

The Barnet Society

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Will 2024 be a decisive year?



The view from
St John the
Baptist's down
the High Street

The push to build more new and affordable homes is bound to intensify around High Barnet, which has for so long taken comfort from its proximity to the Green Belt

After twelve months of growing frustration and uncertainty, 2024 might finally be the year that decisions are taken that could reshape the appearance of much of High Barnet and authorise the construction of 900 or more new homes, writes *Nick Jones*.

Demolition of much of The Spires shopping centre to make room for five and six storey blocks of flats is seen by many residents as a potential threat to both the character and long-term viability of the town centre.

Lining up are other planning applications that might impinge on much-loved wooded areas and green spaces. These include more five and six storey apartment blocks that developers are planning for the eastern and western extremities of the town at both Moxon Street and in the fields of the Whalebones estate in Wood Street.

There is heightened pressure for housebuilding all around the perimeter

of Greater London and that push to build more new and affordable homes is bound to intensify in and around High Barnet, which for so long has taken comfort from its proximity to the Green Belt.

Barnet Council, now under Labour control, has indicated - but not yet demonstrated in the north of the borough to any great degree - a determination to meet the Mayor of London's targets for increased housebuilding, a drive that could accelerate if there is a change of government next year given Labour's pledges.

Plans are being prepared or seeking approval for around 300 new homes in The Spires; 154 in new flats in Moxon Street; 114 homes in houses and flats in the Whalebones fields.

Waiting in the wings is a reworking of Transport for London's scheme to redevelop the car park at High Barnet tube station where Barnet's Draft Local Plan has earmarked 292 new homes.

A decision is also awaited on the Victoria Quarter development, which is on the former gas works site in New Barnet, where the latest application is for 486 homes.

If all or most of these schemes get planning approval, the growth in the housing stock in and around High Barnet would equal if not far exceed that achieved by recent redevelopment in Dollis Valley where 631 homes have been built on the new Brook Valley Gardens estate.

All around High Barnet is evidence of the unrelenting push for additional housing: 260 homes in a refurbished Barnet House at Whetstone; 652 in flats over Cockfosters tube station car park; and a massive redevelopment proposed for Edgware town centre that could deliver nearly 4,000 residential units.

Although Barnet Council has remained fairly resolute in defending the Green Belt within the borough's boundaries, neighbouring authorities might well agree to relax existing levels of protection by authorising additional housing south of Borehamwood; on farmland to the south of Potters Bar; and on Green Belt land near Hadley Wood Station.

Amid all the pressure to eat into the
Continued on Page 2



Continued from Page 1

Green Belt, there is one positive proposal. A new regional park might be established around Moat Mount, Barnet Gate Woods and Scratchwood open space, creating a green space with strengthened protection and biodiversity.

Back in High Barnet, by far the greatest source of frustration is the lack of an update on a proposal by BYM, owners of The Spires, to redevelop the shopping centre and replace it with blocks of flats on either side of a new pedestrian thoroughfare from the High Street to

Stapylton Road. There would be shops and cafes on the ground floor, but the existing covered courtyards and walkways that add to the shopping centre's appeal would be demolished, which is a prospect that has alarmed shoppers and elderly residents.

They fear the loss of a popular and much-coveted civic space where people can meet their friends and stop to chat away from the noise of High Street traffic and out of the rain, which they say is one of the few remaining pleasures of shopping in Barnet.

Discord takes root in the Field of Dreams

Within days of publication of a planning application to site residential caravans on Green Belt farmland in the Dollis Valley, hundreds of objections were being registered with Barnet Council.

Residents of surrounding roads say a two-acre paddock at the Arkley end of Mays Lane has been used for many years for grazing horses.

In their view, it forms an essential part of a wildlife corridor extending down from Arkley through the Dollis Valley and south to Totteridge Common.

A campaign mounted within the locality claims there is widespread opposition to a request to use the field to station two caravans for residential use, together with hardstanding and adjoining day rooms.

The application for two residential pitches has been made by Mr Patrick Casey whose architects, Green Planning Studio, say there is a "recognised need" within the Barnet area for facilities "to accommodate a gypsy lifestyle".

Layout of the site has been designed in line with the 2008 Good Practice Guide on Designing Gypsy and Travellers Sites and the application says that despite being sited within the Green Belt, "there would be, at worst, limited impact or other harm to the area".

At the final count, after the closing date for objections, there were said to be only nine responses in favour and over 1,300 against.



Local residents say two-acre paddock has been used for grazing horses for years

In its objection, the Barnet Society says government planning policy for traveller sites states that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances; the applicant had failed to provide such evidence.

The paddock adjoins the former Brethren's Meeting Room in Mays Lane which was on the market for some months and was sold in October to an Islamic educational charity.

Commercial estate agents Alex Martin

told the Barnet Society that Markaz-Eltathgheef-Eleslami -- the Centre for Islamic Enlightening -- paid well in excess of the suggested price of £4 million for the vacant 1,000 seat meeting room which is also within the Green Belt, and which has 160 parking spaces.

