

THE Barnet Society

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3-0 Hat-trick of wins at planning appeals

You wait years to win a significant planning appeal – then three come along within a few weeks, writes Robin Bishop. **Planning Inspectors have dismissed appeals over development of the Whalebones estate, No.70 High Street and telecom hubs outside Nos.83 & 113 High Street. We're delighted and, because they form legal precedents, they will send powerful messages to developers and Councils across the country.**

1 Whalebones

In our last Newsletter I wrote, "If we win, it would be a stunning victory for those who care about our green environment and our heritage." Well it was, vindicating our six-year persistence.

It was also against the odds. After Barnet Council abruptly withdrew from defending its refusal of planning permission, Guy Braithwaite, Nick Saul and I found ourselves, along with Theresa Villiers MP and some local residents, up against Hill's and the Trustees' large team of consultants headed by a QC, who were supported by the Barnet Residents Association.

However, the Inspector's verdict was decisive: "I am in no doubt that the proposal would have a significantly harmful effect on the character and appearance of the

appeal site and surrounding area. Whilst the benefits of the scheme are clearly significant, collectively these would not overcome the cumulative substantial weight I attach to the identified harms."

As a Society we aren't opposed to all development on the site, but Whalebones is a special and significant part of the Wood Street Conservation Area: the last open fields where livestock grazed before being sold at the local market.

If new plans were submitted, we hope they would preserve the character of Whalebones and enable its management for the long term.

Hill Residential might appeal direct to the Secretary of State to see if the government would back the project, but post-COP26 the importance of preserving green, biodiverse spaces such as the Whalebones Park might well count against the developers.



2 No. 70 High Street

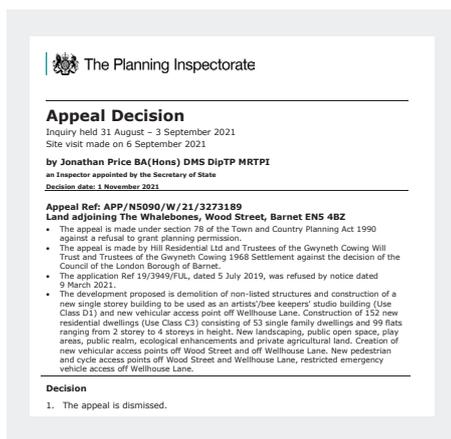
As significant, but in a different way, was another Inspector's ruling that the building completed last year must be entirely demolished and the original After Office Hours rebuilt.

Our objection was never against a replacement building. After Office Hours was no ornament of the High Street, any features of architectural or historical interest or value having been lost years ago. We were generally content with the proposal approved in 2017.

But the building that emerged from behind scaffolding deviated from the approved drawings in several respects, most noticeably in height. As we pointed out in our representation, "The Wood Street Conservation Area has suffered frequent, if less conspicuous, breaches of planning law over recent years: this flagrant example must be refused if further attrition is to be stemmed."

The Inspector's conclusions were unambiguous. As she reported, "When standing closer to the development, the building feels and looks overly large in terms of its height and bulk in its surroundings and ill-proportioned when seen in comparison to its adjoining neighbours. This awkwardness in the relationships is exacerbated by the use of the materials. The brickwork element at the first floor is overly extensive and highlights that the floor levels are very different to what would be expected when compared

▼ **Planning Inspector Jonathan Price's 14-page ruling outlining his decision to turn down Hill Residential's proposal to build 152 properties on the woods and farmland of Whalebones Park**



to its neighbours." She has required the reinstatement of After Office Hours within 12 months. That's a tall order, especially given the present shortage of labour and materials in the construction sector. A simpler solution might be for the owner to re-apply for planning permission for the 2015 scheme – but build it in accordance with accurate drawings.

3 Telecoms hubs outside 83 & 113 High Street

JC Decaux wanted to erect these structures, which are basically advertising hoardings with add-ons for public use. There are already two in the High Street, and a third has been approved outside the Police Station. If JCD's applications had been approved, that would have made five within 400 metres.

We argued that they would add visual clutter that we, the Council and Town Team have been trying for years to remove from the street scene.

Gratifyingly, in view of our championing of the pavement widening, the Inspector noted that, "The careful placement and design of street furniture, such as benches, trees and litter bins, respects the historic character of High Street. The design of these is uniform, subdued and shows an overarching and coordinated design philosophy."

The appeals against both hubs have been dismissed. That outside No.83 (the former Victoria Bakery) "would be an incongruous addition to the street that would not integrate well with existing features. As a result, the proposal would not preserve or enhance the CA."

And the one outside No.113 (next to The Spires), "would...crowd, and form an incoherent addition to, the existing street furniture. Accordingly, this would not respect the largely open and uncluttered character of the footway. As a result, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area." Furthermore, "The proposal would block views of pedestrians approaching the nearby crossing...This scenario would be especially hazardous due to its location close to both the pedestrian crossing and the kerb edge."

All these appeals have been test cases of the effectiveness of Barnet's protection of Conservation Areas. If they had been allowed, what hope would we have of preserving and enhancing the character of the town centre?

Winning all three warns other potential developers in Barnet that they cannot play fast and loose with planning policies and approved designs – and that if they do, the Council is serious about enforcing them.

They have also demonstrated the value of the Society in standing up against inappropriate developments of any kind – and that in the challenging arena of a public inquiry, we're willing and able to make detailed and convincing cases for Chipping Barnet's heritage and natural environment.

They may also strengthen the role of the Conservation Area Advisory Committee, on which the Society is represented by Guy Braithwaite. That's greatly to be hoped, since the Council earlier this year ceased planning officer attendance at CAAC meetings, and provides it with only minimal support.

