

# The Barnet Society

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## Confusion over ULEZ ‘rat runs’

**H**igh Barnet’s introduction to its new role as a gateway to the Greater London Ultra Low Emission Zone brought with it confusion for motorists, some troublesome complications and led to enforcement cameras around the town becoming a target for widespread vandalism, writes *Nick Jones*.

Transport for London – which is facing stiff opposition from Hertfordshire County Council – was forced to acknowledge that some concessions were necessary.

Because of High Barnet’s location on the edge of the Green Belt, and with fewer main roads than in urban areas, exemptions have had to be made to allow for traffic to flow freely within Hertsmeire, especially between Borehamwood and Potters Bar.

Two charge-free corridors have been created around High Barnet, so there are through routes but the introduction of these two corridors, which are exempt from the £12.50 daily charge, has led to annoying inconsistencies for residents and caused confusion for visiting motorists.

TfL admits that Stirling Corner roundabout at the junction of the A1 and

**Given High Barnet’s special status within the ULEZ zone, two charge-free corridors will allow ‘escape routes’ for non-compliant vehicles**

the A411 is one of the top three trouble spots around the perimeter of the capital.

Because of a standoff with Hertfordshire, there are few if any warning signs on county roads.

As a result, TfL believes there is an increased risk of collisions as drivers of non-compliant vehicles take evasive action at Stirling Corner to avoid entering ULEZ.

Signposts on the A411 for vehicles approaching Stirling Corner from Watford, Elstree, and Borehamwood give drivers no warning that if they turn right into the A1 towards Mill Hill, they will be caught

immediately by ULEZ cameras, or if they carry straight on there are cameras on either side, all along the Barnet Road.

Councillor Richard Roberts, leader of Hertfordshire, has accused the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan of creating a tax border between his county and Greater London.

He has said repeatedly that there is no way his council is going to allow signs that endorse ULEZ.

Given High Barnet’s special status within ULEZ, the introduction of the two charge-free corridors will allow “escape” routes for non-compliant vehicles.

Barnet Road – from Stirling Corner to The Arkley public house – is the longest of the two charge-free corridors.

Non-compliant vehicles travelling towards Barnet town centre will be charged if they turn off Barnet Road.

At junction after junction, on the right and the left, there are ULEZ signs and cameras – at the junction with Hendon Wood Lane, Barnet Gate Lane, Rowley Lane, Rowley Green Road, Quinta Drive and Elmbank Avenue.

The only road that is exempt is the continuation of this exclusion corridor north along Galley Lane which is charge free through to the end of the borough boundary with Hertfordshire.

For traffic approaching High Barnet via Galley Lane, there are ULEZ warning signs and cameras right across the junction with Wood Street.

The only alternative for drivers seeking to avoid the charge is to turn right at The Arkley public house and continue along the charge-free corridor to Stirling Corner.

Unlike the Hertfordshire side of the roundabout, the road sign on the A411 towards Stirling Corner indicates that vehicles turning left into the A1 will be entering the zone.

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Vandalised ULEZ cameras in Rowley Green (Inset) Map of the zone in Barnet area



## Continued from Page 1

The second charge-free corridor benefits traffic heading south from Junction 23 towards High Barnet: St Albans Road becomes an exclusion route from the county boundary at the Shire Golf Club.

Warning signs and cameras indicate that ULEZ applies to any right turn – into Wrotham Road, Alston Road and Stapylton Road, but non-compliant vehicles do have the charge-free option to turn left at the junction with the High Street and can head north via Hadley Highstone to Potters Bar.

Vehicles that fail the emissions standards and which are heading south from Potters Bar towards High Barnet will be able to continue charge-free through the upper end of the High Street.

But the only alternative to paying the charge will be to turn right at the junction with St Albans Road and head back to the Barnet boundary, otherwise drivers will be caught by the ULEZ camera above the pedestrian crossing lights outside The Spires shopping centre.

Some High Barnet residents with older

cars are already trying to work out whether they can devise their own private “rat runs” to drive around the outskirts of the town without incurring the charge.

Peter Wanders, whose shoe shop is just within the charge-free zone of upper High Street, has decided to keep his 10-year-old car, which fails to meet the emissions standard.

“I am lucky because I can still drive north up the A1000 towards Potters Bar or along the St Albans Road without paying £12.50. Otherwise, I will have to use the bus.”

## Still ways to avoid charge if you stick to the three main roads that are outside zone

**Drivers of non-compliant vehicles can still enjoy some of what High Barnet has to offer without having to pay the daily £12.50 charge – but only if they stick closely to the three main roads which are exempt from ULEZ.**

Visitors can access properties and venues along these charge-free roads.

