

Robin Bishop, chair of Barnet Society, opens the election hustings.

Barnet Society

70 YEARS OF CAMPAIGNING FOR A BETTER BARNET

SPRING
2018

Council candidates set out their stalls

A deep divide opened up at the Barnet Society's council election hustings as candidates argued over contentious local issues including the need for affordable housing, concern over an increasing number of empty homes, the outsourcing of services to Capita and the demand for free town centre parking, reports Nick Jones

Labour candidates pledged that Barnet Council's policies would change under their control – only to be challenged by the Conservatives, who are pitching to be re-elected for a fifth term, and who argued that such ideas would be unworkable and too costly to implement.

There was standing room only when over 120 local residents crowded in to the Pennefather Hall in St Albans Road on February 22 to question 13 candidates – five from Labour, three Conservatives, two Liberal Democrats, two Greens, and one Independent.

In staging the forum, the Society hoped to stimulate debate before the London-wide borough council elections on Thursday 3 May. After a welcome from the Society's chair, Robin Bishop, the questioners piled in.

By far the hottest topic of the evening was housing and there were cheers and jeers as the two leading protagonists, **Councillor Paul Edwards** (Labour Underhill) and **Councillor David Longstaff** (Conservative High Barnet) went head to head.

Councillor Edwards accused the controlling Conservative group on Barnet Council of having caved in time and again to property developers, and of having utterly failed to secure sufficient social and affordable housing in new developments.

If Labour won control the council would insist that all new estates had at least 40 to

50 per cent affordable housing. Rents for new social housing would be 30 per cent of market value.

If developers were not prepared to agree, they would be refused planning approval. Another Labour manifesto pledge would be to build 800 council houses across the borough over the next four years to replace the social housing lost at Dollis Valley and in other redevelopments.

Simon Cohen (Liberal Democrat, High Barnet) called on the council to specify a far higher target for affordable homes and social housing. "Barnet should be leading by example."

In her response, **Lara Akindiji** (Conservative Underhill) said the Conservative group recognised the need for more social housing and Barnet Council was "catching up" fast on the requirement for affordable housing.

Councillor Longstaff hit back directly over complaints about the prices being charged for new properties on the Elmbank estate. This land had been sold for redevelopment by the NHS.

The council had made a stand in opposing new development on green belt land and he could give an assurance that if re-elected the Conservatives would "defend the green belt to the end".

Obi-Raymundo Obedencio (Green Party) promised equally firm support for the defence of the green belt, as did Labour, but while there was agreement about the scandal of houses lying empty, the parties offered different solutions.

When the Greens declared that the latest count showed there were 3,400 empty houses across the borough, Councillor Longstaff explained that the council was

looking to increase the council tax levied on empty properties.

Ken Rowland (Independent) called for more imaginative thinking to help the homeless and provide affordable housing. Barnet Council could do more to help those ready to self-build and if necessary, the council should construct pre-fabricated homes, initiatives that also had the support of the Greens.

Amy Trevethan (Labour, High Barnet) deplored the impact of the right to buy policy. A third of the homes sold off by Barnet Council were now owned by landlords who were renting them out. Labour believed that a pause in the entitlement to right to buy would be helpful, a proposal that was greeted with cheers from the hall.

Concern over the outsourcing of council services to Capita produced fresh acrimony. Councillor Edwards promised that under Labour services would be brought back in house where possible, and the employees would receive the London living wage.

As a first step Labour would re-examine the terms of Barnet Council's contract with Capita. "We want to see what the Capita contract actually says...We want to ensure that what we are paying for gets done...and our long-term aim is to be paying for local services provided by a local workforce."

Duncan McDonald (Liberal Democrat, High Barnet) condemned the huge democratic deficit that had built up over outsourcing services to Capita.

"Are we stuck with Capita? It would cost a lot to bring services back in house. This is a massive problem for Barnet bearing in

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mind what we have seen with the collapse of Carillion.”

Mr McDonald urged the council to restore local services. “What Barnet’s Conservatives have done to our libraries is criminal. Children are now being barred because children aren’t allowed entry on their own because the libraries aren’t properly staffed.”

Councillor Jess Brayne (Labour, Underhill) promised Labour would extend the hours of core staff in the libraries in order to extend opening hours. “We want to see our libraries serving as hubs of the community once again.”

Amid further heated exchanges in defending the Conservatives’ record, Councillor Longstaff argued that outsourcing to Capita was saving Barnet Council £1 million a month.

“Labour think they can just bring these services back in house, but to do so will add four per cent to council tax – that’s what’ll be needed to replace the current saving of £12 million a year.”

Councillor Longstaff defended the Conservatives’ record on libraries. Two new libraries had been built in the borough and the staffed hours at Chipping Barnet were about to increase and it had “more books than ever before.”

There was another cross-party confrontation after Councillor Brayne gave a pledge that if Labour won control in May, Barnet would introduce a 30-minute period of free parking in shopping centres across the borough. “Within a year there will be 30 minutes of free parking in High Barnet’s High Street.”

Councillor Longstaff feared the creation of extra free parking spaces would only increase pollution in the High Street as drivers looked for somewhere to stop. There was already an hour’s free parking in the Moxon Street car park and a two-hour free period on Hadley Green.

Charles Wicksteed (Green Party) doubted whether free parking was the answer when it came to reviving the High Street. “Making it free doesn’t necessarily increase the number of people parking their cars and going shopping. The Spires car park is half empty.”

The Greens also had their doubts about the plan to build out the pavement in part of the High Street. Mr Wicksteed feared that there would not be room for ambulances to pass in an emergency.

But Independent Ken Rowland said he was a strong supporter of the pavement build-out which would help speed up the flow of traffic, and that would help create a healthier High Street for shoppers.

