quarter of a century after her death in 1982, Anna Freud's profound understanding of child development and her long-lasting contribution to child psychoanalysis was recognised with a memorial conference opened by Inge Pretorius, a psychotherapist and archivist at the Anna Freud Centre in Maresfield Gardens. The following month (last November) Dr Pretorius treated NNA members to a fascinating account of the Centre's origins through photographs and film footage. Report by Richard Selfridge and Inge Pretorius

Exactly 70 years ago (June 1938), when Austria was overtaken by Nazi Germany, Sigmund Freud and his family left Vienna and the following year moved into 20 Maresfield Gardens. With the death of her father and the outbreak of the Second World War, Anna Freud – Sigmund's youngest daughter – threw herself into work.

Anna recognised the need to provide shelter for children and their families who were political refugees from concentration camps, for orphans and children whose parents were engaged in the war, as well as those who were bombed out and rendered homeless. She envisaged a temporary wartime shelter, but it soon became apparent that there was a need for a more permanent residence for children considered as 'billeting problems', that is, those who could not be evacuated without their mothers or who had developed difficulties in foster care situations.

She opened the first nursery, known as the 'Children's Rest Centre', with Dorothy Burlingham at 13 Wedderburn Road in January 1941. Most of the early residents – 10 or 12 children, some with their mothers – came from the East End, their homes having been reduced to rubble or made unsafe by the Blitz.

The Centre was funded by the British War Relief Society, and additional funds from the American Foster Parents' Plan for War Children soon made it possible to increase capacity to 30 children. US support continued throughout the war and afterwards.

Netherhall and New Barn

In mid-1941 two new buildings were opened. Most NNA members will now know the first of these as South Hampstead High's Junior School at 5 Netherhall Gardens; it opened as the Babies' Rest Centre and cared for up to 50 babies and young children. The second building, a country house called New Barn, near Chelmsford in Essex, took evacuated children aged from 3 to 6.

Many of the staff of the nurseries were themselves refugees from the war, and at last November's special NNA evening

Dr Pretorius shared film footage of them talking about their experiences.

The core staff members were highly trained workers in the fields of medicine, psychology, education, nursing and domestic science. But turnover was high among the non-professional employees because the work was so hard and this, in turn, was disruptive for the children.

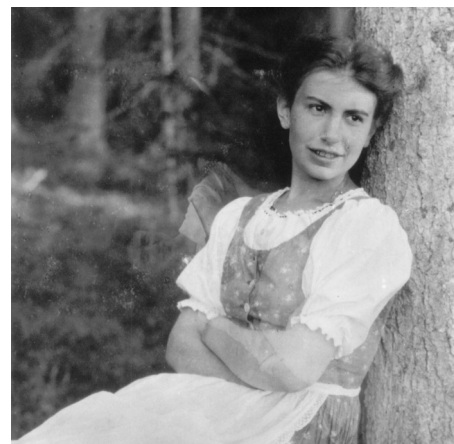
Towards the end of the first year, Freud and Burlingham decided to offer on-site training to the group of approximately 20 young women who then worked in the nurseries. The courses were prepared and delivered by the older members of staff and attended by the younger ones in their off-duty hours, both because there was no spare funding to provide substitutes while staff were being trained and also to maintain continuity for the children. In addition to the formal courses, departments were rotated to offer trainees a range of different experiences – with babies, toddlers, nursery children and those who were ill.

Extended benefits

The courses became so popular that retention problems evaporated and there was soon a long list of applicants eager to fill vacancies. Moreover, the scheme's benefits extended far beyond its practical wartime value in that it created an opportunity to test out an all-round training of workers with children, as well as offering the chance to observe the impact of the war on young children.

Dr Pretorius explained to NNA members the link between the nurseries and the current Centre. Much of Anna Freud's influential research, particularly that based on observations of children's feeding, sleeping and development, began in the war nurseries. For example, in contrast to the typical residential nursery practice at that time, parents were involved as much as possible. 'Family' groups were organised so children had consistent care rather than be looked after by whichever member of staff happened to be on duty.

Freud's focus on attachments and the children's emotional needs also arose from the work the nurseries did in



Photos: Freud Museum, London

▲ Top Anna, in 1914 aged 18, and below in the 1920s still in Vienna

helping children and families to maintain close bonds (employing mothers in the kitchen and household areas served a dual purpose) or to re-attach later.

The nurseries had admitted 191 children during the war, and all but 16 of those still in care were reunited with their parents at the end of hostilities. Anna, assisted by the Foster Parents' Plan, continued to support those who had been in her care long after they had left it.

The experience of the war nurseries led to the establishment of the Hampstead Child Therapy Course in 1947 and the Hampstead Clinic, which was opened by Freud in 1952 at 12 Maresfield Gardens. The clinic grew rapidly and in 1956 spread over the road to number 21 Maresfield, and in 1967 number 14 too was acquired. In 1984, two years after her death, the course, clinic and all three buildings were collectively renamed the Anna Freud Centre.