If they take care to park within the exclusion corridors – and don't venture down a side road – they can visit a cafe or pub, go to a football match, play golf, or attend classes for dancing, yoga, and Pilates.

While some businesses, clubs and organisations are pleased to be the unexpected beneficiaries of relief from ULEZ, Transport for London says the location of enforcement cameras is kept under constant review, so this could be subject to change.

The three main roads around the town which are ULEZ exempt are Barnet Road from Stirling Corner to The Arkley public house; St Albans Road to the junction with High Street; and the upper section of High Street and the Great North Road from the St Albans Road junction across Hadley Green to Hadley Highstone.

Many of the short cul-de-sacs off these three main roads are also charge free, but there are cameras at the start of almost every side road.

Staff at the Old Fold Manor Golf Club, with its approach road off Hadley Green,



are advising members with non-compliant vehicles that they will not be charged if they keep to the Great North Road.

Visitors with non-exempt cars can also park outside Hadley Memorial Hall, which holds classes in dancing, yoga, and Pilates.

Among the organisations to benefit from the charge-free route along Barnet Road is Hadley Football Club, which has its stadium in Arkley.

Club chairman Steve Gray said it would be a great relief for the club if the exemption is honoured.

“Many of the fans and players are from clubs well to the north of Barnet and we know many with older, non-compliant cars are worried about ULEZ. We've already had some parking at Junction 23 services and taking a taxi to Arkley just to avoid ULEZ.”

Across Barnet Road at The Gate public house, manageress Francesca Storey, hopes customers who live outside Greater London and who have older vehicles will not be put off by ULEZ as there is direct access from the main road to the pub's car park.

Closer to Barnet, staff at The Arkley public house are also seeking to re-assure customers with non-compliant vehicles.

But on leaving the pub, car drivers must either return to Stirling Corner or head north up Galley Lane (which is the only other charge-free road in High Barnet).

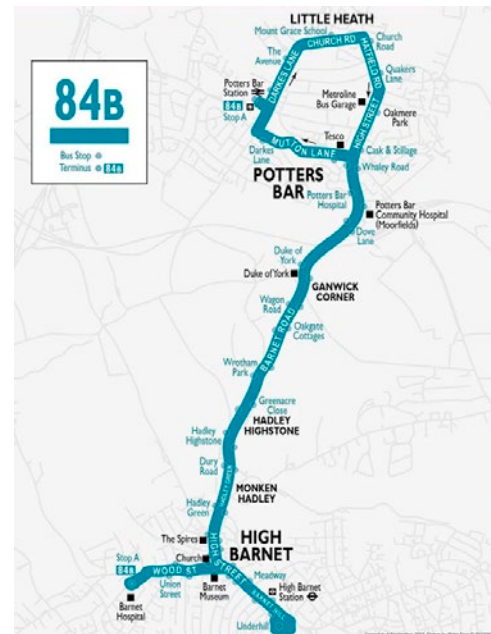
Otherwise, they face a battery of ULEZ warning signs and cameras at the start of Wood Street.



(Top) Steve Gray from Hadley Football Club, Francesca Storey from The Gate, ULEZ camera in Wood Street and parked cars in the St Albans Road charge-free zone



On the buses: The 84 bus, back in its new guise as the 84B



# 84 bus makes return journey

**Hertsmere Borough Council celebrated the launch of the 84B – the re-introduced bus route between Potters Bar railway station and High Barnet, which reinstates a missing service and provides a vital connection to Barnet Hospital, writes Nick Jones.**

Residents who have fought for its restoration filled the pavement at the bus terminal – and a cheer went up when an 84B arrived bringing a High Barnet contingent who had campaigned just as vociferously for the return of a direct connection from the town centre to Hadley Highstone and on to Potters Bar.

Rarely have so many civic dignitaries assembled at a bus stop, but they were met with whoops of delight and, not only were glasses of bubbly handed round, but there was a slice of cake to go with it.

The new Monday to Saturday hourly service – with the first departure from Potters Bar railway station at 06.05am and the last from Barnet Hospital at 19.10pm – will serve vital stops such as Potters Bar Community Hospital, Barnet town centre, High Barnet tube station and Barnet Hospital.

Councillor Jeremy Newmark, leader of Hertsmere, hailed their success in unlocking infrastructure income to fund a 12-month contract worth £183,600 – essentially a subsidy of £600 a day to the bus operator, Central Connect.

Hertsmere found a way to release the money to break the logjam that had developed between the various authorities, and they could now celebrate the restoration of a missing link.

“Communities in Hertsmere and Potters Bar are inextricably linked to High Barnet,” said Councillor Newmark.