HUSTINGS REPORT

Compiled by Frances Wilson

WELCOME

Robin Bishop, Chair of the Barnet Society, explained that there were 13 candidates from High Barnet, Underhill & Oakleigh Wards - 5 Labour, 3 Conservative, 2 Liberal Democrats, 2 Greens and 1 Independent. This was an opportunity to ask questions on housing, transport and the town centre before the election on 3rd May '18.

Apologies from Cllr Tim Roberts

HOUSING

Robin Bishop said Barnet had a target of delivering 27,000 new homes by 2025, mainly in West of the Borough and are likely to meet this target. In 2016, the population of our patch was around 47,500 and nearly 1,400 new homes are expected to be approved by planners by 2025.

The Mayor of London proposes to increase Barnet’s annual target by one third – so our wards could expect another 1,900 homes by 2025. This totals 3,300 homes roughly 5 more Brook Valley Gardens which could be 8,000 new residents.

The Mayor of London’s draft London Plan proposes to abolish current limits on density of new developments including garden infill within half a mile of transport hubs. This would include almost the whole of our 3 wards up to and including Whalebones & Hadley Highstone

As sites become more difficult to develop in the rest of Barnet developers will be drawn to our area and the Council are beginning to revise our Local Plan so it is vital they introduce some controls which the newly elected Councillors must ensure they take responsibility.

How many properties in Barnet are unoccupied and what are the Council going to do about it?

Concerned about the Green Belt – Are there plans to build on it like Elmbank?

Conservative Party (C) are aware there are a lot of empty properties and they are considering increasing Council Tax on void properties which is done elsewhere.

Elmbank was a brown field site and they will oppose any Green Belt development

Green Party (G) Voids -No figures available for this area but 2,800 in Borough in 2011 and 3,400 now.- West Hendon had to decant 143 tenants but they were told they could not use these vacant properties would defend the Green Belt, parks and all open spaces.

Independent (I) Empty houses and empty shops are criminal

Liberal Democrats (LD) Voids – They would use Council’s existing powers to take action but it is often difficult to find the landlords

Labour (L) Green Belt – Concerned about over development and poor quality schemes. Need to ensure the Council achieve a high quality development

Hall (H) People owning 2nd homes will not be put off by an increase in rates.

(H) Ark Academy - Why was this scheme approved? Why was the traffic survey carried out in August!- Why could it not have been a small school for Special needs?.

(L) Labour said they had asked for a Special Needs School

(C) Barnet did not own the land – Labour sold the site to the Football Club for £10,000 and they in turn sold it to the Dept of Education who have leased it to the Ark Academy.

(H) Barnet spent £200m on Housing Benefit and incentives to private landlords for them to house homeless families. This is not good use of the rates. - The Government should reverse Right to Buy and we need to build more social housing not affordable housing – this was cheered by all.

(C) The Council has a statutory duty to house homeless people under Sect 24 and we need to build more social housing.

(G) The Greens asked the London Mayor to ballot existing tenants if the Council want to regenerate a scheme – Now in London Plan. Also can apply for grants for Self- Build Groups and they favour refurbishing a property rather than demolishing and rebuilding.



They think it's all over...

Almost five years since Barnet Football Club played its last game at Underhill, its stadium off Barnet Lane is finally being demolished to make way for a 1,200-place Ark Academy secondary school, writes Nick Jones

Demolition contractors moved onto the Barnet FC site in the second week of January. An access road has been opened up to Barnet Lane to allow for contractors' lorries.

One of the first stands to be taken down was the original and much-loved family stand emblazoned with the magic letters "BFC".

Barnet FC, founded in 1888, played its last game at Underhill in April 2013, having moved there in 1907. It has now moved to the Hive Football centre in Camrose Avenue, Edgware.

Supporters against the move formed the Back2Barnet campaign and tried without success to prevent the sale of the stadium and football pitch to the government's educational funding agency, which provides sites for free schools.

Local residents fought an equally long campaign against the use of the site for an academy school insisting there was no demonstrable demand for a new school of this size in High Barnet.

Initially Barnet Council's planning committee voted unanimously against approving a 1,700-place school on the site, but when a revised application was submitted for a 1,200-place school, the committee voted 6-5 in favour. The six Conservative councillors all accepted the revised proposal, despite the protests of Labour councillors, who said new the academy would cause traffic congestion and was a breach of the green belt.

A last-minute attempt was made to persuade the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, to reject the plan, but this failed, and the final go-ahead was given late last year.

Postings on the Barnet Society's website give a flavour of fans' sorrow at seeing photographs of the demolition.

Louise Rolfe summed up their feelings: "Had such lovely Saturdays there in the family stand. All the kids would sit together with us parents up in another row behind them. We could wander down from High Barnet – grab a burger and watch our home town. Miss it."

Gareth Archer: "I was really sad when Barnet FC were forced to move out of the borough and seeing these pictures shows there is no going back, so I am gutted all over again."



From 1907 to 2013, thousands of Barnet fans have attended matches in the Underhill Stadium, one of the iconic Football League grounds. Fans' hopes of a return to the ground are now truly dashed with the demolition of the stadium to make way for a school



...it is now!

Teenage Market moves nearer to kick-off

The launch of Barnet's teenage market – planned for Easter Saturday – is a step closer with the purchase of 20 stalls that will fill the bandstand area in front of the Waitrose supermarket at the Spires shopping centre

An appeal last year raised £56,000 – including £30,000 from the Mayor of London – to establish the market and finance the first year's operation.

Local students and teenagers will get the chance on the first Saturday of every month to run their own stalls and stage events from around 4pm to 7pm, taking over once the regular fruit and vegetable market has finished.