The aim of the charity -- as set out on the Charity Commission's website -- is to promote the advancement of the Islamic religion and stage religious activities for children, young people, and the elderly.



Volunteer working parties meet twice a week to clear up rubbish and maintain the woodlands



Common people, like you...

Many of the motorists hurrying past beside the edge of Monken Hadley Common have probably never stopped to take a walk or had a chance to enjoy an historic and incomparable green space on the boundary of Greater London, writes Nick Jones.

Control over Monken Hadley Common, the seventh largest in London, is in the hands of a newly established trust. Footpaths through the 74-hectare common, a mix of woods and open grass land, extend east from Monken Hadley to the outskirts of Cockfosters, and they are a well-used route on the London Loop walk around the capital's perimeter.

By taking on responsibilities previously held by the churchwardens of Monken Hadley parish church, and by freeing themselves from legal constraints dating back to the reign of George III, the trustees are eager to explore ideas for the future management of the common.

"Our priority is to keep the common as it is, while dealing with day-to-day issues like clearing up litter and facing up to challenges that lie ahead like climate change which could have a big impact on the health of British woodlands," said Jonathan Hewlings, who has been appointed one of the common's two curators.

"People might assume the common is run by Barnet Council, but it is not publicly owned, and we receive no council funding.

"Constant vigilance is required to counter damage and threats to the common"

"We need to explain our role as a charity and why the trust needs more members. Upkeep of the common depends on income from our members and donations to the charity."

Constant vigilance is required to counter damage and threats to the common. Last winter car and van drivers created a muddy morass by ignoring a road closure in Camlet Way and instead drove across the grass to head towards New Barnet.

Footfall through the common rose enormously during the Covid pandemic lockdown and the increase in visitors only served to highlight the importance of the trust's role.

Tuesday and Thursday working parties, drawn from a team of 15 volunteers, spend the morning on a variety of tasks including clearing up litter and other detritus.

One notable achievement was their success in reinstating an ancient ditch which had been filled up with dumped builders' waste, including hardcore, bricks and plastic.

"There is sometimes a misunderstanding

about what is meant by common land. It does not mean it is a free-for-all as there are regulations," said Roger De La Mare, co-curator with Jonathan Hewlings.

Peter Davies, who has stood down after 13 years as a co-curator of the common, said he shared the sense of achievement they all felt as volunteers in preserving a stretch of woodland where people can have some quiet enjoyment away from the pressures of suburbia.

"We have tried to avoid putting up too many noticeboards and signposts for every footpath. We want visitors to have the freedom to explore."

Cattle were grazed on the common until the 1950s. A much-loved relic of those early traffic-free days are five white-painted wooden gates that used to control access, and which are listed as being of Grade II historic or architectural merit.

Establishing a charity to own and manage the common was considered the most efficient way to ensure it was maintained for public recreation and nature conservation.

A recent innovation has been a series of open-air concerts beside Jack's Lake, where fishing is currently licensed by the Hadley Angling and Preservation Society.

Cricket has been played on the Common since the 1830s and Monken Hadley Cricket Club has its matches there. The grassland also hosts sports days for Monken Hadley Primary School.

In the last two years Barnet U3A has planted and maintained around 60 trees – just one of the examples of community engagement which the trust hopes to build on.



Winter Report

Robin Bishop

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT

Much ado about quite a lot...

GOVERNMENT

The **Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (LURA)** has come into force. It aims to speed up the planning system, but is less radical than the original proposals that the Society commented on (we were one of many critics). Provisions that may affect us include:

- Design codes setting out where homes are built and how they look.
- Stronger powers to deal with breaches of planning rules and processes.
- Permanent relaxation of rules on outdoor seating for cafés, pubs and restaurants.
- Ensuring that developers deliver schools, doctors' surgeries and public services.
- New 'street vote' powers, allowing residents to propose redevelopment of their properties within agreed design preferences.
- Cutting the 'burdensome EU-red tape' around environmental assessment.

LURA doesn't end Michael Gove's relentless mission. **Further reforms to planning policy**, including the creation of National Development Management Policies, were recently out for consultation. The London Forum advised us that it was aimed chiefly at planning authorities outside London, which has a working – if not perfect – legal framework, so we declined Mr Gove's invitation to comment.

We can claim some credit for another Government change of mind, however. Following controversy over the demolition of 33 Lyonsdown Road and the subsequent involvement of the Victorian Society – and spurred by the scandalous demolition of the famous 'Crooked House' pub in Staffordshire – it is consulting on changes to planning law to **prevent demolition of unlisted but historic buildings** without planning permission.

GREEN INITIATIVES

We've been informally discussing green topics including **United for Warm Homes**

with Barnet Friends of the Earth and other activists. Barnet's main source of carbon emissions is our homes – see my separate article about environmental upgrades on *Pages 6&7*

BARNET COUNCIL

We expect final modifications to the draft **Local Plan** to go out to consultation soon.

EXPECTED

Revised proposals for **The Spires** – see *Page 5*.