“We share education, hospitals, critical health care and family links – connections that were cut when we lost the 84 last year and which we knew were a priority to bring back.”

Councillor Newmark explained that the launch of the 84B – which replaces the New Barnet to Potters Bar half of the previous 84 route – had been an election commitment made by the new Labour-controlled council.

Hertsmere was one of the first local authorities in the country to use income from the community infrastructure levy for the specific purpose of funding a bus service.

In thanking Hertfordshire County Council for their support as the local transport authority, Councillor Newmark said he was proud to stand beside Theresa Villiers, the Chipping Barnet MP.

She had given them her full support and encouragement in what had been a genuine cross-party campaign.

His hope was that the 84B would become a permanent fixture and although that

## “Communities in Hertsmere and Potters Bar are inextricably linked to High Barnet”

would depend on the level passenger traffic, there had been indications of possible financial support in the future from Hertfordshire and Barnet Council.

Hertsmere believed that Transport for London – which was represented by Ely Baker, the London Assembly member for transport – might also offer support in the future, and perhaps find way to help sustain the route.

Councillor Nik Oakley, who is the Hertsmere cabinet member for transport – and who has been dubbed the Queen of Buses by her fellow councillors – said the 84B service all about recognising the needs of Potters Bar people.

“This is all about you and we hope it is only the beginning. We have funded the 84B for a year. Hertfordshire might help to extend it a bit, but it must be a self-sustaining service and you must all use the bus.”

Councillor Oakley paid tribute to Potters Bar resident Sherry Billings who had taken a lead in helping to organise demonstrations in support of the restoration of the service.

# AUTUMN PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT REPORT



**Robin Bishop writes:**

## LONDON FESTIVAL OF ARCHITECTURE

Our four LFA walks Barnet commons – old and new went well in June, making a profit of £295. Fine weather showed Barnet’s almshouse gardens and countryside at their best. I’m grateful for the help given by Gordon Kerr, Jenny Remfry and Frances Wilson. High points were inspiring visits to the remarkable Thomas Watson Cottage Homes and New Ground older women’s co-housing.

## BARNET COUNCIL

The Citizen’s and Young People’s Assemblies have reported on how Barnet can become more sustainable. Their 16 recommendations cover waste and sustainable consumption; learning, communications and partnerships; nature and biodiversity; transport; and housing, buildings and energy. They’ve informed the Council’s new vision Caring for People, our Places and the Planet.

The Council is considering Community Review Panels for major developments. These would provide feedback to be considered by the Design Review Panels being set up to raise architectural standards in Barnet.

Progress on the Local Plan remains sluggish. Public consultation is likely this autumn and adoption in spring of next year.

We responded to the Council’s Air Quality Action Plan 2023-28, asking for actions to be added to monitor and mitigate pollution generated by the A1000. We’ve also submitted some preliminary comments on the North London Waste Plan (in which Barnet is a partner).

## MONKEN HADLEY COMMON

We reviewed the Trust’s consultation paper and draft regulations. It agrees with us that cycling should, in principle, be encouraged, but it will be for the Board to decide whether a right to cycle should be extended beyond the existing bridleway.

## OTHER CONSULTATIONS

See my separate updates about Whalebones and Victoria Quarter.

## APPROVED

**70 High Street** (fka After Office Hours) – We’d objected but the outcome is mixed. The developer has been given permission to retain part of his new building, but a drastic reduction of its overall height is required.

**202 High Street** (fka Bentleys) – Despite our objection, this will be demolished in favour of commercial use plus two storeys of flats, pushing up the roof line of the Monken Hadley Conservation Area.

## REFUSED

**164 High Street** (Lightfield, fka Brake Shear House) – Shanly Homes proposed to replace the approved workspace (for which we fought several years ago) with 9 flats. Naturally we objected.

**63A Union Street** – Another application for this site by Coe’s Alley. We were neutral.

## DECISIONS AWAITED

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

**118 High Street** (the Grade II-listed former TSB & Barnet Press) – Costa Coffee on the ground floor, flats above. We were neutral: at least the application is better than Merkur Slots’ gaming proposal.

**152 High Street** – Extension up to the roof line of neighbouring buildings. We objected.

**4 Hadley Parade**, High Street – Proposal to convert Julian’s hardware grotto into a ‘mathnasium’. We didn’t object.

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

**Bartletts Yard**, St Albans Road – A new house on a tiny back land plot. Not bad externally but we objected to the impact of its big basement and construction on existing neighbours.

## Brookfields Garage,

**Victoria Lane** – Three unashamedly modern but inconspicuous houses and workspace on a back land 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 but have suggested design improvements.