"Get Ready!" is the promotional slogan for what will be a free platform for young people to showcase their creative talents.



Young at heart: Kit Carter, Chris Nightingale, and Bob Burstow

"Want to sell your goods – or your music? Trade or perform for free – if you are between 13 and 23."

The purchase of the 20 stalls, at a cost of £12,000, is the first expenditure from the appeal money.

"We still have some way to go to get all the arrangements in place, but our aim is to launch the market on Easter Saturday. If that's not possible, it will open on the following Saturday, and from then on it will be held on the first Saturday of every month," said Bob Burstow, Secretary of the Town Team, who organised the appeal.

Mr Burstow is highly encouraged by the support being offered by local schools and colleges: Barnet and Southgate College, the Universities of Hertfordshire and Middlesex, Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School and Totteridge Academy have all promised to take stalls.

Barnet College is planning to take all the stalls at the May market and Totteridge Academy is interested in taking on the

market on one Saturday in the autumn.

Mr Burstow said that initially the bandstand would be used for staging music and other performances but depending on the level of support the Town Team might invest in a separate stage and the bandstand might be used for a café area.

Friends of Barnet Market – who have campaigned for many years to safeguard Barnet's historic stalls market – hope the teenage market will help boost custom.

Their organiser Chris Nightingale says that they are waiting to hear more from the Spires management about plans to move the stalls market from its St Albans Road site to the bandstand site, hopefully to coincide with the start of the teenage market.

"We know the Spires does envisage moving the stalls market to the bandstand in time for Easter and we know the Spires is also thinking about taking over the management of the land by the bus stop, and we await further details," said Mr Nightingale.

On song: Nightingale's Emporium

Natasha Nightingale hopes her new venture will revive – at least for the time being – the once-busy workshops and offices that are due eventually for demolition to make way for new housing.

Natasha, aged 25, leads the project, and together with her fellow artists, they have taken three floors of Brake Shear House: on the ground floor items for sale include restored retro and vintage furniture; downstairs is the woodcraft section producing tables, chairs and chopping

After remaining empty and abandoned for over a year, High Barnet's historic Brake Shear House, just off the High Street, has been brought back to life as Nightingales Emporium, a collaborative selling point for a group of artists and entrepreneurs, writes Nick Jones

boards; and upstairs is a ceramics studio.

Other attractions include Tarot reading, reflexology and Reiki healing.

"This is a fabulous historic location and just the place to open an emporium for a collaboration of unique artists," said Ms Nightingale.

Last summer, Shanly Homes, which purchased Brake Shear House from developers Wrenbridge, announced a temporary reprieve for the site and have re-let rooms and workshops on short-term leases.

Steve Mellor, head of planning for Shanly Homes, said he hoped new ventures like Nightingales Emporium would succeed and hopefully find new premises once planning approval has been obtained for demolition and the

construction of new homes and offices.

Nightingales Emporium opened in time for the Christmas trade. Ms Nightingale has high hopes for her venture and says reaction in the first few weeks of 2018 has been encouraging.

"Upstairs Candy Ward's ceramics studio is offering pottery classes for beginners. Her ceramics have just been featured in an online documentary on food which starred the singer and songwriter Gary Barlow of Take That fame.

"Downstairs is the woodcraft section run by Louis Dalton-Brown, who is a tree surgeon and who uses locally sourced wood to produce chairs, tables and chopping boards."

Ms Nightingale said she and her colleagues had a great buzz from bringing Brake Shear House back to life.



Natasha Nightingale (left) and ceramicist Candy Ward, two of the artists at Nightingales Emporium in Brake Shear House, off High Street, Barnet



PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT REPORT

Robin Bishop writes

Major developments have gone strangely quiet. We still await the first design proposals for the Whalebones and Marie Foster Home sites in Wood Street, Shanly Homes' redesign of Brake Shear House (186 High Street) and the Market site (apparently sold by The Spires).

A modified High Street pedestrian improvement scheme (see images below) has been approved by Barnet's Area Committee, but many design details need to be resolved. We've asked for a meeting with Highways, in the hope that those can be agreed before the scheme goes out for public consultation again in May, and that construction can proceed over the summer break.

By contrast, winter has seen plenty of action on the planning front. The Mayor of London published his 500-page draft London Plan, which has many good policies but proposes major increases in housing density within 800m of town centres and transport hubs – that's the majority of the streets we represent! Our response to this is on **Pages 10 & 11**.

I attended the first of what we hope will be more meetings with planners revising Barnet's Local Plan. This will be key to defending Chipping Barnet against excessive densification.

With Council conservation officers and others, I've also reviewed a sample of buildings nominated to add to Barnet's list of buildings of architectural or historical value. This is essential to help protect them against increasing pressures for development.

We continue to participate in the London Green Belt Council – an indispensable ally of ours. It's campaigning for a new Metropolitan Green Belt National Park all around London, to provide better long-term protection and planning.



Draft Visualisation



Draft Visualisation

OUR RECENT CASEWORK HIGHLIGHTS:

APPROVED

93 High Street – Wilton Patisserie's tidy shopfront will improve one of the better C19 façades in the High Street.

Ark Pioneer Academy, former Barnet FC ground – The Mayor of London decided not to overturn the Council's decision to approve this. The A1000/Underhill/Fairfield Way junction will be widened, and Vice-president David Lee & I are fighting for more trees to be planted on and around Barnet Hill to compensate for pollution and the loss of several existing trees.

Cromer Road Primary School – A new classroom block.

REFUSED

Moxon & Tapster Street (former Royal British Legion) – The developer's fourth planning application has been refused. Presumably the second (approved) scheme will now be built.

AWAITING A DECISION

1B Church Passage – L'Antica Pizza are taking over the unlamented Guns'n'Smoke, and propose a more acceptable façade.