Although it's good to have won three important cases, we've yet to hear the outcome of three more:

1 Sunset View

The owner has made a series of detrimental alterations to the building and front garden of a Locally Listed house in the Monken Hadley Conservation Area.

Arkley Riding School, Hedgerow Lane

Four new villas with large gardens are proposed on this site, which is part of Arkley Fields and home to many species that are Red or Amber-Listed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. We argued against creeping suburbanisation of the Green Belt, and that neither house nor landscape design are exceptional in terms of building performance or promoting biodiversity.

33 Lyonsdown Road

The Council planning committee unanimously refused permission for demolition of this Locally Listed Victorian villa – one of the last surviving in New Barnet – and its replacement by 20 flats.

The Planning Battles of Barnet go on...



Spire market expansion plan

Ambitious plans to expand and develop the twice-weekly Barnet Market have been given the go ahead by BYM Capital, the new owners of The Spire shopping centre.

Two long-established stallholders – Tyler Bone and Andy Gardiner – are establishing a partnership to take over the management of the market and widen the range of produce and products available to customers.

Previous owners of the Spire have sub-contracted the operation of the market to agents, but the two stallholders believe they are best placed to attract new traders and widen the market's appeal.

“Because of the Covid.19 pandemic more people are shopping locally and that's why we think it is an ideal moment to try to rejuvenate the market and keep them shopping here in High Barnet,” said Mr Gardiner, who first started helping at the market as an eleven-year-old schoolboy.

Mr Bone, whose grandfather Albert established the family's

▲ Tyler Bone (left) and Andy Gardiner, two stalwarts of the market, who now have ambitious plans for expansion

“All we want is a chance. Come the new year, we will be ready to give it a go

fruit and vegetable stall in 1959, is confident that with an imaginative approach Barnet Market could recapture the bustle of its heyday when stalls filled its former site on the St Albans Road and had a significant turnover.

“What is needed is some new thinking. A market needs to be a bit special. We could have themed events and attractions and that would help us sign up more stalls.

“Our site at the bandstand - at the Waitrose entrance - is already becoming the place to go, where you can eat and drink as well as shop.

“We have Yamama Falafel doing Middle Eastern fresh food and the local brewers Urban Alchemy have been laying out seating areas at weekends, so the potential is there for a much bigger market and a greater variety of food and drink.

“In the future we might even be able to expand the market to take in the landscaped grassy area on the other side of the service road. All it needs is the enthusiasm and local knowledge that has been missing in the past,” said Mr Bone.

After being suspended during lockdown, once it resumed earlier this year the market became increasingly popular having the added appeal of being an outdoor venue.

In the summer months there were often as many as ten stalls joining the two regular fruit and vegetable traders and Lenny's meat and poultry stall.

Newcomers have included a fresh fish stall operated by Young's Fish of Ipswich, as well as stalls selling bread, cheese, coffee, and refreshments.

Mr Gardiner said the priority was to get more of the produce stalls coming on a regular basis every Saturday and if possible, for the Wednesday market as well.

“Markets around the country are all becoming popular outlets for specialist foods and delicatessen and that's got to be the future, as well as the staples like fruit and vegetables, meat, fish, bread and cheese and so on.”

“All we want is a chance. Come the New Year we will be ready to give it a go.”

▼ Sample slide from Community Plan workshops



Calling on residents to help Tudor Park project

Following huge public response to Committee Member Simon Cohen's appeal in spring to support saving the derelict Cricket Pavilion, Barnet Council has generously agreed to fund £200,000 of repairs to bring it back into use – but as what?

Simon's survey showed that there is considerable demand for (in order of popularity) a café, public toilets, community space, events space, social enterprise and changing facilities.

Simon has drafted a vision document and mission statement, fellow Committee Member Simon Kaufman has looked at design options, and our Secretary John Hay is advising on a business plan, based on his experience on the successful Hope Corner project in Mays Lane. Council architects are expected to complete their

survey of the building in the New Year.

This is an exciting opportunity for local residents in the new Barnet Vale ward to help create a new community resource in Barnet Vale. Volunteers are urgently needed from the community around Tudor Park to join a working party to steer the project in partnership with the Council to meet local needs and wishes. Tasks include developing the brief and design, co-ordinating publicity and raising funds, as well as organising and admin.

Would you like to join the working party? If so, please contact *Simon Cohen* at FriendsOfTudorParkPavilion@gmail.com



Ball's in Gove's court

Robin Bishop writes

The government's planning reforms have been paused while the new Secretary of State, Michael Gove, focuses on 'levelling-up'. Let's hope that when his attention turns to planning, the government will abandon its more radical ideas and base its housing needs forecast on accurate data from the latest census.

The new Local Plans of Barnet, Enfield and Hertsmere continue to unfold. We've commented on the first two, but not yet on Hertsmere's which – alarmingly – includes building on over 10% of its Green Belt (see my separate article on Pages 6 & 7).

The former Barnet Market site has been sold, most likely for housing (Page 8) The Spires' new owners have yet to reveal their plans for the precinct, but the new Sunday afternoon street food market has got off to a good start.

The Chipping Barnet Community Plan progresses slowly. The Society was represented at recent introductory workshops for feasibility studies by Architecture 00 for (1) shared workspace, (2) a play masterplan, and (3) public realm and wayfinding improvements in and around the town centre. In parallel, the Town Team is bidding for further funding from the Mayor of London's High Streets for All initiative. It will be a while before we see results, but at least something is being done.



