

In fear of the next demand

□ I HAVE been a leaseholder with the London Borough of Islington for over 40 years and have been subjected to unjustified charges for repairs and major works.

The most recent estimate I was upset to receive was a bill of up to £44,000 and had to work with the council to reduce the scope of the works without resorting to legal action.

LBI know leaseholders can rarely afford legal action.

This abuse of power puts low-income leaseholders such as I at risk of bankruptcy and homelessness.

In 2024 LBI followed up with another letter for major works to take place during 2025 which had previously been undertaken in 2019.

With the support of the Islington Leaseholders Association I was able to challenge the major works schedule and these works were eventually withdrawn, but only after waiting a agonising eight months for a decision to be made.

I currently exist in a state of financial insecurity and a constant state of anxiety and worry.

I worry for my mental health as I am unable ever to switch off living in a never-ending spiral of fear, fight and eventual flight.

I live in panicked state as to whether I can afford to stay in my home in an area I truly love.

**EXTREMELY CONCERNED
LEASEHOLDER
Address supplied**

Look again at road closure?

Not just in October...

□ IF you're right that the Barnsbury LTN has "now come to a standstill" (Three years on, controversial traffic scheme is no further down the road, *Tribune*, October 24), it would allow the council to re-examine the scheme it pursued in the 1980s to close Liverpool Road south of Tolpuddle Street, a street that was

An idea to benefit all

□ A PITY your October 24 piece on the stalled Barnsbury-Laycock Liveable Neighbourhood (LN) proposal failed to link to a recent *Tribune* letter on the matter.

Had it done so, a useful public discussion about the pedestrianisation of Angel Town Centre, which is within the designated LN, might have at last begun (Start at the centre now the 'LN' is on the back-burner, September 26). It is, after all, over a year

created specifically to make that closure possible.

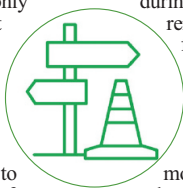
One reason the scheme was afterwards abandoned was opposition from some Chapel Market traders fearing deliveries would be made more difficult; another was opposition by a group called "Save our Streets" which opposed any road closures.

ago since you published other correspondence on the matter, particularly from architect James Dunnett, which informed readers that Tolpuddle Street was built precisely to enable the closure of the southernmost end of Liverpool Road at its junction with Upper Street (Letters, August 30 and September 6 2024).

Can anyone seriously doubt that removing through-traffic from this busy shopping hub would be to the benefit of all who use the area, significantly enhancing the public good? Narrow and

But it would only be the very short stretch of Liverpool Road between Tolpuddle Street and Chapel Market that would need to be closed to transform the shopping experience at the heart of Islington.

It was closed for while



during the water-main renewal works a few years ago and the hugely beneficial results could be seen and felt.

It would do more to enhance pedestrian experience than the proposed Barnsbury scheme, which would be incompatible

overcrowded pavements make the pedestrian experience deeply unpleasant, and dangerous, with some on foot even being forced into the road.

What a contrast with the green, seated, Angel Centre, which would be directly linked with the supermarkets through pedestrianisation.

Surely this is something Jo Michaelides and her fellow resident members of Save Our Lungs Liverpool Road could get behind? Closing the southernmost end of Liverpool Road between Upper and Tolpuddle streets

would benefit all, particularly babies and toddlers at exhaust-pipe height whose lungs are still developing and the most adversely impacted by filthy air.

The pavements along the western side of Liverpool Road where the anti-LN campaign appears to be concentrated are at least partially separated from passing traffic pollution by cycle and parking lanes.

A Freedom of Information request has been submitted for the original plans and discussion regarding Tolpuddle Street.

with it and would tend to funnel additional traffic down that narrow, already overcrowded, street.

With ambitious plans being examined again by mayor Sir Sadiq Khan to pedestrianise Oxford Street, this could be a more modest and practicable move in the same direction..

JAMES DUNNETT, N1

A holding response has been received promising a reply "as soon as possible". The files will be pre-digital and so time must be allowed for locating them.

Moving to the present: there must be no more hiding behind the excuse that pedestrianising the town centre hub would be "difficult".

Fixing this by removing through-traffic would be to the credit of the council, particularly important in the run-up to next year's elections.