70 High Street (fka After Office Hours) – Now gutted (with permission). The developer is applying for an extra floor for two more flats. We haven't objected because they will be out of sight from the High Street.

141-143 High Street – A new proposal for the car park behind the shops, this time for four stories of offices and flats. It will overlook The Spires delivery yard, so is unlikely to offend.

189-91 High Street – Following local objections to unauthorised changes to a previously approved scheme, a much more

sympathetic design has been submitted.

Fern Room site, Salisbury Road – 10 new flats above replacement community facilities. Their boxy design doesn't relate well to the Victorian houses to the west, but is more interesting than the buildings opposite or to the east. We are neutral about it.

1 Sunset View – The owner's first proposal to extend this prominent and attractive Arts & Crafts house in the Monken Hadley Conservation Area was withdrawn following our and neighbours' strong objections. A less offensive scheme has now been submitted.

The Physic Well – Welcome plans have been submitted to restore this Barnet landmark.

FARTHER AFIELD

Barnet House – We, and many others, objected to a new application for 229 buy-to-rent units in an enlarged and taller slab, and on the car park behind, on grounds of over-development and visual pollution. The Council agreed, and has thrown it out.

North Finchley – The Council has given its backing to street improvements in the town centre around Tally Ho Corner.

Grahame Park – The Mayor of London has rejected the Council's redevelopment plans due to the proposed loss of 257 social homes.

AND FINALLY...

The results of Barnet Council's Architecture Awards 2017 were announced in December. You didn't hear about them? I'm not surprised. Publicity was restricted to a column in Barnet First, with pictures the size of postage stamps. Winner of the best residential new build was Dollis Valley Way. What do you think?

WINNER: DOLLIS VALLEY WAY



1915, when Greta was born...



Average house cost £195
Equivalent today £18,540

Average car cost £230
Equivalent today £21,860



Average wage £78
Equivalent today £7,415



Hairdressers' sing-along for Greta, aged 102

Going through the favourites of yester-year is a highlight at a Barnet hairdressing salon when 102-year-old Greta Nellie Druce pays her weekly visit to have her hair done, writes Nick Jones

Hair stylist Pammie Sardillo joins in as Greta goes through a repertoire that usually starts with *How Much is That Doggie in the Window*, followed by *You Are My Sunshine* and *It's a Long Way to Tipperary*.

A very special number for Greta is the World War I marching song, *Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag* – a moment to remember her two brothers killed as children in a first world war bomb attack on London, and the brother she lost in World War II.

Greta has lived in Manor Road, Barnet, with her daughter Diane Druce, since the family returned to the UK in 1965 after emigrating to Australia for five years.

In her fifty-plus years living in Barnet, Greta became quite an institution. She was Brown Owl for the Brownie pack at the Methodist church and helped with music lessons at Foulds School, teaching countless children how to play the recorder.

Greta celebrated her 102 birthday in late November and friends and neighbours

joined her for a special birthday party.

Diane drives her mother to JJ's hairdressing salon in Alston Road, Barnet, every Tuesday, and for her stylist Pammie it's a chance to put in the curlers for a very popular customer.

"Sometimes Greta finds it a bit difficult to lean back her head when I wash her hair, but she's always so cheerful and I love to hear her sing, and it's wonderful to have a chance to join in singing songs that mean so much to her. She calls me crazy, but I can't help singing along with her."

Greta had a dramatic childhood. Her family lived in Camberwell during World War I and one evening in October 1917, just before her second birthday, they were all over the road at another house that took a direct hit after a bomb was dropped by a Zeppelin airship.

She was pulled clear alive, along with her parents, Henry and Nellie Boyce-Balls, but two of her six brothers were killed, and another brother was badly traumatised.

Greta, who married Wes Druce --

Hair stylist Pammie Sardillo putting in the curlers for her very special customer, 102-year-old Greta Nellie Druce

Nathaniel Ebenezer Wesley Samuel Druce to give him his full name – joined the Women's Royal Air Force in World War II and played the bugle in the WRAF's central band, one of only two all-female bands in the British Armed Forces.

"At the end of the war, she toured Europe with the central band as part of the liberation, so no wonder she can't stop singing all those war-time melodies," said Diane.

Greta's blue disabled badge – used, for example, when her daughter drives her to the hairdresser's – invariably arouses the interest of parking enforcement officers.

On the day she visited JJ's for her birthday hairdo, an ever-watchful enforcement officer in Alston Road had spotted the date of birth on the badge – November 1915 – and insisted on checking it out with his office, wondering whether it was perhaps a fraud.

"It's not often the enforcement officers see a 1915 date of birth, so no wonder they scratch their heads," said Diane.



Barnet girls celebrate votes for women



Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School, Barnet, played its part in the celebrations to mark the 100th anniversary of the 1918 Representation of People Act giving women the right to vote.

In recognition of its success in becoming the country's highest achieving wholly non-selective all-girls state school, QE Girls was chosen to host a government announcement to recruit youth democracy ambassadors.

School pupils will have the chance to apply to become democracy ambassadors when the scheme opens later this year.

Their role will be to engage with under-represented groups and help to ensure every member of society has an equal chance to participate in the democratic process.

Chloe Smith, minister for the constitution, made the announcement after 15 girls – aged from 12 to 16 – gave presentations on what they had learned at school about democracy, citizenship and the electoral system.

They then took part in a question and answer session with Ms Smith and the Chipping Barnet MP, Theresa Villiers.

Ms Smith said it had been a fantastic opportunity to speak to the school and hear what pupils were doing to help celebrate such an important milestone for women.

Violet Walker, QE Girls' headteacher, said the honour of being chosen to host the announcement was a tribute to the school's achievement in raising standards.