What's COP26 got to do with the Barnet Society?



The planters: from last year and from 1995 (inset)

Robin Bishop writes

Potentially a lot! At the suggestion of our Vice President David Lee, on the eve of the international conference I wrote to our MP, Theresa Villiers, on behalf of the Society to ask her to encourage her Government colleagues to do all they can to facilitate a successful COP26 to save our planet. As a former Secretary of State for Environment, of course, she needs no convincing of the urgency of the situation.

We were founded in 1945 to protect our countryside, and have a proud record of helping to conserve and enhance the environment (including the pioneering work of our erstwhile President, Sir Sydney Chapman MP). But we must do more.

Here are some actions we can take:

- Support net-zero-carbon and other exemplary environmental projects to reduce and eventually eliminate emissions during building construction and operation.
- Prioritise recycling of existing buildings and materials over-newbuild wherever feasible over their whole life.
- Protect and promote the Metropolitan Green Belt and other natural assets in our area.
- Plant trees, shrubs, wildflowers and rewild, where appropriate and properly managed.
- Promote public and active transport, including walking and cycling.
- Dispose of waste and water more sustainably

We'd welcome your thoughts on these and other ways the Society can help to mitigate climate change.

A selection of other recent cases:

APPROVED

54A High Street – We supported restoration and modifications to this, apparently the second-oldest timber-frame building in London.

Brake Shear House, 164 High Street – We objected to gates to this housing.

2 St Albans Road – Two new floors above the former Scrummagers shop.

Holmside, 145 Barnet Road – Replacement of an Arts & Crafts house that we nominated for the Local List by a larger and inappropriate modernist one. We objected.

REFUSED

189 High Street – Proposed attic flat with dormers in Monken Hadley Conservation Area.

WITHDRAWN

63A Union Street (CA) – House and workspace replacing former, long-empty shop. We were neutral about the design.

39 Wood Street (CA) – Proposed garden studio. We objected.

The Totteridge Academy city farm (GB) – We supported a classroom, accessible WCs and a small barn on this former field.

PLANNING DECISIONS AWAITED

2 Clyde Villas, Hadley Green Road (CA; LL) – We objected to this proposal for 16 flats for people with special needs, which would cram too many into the building and garden.

81 advertising banners on lamp-posts, High Street & Barnet Hill – We objected.

Former Quinta Club, Mays Lane – We support conversion of this derelict building into a Council facility for the storage, archiving and dispatching of library books.

Gaelic football pavilion, King George's playing field – A replacement for a previous building, not to be confused with the sports/leisure hub proposed for Barnet Playing Fields.

Victoria Quarter – Although the number of homes has been reduced by 15% to 554, and the height of some blocks lowered, the type of housing and its monolithic design are still worse than the plans approved four years ago, so we have objected.

Cockfosters Station – We strongly objected to Enfield about the adverse impact of 652 flats in four towers up to 13 storeys high overlooking Hadley Wood and Trent Park.

Barnet House, 1255 High Street – We objected to an application for 260 homes in, on top of and behind this prominent slab in Whetstone.

North London Business Park, Brunswick Park – Comer Homes propose to increase the number of homes from 1,150 to 2,428 in blocks of up to 12 storeys.

Hendon Hub – We have objected to plans for expansion of Middlesex University and relocation of the Central Library.

APPLICATIONS IN THE OFFING

Moxon Street – A housing development at the bottom of the street and a special school in a converted office block at No.50. The school designs exhibited last month were underwhelming, traffic could be a problem and we have severe concern about inadequate outdoor playspace, which is almost entirely on the roof.

Finally, TfL's plans for flats on **High Barnet Station** car park are on hold. The developer, Taylor Wimpey, has pulled out, but that's unlikely to be the end of the story.

Whither our Green Belt?

Hertsmere Council's draft **Local Plan** is currently out for public consultation, writes **Robin Bishop**.

Why should the Barnet Society be interested? Because if it's approved, over 10% of Hertsmere's Green Belt will be built over and lost forever. That's an area about twelve times the size of Hadley Common and Hadley Wood combined.

That should most certainly be a Society concern. Establishment of a Green Belt was the trigger for our foundation in 1945. Although legally part of Hertsmere, not Barnet, in effect we share Hertsmere's Green Belt. Most of us drive through it to the M25, Potters Bar, Borehamwood or St Albans, and its varied and mainly green openness is a welcome break between our and their built-up areas.

Also, most of the walks in our Rambles Round Barnet guidebooks are through Hertsmere. The footpaths themselves may be

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For Barnet residents, 900 homes on the fields separating Potters Bar from the M25 will be a particular loss.

safeguarded, but if their green surroundings go, they will offer a sadly diminished experience.

The Green Belt is an indispensable reservoir of natural biodiversity, absorbing greenhouse gas emissions and cleaning the air we breathe, as well as great resource for physical and mental wellbeing.

There's much else in the Plan to cause us concern:

- Little information is provided about two showpieces of the Plan, Bowmans Cross – a major new settlement north of South Mimms – or a massive Media Quarter east of Borehamwood, (*See Page 7*) both of be sited on Green Belt land.
- Other proposals include 2,770 houses in and around Borehamwood, 900 on the fields south of Potters Bar and 225 at South Mimms village (to list only those close to Barnet), mostly in the Green Belt.
- Very little is said about transport, which will be vital to the Plan's

success, especially in semi-rural areas. There's a tantalising mention of a Mass Rapid Transport system, but no details.