APPROVED

118 High Street (the Grade II-listed former TSB & Barnet Press) – Costa Coffee on the ground floor. A separate application is in for conversion of the flats above. We were neutral.

4 Hadley Parade, High Street – Julian's hardware grotto will be converted into a 'mathnasium'. We had no comments.

Byng Road Playing Fields – New rugby clubhouse and pitch improvements

REFUSED

Bartletts Yard, St Albans Road – A new house on a tiny backland plot. We were neutral but expressed concern about impact of the big basement and construction. The planners ignored our concerns.

DECISIONS AWAITED

Whalebones, Victoria Quarter and **JOLT EV chargers** – see *Pages 5&8*.

98-100 High Street (fka Foxtons) – Workspace plus 12 flats. We were neutral.

152 High Street – Extension up to the roofline of neighbouring buildings. We objected.

Off Langley Row, Hadley Highstone – Rebuilding of former stables in Green Belt. We didn't object.

Brookfields Garage, Victoria Lane – Three unashamedly modern but inconspicuous houses and workspace on a backland site. We had no comments.

Fortune House, Moxon Street – The developers building a 7-storey building next door propose a similar, but only 6-storey, building for 41 flats and 2 workspace units. It's not as bad as its neighbour and won't harm the Green Belt, so we're neutral.

Mays Lane, land between Chesterfield Farm and the former Brethren hall –

Application for two travellers' pitches. We objected because traveller sites are inappropriate development in the Green Belt. *See Page 2*

SHOPFRONTS

The spate of inappropriate shopfronts in conservation areas continues, despite Council design guidance – but so does the fight against them.

1B Church Passage (fka L'Antica Pizza) – Another pizza restaurant, Villaggio, this time in modernist style. The application has been withdrawn.

60 High Street (Balady) – The owner of this garish example appealed against the Council's refusal. Fortunately, his appeal has been dismissed.

ROOF EXTENSIONS

Roof extensions are still the rage, but the Council continues to take a tough line.

5 Regina Close and **Brookhill Court, Cat Hill** – Both refused permission.

FARTHER AFIELD

Abbey Arts Centre, 87 Park Road, East Barnet – An unusual and interesting site with an extraordinary history. The replacement and new buildings are restrained in scale but lack architectural quality. It deserves a master plan based on more thorough analysis of the heritage values of the site.

Edgware town centre – The row over redevelopment of the site next to the station rumbles on, with 5,500 signing a petition against the 'mini-Manhattan' proposed by TfL and developer Ballymore.

Meet the new Whalebones plan, much like the old one

Hill the developer submitted a new planning application for Whalebones, scaled back from 152 to 114 homes, but similar to ones to which we previously objected.

This is a large development on land which a Planning Inspector described as a 'valuable undeveloped area of greenspace'.

Some buildings would be of 5 storeys. The remaining open space would have the character of an urban park, not the rural character it has now. The resulting loss of green space would also seriously harm the Wood Street Conservation Area and set a bad precedent for Barnet's other conservation areas.

A housing development of this scale would also contradict other Council, London Mayoral and national planning policies in relation to open space, the environment and farming.

Disregarding them would send Barnet residents an unfortunate message about the Council's understanding of the value we increasingly attach to the natural environment – as well as to healthy eating and food security.

It would also be inconsistent with Barnet's declaration of a climate and biodiversity emergency.

We're minded to object again, and encourage you to submit your own objections before 12 December deadline.

To be sure that we represent the majority of our members, we've written to everyone asking whether they are for, against or neutral about the application.

I write before the final outcome is known. But we've had a good response rate, and the overwhelming majority so far support our proposed objection.



A heavy heart, but Victoria Quarter still not up to par

In October, Fairview & One Housing submitted yet another a planning application, this time for 486 homes – almost a third more than the 2017 approved scheme. It generally follows the 2017 layout, but replaces the terraced housing with taller blocks of flats and adds a floor to 'finger' blocks.

It was with a heavy heart that we objected to the latest application. We'd love well-designed new housing in Chipping Barnet. But it must be genuinely sustainable, and the latest effort wouldn't be.

We generally supported the objections of Save New Barnet about overheating, railway noise and inadequate daylight and we particularly objected to the housing mix and the poor environmental performance of many of the units.

We disliked the high proportion of small flats, the small number of family homes with three or more bedrooms (24%), the lack of larger homes (2% - none of which would be privately owned) and the complete absence of traditional private gardens.

We were also concerned that nearly 20% of flats would be single-aspect, making cross-ventilation in hot weather impossible, and that 46% would require active cooling, with high running costs.

Also, almost all the flats would depend on mechanical ventilation and heat recovery, whose effectiveness and economy depend on high standards of specification, installation, maintenance and user behaviour, not all of which are normal in estates of this kind. Any shortfall risks condensation, mould, poor air quality, damage to the building fabric and potentially serious health consequences for occupants.