"Government recognition of this kind is a real boost, not only for what we teach the girls about the importance of women getting the vote, but also about the tradition of QE as wholly non-selective school.

"Our girls demonstrated a love of learning and we were proud to hear their ideas for increasing democratic engagement among young people.

"Chloe Smith's visit to mark the suffrage centenary was also a real curtain raiser for our own celebrations.

"QE Girls' was founded in 1888 and are holding a fête in June to mark out 130th anniversary," said Mrs Walker.

Millie the Waitrose cat, already dubbed High Barnet's most sociable feline, has become a star of YouTube and other social media sites.

Such is the adoration of shoppers in the Spires for this 16-year-old tabby – previously known as the library cat – that owner Paula Gabb, who lives in nearby Carnarvon Road, has been told one online admirer wants to write a book about Millie's adventures.

Earlier this year Millie was inundated with goodwill messages after shoppers were warned that she had been suffering from tummy upsets after being given too much unwanted food.

Paula says she is doing all she possible can to persuade people not to put down food for Millie.

"Millie now has a "Don't feed me" collar saying, "I'm not a stray". I even got Millie a harness saying, "Don't feed the cat" but I was told somebody was seen taking it off."

Millie's habit of sitting outside Waitrose and other nearby shops, waiting to be stroked by her adoring admirers, is now the subject of three YouTube videos and her exploits have attracted over 100 comments on the High Barnet Next Door community website. Sometimes Millie's sociability gets the better of her and, on occasion, she has had to be escorted out of the supermarket, apparently after heading for the fish counter.

In previous years, Millie was known as the "library cat" – after having made a beeline for the comfort and calm of Chipping Barnet library, which had to resort to putting up a notice saying, "Don't let the cat in".

Well-wishers describe how they try to persuade other shoppers not to leave food for Millie, but passers-by feel so concerned they put down a wide variety of titbits, ranging from salmon, cheese to tinned cat food.

Paula has thanked all her online respondents and is trying to take Millie back home whenever she finds her in the Spires.

The trouble is that whenever she lets Millie out, she heads straight back to Waitrose, and as the Barnet Society reported in its first post about Millie in September 2016, she regularly stops the traffic at the zebra crossing outside the library as she heads for the Spires.

"I was in Savers the chemists the other day and spotted Millie on the shelves snoozing on a pile of dusters," said Paula.

Another correspondent reported seeing Millie asleep in Savers "having made herself comfortable in a basket of hot water bottles."

"Millie is a legend – I feel like writing a kid's book about her"

Millie the cat - online sensation



Playtime and petitions

Young mothers and their babies were out in force at a protest meeting to try to force Barnet Council to abandon its decision to close the Barnet Breastfeeding Support Service – at an annual saving to the council of only £75,000, writes Nick Jones

Hope Corner Community Centre in Mays Lane was crowded out with prams, buggies and three television crews – from BBC, ITV and London Live – as a throng of mothers and campaigners demanded a rethink.

Petition forms were handed round the protest meeting to collect as many signatures as possible – see www.savebarnetbreastfeedingsupport.co.uk

Unless the council backs down, the breastfeeding support service will close at the end of March and put six part-time infant feeder trainers out of work.

Barnet breastfeeding runs nine drop-in group sessions a week across the borough, including one at Hope Corner on Thursdays and another at Underhill on Fridays, plus home visits.

The six part-time trainers – equivalent to two-and-a-half full-time posts – are backed up by volunteers who say they could not continue the support service on their own.

Since the service was started in co-operation with the NHS in 2014, over 1,500 young mums have been given advice, help and support to breastfeed their babies.

Rebekah Smith, who was helped by the service to breast feed her three children, is one of the volunteers at the forefront of the campaign, and says she deplores the lack of consultation from Barnet Council and its failure to respond to their demand for a rethink.

“I raised this personally with the council leader, Richard Cornelius, when he addressed a residents’ meeting in Barnet in November at the Bull Theatre. He promised he would reply to residents’ questions, but I have heard nothing since.

“We can’t get the council to tell us why they are closing the service, who made the decision, of what will happen next. All we know is that the £75,000 in funding is being withdrawn on March 31 and the six part-time staff will lose their jobs.”

Ms Smith said that the service was a life line for those young mothers desperate to breastfeed their babies. “The NHS is so short staffed that many young mums go home with little understanding of breastfeeding. Young mums can come to one of our drop-in centres on any day of the week and get support free of charge.” Caroline Shillabber, another volunteer,



Top: Natalie Wilson and her 18-month-old son Oliver, Rebekah Smith, and Caroline Shillabber (Above) Meeting to protest against the closure

urged Barnet Council to recognise that young mothers were vulnerable and needed support.

“No one has told us why these cuts are being made. The midwives tell us they had no idea Barnet Council was shutting down the service to make a quick saving.

“We have shown them today that young mums can organise themselves and we are determined to make our voice heard and for council to understand that we are not going to let this happen without a fight.”

Barnet Council said that breastfeeding support services would continue to be provided after the current contract ends



Houses and flats are being built at Elmbank just a few hundred yards from the smallholding in the woods and farmland at Whalebones. New homes and flats in the Elmbank development are transforming the junction of Wood Street and Barnet Road, opposite the Arkley public house

Whalebones campaigners enlist help

Residents campaigning to stop housing development on the Whalebones farmland are investigating options for safeguarding the much-loved green space.

At a meeting chaired by the Chipping Barnet MP, Theresa Villiers, the possibilities under discussion included canvassing support for the opening of a city farm for schoolchildren, or possibly the creation of a public garden for patients and visitors at nearby Barnet Hospital.