- There's a serious conflict with Enfield's Local Plan over land use around M25 Junction 24. Hertsmere is planning a wildlife area; Enfield envisages a joint industrial development.
- Barnet already suffers from road and parking congestion caused at least partly by the rising number of commuters from Hertfordshire into London. Building new homes and workplaces near our border seems certain to exacerbate that.

For Barnet residents, 900 homes on the fields separating Potters Bar from the M25 will be a particular loss.

Not only do they provide an attractive working agricultural landscape between Potters Bar and Barnet, they link visually with Bentley Heath, Dancers Hill, Wrotham Park, Dyrham Park and

other greenery to create a panorama much greater than the sum of its parts. The Baker Street and Barnet Road motorway bridges will make dismal southern gateways to the new housing, and it's hard to imagine a pleasant life in the shadow of the M25.

Good news for Barnet is that no new building is planned for the countryside south of the M25 and east of the A1. The media work opportunities will be welcome. And new homes near Barnet are likely to be cheaper and more spacious, internally and externally, than in Barnet itself. They're bound to attract young couples and families struggling to afford property in our area. It would be ironic if Hertsmere's new housing ended up benefiting us at the expense of its own residents.

We sympathise with Hertsmere's predicament. It has to meet an ambitious government housing target, yet 79% of its area is

designated as Metropolitan Green Belt, where development is only justifiable under very exceptional circumstances. But the Plan contains little analysis of either its housing need or re-use of its brownfield land.

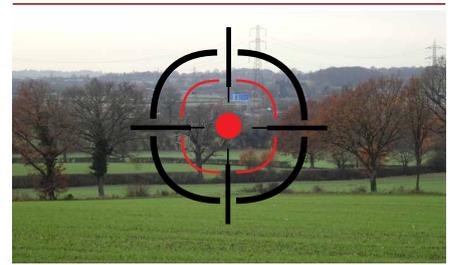
The Society will be submitting a detailed response to Hertsmere, but we encourage you to submit your own. The deadline for comments is 5pm on Monday 6 December.

The draft Local Plan can be found at: www.hertsmere.localplan.com/site/homePage. To comment, you can:

- **complete an online survey under the Have Your Say tab on www.hertsmere.localplan.com**
- **submit comments via the consultation portal also available on the website**
- **email local.plan@hertsmere.gov.uk**
- **write to Local Plan Consultation, Hertsmere Borough Council, Elstree Way, Borehamwood WD6 9SR.**

BARNET SOCIETY

CAMPAGNING FOR A BETTER BARNET SINCE 1945 SPRING 2019



Developers have Green Belt in their sights

Hertsmere Council recently consulted on the possibility of building up to 2,620 new homes plus new places of work between the M25 and Potters Bar, westwards as far as South Mimms and eastwards beyond junction 24. This would have a huge impact on our Green Belt, writes Robin Bishop.

To meet the housing crisis, particularly in London and the South East, the government is requiring every local authority to meet new house-building targets. Hertsmere have responded by considering 28 large sites and many more smaller ones. Barnet Council may do something similar when it launches its own draft Local Plan this February. Although the Green Belt on our side of the M25 is not seriously threatened - yet - we have to be constantly on our guard. Any new building on it sets a precedent that developers are happy to exploit. The identity of Chipping Barnet, which is surrounded on three sides by Green Belt, is potentially at risk.

That is why the Barnet Society recently opposed - successfully - a new warehouse on Green Belt land at 127 Barnet Road (the former Cottage Gardens Nursery). That is also why we have conversations about a new community and sports hub in the middle of Barnet Playing Fields. So we responded to Hertsmere's consultation. Our main comments were as follows.

The Green Belt principle

The Barnet Society opposes development of the Green Belt on principle. Not only has it prevented ribbon development between Barnet, Potters Bar and other Hertfordshire settlements, thereby preserving their cohesion and identity, but it has saved lovely countryside north and south of the M25 for the benefit of residents, travellers and wildlife. Its openness has been enhanced by the lack of roadside development along the M25. Having said that, we recognise that some development may be justifiable under exceptional circumstances. Unarguably today's housing needs across London and the South East are exceptional, and we broadly accept that a substantial amount of new building is necessary. But much of this could and should be accommodated on brownfield sites. Only as a last resort should building on the Green Belt be considered - and then only in the least obtrusive places, properly planned, and designed to high design and environmental standards.

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INSIDE:
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 Page 6: Work on Noah's Ark Children's Hospice is proceeding according to schedule after successful £1m fundraising
 Page 7: Children have reminded their adult counterparts about the importance of keeping the streets and paths free of litter

▲ How we warned about the threats back in 2019.

▼ Illustration of the proposed media quarter



BOWMANS CROSS & BOREHAMWOOD MEDIA QUARTER

Bowmans Cross is planned to be a settlement of 6,000 homes for around 15,000 people - nearly as many as live in High Barnet ward, half the size of Borehamwood and seven-tenths that of Potters Bar, located on Green Belt, **writes Robin Bishop.**

It will be a net-zero carbon, self-sustaining community, and the only

sketch in the plan [above] shows lots of trees. But little detail is provided.

The Media Quarter will be on a site of 63 hectares, and it's hoped will provide thousands of jobs. That would be welcome - but is it credible or sustainable? The economic case for such a vast development, or its long-term viability in a distributed digital age, needs

critical scrutiny. The Quarter will have 34 sound stages, many times more than currently exist in Elstree & Borehamwood. But access to Borehamwood will depend largely on two motorways, one of them notorious for traffic jams. And sound stages are being built in large numbers elsewhere in the country, which the government will probably support.



