



# Highams Residents' Association

Founded in 1955 for the residents of The Highams Estate

NEWSLETTER - Dec 2012 No.11

## Letter From David, The HRA Chairman:

Dear Residents,

I moved into Nesta Road in 1991 and vaguely remember someone knocking on my door asking me to join the residents association, which I agreed to (as it was very cheap!) I was very happy to be a member for many years, letting someone else do all the work, enjoying the newsletter, and attending the occasional AGM or Tea Party.

That is until 2009, when I got the same letter that many of you received, saying that HRA was going was going to fold, unless more volunteers came forward.

I attended the AGM and watched as new people come forward to run the HRA. I then went home and did nothing, perhaps a year later I heard that they were still short of volunteers! So finally, I rang and said I would join the committee. I did not manage to make the first two or three meetings, and when I finally managed to attend a meeting, found that they were short of a Chairman. Again more procrastination until I volunteered to be Chairman.

I thoroughly enjoy it, have had lots of fun, and highly recommend getting involved.

I have met a great bunch of people, many of whom work very hard on behalf of the community which is HRA. Volunteering is not onerous, it is very enjoyable.

I realise that not everyone will agree with me, but I feel very lucky to live in such a

lovely area, and I'm sure many residents feel the same. Therefore, it is vitally important to maintain the character of this classic 1930's estate. It is rare to find such an area today, we are the only "Area of Special Character" in the London Borough of Waltham Forest.

HRA was formed in 1955 with the main aim of preserving the character of the estate. HRA is run entirely by volunteers.

My vision is to build a strong and united HRA, that has a voice with the council.

We need:-

- Committee members who are prepared to put in some work.
  - Volunteers to deliver newsletters
  - Volunteers to collect subscriptions once a year.
  - Volunteers to help clear the "Ransom Strip" once a year.
  - More e-mail addresses so we can keep you better informed.
- Email: [highamsra@me.com](mailto:highamsra@me.com)  
(New residents e-mail for a FREE Welcome Pack)

The more volunteers we have, the less each person has to do!

*Wishing all residents a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year*  
David Jennings

## What a GREAT Year!

### HRA's 2012 Party in the Park

Thank you to all those that came out to support the HRA's event of the year! Our very own Party in The Highams Park. It was a great success, with over 200 people turning up on the day including The Mayor - fun was had by all. A huge thank you to all the residents that helped to set up, bring cakes to share, run the games and clear away - it couldn't have been done without you - here are a few photo's from the day...



Notice is hereby given that the fifty-eighth Annual General Meeting of the Association will take place in the week beginning 15 April 2013 at 8pm in the Pavilion of Woodford Rugby Club, High Road, Woodford Green (pedestrian access in Nesta Road),

# Permitted Development and our Area of Special Character.

In 2008, the Government loosened the planning regime to enable simpler types of development to be carried out without all the red tape and cost of full planning permission, via what have come to be known as the Permitted Development (PD) rules. Basically this means that, subject to a number of conditions, planning permission is no longer needed for single-storey side and rear extensions, most loft extensions and dormers (subject to limits on size), porches and solar panels. Double-storey rear extensions are also in theory permitted. But as they have to terminate at least 2 metres from every boundary, this will often make them a poor use of funds, so that where one is required, it may make more sense to apply for a full-width one via full planning permission. In all cases, materials and style have to match those of the existing property, and adverse impact on the street scene must be avoided. More detail can be obtained through the interactive guide at [www.planningportal.gov.uk/permission/house](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/permission/house)

This still leaves a number of "grey areas". Notably, the overall design, despite the above restrictions, could still be completely out of sympathy with surrounding properties. And issues will always arise where combinations of the above alterations – say erecting both side and rear extensions plus a maximum-size loft extension – result in substantial change to the character of the original property. There are also some differences in the way the PD rules are interpreted and applied by different local authorities.

The resulting uncertainty means that some householders still prefer to go for full planning permission, or for the cheaper alternative of seeking a Lawful Development Certificate from the Council, to safeguard against future queries over the legality of the construction. This consideration becomes particularly important upon sale of the property – any prospective buyer needs certainty over the legality of any past

development work premised on the PD rules.