New flats and homes are nearing completion on adjoining land at Elmbank, and the new development already appears to dwarf the Whalebones small holding where Hill, a Waltham Abbey housebuilder, is preparing plans to redevelop the 11 acres of woods and farmland that make up the Whalebones estate.

Hill have promised further consultations early this year with local residents before submitting a planning application to Barnet Council.

The campaign group agreed to seek legal advice to discover whether the trustees for the estate might be under a legal obligation to honour the wishes of the late Gwyneth Cowing who stipulated in her will that the Whalebones smallholding and farm land should remain in agricultural use for as long as practicable.

A spokesman for the developers said that the company was still considering the feedback from last year’s consultations with local residents and organisations and expected to hold further consultations early in 2018 before submitting a planning application.

The 'Marmite' house that Fred built

Sitting right in the middle of a typical Barnet street of Edwardian homes is an eye-catching 1960s modern house that is still lived in by the architect who had to fight long and hard against town planners who were reluctant to grant planning approval, writes Nick Jones

Fred Hobart, now 88, built the house himself with his father, and – 60 years on – its cantilevered design and forward-thinking features still attract admiring comments, especially from Scandinavian and American visitors more familiar with modern housing concepts.

His latest improvement to the house is an internal lift to allow himself and his wife Blanche to go on living there, and enjoying every room, even if it becomes too difficult for them to climb the stairs.

In his bid to persuade a planning inspector to grant permission, he built a scale model of the house to try to win over his neighbours in Granville Road, and they signed a petition expressing support.

Fred, who grew up in Tufnell Park, faced a problem after he qualified as an architect and became an associate in an architectural practice.

"I was 28, I had very little money, but enough for a very small plot – and I did have my own ideas and design for a self-build, detached house that could take full advantage of a very limited site."

Fred's design was for a ground floor with an integral garage and access at each side of the house despite the narrowness of the plot. A cantilevered first floor was designed to provide extra space, and the two-foot overhang over the ground floor

ensured there was enough space upstairs for an extra room.

"There is nothing new about a cantilevered first floor. Elizabethan houses used to overhang the pavement to gain extra space.

"Although today most people still prefer traditional houses built of brick, with pitched roofs, the 1950s and 1960s were pioneering years for modern housing."

"My application was turned down in November 1958 on the grounds it was out of keeping with the other houses.

"Even when I was granted permission by a planning inspector in March 1959, Barnet refused to approve the work under building regulations; they said the house wouldn't stand up, and then when I started work they predicted it would only fall down if I did build it."

Fred and his father finally started construction in September 1960 and they finished the house a year later. The total bill for building materials and the contractors they hired was £6,000.

"My father's life-time ambition was always to build his own house, and I was already skilled at carpentry, so we were an ideal team. We used contractors for the ground work and drainage – and later for the electrics and plumbing – but we did almost everything else."

The house is a testament to their craftsmanship. Exposed brickwork inside on the ground floor is complemented by veneered wood panelling. Upstairs there are rooms with elm and mahogany panels; downstairs there are tongue-and-groove pine panels.

Over the years he extended the house to create extra ground floor space, but his original concept of an open plan house designed to let in lots of sunlight continues to please him to this day.

Fred recognises that his house does have a Marmite effect on some people. "A few people have said they think the house is ugly. One woman said she wouldn't like to live in that 'dark house behind the trees', but really it's very light inside, with sun streaming in through the windows."



Retired architect Fred Hobart, now 88, faced a massive task in getting planning permission for his unusual house in an Edwardian area

Barnet Society nominates house for local list

"A rare example in Barnet of an uncompromisingly modern house at a time when modern architecture – though widely adopted abroad – was still treated with suspicion by the British. It sits neatly between older villas. The ground floor is of a dark red brick common in the area. In contrast, the first-floor floats over it on cantilevers to front and sides, its lightness emphasised by a naturally pale-coloured corrugated aluminium boarding.

The flat-roofed volume has a bold three-dimensional clarity that is enriched on its street façade by asymmetrically placed steel-framed windows: one a plain rectangle punched into the cladding, the other combined with a plywood panel above and a mosaic panel below forming a full-height break in the cladding to mark the front door below.

The design's contrast with the rest of the Victorian and Edwardian street caused difficulties with planners and building inspectors at the time, but today impresses by its logic and graceful simplicity.

THE MAYOR OF LONDON'S NEW LONDON PLAN



Over the last 18 months, Sadiq Khan has been consulting Londoners about a new London Plan. It will set a framework for local plans across London. **Robin Bishop** co-ordinated the Society's response

Unless Barnet produces more detailed plans or policies for Chipping Barnet, all developers will need to do to get planning permission is show that their proposal meets the London Plan – which is mainly a set of aspirations rather than specific design requirements.

Many aspects of Mayor Khan's draft Plan are admirable and consistent with Barnet Society aims. But certain policies of his, coupled with ambitious new housing targets, could have a massive – and detrimental – impact on our area.

It is essential to have our say on the draft London Plan, and what follows are edited highlights of our recent submission. The full version is on our website. Many thanks to our Committee, plus Peter Bradburn, Judith Clouston and David Lee for their expert input.

INTRODUCTION

The Barnet Society welcomes the wide scope and far-sighted thinking of the draft London Plan, and agree with most of its policies.

However, as an area with important links to neighbouring Outer London boroughs and Hertfordshire, a high proportion of green space and a distinctly hilly landscape, we do not believe the draft Plan is sufficiently sensitive to local differences of geography, historical identity, or to suburban architectural and landscape character. Our chief reservations are detailed below.

CHAPTER 1 – PLANNING LONDON'S FUTURE

The proposal for London to become a National Park City is quite consistent with our own aims, which are to defend the range and quality of Chipping Barnet's open spaces.