**Gaelic football pavilion, King George’s playing field** – We were neutral.

**Western half of Meadow Works site,**

**Pricklers Hill** – We supported these 8 new houses.

**Sky Studios North, Rowley Lane** –

Application for 10 more sound stages on the Green Belt.

## APPEAL

**1 Church Passage** (two flats above L’Antica Pizzeria) – We agreed with the Planning Inspector that ‘[The] incongruity of the roof form, its design and detailing would distract attention away from and visually compete with the listed and locally listed buildings [on both sides] and...be harmful to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.’

## DOOMED

**33 Lyonsdown Road** – As I write, demolition of this villa on the Local List has begun.

## FARTHER AFIELD

**Alexander House, Finchley** – A classic 50s building with a remarkable mural will be lost if this application succeeds. We’ve written supporting its addition to the Local List.

**Hendon Central Library, The Burroughs**

– Following strong objections in 2021 by us and many residents, the existing Central Library – one of a trio of magnificent civic buildings – is to be retained for its original purpose. Unfortunately its proposed rear extension and new neighbouring buildings for Middlesex University are little changed from the previous scheme, so we’ve objected to them.



## ‘Hands off’ the Spires shopping centre

**Another sign of the mounting opposition to plans to replace much of The Spires with blocks of flats was the strength of a Saturday morning protest in Barnet High Street, writes Nick Jones.**

Leaflets were handed out and shoppers queued up to sign a petition opposing the redevelopment.

Protesters fear that new buildings will tower above High Barnet’s historic skyline and that the town will lose what they believe is a popular and well used shopping centre connecting the High Street to Stapylton Road.

Developers BYM, who bought The Spires for £28 million in May

Residents opposed to the Spires plan collect signatures outside the shopping centre. Another protest is planned for next month

**“The Spires have become a really important central space for the town”**

2021, have indicated that they will publish revised proposals in the autumn for their scheme to build up to 300 flats in blocks of five to six storeys in height.

Two of the town’s largest representative groups – Barnet Residents Association and Barnet Society – have already agreed to combine forces to co-ordinate a community-led response.

The Society has responded in detail to BYM’s initial proposals and looks forward to seeing greatly improved designs soon, and to staging a public meeting about them.

Barnet Council officials and leading councillors are being asked to agree to open discussions with local organisations so that they can pass on the concerns of residents and shoppers.

Organisers of the “Save Our Spires” campaign, Diana Rae and Sheila Ladd, say they are anxious to demonstrate to BYM and Barnet Council the anger of residents at the prospect of losing so much of the existing shopping centre.

“Since it opened in 1989, the covered walkways and squares

alongside the shops within The Spires have become an important central space for the town, a vital social hub,” said Ms Rae.

“The Spires is where we do our shopping, meet our friends, chat together. We can do that right in the middle of the town centre, away from the noise of the traffic, often out of the rain, and that sense of community is so important, especially for the elderly.”

Ms Ladd feared that replacing the shops with blocks of flats either side of a new narrow thoroughfare would destroy the character and intimacy of The Spires.

“We all appreciate the chance to walk through the shopping centre, with its covered walkways and squares, perhaps sitting outside for a cup of tea or coffee. All that would go if it was just one straight pedestrian thoroughfare.

“BYM say they want to encourage a cafe culture – with cafes and restaurants under the flats – but there won’t be enough space for outside seating in their new thoroughfare. There won’t be any sunlight with tall blocks of flats.”





# Let's plant an 'M25 for trees'

**We are all being encouraged to plant more trees as a contribution to carbon capture and improvement of the air we breathe, writes Jenny Remfry.**

**In Barnet the push is coming from two directions: from Barnet Council, who need to green up the borough, particularly those parts that are not 'leafy Barnet', as part of its Net Zero aim.**

**And the Campaign to Protect Rural England (London) is calling for a continuous ring of woodland winding around the capital – a kind of M25 for nature. Is it possible that one day a squirrel or rabbit could make its way from Essex to Kent by way of Epping Forest and Hampton Court?**

Last month Barnet Council launched its Interactive Tree Portal alongside its new Tree Policy 2023-2028. By opening [barnet.ezyportal.com](http://barnet.ezyportal.com) you will find a map that marks every tree that is the Council's responsibility: street trees and those in parks and Council-owned open spaces. The aim is to increase street tree canopy cover by 1,000 trees per annum, by planting new ones,

**“The Society has been asked to help by providing information on recent tree or orchard planting in our area”**

replacing dying or diseased ones and supporting the existing ones through good management.

In addition, the Council is encouraging individuals and groups of volunteers to plant trees on private and community land. The Portal gives sources of advice on suitability of sites, selection of species and how to manage and support new trees.