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SHHS and planning creep *continued from page 1*

destruction of one handsome building (Waterlow House) and its replacement with a thoroughly undistinguished slab. This is what has become the central part of the school, and the section to be preserved at the expense of the old houses. Now the original No 3 is to be destroyed as well, on the grounds that health and safety regulations are too expensive to implement in old buildings.

Just because the school has increased its numbers until it cannot cope any more does not justify accepting a plan which mimics the mistakes of UCS. The proposed buildings will fill every inch of the site with no open space between them.

Rather than try to make an inadequate site fit a school which is too big for the space, more effort should be given to finding a larger site. This is what Haberdasher's School for Boys did. It is also what the Jews' Free School did. Both found new sites with plenty of ground for playing fields, and in areas nearer to where their pupils live.

In its current planning application SHHS states that "efforts were made to find a site elsewhere", but it does not elaborate on the extent or nature of that effort. I suspect it was not very great. Presumably it is easier to pull down buildings and build from new on the existing site than to move the whole school out to a larger site. However, I do not believe such sites are so rare; large new buildings are going up all the time within the M25 and in the outer suburbs.

According to the maps provided by SHHS, many pupils do live near the school, but most live along the route of the Barnet branch of the Underground's Northern Line. Just imagine the reduction in traffic congestion from a move of SHHS to Hendon or Finchley: all those cars would be delivering and collecting girls in the opposite direction to rush hour traffic.

Serious consideration should be given to refusal of the whole current



▲ 42 Netherhall Gardens, site of Elgar's former house and subject to a long series of planning applications

application. The SHHS senior school should move out to a site which is still accessible to its pupils, and where the girls would be able to breathe, run about and have some space around them.

The SHHS Junior School buildings are arguably even less adequate than those of the senior school. Whether or not the juniors should move out into the vacated Maresfield site is a matter for the school to decide. However I would hope that Camden would look sympathetically on an application for the Netherhall school buildings to revert to residential use.

Finally, a few more words on the loss of No 3 Maresfield as a landmark local building: I accept that modern health and safety adaptations, including those to accommodate people with disabilities, are costly, but I do not regard this as an acceptable justification for the loss of such an elegant building, and one so central to the area's architectural balance.

The 1987 acceptance by Camden of the Waterlow House development is accurately mocked in this new application: the school itself describes it as "a building of little merit," which "creates a poor visual relationship with Oakwood and No 3". Yet this building is destined to be preserved, and the handsome No 3 demolished.

I have read that No 3 was the first building in the local redbrick 'rococo' style in this part of London. It set a standard which has been successfully replicated in the surrounding streets.

Issue of principle

I hope all the local residents' associations will respond to the current SHHS planning application. They should also encourage many local residents to do so in an individual capacity. I suggest that they all also consider raising 'Planning creep' as a major issue of principle, one which warrants being raised with the Council as a separate matter in its own right, not just linked to any single planning application. We could all start writing about it to our councillors. On publication of *NNA News*, I will be sending a copy of this article to my local councillors, to the Chair of the Planning Committee, to the Leader of the Council and to the Chief Executive. All letters will be copied to Glenda Jackson MP.

Challenging 'Creep' is not NNA policy. However, I would welcome discussions on whether or not it is thought appropriate for adoption by the association, leading perhaps to raising it with Camden in partnership with neighbouring associations. **NNA**

ENVIRONMENT

Climate change and bug life

THIS YEAR it seemed that winter was never going to end – not particularly cold, but long, long, long and very dreary. But end it did, as of course it had to, and an extraordinary spectacle ensued: the trees and shrubs which had been waiting – in some cases as much as six weeks beyond their normal flowering time – all came out together, and what a show they made! Cherries and horse-chestnuts, wisteria and magnolias, and countless others – all in flower together. Absolutely lovely!

The faithful may tree – or hawthorn, which did come into blossom exactly on schedule in the first week of May, was out while the cherries were still in flower or only just starting to drop their petals. And it is the first time also that I have seen ash and oak and sycamore coming into leaf in the same week.

Vernal confusion

Animals, too, were thrown into vernal confusion, with frogs and toads laying their eggs weeks later than they have in recent years; I found my first frogspawn as late as April this year, which hasn't happened for decades. Latterly, frogs have tended to appear during the back end of February. Indeed, students of phenology (the study of the times of recurring natural phenomena), which has been a very popular science of late as people have looked for evidence of climate change, will be amazed or perhaps gratified by an abrupt return to the seasonality of 40 years ago.