Still dreaming at the Spires

Since the public exhibition at The Spires in April, we've seen no further designs for the retail and residential redevelopment. BYM's team promised us a revised version of their scheme 'by the end of summer', and assured the Society that they were keen to meet us again 'shortly' prior to wider consultation, but as I write no date has been offered.

We and Barnet Residents Association have shared thoughts on its project, and we're standing by to organise a meeting to discuss them with our members, if and when we finally see the next plans.



Retrofitting homes key to achieving Net Zero target

In Barnet, the biggest cause of carbon emissions is housing

Robin Bishop writes

Homes emit around 50% of the carbon released in our borough. Radically reducing those emissions by upgrading the environmental performance of our homes is the most urgent and useful thing that many of us can do. It will also generate employment, substantially reduce our energy bills and – done properly – improve our health.

Over two-thirds of Barnet's housing stock was built before 1944, and over 85% of it is likely still to exist in 2050. Today, the median Energy Performance Certificate rating of existing homes in Chipping Barnet is only about 56%. Retrofitting them is therefore critical to achieving Net Zero.

The technical and aesthetic challenges of bringing old houses up to modern standards mustn't be under-estimated. It's also financially challenging – but will only get more expensive the longer we delay. To illustrate the challenges and some ways in which they can be met, this article looks at an example in Barnet.

Nos. 26 & 27 Manor Road are an attractive pair of Arts &

Crafts semi-detached houses on Barnet's Local Heritage List. They date from about 1906. Both deserve careful conservation and upgrading to reduce their energy consumption.

No. 27 was the home of the late Peter and Doreen Willcocks, who were stalwarts of the Barnet Society and Barnet Local History Society. They moved in 60 years ago and the house is still occupied by family.

The architect isn't recorded, but the design shows the influence of Lutyens (notably the front doorway and steps) and Voysey (the stair balustrade and living room window bay). The craftsmanship throughout, from the woodwork to ironmongery, is exceptionally good. The fireplace and its Classical surround is a high point.

The house has been well looked-after – not surprisingly, since Peter was a national expert on the Building Regulations. But also unsurprisingly, it's showing signs of age.

Fortunately its underlying structure seems generally sound and repairs should not be too difficult. What can and should be done to bring it somewhere near Net Zero standards without losing its beautifully crafted details?

Below are some improvements that could be made here, and to many other Barnet houses of similar vintage. Please note that they are purely indicative and no substitute for a full survey and environmental diagnosis by a qualified professional.

Southerly-facing parts of the roof

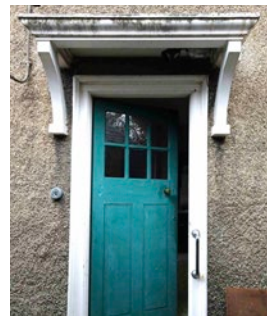
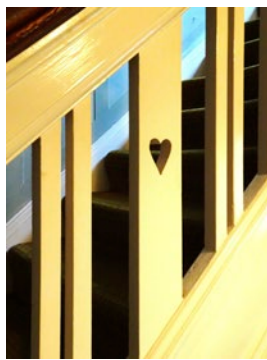
could be fitted with photovoltaic panels to generate solar energy.

Guttering and drains are of cast iron with an ornate hopper-head. They should be kept if possible, or replaced with cast aluminium to similar profiles.

The rough-cast render is essential to No.27's character. It needs repair or partial replacement, which must be done with lime mortar to enable the brickwork behind to breathe.

In unobtrusive places, it could be replaced with new external





Clockwise, from top left: front door, balustrade, bay window, internal door, fireplace, lead-paned window, side door, external bay window and ball and hopper

insulation finished with a thinner render to match the original in texture and colour. But this would impact on door and window reveals and cills, and require close-fitting eaves, gutters and drains to be adjusted. Where internal insulation can be provided without unacceptable disturbance, external walls can benefit from condensation-safe internal insulation, e.g. patent render with cork granules and lime skim-coat finish.

External doors would need draught-proofing.

The original lead-paned windows with their ornamental fasteners remain intact. Secondary glazing was installed remarkably discreetly by Peter nearly 50 years ago: compare the original living room windows with the secondary-glazed ones in the kitchen. Today a triple-glazed unit would be considered. 'Slimlite' and similar thin double-glazing units are available, some fitting into the traditional shallow glazing rebates. They are more expensive than normal double-glazed units but more elegant than secondary glazing.

Much of the ground floor is of timber boards, still in good condition. **Underfloor insulation** could be inserted between floor joists, though care is required to retain, clear, and possibly increase the number of sub-floor vent bricks/gratings to ensure through-flow of fresh air.

Most of the fireplaces have been blocked up but include ventilation for their flues. **The existing tall chimneys** are features of the roof and in fair condition. They should be retained and could form

part of a new mechanical ventilation system with heat recovery.

Roof spaces have been partly converted for storage and other use, but the existing structure remains in fair condition. The insulation should be greatly increased, however, and air leakage and condensation eliminated.