MEG HOWARTH, N7

□ BLACK History Month has always been about more to me than a time of celebration.

In a country where racism and xenophobia are increasingly emboldened by mainstream politicians, BHM is a timely reminder that the fight for justice is far from over. As well as taking time to recognise black resilience, creativity, and leadership, we must confront this reality.

Just recently Dr Shereen Daniels's report on the Metropolitan Police Service and an independent review into the Nursing and Midwifery Council both exposed systemic racism. These findings are not isolated and they reflect deep-rooted structures that continually marginalise black professionals and communities.

For me, honouring black history is about actively challenging these systems that perpetuate inequality and amplifying voices that have been silenced.

Bringing focus to this through BHM creates important space to reflect, educate, and mobilise. But I am black every day, not just in October, and feel we must grasp this opportunity to catalyse sustained action and accountability.

In the context of this government shamelessly pandering to racist narratives and the far right demonstration in our capital last month, we cannot afford to ease up now.

**ELMEDINA BAPTISTA-MENDES
Islington Green Party**

Choice of leader a boost for Green Party

□ GREEN Party membership has almost doubled since Zack Polanski (inset) was elected leader, passing 130,000 nationally to overtake first the Liberal Democrats and now the Conservatives too.

This increase has been reflected in Islington and we've been excited to welcome so many new faces.

Admittedly membership of political parties is still a minority activity, with less than a million people paying subscriptions to their party of choice, compared with over 15 million thought to play football regularly in England

or close to 45 million who buy lottery tickets.

Membership of parties has been in decline in the United Kingdom for several decades, reflecting disenchantment with the big parties.

Worryingly for democracy, this lack of interest is also affecting election turnouts, such that the

2024 general election saw the second lowest figure since all adults received the right to vote nearly a century ago, with less than 60 per cent of registered voters actually choosing to do so.

Measures such as lowering the voting age and introducing

proportional representation would help re-engage voters, but the big question is how to restore trust in politicians and our political system.

The role of the active party members, at grass roots level, is to set the agenda for elections and to inspire the footballers and lottery players to vote for their vision.

In the Greens members not only decide party policy, rather than following lobbyists and spin-doctors, they also fund the party rather than relying on corporate donations.

Now that the country has moved on past the old two-party divide, hopefully not only will Zack Polanski's message of

inclusive, robust, and optimistic eco-populism, continue to bring in new members, but those new members will work to help

restore confidence in our country's democracy.

**JOY HINSON
Islington Green Party**



Act a Pyrrhic victory for government

□ IT is difficult to find much rejoicing among those who actually provide housing, yet as the Renters' Rights Act receives royal assent, it will no doubt be hailed as a great social achievement.

Over recent decades private landlords have increasingly replaced social housing, while Local Housing Allowance has failed to keep pace. The problems now being seen in this part of the market were therefore inevitable and have themselves been a powerful force for reform, supported by Shelter and Generation Rent.

The new act removes

many of the tools the private sector relies on to manage its business, and landlords are withdrawing, a trend confirmed by a senior environmental health officer at a public meeting last week.

If government failed to recognise this, it should at least have balanced the evidence before pressing ahead. In the radical step of abolishing Section 21 without first reforming the courts – a provision that encouraged many landlords to offer homes to prospective social housing tenants – should it not have established when and why Section 21 became the most practical way to

remove long-term non-paying tenants?

Statistics on causes of use were not collected for the impact assessment.

The government itself tacitly acknowledges the weakness of the courts by relying on civil rather than criminal penalties both in this and other legislation.

Further, as confirmed by publicly available data, councils have recovered little from fines since many of those historically pursued are hardened evaders who stay one step ahead.

With the new act, good landlords who attempt to comply but slip up on one of the innumerable rules

will fear they are fine fodder while rogues still get away untouched.

That perception alone will deter investment and reduce housing provision, the opposite of what is needed. I do not expect rents to rise significantly as they tend to move with earnings. But a growing number of tenants eligible for social housing will find nowhere legal to rent or will add to the spiralling costs and misery of temporary accommodation.

A Pyrrhic victory for the government, and one that locally will be felt keenly.

**ALEX SHINDER
NW3 Homes Ltd**

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