▲ The old market site as it is today, originally earmarked for a hotel



▲ The old market site marked out in red

Old market site may become homes instead of hotel

A feasibility study in the sales prospectus suggests two options for redeveloping the 0.4-acre site

After Premier Inn abandoned its plans to build a new hotel on the former Barnet Market site, the empty land is back on the market for potential redevelopment with flats and townhouses.

Bids for the site, which is bounded by St Albans Road and Chipping Close, had to be submitted by mid-October to agents Cushman and Wakefield.

An offer has been accepted but it is likely to be some weeks before a sale has been completed. The guide price was for offers of £2.5 million or above.

A feasibility study in the sales prospectus suggests two options for redeveloping the 0.4-acre site:

1, A four-storey block of flats on the corner with St Albans Road plus nine town houses along the length of Chipping Close.

2, Two blocks of flats of three and four storeys.

The land is currently owned by Aberdeen City Council (in the care of Aberdeen Standard Investments) which purchased the site for £4 million in April 2019 from Locate Developments (Hotels) Ltd.

In 2018 Locate Developments obtained planning permission to build a 100-bed hotel and restaurant for Premier Inn.

Whitbread's target date for opening the new hotel was in time for Christmas 2020 but this became a victim of the Covid.19 pandemic and the project was abandoned with the planning approval, limited for three years, expiring in November 2021.

In its sales prospectus, the agents Cushman and Wakefield say that the former market site – which is currently an abandoned car park – has significant potential for residential development, subject to planning permission.

Mistakenly, the prospectus says the “site does not sit within a conservation area” and there are no listed buildings in the immediate vicinity.

In fact, the market site is just within the boundaries of the Monken Hadley Conservation Area.

The planning permission granted in 2018 was for the erection of a “part three, part four” storey hotel with ancillary restaurant and parking.

Cushman and Wakefield believe the site would be considered acceptable for residential development and potential purchasers were told the London Plan focuses on developing brownfield land and the edge of town centres, as well as utilising small sites such as the former market.

The feasibility study's two options indicate a wide range in the number of new homes that could be provided.

The first option with a block of flats with 12 apartments and nine town houses would provide 21 new homes.

But the alternative option of two blocks of “part three, part four storeys” could increase this to 37 new homes.

St Albans Road fly tippers beware

Finally, after the usual prevarication, the council has installed cameras to counteract illegal dumping, writes Nick Jones

After presenting an unsightly and unsafe approach to High Barnet for so many years, the A1081 St Albans Road is finally being tidied up and improved, not least with the installation of closed-circuit television to deter illegal fly tipping.

Piles of rotting rubbish, builders' rubble, broken furniture, and assorted detritus have been cleared from hedges and grass verges.

A high steel security fence now provides an effective barrier in the worst affected area, closest to High Barnet

To the great relief of walkers and joggers the pavement that continues beyond the Barnet borough boundary has been widened and restored all the way to the roundabout near the Green Dragon public house.

Barnet Council, Wrotham Park Estate and Hertfordshire County Council have each contributed to the clean-up and in making it safer for

pedestrians walking beside what is a busy, fast main road.

After years of complaints, Barnet Council agreed to install CCTV to tackle illegal fly tipping and secure the removal of what had become a hideous eyesore.

Cameras now monitor movements on the west side of St Albans Road between Christ Church cemetery and the approach road to stables and footpath leading to Calvert Road.

Barnet Council's community safety team has remote connection to the cameras, and the location is also being monitored by daily inspections by one of the team's local officers.

The cameras are powered by solar panels.

Wrotham Park Estate contractors spent a week removing rubbish before the installation of the six-foot high steel security fence that extends from a gateway beside the churchyard to the stables and footpath to Calvert Road.

“But within a week of the fence going up, the fly tippers were back

▼ Darren Knott says the fence has made a real difference but that fly tippers have already broken through a hedge

Contractors from Hertfordshire spent several weeks restoring the pavement that runs north from the Barnet boundary.

There has also been resurfacing and pavement widening at the lay-by and bus stop outside the Shire London Golf Course.

Despite these combined efforts to spruce up the approach to High Barnet, the fly tippers are still able to take advantage of the ease with which rubbish can be thrown from parked vehicles.

There is no protection alongside the hedgerow heading north from the newly installed steel fence.

Already fresh heaps of rubbish have appeared between the end of the fence and Barnet electricity grid station which is alongside the county boundary and next to the entrance to the golf course.

Darren Knott, the Shire's events and catering manager, walks along that section of St Albans Road twice a day on his way to and from work and was delighted to see the work completed.

“The fence has made a real improvement and has made it much safer to walk along this section of the St Albans Road, especially for staff at the golf course.

“But within a week of the fence going up the fly tippers were back, and they have now broken through the hedge further along the road and dumped fresh loads of builders' rubble and rubbish.”

“If parking along here was banned altogether and there were double yellow lines it would make it much harder for fly tippers, but it would also speed up traffic along the St Albans Road which is already much too fast for comfort.

“Perhaps the only solution is to install additional CCTV cameras, extend the security fence and repair the hedges.”





Flower girls

Daffodil planting at QE Girls' School to provide a lasting reminder of Covid.19 pandemic, writes Nick Jones

By the spring of next year and the second anniversary in March of the start of lockdown, there should be a carpet of daffodils on the lawn in front of Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School.

Every pupil was invited to plant a bulb beneath the trees on the grassy slope beside the High Street. Sixteen former pupils who initiated the project hope an eye-catching display of a mass of yellow flowers will demonstrate QE Girls' community spirit and provide a lasting commemoration of how the country pulled together during Covid.19.

