

Uproar over Tube apartments plan

Local residents are up in arms over plans to build up to 450 apartments on land around High Barnet underground station, write Robin Bishop and Nick Jones.

They are being supported by local MP, Theresa Villiers, who has raised the matter in Parliament.

The Barnet Society has submitted its own criteria for development to TfL, which is behind the proposal. [See panel on Page 2] These are the things we believe must, and must not, be done with the site. They were overwhelmingly supported by our members in a recent email consultation.

TfL has been asked by London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, to have plans in place by 2021 to build a total of 10,000 homes on car parks and other vacant land around London's tube stations.

Reducing car usage and increasing use of public transport are key planks of his London Plan.

Similar plans are in hand for developing TfL land at about 20 other Tube stations in North London. These include Finchley Central, where up to 700 homes are proposed, and at Cockfosters tube station car park, where a scheme is being developed to build homes to rent.

Residents were quick off the mark when the proposals were first published in June. More than 100 crowded into a hurriedly arranged

meeting in St Mark's, Barnet Vale, to decide on a campaign of action.

They complained about the sheer scale of the redevelopment; loss of 75 per cent of spaces in the station car park; lack of services in the area; and destruction of much-loved wooded areas around the station.

Two of the organisers Gaynor Bond and Kim Ambridge have been encouraged by the response so far to their campaign.

"Gaynor started posting messages about it straight away and I offered to help. Before we knew it, we were being inundated with promises of support," said Ms Ambridge. "What's so encouraging is we are getting any number of firm pledges to help organise a campaign group."

The group can be contacted at HandsOffHighBarnet@gmail.com.

A change.org petition has been set up <http://chnq.it/VQb8CpM8>

TfL's initial sketches showed blocks of flats of seven storeys or higher stretching all the way from Meadway down Barnet Hill as far as the bridge. A gentler and better-lit ramp would connect the station and the A1000/Meadway junction, but most of the present trees and shrubs would go. New workspace would be built, including a cycle hub with secure bike parking, changing facilities and e-bike charging points, and a coffee shop on a new public 'square' by the station.



Kim Ambridge and Gaynor Bond with pledges of support after launching their protest group to oppose plans to provide over 450 homes in blocks of flats around High Barnet tube station

There were no proposals to change the station itself.

In a mid-August meeting with the Society, TfL acknowledged that the structural challenges of the unstable Barnet Hill embankment would probably prevent building blocks at



Aerial view of the proposed site of the apartments

Special focus on Environment and Planning issues

the north end of the site. They still intend to build on the car park and the scaffolding and container yards, but only 300-400 rather than the original 450 homes. These would be mainly 1- & 2-bed flats, with some



Robin Bishop and architect Steve Pike

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If it goes ahead, we must have say in design

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Drawing of the apartments

3-bed units as well. The blocks could still rise 6-8 storeys above street level – but TfL didn't say whether that was from the bottom or top of Barnet Hill, and didn't show any new drawings. They propose to keep 50 of the present 160 parking spaces (30%), to keep the existing disabled bays and to provide 20-30 spaces for residents and visitors.

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Barnet Council is in two minds about the proposals: it wants more homes, but is aware of

the unpopularity of high-density, minimum-parking schemes. It recently approved a planning application for the redevelopment of Colindale tube station with 313 new homes, but refused permission for 86 homes beside Woodside Park Station and for 724 homes at Pentavia Park in Mill Hill. Unfortunately, the Mayor of London has over-ridden the latter decision, and could do so at High Barnet. TfL's aim is to test local reaction, prepare more detailed plans for



Protest meeting by local residents

public consultation in autumn, and submit a planning application in December. They hope to start construction in 2021, with the first homes ready for sale in 2022 or 2023. For that to happen, a great deal of TfL's site investigation and design work must already be well advanced. Our chances of influencing the design are slim, but we will do our best.

What we want when it comes to development

Barnet Society criteria for development at High Barnet Station

1. We agree with the draft London Plan that in principle transport hubs are logical places for intensified use, and that there may be scope at our tube and rail stations for building above car parks, tracks and the stations themselves.

2. We object to high rise development, but don't object to high density development. It must intrude as little as possible on views from nearby open spaces and the Green Belt.

3. The trees around High Barnet Station form, with Lee's Trees on Barnet Hill and Meadow Open Space, one of the 'green gateways' that give Barnet town centre its special identity. The trees and greenery should be extended to the foot of the Hill.

4. We do not want big buildings at the A1000/Meadway junction, nor should any overlook Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School. We question the viability of any buildings on the northern or western embankments since their engineering cost will be considerable.

5. If built on, the container storage depot must be reprovided on a suitable alternative site.

6. The TfL staff building should be replaced, re-faced or at least screened.

7. We cherish the original parts of the existing station, a part of Barnet's history.

8. Rationalisation of the station

entrances and platform access would be beneficial. Nothing is to be built that would impede future station improvements.

9. Development must be conditional on enhanced interchange between station, buses and taxi. TfL claim to provide this, but its initial scheme shows no evidence of it. Provision should be made for onward connections to Cockfosters, Edgware, St Albans and other points east, north and west, now or in the future.

10. Improved access, drop-off and pick-up, particularly for the disabled and semi-ambulant, are essential.

11. We object to removal of 75% of the existing car park, which would displace cars onto local streets and discourage car-sharing and other integrated transport solutions. We wish to see an independent survey of where users come from. We don't understand how removing car parking places from the last tube station on the line will encourage people to use public transport, a stated aim of TfL. Furthermore, the London Mayor has no say about car usage from nearby Hertsmere residential development.

12. We accept the need for new housing, especially affordable, but question the quantity proposed. We wish to see a variety of unit type, size and tenure e.g. shared ownership, key worker and first-time buyer, and management arrangements that discourage transient dwellers.

13. Any new development must follow best practice in urban planning, enhancing security and connectivity to neighbouring areas, and avoiding hostile boundaries to rail and road. Without this, there is a real risk of creating an urban ghetto.

14. We welcome appropriate types of new workspace, e.g. start-ups, creative studios, flexible offices, traditional offices and/or shared workspace – but not at the expense of trees.

15. Local traffic on and off the A1000 is already very congested – even before the opening of Ark Pioneer Academy. Road improvements must be made, allowing for drainage and utilities upgrades, as well as possible deep sewerage problems (such as those recently occurring around Hadley Green).

16. The impact on local services including schools, GP and dental surgeries, which are already over-subscribed, must be quantified and properly planned for in advance of any development.

17. The development must be an exemplar of environmental and ecological sustainability and diversity, retaining and nurturing existing natural habitat and wildlife (including, for example, thrushes and deer). There should be more trees on after the development than before it.

18. Air pollution and noise from vehicles and trains must be mitigated.