CHAPTER 2 – SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Policy SD2 – Collaboration in the Wider South East

In view of our close links with Hertfordshire, we would like to see explicit commitment to improving and harmonising cross-border transport planning and Oyster usage, especially with regard to bus connections between town centres, transport hubs, hospitals, schools and colleges.

Policy SD6 – Town centres

We welcome the Mayor's commitment to promoting and enhancing the vitality and viability of town centres like ours, and his recognition of the importance of balancing the demands of housing and commerce, including affordable business space.

We agree that higher-density development is a promising way forward – but only provided that it is carried out on a scale that relates to existing neighbouring buildings and greenery, and that its design is of high quality.

CHAPTER 3 – DESIGN

Policy D1 – London's form and characteristics

We strongly support the importance of high standards of design and sustainability, both for buildings and external spaces. We agree with the Mayor's list of considerations for form, layout and design development.

Policy D6 – Optimising housing density

We strongly agree with Section A that: The optimum density of a development should result from a design-led approach to determine the capacity of the site. Particular consideration should be given to:

1) the site context

2) its connectivity and accessibility by walking and cycling, and existing and planned public transport (including PTAL*)

3) the capacity of surrounding infrastructure.

* Public Transport Accessibility Level: a measure which rates locations by distance from frequent public transport services

These considerations are insufficient, however, in neighbourhoods like ours, where significant areas of Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Space border – and often penetrate – the 800m-radius zones proposed by Policy H2 (below). And while Para 4.2.7 prevents inappropriate densification within Conservation Areas, it says nothing about developments immediately outside their borders. Impact on views from, and towards, Conservation Areas and significant green spaces should therefore also be a consideration.

CHAPTER 4 – HOUSING

Policy H1 – Increasing housing supply

We accept the Mayor's ten-year target for net housing completions of 3,134 p.a. for Barnet. [This is a third more than our Council's current target.]

Policy H2 – Small sites

We have severe reservations about Section D.2.d's presumption in favour... within PTALs 3-6 or within 800m of a Tube station, rail station or town centre boundary [of] infill development within the curtilage of a house. We have seen numerous applications for such infill in our area, but rarely to the satisfaction of either neighbours or planning committee.

Para 4.6.5

We support the Mayor's belief that public sector land can play a significant role in meeting affordable housing need, and would like to see such developments giving priority to key public service workers. But the definition of 'affordability' in the Glossary is insufficiently robust.

Para 4.12.2

In suburbs like Barnet there are many elderly people living in family-sized accommodation, and we would like to see incentives to encourage them to downsize or let spare bedrooms to students or low-earners – without, of course, any pressure, threats or harassment.

CHAPTER 8 – GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

We particularly welcome this chapter with its recognition of the vital importance of maintenance and value measurement.

Policy G2 – London's Green Belt

Three recent cases illustrating what the Mayor's 'densification' ambitions could lead to in the hands of uncontrolled developers and architects.'



Proposed elevation by
Richard Maltese Architects Ltd

33 LYONSDOWN ROAD Application for replacement of a villa with 22 flats.

The villa dates from 1866-7 and is an elegant survival – with unusually intact interiors – from the original Victorian development around New Barnet Station. It is outlined in red on the proposed elevation, which is two storeys higher.

Permission was refused by the planners, but the developer has gone to appeal.

We agree that the enhancement of the Green Belt to provide appropriate multifunctional uses for Londoners should be supported – but more detailed guidance is needed as to what is 'appropriate'. We do not believe that this includes multi-use games areas with high security fencing, floodlighting and artificial surfacing, for example.

CHAPTER 10 – TRANSPORT

Para 10.1.1

While we generally support restraint of vehicle use, it must be recognised that in Outer London boroughs such as ours residents are inevitably more dependent on cars. Increases in housing and population will result in increases in motor traffic in Barnet and throughout London, with the propensity for longer delays and increased pollution. A concerted effort will be necessary to keep both private and public transport moving efficiently. This must include road building, more effective traffic flow systems and high-tech innovations such as smart traffic lights.

Para 10.3.2

We agree that there is an urgent need to improve public transport capacity, connectivity and quality of service to ensure that it continues to cater for London's growth. Our town centre tube and bus services are not well integrated, and east-west connections are often poor for both public and private transport.

In principle transport hubs are logical places for intensified use, and there may be scope at our tube and rail stations for building above car parks, tracks and the stations themselves. However there are considerable planning and technical challenges associated with all our existing hubs. High Barnet Station, for example, abuts the unstable 19th century embankment carrying the A1000 on Barnet Hill, and is surrounded by trees and the open hillside that was the historic site of Barnet Fair. Its natural surroundings makes it one of Chipping Barnet's attractive 'green gateways' that would be lost if medium or high-rise development were permitted around or above the station.

Transport – generally

The Mayor should encourage more orbital links – including tram, light rail and affordable very rapid transit (AVRT) – across or beneath the Green Belt where necessary – to link new destinations on either side of the borough. We welcome the positive findings of the recent feasibility study of a potential West London Orbital Railway, and would like the study extended to include Brent Cross, Mill Hill East, Finchley Central, Finsbury Park and a possible link with the Gospel Oak-Barking line.

These and other imaginative transport and infrastructure improvements will be essential if the Mayor's vision of intensified suburbs in Chipping Barnet are to receive residents' support.

MEADOW WORKS, GREAT NORTH ROAD

Architects' preliminary proposal for replacement of workshops and cafés with 78 flats.

Note the brutal contrast of scale with the existing semi-detached houses. The architects wished to 'develop a landmark building' – though why Pricklers Hill needs a landmark was never explained. Fortunately the planners weren't convinced either, and rejected it.



Sketch by Liam Russell Architects

BARNET HOUSE, 1255 HIGH ROAD

Application for extensions and additions to former Barnet Council offices.