Other ideas being considered include the preparation of a time capsule filled with reminders and mementos of the pandemic.

Headteacher Violet Walker congratulated the students who had suggested planting the daffodils and then worked with the rest of

▲ QE Girls (from left) Grace Hanley (17), Preslava Taya Raleva (14), Ruby Douglas (14) and Trixie Smith (17), with English teacher, Paul Brooke

“All the pupils have been through a lot...and they wanted to leave a legacy, a reminder

the pupils to raise £450, enough to purchase 2,000 bulbs.

“This was the pupils' inspiration, and they hope it will be a lasting commemoration of what they and the rest of the community went through during the Covid emergency.

“Bulbs do represent a new life, a new beginning, and they should be at their best next March, the anniversary of lockdown.

“The pupils seemed to sense that QE Girls' School, standing as it does right at the entrance to High Barnet, was just the place for a reminder of what was a momentous period in their lives,” said Mrs Walker.

There was no doubting the pleasure of the girls to be back full time at school, but they sensed that the pandemic, and especially lockdown, was an episode that in some ways changed their lives and should be commemorated.

Grace Hanley, one of the pupils who had initiated the daffodil planting, hoped it would be a peaceful reminder of the stress that everyone had been through in the last 18 months.

“Like a lot of the others I was due to sit my GCSEs last year. It was incredibly stressful not knowing whether or not the exams would take place and then finding we would get grades, so the uncertainty caused a lot of worry.”

Trixie Smith shared Grace's frustration over the exam disruption and regretted the time lost at school in such a critical year.

“Everyone was living in their own bubble, so it is great to see the school coming together again and everyone planting a bulb.”

For younger pupils without the stress of having to miss out on exams, the switch to doing lessons at home via Zoom was an experience they are unlikely to forget.

Paul Brooke, the lead English teacher who worked with the sixth form on the arrangements for the bulb planting, said the enthusiasm shown by the pupils had been inspiring.

“All the pupils have been through a lot these last two years and they wanted to leave a legacy, a reminder of what they have all been through.”

Neighbourhood police officers are anxious to strengthen their contact with the community

One of the top priorities for High Barnet's dedicated team of police officers – the Safer Neighbourhood Team – is to respond to complaints about anti-social behaviour in the High Street including begging on the pavement and disturbances involving rowdy youngsters.

Another focus is to tackle problems caused by drug dealing in and around Leicester Road, New Barnet.

Over the winter months there is to be a renewed drive to try to reduce burglary offences with advice for homeowners on crime prevention.

After having had to curtail face-to-face meetings with residents because of Covid, the team is keen to strengthen contact with the community and monthly getting-to-know-you sessions have resumed.

Sergeant Kevin Rudge (centre) and two police constables, PC Umar Fida (left) and PC Ben Knight, are anxious to restore the pre-pandemic level of contact with residents across the High Barnet ward which is the area north and east of Wood Street and Station Road, New Barnet.

A separate Underhill Ward Safer Neighbourhood Team led by Sergeant Anthony Toporowsky is responsible for the area south of Wood Street, which includes the hospital and Barnet College.

Sgt Rudge said the High Barnet team, which also includes Police Community Support Officer Rick Celeste, were encouraged by the interest shown when they held a contact point meeting in The Spires earlier this autumn.

After hosting their November session at Theo's café and grill in Plantagenet Road, New Barnet, there will be another contact point session in December.

At present the two ward teams are based in Barnet Police Station but the future location will depend on what happens to the Metropolitan Police building in the High Street which is to close completely and is due to be sold. Front counter services at High Barnet were withdrawn in December 2017 when Colindale Police Station in Graham Way became the one 24-hour, seven-day-a-week station for the whole of the London Borough of Barnet.

Theresa Villiers, MP for Chipping Barnet, has appealed to the Mayor to drop his



plans to relocate the Safer Neighbourhood Teams to Colindale and rent one of the empty shops in her constituency. Regular discussions about the work of the High Barnet and Underhill Safer Neighbourhood Teams are organised by a Community Action Plan committee for each ward.

Representatives of local organisations attend the meetings and hear directly from ward police officers about the action being taken to tackle issues causing concern.

These meetings advise on priority issues for the team and the three to be tackled in the High Barnet Ward between this November and February next year are reducing anti-social behaviour in and around the High Street and Leicester Road and reducing burglaries.

Sergeant Rudge said his team aimed to ensure that any householder who had been burgled would get a home visit the following day, or as soon as possible, followed by a visit by a crime prevention officer.

His team have noticed a welcome reduction in anti-social drinking of alcohol in the High Street and other public spaces around the town centre.

A ban on street drinking was introduced by Barnet Council in November 2019 under the High Barnet Public Spaces Protection Order following complaints about drunken

and rowdy behaviour in Church Passage, the rear of The Spires shopping centre, Ravenscroft Park, and other trouble spots.

Officers work a mixture of day and evening shifts, both during weekdays and weekends, and they are happy for residents to engage in conversation while they are out on patrol.

Residents and business owners can keep up to date with local crime alerts by becoming a member of Online Watch Link, on which the Metropolitan Police in partnership with neighbourhood watch coordinators communicate with the community.

Messages and crime alerts are sent out by email, telephone, SMS, or fax after registering at <https://www.owl.co.uk/net/>

If anyone would like to attend Community Action Plan meetings – and the next meeting is online at 7pm on Thursday 17 February 2022 – they should make contact via email:

Contact details for High Barnet Ward Safer Neighbourhood Team:

- Email - SX-SNTHighBarnet@Met.police.uk
- Twitter - @MPSHighBarnet
- Mobile phone - 07887633343 - Please do not use this number in an emergency – please use 101/999 instead

New school planned to meet huge need for autistic children places

A former warehouse and office block in Moxon Street is to be converted into a special needs school for up to 90 children with autism, if Barnet Council gives the go ahead, writes Nick Jones.