Meanwhile, CPRE has launched its Tree Ring Community Forest project. Its aim is to extend wooded areas in Green Belt and neighbouring areas, and to create continuous green routes from central London to the Green Belt.

It has started by mapping the area, since most existing maps are at least five years out of date. They need to know about any woodlands or trees planted in the last 20 years

Jenny Remfry points to the line of native oak, ash and silver birch that the Society planted on Whittings Hill to mark its 50th anniversary in 1995

so that they can build up a picture of where new planting is required to join up existing woodland. For more information, visit CPRE London and look for Tree Ring Community Forest.

The Society has been asked to help by providing information on recent tree or orchard planting in our area. We have undertaken quite a lot over the years.

The plantation on Whittings Hill was created to celebrate the Society's 50th anniversary. The line of Norway maples – Lees' trees – up Barnet Hill is flourishing. The hawthorns on the hill slope are mostly doing well. More recently, the 14 trees planted in the High Street as part of the pavement extensions are surviving in spite of the drought last year.

Holly Kal-Weiss and I are collecting news of schools, groups and other volunteers who are planting trees or orchards, or making requests for planting on Council-owned land, so that we can pass information on to CPRE.

Please contact [jennyremfry@btinternet.com](mailto:jennyremfry@btinternet.com).



## Victoria Quarter developers back for more

**Robin Bishop writes:**  
**Some developers just never give up!**  
**In 2017, you may recall, after years of negotiation with local residents, a scheme for 371 homes next to Victoria Recreation Ground was agreed and given planning permission.**

In 2020 Fairview, the developer, applied for permission for 652 units. Following local outcry and planning refusal, they returned in 2021 with a reduced scheme for 554 units. Last year, the Council rejected that proposal too. Fairview appealed against the decision, but lost. We thought they would revert to the 2017 scheme. We were wrong.

Fairview came back in August, this time wanting 486 units. They claim to be generally following the 2017 scheme, but replacing the terraced housing with taller blocks to provide 76 more social and affordable homes.

We accept that since 2017 planning and building regulations have become more stringent and that the economic climate has worsened, necessitating some adjustments to the original design. However, this proposal is far bigger than that previously approved. Furthermore, since the last application the Council has declared a

climate and biodiversity emergency and set the ambition of Barnet becoming Net Zero by 2042.

**We submitted a range of comments on the public exhibition. The main ones were these:**

- We welcome the retention of the ‘finger’ blocks, but less so their increase of height from five storeys in the 2017 scheme to six.
- We aren’t persuaded that an increase of 31% residential units is justifiable, particularly as the number of larger family homes (8) would be 73% fewer than in the 2017 scheme (30).
- We’re also unhappy about the very low proportions of affordable and social housing.
- The loss of the terraced houses with their own gardens jars with us. They added variety of house type and visual character to the 2017 scheme.
- The apartment blocks backing onto the railway tracks would need very careful design to ensure adequate views, ventilation and acoustic privacy.
- The key principles of the landscape strategy such as drainage, renewable

energy, biodiversity and play require explanation.

- We’d like to see more substantial community and environmental benefits. These would include serious steps towards meeting Barnet’s Net Zero targets and aspirations.

**To their credit, Fairview responded in some detail, making the following points:**

- They do not consider that there is sufficient market demand for the private sale of 4-bed dwellings on this site (surprisingly, in our view).
- The majority of new homes will be for the affordable tenures, with only 39 (34%) of the additional 115 homes proposed in our application being for private sale.
- One Housing Group will provide estate and block management services to all the homes on the site, so there will be parity of service regardless of tenure. All homes will have access to the landscaped areas, parking, and other services.
- They expect to achieve over 60% improvement over Building Regulations Part L. A financial contribution is proposed to address remaining emissions to ensure the development satisfies the ‘net zero carbon’ requirement for major development.
- The site would achieve a substantial biodiversity net gain.
- It is their ambition to see Victoria Quarter become the most sustainable development that Fairview has delivered to date.

We’ll see. Another planning application is expected soon.

## Whalebones amendments still don’t go far enough

**Robin Bishop writes:**  
**We’ve known since late last year that, despite planning refusal in 2020 and dismissal of their appeal in 2021, a new application for the Whalebones estate was on its way. A proposal for 120 homes had even been written into Barnet Council’s draft Local Plan.**

At public exhibition in March, the Trustees’ developer Hill showed a scheme not very different from the previous one. The main design differences were a reduction from 151 to 118 homes, setting back of the building line along Wood Street and some reduction in the blocks next to Elmbank.

In August Nick Saul and I were invited to meet the developer’s team to see how they’d responded to public comments in March.



