

Highgate Neighbourhood Forum

Placecheck Walk - Area 8 - September 2012

General Impression

Overall impression is of an area offering great contrasts; the noise of a busy road artery, quiet back-streets, allotments and ancient woodland.

Good

- Variety, Greenery, Characterful.

Bad

- Noise / Traffic (on Archway road). Some 'bin blight' though mainly under control.

Improve

- A concrete surfaced triangle behind a wire fence on Holmsdale road would be an ideal candidate for a small communal space.
- Reduce speed limit on Wood Lane and re-surface. Better lighting on Queens Wood Road and light coloured 'sealed gravel' pavements / access pathways rather than dark asphalt.
- A light hearted suggestion from an Underground official that the old railway station might be turned into a sports / fitness centre might be one of any number of possibilities to make use of this largely overlooked spot.
- Could there be an embankment footpath parallel with the Archway Rd so pedestrians were not squeezed between a fence and the busy road?
- Make one or more child friendly pedestrian streets - Priory Gardens?
- Encourage 'street art' on concrete wall in Summersby Road? / Panels on path down to Highgate Tube?

Walk 'narrative'

Claremont Rd / Stanhope Gardens: Evidence of building works on a number of properties. Regular terraces broken up with 'infill' housing of contrasting styles. The occasional unkempt property.

Stanhope Rd (Shepherds Hill end) and Shepherds Hill: Apartment blocks and large red brick houses, typically converted into flats rub shoulders. A number of properties are to let and for sale. Mature trees overshadow the road. Cars and Haringey wheelie bins crowd the forecourts.

Priory Gardens offers a glimpse of suburbia in the vale leading to Highgate Underground. At the Shepherds Hill end just by the bend in the road two immensely tall, rusty iron pillars rise into a tree. Their tops are crowned, literally, with some detailing suggesting that perhaps they are vents. A dark and rather narrow alley between two houses leads steeply down into Queens Wood, offering a glimpse of the allotments on the slopes below Shepherds Hill.

Queens Wood has a brooding beauty of it's own. The road running through the middle of it an opportunity for parking apparently without charge, though evidently at owners risk. As well as warnings to both car owners and potential thieves there are regularly 'no waiting' signs which confusingly seem to be unaccompanied by markings, and are seemingly ignored.

Wood Lane, the narrow continuation of Queens Wood Road has a surface in poor repair and a 30 mph speed limit. Given the narrowness of the two way road and the walls pushing against it anyone actually travelling at such a speed at this point would probably be reckless. The housing on Wood Lane offers a great variety of styles both old and new. A modern mews built into what must have been the rear gardens of a large property offers a glimpse into a communal garden.

Highgate Underground, beneath the disused railway embankment running alongside the Archway road has a number of access points. One, from the Muswell Hill Road end of Wood Lane, is a pathway running down between fences. Largely ignored to one side of this path is the old Highgate Railway Station, a stop on the line which has largely become the Parklands Walk. 'Station Cottage' is cared for by Underground staff who are proud of their recent 'Best Newcomer - Underground in Bloom' award.