A planning application is to be submitted for change of use and to construct a school assembly room as part of the proposed refurbishment of the building.

The Department for Education has already purchased the former clothing warehouse and offices for what it is hoped will become the Windmill School, a new free school which will be under the control of the Barnet Special Education Trust and be the first publicly funded school for autism in the Barnet area.

If planning permission is obtained after the application is made in late November or early December, and if the other approvals that are needed are obtained, the new school will start taking pupils in September 2023.

There is a shortage of special needs places for children on the autistic spectrum across the borough.

Andy Hamer, a capital projects manager from the Department for Education, said that the two main floors of the existing building will

be fitted out with classrooms, with secondary age pupils on the first floor and primary children on the second floor.

To overcome the lack of an outside recreation space, a play area would be created on the roof which would include a horticultural section for gardening, a sensory garden, and an area for games, all surrounded by a 2.5-metre-high solid fence.

Minibuses arriving at the school would follow a one-way system, exiting at the entrance beside the Hadley Wood Hospital.

The only significant structural change would be the demolition of a section of the building to construct an assembly room.

A kitchen and school dining room would be created in the ground floor section of the building next to the Hadley Wood Hospital.

Mr Hamer said the DfE had been working with Barnet Council for some time to find a suitable home for the new special school.

When another possible site fell through in 2019, the Moxon Street premises became available and were purchased by the government.

“There is a severe shortage of

“The aim, wherever possible is to educate [autistic] children within the community

▼ An artist's impression of how the new school would look like, including a specially constructed play area on the roof of the building

places for children on the autistic spectrum and even the Windmill School will not meet the demand within the borough that is expected by the middle of the decade,” he added.

“The aim wherever possible is to educate such children within the community rather than sending them outside the area or to special residential schools or independent providers.

“These premises are close to the High Street, which will help the children familiarise with shopping and life in the town centre; the Tube station is nearby, and that will help them gain experience of travelling; so Moxon Street has a lot to offer.”

Each class at the new school would be for up to six children and probably as many as 50 members of staff would be required including teachers, teaching assistants, therapeutic and administrative staff.

For more information about the Barnet Special Education Trust and the proposed Windmill School see www.thewindmillschool.org





Finishing touches to new care home

Signature at Barnet, a new care home with 100 apartments, which is due to open for residents in March next year, will become the largest nursing home in High Barnet, writes Nick Jones.

Construction work on the £22 million development is nearing completion and the massive crane which has dominated the local skyline for so many months was finally dismantled in October.

The three-storey home, with a rear lower ground floor – fronting Wood Street and Cattley Close – offers a mix of two-room apartments and one-room studio apartments with supporting nursing and dementia care.

Residents will have access to a wide range of facilities including a restaurant and bistro, cinema, activity rooms, hairdressing salon and health spa.

Signature Senior Lifestyle purchased the 2.5-acre site of what was formerly the Marie Foster Centre and a derelict nurses' home from NHS Services in 2018 (right).

A year later, approval was given for a building that the planners agreed was compatible with the Wood Street conservation area.

Construction work was well underway by the summer of last year and the contractors

are due to hand over the completed building by February next year.

Local residents and passers-by have watched with interest the rapid progress by the building contractors.

A sales office was opened in the autumn and several furnished apartments can be viewed: one-bedroom apartments include a lounge as well as a wet room and kitchen area and the smaller one room studio apartments (above, right)

When fully occupied Signature at Barnet is expected to have a staff of well over 100 with a range of full and part-time posts. A recruitment drive will start at the end of the year.

As part of the Signature group's policy of reaching out to local communities, apprenticeships will be offered to local students and the home hopes to establish links with Barnet College and other educational establishments.

Lisa Nichols, client liaison manager, told the Barnet Society that Signature at Barnet was



keen to work with local community groups and organisations and would be interested in any ideas for events for residents that the home could host in its activity rooms.

Signature has just opened the latest of the group's 14 homes at Beckenham and another nearby new home being developed at the site of the former Hendon Hall Hotel will start taking residents at the end of January.

Ms Nichols said the location of the new Wood Street home was ideal because it was so close to the town centre, High Street shops, transport links and other important services such as Barnet Hospital.



Before: blot on the landscape

Musical invitation

Students entering the young composers' competition have the option of creating a short four-to-six-minute piece for a piano trio (piano, violin, cello) or string quartet (two violins, viola, and cello).

“
The competition is aimed at widening local interest and support

Secondary school pupils who play an instrument or who are studying music are being invited to take part in a young composers' competition organised by the High Barnet Chamber Music Festival, writes Nick Jones.

The competition is aimed at widening local interest and support in what is to become an annual chamber music festival at Barnet Parish Church.

At the end of the festival's inaugural sell-out concerts in July, the artistic director Joshua Ballance announced plans to develop an outreach programme to engage local schools.

The winning composition – and the deadline for entry is 20 February 2022 – will have its premier at the festival to be held next July.

In another initiative, the organisers are hoping to appoint two students who love music, and who are interested in running concerts, to become student ambassadors for the festival.

Their role would be to help prepare for the 2022 festival.

Students entering the young composers' competition have the option of creating a short four-to-six-minute piece for a piano trio (piano, violin, cello) or string quartet (two violins, viola, and cello).