The gas central heating boiler and radiators have served well for decades, but the boiler will have to be replaced before long by some new source – or combination of sources – of renewable energy. Air-source heat pumps (ASHPs) are increasingly being used, though their effectiveness depends on high levels of thermal insulation and airtightness, and often on larger and/or more efficient radiators.

The boiler or ASHP can be supplemented by solar panels. Whilst gas and oil-fuelled boilers continue in use, solar water-heating is a good way of mitigating fuel costs. This entails replacing the standard hot-water cylinder with a well-insulated calorifier containing an additional heating coil connected to the solar panel.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Healthy Homes and Buildings points out that energy efficiency measures must go hand-in-hand with mechanical ventilation that can exchange toxic indoor air with fresh air, and with design measures that improve the overall comfort and wellbeing of all occupants.

To ensure both air quality and economical running, a building energy management system will be needed. But it must be properly installed, calibrated, commissioned and maintained.

Materials and workmanship must also be of appropriate quality. As well as looking right, the results must not impair the environmental performance of the building, for example by creating condensation and mould.

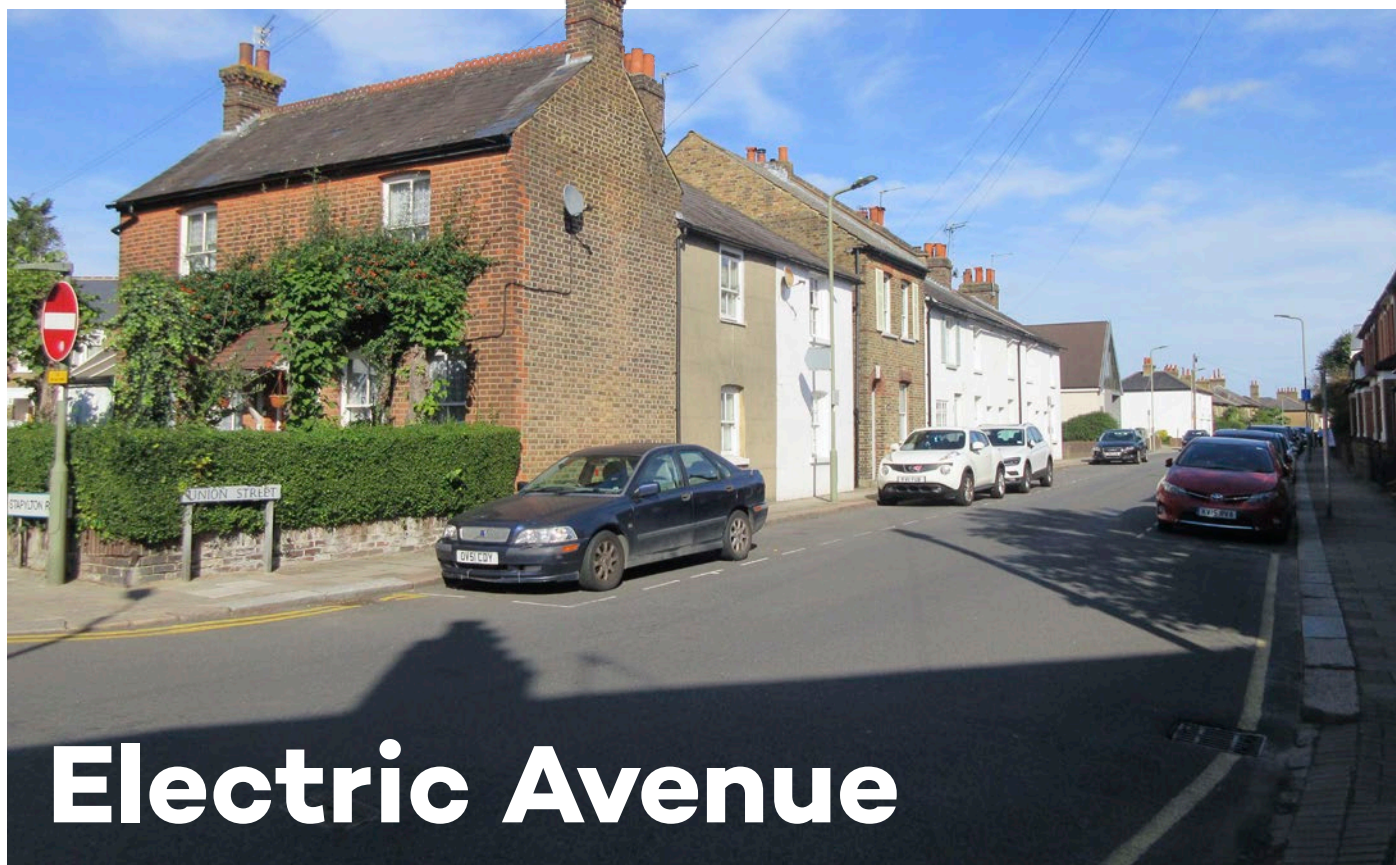
These suggestions only scratch the surface. It's vital to understand the construction of a house before specifying solutions, but getting good advice isn't easy.

