

The Village in the City

The shutters roll up, metallic bright against the morning.
The hot coffee warming your hands at the start of the day,
cutting through the frost, that you stamp out at bus stops.
You pass through on your daily commute.
You pop in for a pint of milk, or the brewer's drop.
The famous tower and its clock.
You stroll and spend hours, after school drop offs.
The lunch dates,
the Friday night takeaways,
the lamb joint for a Sunday roast,
the bright bloom of bouquets,
the ink spill against skin,
the fresh fade,
the reinvent me bob and highlights,
the new abaya for Ramadan,
and the famous Hanwell Hootie.

Even the celebrations at home
start on the humble high street.
It's alive and kicking. Not without grit.
Some good old-fashioned rolling up of sleeves
and plenty of heart.

The music, the flavours, the languages,
this is the village in the city.
From hundreds of years old
to the latest Opening Soon sign.
Here's to the independent trader,
who knows your usual.
Asks how's your mum?
We haven't seen her in a while.

By Shagufta Iqbal (2025), based on conversations on the high street in Hanwell.

Oldfield Circus: Lessons in Love

Different communities working together,
We marvel at how far we all have come,
People with mixed emotions form a purple mirror,
And Oldfield Circus teaches reflection well,

Lesson No 1:

Life is hard,
We all work to provide for our families,
This is the tradition found behind every shop's door
For without a foundation, nothing gets built,

Lesson No 2:

Everybody has different points of view
Different stories, different styles, different voices,
And Guess what?
Our fingerprints are different too!
But greetings and farewells eternally rest,
Within the palm of all our hands,

Lesson No 3:

Our Children reflect what they see,
They will have to make their own choices,
And face a new world built on past mistakes,
Our version of Oldfield will only exist in their memories,
For one day my friend, we too shall be gone,

So Time is our only home and Now holds our foundation,
Let's improve the moments we share together,
Everything is either Love
Or a cry for Love (lesson No 4),

Love your family,
Love your environment,
Love yourself,
And cry no more,

By Mr Gee (2025), based on conversations on the high street at Oldfields Circus.

High Street Poem

orange are the bricks
 white crush is the blossom in the spring
 all the colour of the rainbow are the traders here

 the sky is a tucking-us-in-again
 a parent is teaching their kid to sing
someone buys an orange at the greengrocer for dry lips

in the summer the blossom is spectacular
 but maybe when the leaves
 leave the trees for another year

that s where beauty is
 when the familiar tops of buildings
 take lampposts by surprise

or when the little leaves
 leave the trees another year
 & the street becomes wet then dry again

By Laurie Bolger (2025), based on conversations on Pitshanger Lane.

Windows

the high street is a gallery
 cappuccinos in round window tables
 parked bikes & ice cream

where groceries are book-ends
 and the bookshop holds words like sweets
 all of this dripping with heart

the loyalty of place
 this lane where the scent of dry cleaners
 meets greengrocer's brightness

bring in sandwich shop chat
 one side of the street meets the other
butter-light and full
 the bus beats down the lane

through bright sun or dishwater rain
 this going away & coming back again

By Laurie Bolger (2025), based on conversations on Pitshanger Lane.