The quantity of homes was down to 114 and some design tweaks had been made, but the scheme was still far bigger than the Society thinks is acceptable for the Wood Street Conservation Area.

We were told that a planning application is likely in early September. As soon as it’s in, we’ll study it in detail, draft our conclusions and consult our membership before submitting our final comments.



Action stations:  
Jonathan  
Warren, Hayley  
Lehmann,  
Frances Wilson  
and Mel Garfield  
at the woodland

## Threat to Arkley Green Belt and woodland

**There could hardly be a clearer illustration of the constant threat of unauthorised development within the Green Belt around Barnet than an alarming sequence of events surrounding the fate of ten acres of protected woodland at Arkley, writes Nick Jones.**

Nearby residents mounted a united fight back when they found that well-used footpaths had been blocked, fences were being erected and that contractors were delivering building materials.

A previous owner of the woods at the rear of Rowley Lodge subdivided the land into ten separate one-acre plots and has sold them off for a combined total of £1.3 million.

Five plots are thought to have been purchased by potential developers, one of whom has cleared trees and undergrowth without planning permission from a plot close to Rowley Lane.

In response, a group of Arkley residents

mobilised themselves to demand action from Barnet Council to prevent unauthorised house building.

They have achieved some new safeguards: A tree preservation order has been extended and strengthened to take in all ten acres of woodland and three weeks' notice was given of an enforcement order if builders' materials were not removed.

Residents are trying to register well-established footpaths, which have been blocked by fencing and barriers.

"We have shown what people power can achieve in alerting the authorities. But now we must wait to see whether Barnet Council can deliver," said one of the organisers, Hayley Lehmann.

Over recent months, neighbouring property owners were alerted to the imminent sale of the ten one-acre plots after finding them being advertised for possible development if planning permission could be obtained.

An aerial view published by Barnard Marcus Auctioneers when the plots were being marketed (bottom, left) shows the woodland, bounded by Windmill Lane and Rowley Lane.

Five plots were purchased by adjoining homeowners intent on preserving the land and keeping it as a protected green space, but the other five appear to have been bought for potential development.

Then, in mid-August, much to their annoyance, residents and dog walkers noticed that footpaths through the woodland were being blocked with fences and barriers.

To their great surprise, a stile and signs marking a public right of way across one corner of the woods simply disappeared. Fresh earth had been used to fill holes left by the wooden posts.

In a bid to mobilise a community response, Ms Lehmann joined forces with fellow residents, Jonathan Warren, and Mel Garfield, to alert Barnet Council to unauthorised development, damage to trees and blocked footpaths.

Their first success was to secure a tree preservation order to protect all the trees growing in what is officially known as Rowley Lodge field. This order protects existing trees and any new trees that establish.

As an additional safeguard the designation of the site of being of interest for nature conservation has been updated to reflect the current character of the land which is "wooded with open glades of grass or scrub".

Owners of the plots have also been reminded that the woods are within an area designated as Green Belt and these designations should be regarded as "significant policy constraints" for anyone considering developing the land.



Stiles and signs vanish overnight

*When Frances Wilson, chair of the Barnet Society, visited threatened footpaths in woodland off Rowley Lane, Arkley, on August 19 she was keen to point out the existence of a stile and signs indicating a public right of way across the woods. A day later the stile and signs had disappeared. On August 21, Hayley Lehmann, who has been mobilising local residents in their fight to preserve the*

*woods, stood on precisely the same spot to show what had happened. Fresh earth filled the holes left by removal of the wooden posts. Ms Lehmann feared that the sudden disappearance of a stile and signs from what is a registered footpath seemed to be another indication that some of the new owners of the one-acre plots within the woods were intent on restricting future public access.*



We are not objecting to plans to convert most of the agricultural buildings into industrial and warehousing at Kitts End Farm



## Green Belt high on election agenda

**Robin Bishop writes:**

**London's Green Belt could be a major issue in the next general election in constituencies in and around it, like Barnet.**

Numerous councils changed hands in the May local elections, and in East Herts the Greens are the majority party. Around half of councils with Green Belt have delayed their Local Plans, concerned about housing targets.

Analysis of the Uxbridge by-election has shown that threats to the Green Belt were as influential as ULEZ in preventing Labour winning it. By promising to allow more homes to be built on the Green Belt, Keir Starmer may shoot himself in the foot.

Although Conservatives claim to protect the Green Belt, a new CPRE report State of the Green Belt 2023 shows that councils plan to build over 200,000 homes on it.

The government continues to allow planning appeals based upon its current, but discredited, method for calculating housing need and supply. The CPRE also finds that, on Green Belt land, less affordable housing is being provided than called for by local plans, and only 5% is social housing.