Still on the subject of the animal kingdom, the dreaded harlequin ladybird (*Harmonia axyridis*) made an appearance with the opening leaves and has now completely overrun the NNA neighbourhood. There are dozens of these Asian invaders everywhere and yet at the time of writing (mid-May) I had seen only one native 2-spot ladybird so far this year. When I was monitoring the harlequin's progress for the charity Buglife, we found only two in North West London in 2005; in 2007 there were 150 in Netherhall Gardens alone; and this year they are uncountable. Since this invasive species is very variable in appearance, non-bug enthusiasts (99 per cent of people, I expect) won't notice much difference in the garden, but to entomologists and ecologists generally this is a tragedy.

Noel Brock

WHAT'S ON

Anthony Coles reports:

There has been a wealth of events for NNA members to attend this summer. Linda and Stephen Williams opened their lovely garden (see article in this issue of *NNA News*, page 3) on two occasions (**18 May, 14/15 June**) at both of which NNA members obtained free entry. Rosey Lyall (Holy Trinity School) hosted a cheese and wine evening (**5 June**) and also a coffee morning (**12 June**) for NNA members and other interested parties.

To celebrate the centenary of the publication of Freud's **Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming** the Freud Museum has organised a series of evenings with practitioners from the worlds of fiction, theatre, film and biography talking, reading and answering questions on their lives and careers: those featuring Timberlake Wertenbaker (**22 May**) and Jonathan Miller (**12 June**) attracted several members, as did the concert (**31 May**) arranged by Simon and Pamela Majaro (Cavatina Trust) and Peter Brown (Netherhall House).

Forthcoming events...

On Sunday **6 July** at 11 am Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor will celebrate mass to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Saint Thomas More Parish and the 40th anniversary of the building of the present church at the lower end of Maresfield Gardens. On Saturday **12 July** from

4pm to 6pm Palle Pedersen will host a cream tea and Pimm's garden party at the Danish YWCA, 43 Maresfield Gardens for NNA members and their friends (tickets £8, children under 12 free) and on the evening of **16 July** Fay Weldon will be in conversation with novelist and critic Michael Arditti at the Freud Museum (tickets £12 from www.freud.org.uk or tel 020 7435 2002).

...and beyond

For the autumn there is a garden party at the Anna Freud Centre, 12 Maresfield Gardens (**14 September**) and a nature trail/mini-beast demonstration for children and the young at heart with Noel Brock, also at the Anna Freud Centre (**10 Oct**). Cavatina concerts for children (age 6+; only one adult per child) are organised by NNA members Simon and Pamela Majaro at the Swiss Cottage Central Library, 2.45pm (**5 October, 2 November** and **7 December**). Entry is free but booking is essential (tel: 020 7974 5451; email majaro@cavatina.net).

The Freud Museum evenings continue with actor Amanda Craig (**18 Sept**) and writer Deborah Moggach (**23 October**).

Monika Caro is organising a Murder mystery evening (**8 November**).

Watch the NNA website for more details of these and other events: www.netherhallneighbourhoodassociation.org.uk or contact gina.dasilva@annafreud.org or arctc@btinternet.com

SITUATIONS VACANT

Following the regalanising of the NNA and the mushrooming of activities, volunteers with regular computer access are sought for the:

Website: Richard Selfridge, who set up and runs the NNA website is leaving London for Leeds. Does anyone have experience of website maintenance? Contact: richard@theselfridges.net

Planning and conservation

committee: Professional expertise not vital but must be able to 'read', understand and comment relevantly on plans and drawings in order to help members make sense of neighbours' (or more often developers') planning applications. Contact: liam@liamoconnor.com

Newsletter: For occasional interviews or to research specific local issues and write up the results. Must be able to write reasonably journalistically! Also looking for anyone familiar with Adobe Indesign software. Contact: susanne.lawrence@ppltd.co.uk

Membership committee: Practical and creative assistance needed if we are to attract and sign up all eligible residents – unity is strength (in terms of putting over our views) and maximising subs revenue enables us to do more. Contact: jennywhite@waitrose.com

NNA MEMBERSHIP 2008

IF YOU've not yet renewed your NNA membership, or are new to the area, please join now. It's only £8 a household or £5 for an individual. Apart from working to maintain and/or improve the character of the environment, running social events and being 'good neighbours', we also give all paid-up members a copy of our much prized and recently updated list of trades and services providers. So please fill in the form and return it with your payment to the address below.

And if you have a new neighbour, or there are other flats in your building, please spread the word and encourage them to join or notify Membership Secretary Jenny White: jennywhite@waitrose.com, tel 7794 5886.

FORENAME(S).....

TITLE (Mr/Ms, etc) and SURNAME(S).....

ADDRESS.....

.....POSTCODE.....

TEL (home).....(wk).....(mobile).....

EMAIL.....

I/WE ENCLOSE £.....(£5 indivs/£8 household) TICK IF RECEIPT REQUIRED.....

Please return with payment (cash or cheque payable to 'NNA') to the NNA Membership Secretary, Flat 3, 22 Netherhall Gardens NW3 5TH (opposite Netherhall Way)