As Barnet Society member and sustainability expert Dave McCormick notes: 'High energy prices might be persuading more people to consider green home improvements, but knowing where to begin is an issue for many.'

Or as Marianne Nix, another Society member and house-owner keen to follow best practice, puts it: 'Finding suitable builders is like looking for a needle in a haystack. And I'm not sure I know what the needle looks like!'

Looking for that needle – and for expert advisers, designers, builders and funding – will be addressed in our next issue, which looks at a more typical house that's been radically upgraded by a local architect.

I'm grateful to Alan Johnson, Richard Kay and Dave McCormick for their advice on this article.



Charging points for electric vehicles are to be installed in several side roads close to the town centre and applications are being made for larger self-standing points in front of the Everyman cinema and in East Barnet village, writes Nick Jones.

Notices warn residents in terraced houses in roads such as Union Street that the charge points will be installed on the pavement, just a few feet from their front doors.

Trojan Energy, which is to carry out the work for the council, says that in each of the four roads, there will be up to 15 charge points five metres apart.

The charge points will be “seamlessly integrated” into the pavement by utilising Trojan’s “hassle-free flat and flush technology” so pedestrians will face no obstructions.

Another company, Jolt Charge, has applied for three self-standing charge points, one in front of the Everyman, another immediately opposite on Greenhill Parade, and a third in East Barnet. The chargers would be 2.7 metres tall and 1.2

Only residents with CPZ permits or visitors with a voucher will be allowed to use the charge points in streets near the town centre

metres wide. There would be advertising panels on each side.

The Barnet Society has objected to the charger proposed in front of the Everyman cinema on the grounds it would have undue prominence and harm the setting of a Grade II listed building.

Local amenity groups have criticised the council for reaching an agreement with Jolt Charge to install 120 charge points of this size across the borough. Advertising was said to be necessary to subsidise the charges to be paid by motorists.

Council notices setting out details of the pavement-level charging points in the four side roads in High Barnet say that because the installations

Union Street, above, already has a charge point but residents say it is rarely used as most residents do not have an electric vehicle because they find them too expensive. Below, how a Jolt charger would blight the architecturally distinctive Everyman



will be at ground level there will be no obstruction on the pavement.

These new charge points will provide Barnet with a “future proofed infra-structure” that will help residents who are making the transition to more sustainable modes of transport such as electric or hybrid vehicles.

There will be a total of 15 charge points in Salisbury Road and the council insists that residents will notice no change in their parking arrangements within the CPZ.

Only residents with valid CPZ permits will have access to the charge points as well as visitors who display a valid visitor voucher – residents will be given a lance to connect to the charge points.

Union Street already has an electric vehicle charge point attached to a lamp post with a designated EV bay.

Nearby residents say the existing charge point is rarely used as most of those living in Union Street have petrol-driven cars and they cannot afford new electric vehicles.

How the other half lived



Left, a row of Edwardian commercial buildings on what is now the approach to New Barnet Station and which remains largely unchanged today. Above, one of the imposing Victorian villas built along Station Road

A fascinating insight into the life of wealthy middle-class households who set up home in the flourishing township of New Barnet in the late 1880s has emerged after research by family historians, writes Nick Jones

New Barnet was developed around a railway station for Barnet, which was opened in 1850 following completion by the Great Northern Company of the line between London and Peterborough.

Initially the prime thoroughfare was Station Road which connected the station to the Great North Road at the bottom of Barnet Hill.

Imposing villas and terraced houses were built along the road as the up-and-coming railway village of New Barnet started attracting business and professional people who were moving into the London suburbs.

By the 1861 census there were nine households listed as living in Station Road comprising a total of 32 people of whom a quarter were servants.

By 1881 this had increased to 33 households made up of 191 people of whom 43 were servants.

Family historians Elizabeth Burling and Karen de Bruyne say their research into these newcomers to Barnet highlights the social divide that was apparent in Victorian times.

While middle-class families with

The pace of suburban growth accelerated. By the outbreak of the First World War, New Barnet's development was almost complete

servants were setting up home to the west of the station in villas along Station Road and Lyonsdown Road, working-class housing and shops were being developed along roads on the eastern side of the railway line.

There was an equally sharp contrast between these business and professional newcomers with people living at Underhill, at the bottom of Barnet Hill.

In 1851 there were 23 households, mainly working-class families of agricultural labourers, charwomen and similar occupations, half of whom had been born in Barnet.

New Barnet was described in 1876 as one of the "new half-finished railway villages" that were springing up close to London (*James Thorne, Handbook to the Environs of London*) and house building was said to have proceeded slowly in those early years.

East Barnet Gas and Water Company

built a gas works in 1872 and provided water from a 500-foot deep artesian well.

The station was renamed New Barnet in 1884 and wholly rebuilt in 1896. Station Road, which had become the main municipal thoroughfare, was chosen by the East Barnet Valley local board as the site of an Italianate town hall which was built in 1891-2.

The pace of suburban growth accelerated at the turn of the century and by outbreak of the First World War, New Barnet's development was almost complete.