In theory, PD represents a threat to the integrity of our Area of Special Character (ASC) designation, by reducing the Council's ability to control development. In practice however, the numerous PD limitations on what can be erected with regard to the street scene mitigate this. But against that, there is less protection over what happens at the rear of a property - for instance, a resident could be confronted with a major extension going up next door, which has no sympathy with the style of surrounding properties, and on which he or she has received none of the advance notice from the Council that goes with the full planning process.

So far, our estate has seen very little unwelcome development as a result of the PD rules – indeed most of the contentious development issues of the past few years have related to full planning applications. Even so, the risk remains. A new building is a new fact on the ground, and abuses of the PD system could remain hidden for years unless spotted at the start. We therefore encourage any resident unhappy or confused about a development taking place nearby, to contact us. We can then check whether this has received full planning permission; if not, it should logically be premised on the PD rules. And if we have any grounds for suspecting that this may not be the case, we can refer the matter to the Council's Planning Enforcement Officers, whose ultimate sanction is a demolition order.

## Current Proposals to permit Longer Rear Extensions.

The Government has now proposed a new relaxation of the PD rules for rear extensions. This would double the maximum length that the extension can go out from the rear of the property, from 3 to 6 metres for the semi-detached houses which dominate our estate, and from 4 to 8 metres

for detached houses. For measurement purposes, rear of the house is defined as the original house when built, or as it stood in 1948, whichever is the later. So on our estate, this normally means the 1948 position, and the length of any rear extensions built subsequently will need to be deducted from the 6 metre allowance.

The PD restrictions on the width of double-storey rear extensions referred to above, suggest that most 6 metre long rear extensions built in future will be single-storey only. The snag is that under another PD rule, maximum height for a single-storey rear extension is 3 metres. This means that a 6 metre-long extension will only be practicable with a flat rather than sloping roof. While the visual impact of a flat roof is borderline acceptable on a 3 metre extension, at 6 metres it is likely to be ugly. There will also be significant loss of light issues for adjacent properties. And although the new relaxations are supposed to be for 3 years only, throwaway comments from ministers suggest they will finish up becoming permanent.

These proposals have been roundly rejected by the Local Government Association, representing 370 local authorities, and separately rejected by a number of Tory Councils and also our own Council (which memorably dubbed them Permitted Blight). Despite this and an avalanche of other criticism, the Government has so far shown no sign of backing down.

For our part, we fear the impact of such unsightly and inappropriate extensions on the integrity of our Area of Special Character designation. Every unwelcome development that gets through, provides a strong precedent for further unwelcome development. While the proposed relaxations include nothing that might affect the fronts of properties or the street scene, we believe that they still have the potential, over time, to render our ASC increasingly worthless.



## Neighbourhood Watch news and information Christmas Crime Prevention Information:

### Help us to help you prevent burglary - Our 10 Top Tips:

- 1) Mark or etch your property with your postcode, house or flat number or the first three letters of your house name.
- 2) Register items with a serial number at: [www.immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com)
- 3) Do not leave your car keys or ID documents near doors, letterbox or windows.
- 4) Always check who's at the door and don't open it if you feel anxious.
- 5) Close and lock all your doors and windows, even if you are only going out for a few minutes.
- 6) Keep your valuables out of sight.
- 7) Leave some lights on if it will be dark before you get home.

- 8) Install a visible burglar alarm.
- 9) Always keep sheds and outbuildings locked.
- 10) Cancel milk or other deliveries if you will be away for days or weeks at a time.

The Highams Estate is covered by two Teams - the main part including the park is **Hatch Lane SNT** and the lower end inc. Nesta Road is **Hale End and Highams Park SNT**.

**Hatch Lane:** team members are: Sgt Lee Palmer, PC Adewale Akano, PC Steve Kilbey, PCSO Aaron Prayter, PCSO Thomas Appiah and PCSO Sue Coughlan. You can contact the team at any time on 020 8721 2641 or 07920 233822. Leave a message and one of the team will get back to you.