There are three possible briefs for the competition: a piece that commemorates the 100th anniversary of the founding of the BBC; a piece that draws on the climate crisis as inspiration; or a piece that only uses three notes.

The winner will be able to attend rehearsals of their composition and talk to the ensemble about their piece.

In addition to a recording of the performance, the winner would receive free tickets for their concert and a £25 voucher for Chimes Music shop.

In launching the two initiatives, artistic director Joshua Ballance said that as a composer himself he knew full well how important it was to have a student composition played by outstanding professionals.

For further details about the student ambassadors' scheme and young composers' competition contact admin@hbcmf.co.uk



▲ Head teacher
Eve Watson

High Barnet infant school under threat of closure

Teachers and staff anxiously await the government's decision on its future, writes Nick Jones

A government decision is expected by the end of the year on the future of Grasvenor Avenue Infant School where staff and parents have already been warned about its possible closure in July next year.

Officials at the Department of Education are currently looking at the options.

The school's trustees hope the Secretary of State will be able to announce a final decision within the next few weeks, once the consultation process has been completed, so as to end the uncertainty.

Grasvenor Avenue is unusual among High Barnet primaries because it is infants only – taking children from reception until they are seven – and with a falling school roll it has faced financial difficulties for some years.

Currently the school has just under 60 pupils and in a letter to parents last July the trustees said that with “great sadness” they had been forced to explore the potential closure of the school.

For the past decade, the staff and trustees had worked “very hard” to continue operating as a one form entry infant school with a capacity of 90 pupils, but the “viability of the school is no longer secure”.

Long-term budget deficits were predicted for the future, and this was compounded by low birth rates in the surrounding locality.

Another handicap is that many parents prefer a primary school that has infants and juniors together so that there is no need – as at Grasvenor – to transfer to another school at the age of seven.

Grasvenor became an academy trust in 2012 and its income was boosted for some years by the Grasvenor Project under which the school mentored over 200 secondary school pupils – a project that closed in February this year due to the Covid.19 pandemic, and which it has not been possible to revive.

Ian Phillips, chair of the trustees, and Grasvenor's headteacher Ms Eve Watson, are awaiting the government's decision and are anxious to work with staff and parents once the school's future is

▲ Grasvenor has been suffering from falling rolls and budget deficits for years

decided. If the closure goes ahead, Barnet Council will be responsible for securing places for the Grasvenor children at other local schools.

Mr Phillips said the trustees were standing by, either to map out a future for the school if that is what the government decides or prepare for an orderly closure.

He added that the trustees acknowledged the difficulties faced by a single school academy trust like Grasvenor which had a small intake of pupils and had a struggle to balance the books.

One option was for the school to join a chain of academy schools such as the Enfield Learning Trust – which had been a possible partner – but it had decided against inviting Grasvenor to transfer to the trust.

The site of the school is on land that was gifted to the London Borough of Barnet by the Leathersellers Company and school was granted a 125-year lease when it became an academy in 2012.

If closed, the school building would revert to Barnet Council; the land was originally gifted for the exclusive use of education.

“
If the closure goes ahead, Barnet Council will be responsible for securing places for the Grasvenor children at other local schools



THE ARTFUL DODGER: ‘His mind is cunning, his fingers are sly, and he’s quick on his feet’

Residents and admirers of High Barnet have every encouragement to enter a competition to write the best “Love Letter to London” – after all this is said by many to be a leading contender for the most historic town within Greater London, writes Nick Jones.

The London Society has launched the contest – with £4,000 in prize money – to celebrate London in “all its life, charm and mystery”.

Local contestants might well be tempted to write a love

letter to London with a Barnet twist – and there are lots of angles to choose from.

What better starting point than Charles Dickens’ masterful creation of Oliver Twist...Twist met the Artful Dodger in Barnet High Street (possibly on the steps of what was the old Victoria Bakery).

Another source of inspiration might be the 1471 Battle of Barnet in the Wars of the Roses – and Barnet is the site of the only battlefield in London.

Anyone short of ideas might like to view the Barnet Tourist Board’s YouTube video



◀ Drawing of Oliver Twist meeting the Artful Dodger is from the Mary Evans Picture Library

featuring “London’s Most Historic Town”.

The free to enter writing competition is to write up to 500 words on the theme “resilience and recovery” to fit with the London Society’s motto of “valuing the past; looking to the future”.

www.londonsociety.org.uk/page/loveletters

Entrants are encouraged to write on any aspect of London’s past, present or future. It might be reportage, an historical essay, a think piece, a spot of futurology, a work of fiction, or a poem. “We are open to all forms and styles”.

There are five categories, with prizes of £400, £200 and £100 in each, and a further overall winner’s prize of £500.

- Under 18
- Students (in full time education, 18+)
- Open - all other UK entrants
- International - from anyone

not based in the UK

- Poetry

The deadline for entries is 30 November 2021. Final judging will take place during December and the winners announced in January 2022.

The London Society is encouraging the widest possible support for its “Tell us why you love London” competition.

“We’re biased, but we believe London is the greatest city in the world.

“It is the nation’s capital, but woven from hundreds of separate communities; the economic powerhouse of the UK.

“It has an amazing history but is constantly evolving; it offers world class art, music, theatre and other live performances. It is ‘home’ to nine million people but attracts dozens of millions more each year as visitors.”

Help the Barnet Society carry on its work by joining.

Annual subscriptions are £8 for an individual or £12 for a family. Additional donations are greatly appreciated.

Website – www.barnetsociety.org.uk

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susanskedd@yahoo.co.uk

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