In 1921 a war memorial was unveiled opposite the town hall, in front of an imposing Edwardian bank, dedicated to the 278 men of East Barnet who were killed in the conflict.

Some of the original houses remain in Station Road. Many were demolished in the 1960s and 1970s to be replaced by blocks of flats and offices. Some of the larger office blocks have since been converted for residential use.

A look back at family life of those early years, *The People of Station of Road, New Barnet*, has been written by Elizabeth Burling and Karen de Bruyne. To read the text in full follow the link to the Barnet Society website:

www.barnetsociety.org.uk/family-research-highlights-upstairs-and-downstairs-divide-of-life-inside-the-once-grand-houses-of-new-barnet

Still digging after all these years

High Barnet's Byng Road Allotments, one of the very first Dig for Victory allotments established during the Second World War, celebrate their 85th anniversary next year, writes Nick Jones.

Local councils were asked by the Ministry of Agriculture to set aside space where people could be encouraged to grow their own vegetables to help boost wartime food production.

Much of the land used for emergency cultivation was taken back by local authorities after the war but the plots in Byng Road remained popular and became a protected allotment site.

Few of the original Dig for Victory allotments have survived, many having been sold off for housing and other developments.

Since becoming chair of the allotment committee, a year ago, Anna Robins has been beaver away to compile a history of the Byng Road site.

It has meant examining records of the former Barnet Urban District Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Barnet Council.

Perhaps her most gratifying discovery was that Byng Road can claim to be one of the very first Dig for Victory allotments.

A month after the declaration of the Second World War in September 1939, the

Ministry of Agriculture announced the Dig for Victory campaign, and in October 1939 Barnet UDC agreed to provide 400 plots of 10 poles each.

The original site for the Byng Road allotments was adjacent to what is now the Noah's Ark Children's Hospice and fields and woodland cared for by the Barnet Environment Centre.

This land had been purchased by Hertfordshire in 1937 for playing fields for Barnet's elementary schools. After the war more school buildings were needed to accommodate extra children from the raising of the school leaving age in 1947 and in March 1952 Hertfordshire moved the allotments to their current site next to the Byng Road playing fields and Barnet Elizabethans Rugby Club.

The original allotments were adjacent to where Noah's Ark Children's Hospice is and fields and woodland cared for by the Barnet Environment Centre

Anna said that after the end of rationing and the growth in supermarkets, vacancies for plots steadily increased.

In July 1960 Byng Road allotments were reduced in size and all temporary allotments within Barnet UDC were closed.

A decade ago, the Byng Road plot holders gained independence from Barnet Council taking full control of their site and they are determined to find an appropriate way to mark the 85th anniversary and another important milestone.

Peter Morris, the longest-serving plot holder, is due much of the credit for the lasting success and appeal of the Byng Road site.

He became honorary secretary in the 1960s, a post he filled for over 30 years, and it was on his initiative the group took the first step towards self-control.

In 1980, in return for a discount for plot holders, he reached an agreement with Barnet Council to collect the annual rents himself, thus saving the council the cost of paperwork and postage.

When Peter stood down in 2001 – and handed over the role of secretary to Erica McCormick – he reflected on all the “fun and friendship and happiness” he had experienced at the Byng Road site since taking on a plot in the 1950s when still a schoolboy.

Erica saw through the final step towards freeing the allotments from Barnet Council's day-to-day control.

Long-time secretary of the allotments, Peter Morris and his sister Angela in their patch. Above, an aerial view from the 1940s with the Byng Road site, arrowed





Gary Cheung, left, with female members, Katrina Watson, Shirley Pullenayegum and Nicole Hobday

CHOIR MIXES IT WITH THE BEST

In a break with a tradition that dates back for a century or more, Barnet Parish Church of St John the Baptist is to set up a mixed voice choir alongside its long-established choir of men and boys.

Girls and women are being invited for the first time to join the choral singing for which the parish church has always been held in high regard.

Creating a mixed voice choir is the challenge that faces Gary Cheung, an internationally recognised conductor, organist, and choir director, who has been appointed to a new post at the parish church of director of music and musical mission.

Mr Cheung's appointment represents a significant step in what the team vicar, Father Sam Rossiter-Peters hopes will be a "wonderful expansion" of musical tradition at the parish church with girls and women singing at the high level which the church has always aspired to.

"The new mixed voice choir will sing

alongside our men and boys who have served us so beautifully for so many years.

Links are to be established with schools in and around Barnet to encourage interest in choral singing and to invite pupils with musical ambitions to sing or play at Sunday morning services.

Terence Atkins, organist and choirmaster emeritus at the parish church, who took up his post 47 years ago, will be working alongside Mr Cheung, primarily leading the continuing tradition of Sunday evensong at 6.30pm.

Mr Cheung said the move in the Anglican church towards girls and women joining the choir began in the late 1990s.

"Barnet parish church has had an all-male choir for at least 150 years, and this will probably be the first time in its history that girls and women will sing alongside the choir in the Sunday morning service and at evensong.