On a brighter note, Jenny Remfry reports on Page 6 about our work with CPRE London to create an M25 of Trees around London.

In and around Barnet, threats to the Green Belt are coming big and small. Just

across our border with Hertsmere, Wimpey have applied to build up to 220 homes off Barnet Lane. We've objected to that. But we're minded not to in the case of Lower Kitts End Farm near Dancers Hill, where an application is in to convert most of the agricultural buildings – which are unsuited for modern equipment – to industrial and warehouse.

Hendon Wood Lane to be resolved.

Special circumstances surround the application by Barnet Elizabethans Rugby Football Club to replace their clubhouse and improve their pitches on Byng Road Playing Fields. We're neutral about it: we have reservations, especially about the landscaping which could threaten the future of the Medieval Festival; but it does



Plans for Byng Road rugby pitches could threaten the annual medieval festival

**Nick Jones writes on Page 8 about several plots of greenery in Arkley recently sold at auction and used to store building materials.** Our under-resourced Council Enforcement Team has been alerted, but it took eight years for a similar case in

offer an opportunity to increase community use of this Green Belt site. As I write, Barnet's Strategic Planning Committee is minded to approve the plans subject to conditions including safeguarding and biodiversity.



The Jester in its hey-day (above) and now the pile of rubble that stands today and which neither council nor developer can agree on its future development

## Jester stalemate is no joke

**The Jester and its beer garden were once a popular venue on the New Bevan housing estate, between New Barnet and Cockfosters, until it was damaged in a fire and partly demolished in 2018, writes Nick Jones.**

Unlike The Crooked House, once dubbed the UK's wonkiest pub - and now just a pile of rubble - The Jester is still standing, just about.

Local residents are demanding that Barnet Council should insist on the demolition of what is now an eye sore so that the site in Mount Pleasant can be cleared for community use.

Community activist Ros Howarth, who has already fought several campaigns on behalf of residents of the New Bevan estate, hopes that the outrage over destruction of The Crooked House will serve as a salutary reminder to Barnet Council that the only answer is for the local authority to intervene directly.

Behind The Jester's partial demolition is a troubled history of changing ownership, futile planning applications and a seemingly never-ending sequence of court cases and appeals.

Built in 1958 as a result of a petition from residents, The Jester became a well frequented pub and restaurant, and its loss five years ago was said to have been a

heart-breaking blow for the community.

Ms Howarth said that while she supported Barnet Council's insistence that a new "community facility" should be built on the site, the current stalemate was unacceptable.

"We fought so hard to try to get the pub restored but we got nowhere and now feel abandoned. Of course, we would be delighted to see it rebuilt and re-opened as a community pub.

"But leaving a wrecked building like this is an eyesore. If the planners and the owners are going to go on arguing over its future, the least that could be done is that the building could be demolished, and the site cleared of rubbish."

Ms Howarth said that after the fire at The Jester in 2018, demolition work began within days, but the council stepped in to halt the work.

After the owners failed to get planning permission to redevelop the site, an order was finally issued requiring the pub to be rebuilt within three years or replaced with

**"Of course, we would be delighted to see it rebuilt and re-opened as a community pub"**

equivalent community space.

When that order lapsed in 2022, a new owner submitted a fresh application to build a private nursery on the site, together with houses and flats.

"Again, a judge has said that it must be rebuilt with a new public house or community facility. But a private nursery is not a community facility.

"We think the council should intervene and get the demolition completed. But the owner doesn't want to do the demolition until there is planning approval in place, and the council don't want it demolished as they fear a vacant site would be even worse, so it is stalemate again."

She has been supported by East Barnet Councillor Simon Radford who said it was unacceptable for the local community to have to put up with what looked like "a haunted house".

Ms Howarth is used to fighting drawn-out campaigns and as the Barnet Society reported in 2019, she was at the forefront of a spirited appeal to save the New Bevan Community Church as a much-used meeting room and children's play area.

When the London Baptist Property Board put the Community Church up for sale the Barnet Christian Fellowship organised a crowd-funding appeal to try to buy the premises after gaining protection for the building for six months as an asset of community value.

"In the end the church was demolished after we failed to raise the £1 million needed to purchase the building and the site. It was bought by a developer who has built flats in its place."

At one end of the site the developers erected a 2,000 square foot, two-storey freehold community building which was completed in the summer of 2022 and is currently on the market.

# The lady of Jack's Lake

Russia-born Ilona Domnich surprised the fishermen at the lake with her soprano voice ahead of her concert and now she hopes it will be an annual affair



Sitting with her dog beside Jack's Lake at the height of the Covid pandemic, New Barnet opera singer Ilona Domnich had a flash of inspiration, **writes Nick Jones**. Could a wooded glade at the water's edge in Monken Hadley Common become an auditorium for an outdoor concert?