The present 13-storey tower is a slender and rather graceful 1960s landmark by Richard Seifert, architect of Centre Point. The developer proposed to add two storeys, clag on a 12-storey front addition, and to build a courtyard up to six storeys high behind on the car park, to provide a total of 216 new dwellings plus retail, commercial and community floorspace.

It would have been much more prominent in views locally and for miles away than the present tower, but fortunately the planners have rejected it.



Continued from Page 2

(LD) Trying to pause RTB. The Council should specify a larger percentage of affordable housing on every development and should build social council housing.

(I) Agrees there should be more social housing and more affordable housing.

(L) Housing Benefit bill has increased by 118% because more homeless people are housed by private landlords. Under the current regeneration schemes, Barnet will lose 800 properties which will need replacing. There needs to be a better definition of affordable housing, which is mainly 80% market rent but there should be a definite percentage of social housing which is 30% market rent on every new scheme.

(Hall) All agree there is a need for social housing but who is going to pay for it? Developers do not want social housing as it makes the scheme less profitable.

(C) The Albert Road Gas Works was bought by a large Housing Association who will build larger properties for the private market and use the profits to build Social Housing.

(G) Self-Build Schemes are an answer; can get a grant and learn a trade

(L) The Developer will have to agree to build 50% affordable rent or they do not get permission. This includes both affordable housing (80% market rent) and social housing (30% market rent). This has been achieved in Islington Labour will build 800 homes for people decanted from W Hendon, Dollis Valley & Graham Parke

(I) Council should consider pre-fabricated buildings.

TRANSPORT

The Mayor of London wants to encourage sustainable transport such as public transport, cycling or walking. Currently in Barnet this is 55% and the Mayor is aiming for 80%. About third of trips are on foot, 1.6% in H Barnet cycle to work, 1% in Underhill and 0.8% in Oakleigh. Many young people and elderly rely on buses but the routes do not connect with schools, hospitals or into Hertfordshire. The 3 rail stations do not connect well with existing bus services. and the Mayor's intention to build high density schemes around transport hubs will not be welcome without improvements to rail, bus, car and bike travel. We need a proper integrated transport system such as the proposed West London Orbital Railway linking Brent Cross with Mill Hill East, Finchley Central, Finsbury Park and possibly Gospel Oak-Barking line.]

(Hall) Questioner lives in Potters Road and if Station Road or A1000 near Everyman cinema is closed then there is a huge bottleneck with traffic diverted down the very small Potters Road – He asked who is responsible for making these decisions in an emergency.

(C) Met TfL on numerous occasions to consider a hopper bus from the station to the hospital. Have 107 or 307 stop at Arkley as they used to but the answer is always the same - it would cost a quarter of a million pounds for each one and they can't afford it. Trams turned round at the church so buses do too! Northern line trains have been cut - more now go to Edgware and Mill Hill East and the new trains which were promised have been cancelled.

(LD) Lots of issues – will be a million extra cars per day in London if no action taken. Should encourage more walking and cycling. Should be cycle networks including along the A1000.

(L) The relationship with TfL should be better as the London Mayor is Labour. Would like to extend the lower emission zone proposed by the London Mayor and will put electric charging

points in the Borough. Would encourage cycling.

(G) Need a long term solution to congestion and discourage people from coming to Barnet.

(I) Used to be a shuttle bus between Chase Farm and Barnet Hospital for nurses etc. but no longer exists. Roads around Salisbury Road get gridlocked if there is a major accident.

(Hall) There seems to be ever expanding CPZs. Barnet Hospital in particular causes loads of parking problems.

(L) CPZ around hospital was lobbied for by people living near the hospital. Labour represents the people and cannot ignore complaints. They had 3 consultations and the people living in the zone will decide the times it operates. Aim of Labour is to improve quality of life not raise money.

(C) In Barnet, parking money raises about £6m and it is spent on roads. Barnet policy is to consider CPZs when it is led by residents who start the ball rolling.

(LD) CPZs do not solve the problem it just moves it elsewhere and reduces the amount of parking.

FUTURE OF BARNET TOWN CENTRE

Robin Bishop said Barnet High Street and New Barnet were 2 of 15 town centres in Barnet. Between 2013 & 2016, High Barnet lost 1% shops, New Barnet 5% and Golders Green 12%. - betting shops have increased by 7%, convenience stores 8%, restaurants 14% and cafés 23%,

Planners in Barnet are expecting to build new homes in town centres - 250 in High Barnet and 600 in New Barnet by 2026 which is only a quarter needed to meet the Mayor of London's target. But our town centres still need new offices, affordable workspaces and other businesses.

There are 2 local planning guidance documents - The Chipping Barnet Town Centre Strategy and the New Barnet Town Centre Framework but neither say much about housing density.

Pavement Build outs & other improvements

The original proposals have been revised to take account of some resident's objections and on Monday 19th February the Area Committee agreed the funding for detailed design to proceed. **Question, from floor. How serious are the Council about boosting Town Centres?**

(L) Labour serious about boosting the Town Centre – Will take strong action against fly tipping and will pick up 5 large items per year for free from people homes.

(LD) Need to make the High Street a nicer place with trees, seats and wider pavements.

There were other questions on topics such as, street cleaning, libraries and empty shops. Full minutes on Barnet Society website: www.barnetsociety.org.uk

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

On 22 February 30 members voted on 3 motions:

- (1) Nominate Jim Nelhams as Independent Examiner for 2016-17 & 2017-18.
- (2) Adopt the 2016-17 accounts (see Summer 2017 Newsletter), which have been independently scrutinised by Jim Nelhams.
- (3) Nominate Judith Clouston to become a Vice-president of the Society. All the motions were carried unanimously