PACKING A PUNCH

Ewen Hall in Wood Street was transformed for an action-packed evening when the newly established Barnet Amateur Boxing Club held its first show event attracting amateur boxers from nearby clubs in the London area.

There were 13 bouts in all and the evening opened with some fiery engagements from ten-year-olds.

BABC, which has been created under the auspices of Box Sport London boxing gym in Tapster Street, High Barnet, is open to all ages from ten to 30-year-olds and already has 140 members.

Professional boxer Ollie Pattison established Box Sport London with his father Mark Pattison, a professional boxing coach.

They opened their boxing gym in 2018 in a former print works in Tapster Street and acquired amateur status for the boxing club in 2021.

"We want to impart our experience in boxing to the local community and allow anyone from any walk of life to realise the physical and mental benefits of boxing," said Mr Pattison, who is the club's head coach.

HELP FOR UKRAINIAN CASUALTIES TAKES THE NEXT STEP

Zimmer frames, crutches and surgical boots left unused in lofts and garages around Barnet are just some of the surplus mobility aids which are being rounded up and sent off to help amputees injured in the Ukraine war thanks to the efforts of a Friern Barnet pensioner.

Since Anne Mackiewicz started her appeals on social media, she has been heartened by the response she has received.

Medical equipment and supplies which



have been donated and which she helps to gather together are being sent off every month in deliveries organised by Michael

Byrne of East Finchley who established the charity Driving Aid to Ukraine. <https://drivingaidtoulkraine.org/>

In the garage at her home, Mrs Mackiewicz surveyed some of the medical aids donated over recent days including a Zimmer frame, two crutches, baby cots, children's car seats and other items.

She regularly gathers together a wide array of medicines, clothes and equipment which are added to the consignments sent to hospitals in Ukraine.

Dan, the Labour man, pulls out all the stops

A petition organised by Dan Tomlinson, Labour's for Chipping Barnet, proved to be an accurate pointer towards the government's eventual climbdown over railway station ticket office closures, writes Nick Jones.

Over 300 people backed his protest over the loss of ticketing staff at New Barnet and Oakleigh Park, just two of the 974 stations across England where ticket offices were to be closed.

In the face of over 750,000 objections across the country and unrelenting criticism, the Transport Secretary, Mark Harper, announced the withdrawal of the proposals because they did not meet the "high thresholds" set by ministers for the level of service for rail passengers.

Organising a petition this summer against the cutback was the first local campaign mounted by Mr Tomlinson since he was selected in November last year.

He said it had been obvious for months that a U-turn was inevitable as the closure of the ticket offices was never a viable option when so many passengers, especially among the elderly and disabled, needed assistance in obtaining tickets.

"Ministers tried to present ticket office closures as a



Dan Tomlinson at New Barnet Station. Pleased at the decision to rescind the plan to shut ticket office

step being proposed by the rail operators, but everyone could see it was a cut being handed down by the government.

"I am pleased the voices of residents and rail users in Barnet and beyond have been heard loud and clear.

"Our campaign brought together people from across the community. I will continue to champion their needs and speak up for the vital services we all rely on."

Since he was selected as Labour's candidate Mr Tomlinson says he has taken time to meet residents to get to know the issues that affect the area, especially as there have been changes to the constituency.

The general election will be fought on new Parliamentary boundaries – and in the case of Chipping Barnet, the redrawn constituency loses Friern Barnet and takes in Edgwarebury.

Like the wider community in High Barnet, Mr Tomlinson is awaiting with interest the imminent release of updated plans for redeveloping The Spires shopping centre to provide space for the construction of blocks of flats of five to

six storeys in height.

"I accept that the Spires is not very vibrant at the moment. But long term I think High Barnet should be sustainable as a shopping destination and it would be a failure to give up on the idea of keeping The Spires as a shopping centre.

"I want to see broader reform for town centres, so that we get a level playing field in High Streets on business rates."

Having listened to residents, their top concern was the state of the

National Health Service, which he said was not surprising given that the waiting list for appointments and procedures had reached 97,000 within the Royal Free Trust, which includes Barnet Hospital.

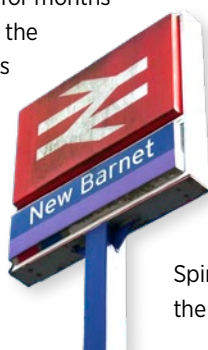
Crime, policing, the broader economy, and the cost of living were the other issues identified by most voters.

Mr Tomlinson, who is 31 and who trained as an economist, is currently the principal policy adviser for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Previously he had worked for the Resolution Foundation and the Treasury. Dan moved to London a decade ago and he and his wife purchased a house in Whetstone a few months ago after having lived in Friern Barnet for a year and a half.

Given the proximity of the Green Belt in Whetstone and Totteridge, he would be a resolute defender of open spaces and woodland.

"My starting point when it comes to judging any potential development would always be to preserve and where possible enhance the Green Belt."



Join the Barnet Society and help carry on its work

Annual subscriptions for new joiners are £10 for an individual or £15 for a family.

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