With the cancellation of indoor events, Ilona had no appearances booked in her diary and many of the musicians she knew were also without work. They were all desperate to start performing once again.

Within a matter of months her idea had become a reality and in August 2021 she held the first concert in what is now an annual season of Music by Jack's Lake.

The second of this summer's concerts, Schubertiade by the Lake, was on Sunday 10 September.

Ilona, an internationally acclaimed soprano, who often takes the title role in classical operas such as La bohème and La traviata, will be accompanied by BBC Concert Orchestra pianist, Charles Mutter; Judit Kelemen (viola); and David Sztankov (horn) in a special arrangement of music by Franz Schubert.

When Ilona first started asking around about the possibility of staging an outdoor concert beside Jack's Lake she was surprised and delighted by the encouragement she received.

Support was immediately forthcoming from the Monken Hadley Common Trust and the tenants of the lake, Hadley Angling and Preservation Society.

"I met their representatives beside the lake to show them precisely where the musicians and audience would be. To try to convince them I started singing, and they were taken aback on hearing a soprano in full voice, but it obviously did the trick."

Ilona also has the support of the World Heart Beat Music Academy where she teaches singing and which helps with tasks such as amplification for the concert.

The Academy's aim is to introduce classical music and jazz to communities in south London and her long-term aim is to raise sufficient money to pay for a scholarship.

"What I would like to do is find a sponsor who could help finance the concert and then we could use donations from the audience to assist charitable causes, such as the Monken Hadley Common Trust, and establish a scholarship for a young musician unable to pay for tuition.

**"It is a magical location to hear music"**

"Sponsorship would provide the guarantee I need to invite world class musicians and give our local community a taste of that magical combination of nature and music at an open-air concert."

Ilona's journey to New Barnet – where her son is a pupil at JCoSS, the Jewish Community Secondary School – is also of note.

She was born in St Petersburg in Russia (her father is Ukrainian) and they moved to Israel when she was 13. Aged 21, she came to London on a scholarship at the Royal College of Music where she trained as an opera singer.

Her next professional appearance is a Wigmore Hall recital on 30 September.

# Let the music play on

Barnet's Chamber music festival honours the late great Jean Middlemiss



Jean Middlemiss at a concert some years back. Members of the Suzuki Group who played at the tribute

**M**usicians and singers from across the age range performed together at Barnet Parish Church recently to commemorate the life of a much-admired music teacher, the late Jean Middlemiss.

Their celebration of her outstanding contribution to the local music scene ended this year's High Barnet Chamber Music Festival.

Performers commemorated different aspects of Jean's lifetime in musical education, especially in teaching young musicians; her encouragement as an accompanist to numerous local artists; and her support for local concerts and events.

Joshua Ballance, the festival's musical director, congratulated them for the way they had come together to honour Jean's life and to provide a fitting finale to what had been their

most ambitious festival, with five concerts spread over the previous two weeks.

Jean, who lived in High Barnet at Ravenscroft Park with her sister Barbara, died in 2020 at the age of 94.

An obituary in The Guardian reflected on the contribution she had made to British musical life. She studied the innovative method of teaching inspired in Japan by Dr Shinichi Suzuki – and a performance by the Barnet Suzuki Group was one of the highlights at the concert at Barnet Parish Church.

Hannah Biss, who is the group's founder and teacher, says she first met Jean after completing her training at Manchester and she gave her every encouragement.

"She came to every single concert I had with my group."

Another group supported by Jean was the Barnet Madrigal

## “Performers aged from six to sixty-plus took their turn to commemorate an aspect of Jean’s lifetime in musical education”

Group, which performed three of the numbers that she had loved.

In her tribute, Norma King said that Jean had been a committed and enthusiastic member of the Barnet Madrigal Society and her expertise and cheerful personality had contributed so much to the group's performances over the last 30 years. "Right up to her final days, Jean was not only piano accompanist for the U3A choir but also active in the local musical community."

The concert opened with

a performance by the Barnet Young Cellists with Sara Bethge and Christopher Bevan.

Sara said Jean had worked tirelessly at her aim that every child should have the experience of making great music with others.

"She would be glad to see so many young people performing in her memorial concert.

In a tribute after her contribution, Clare Hoffman (violin) said she missed her early morning walks with Jean around the fields at Barnet.

"She would often wear a 'statement' summer dress and told me fashion always comes full circle.

"Her lovely 94th birthday part was the best celebration ever. Jean hired a boat to travel the Thames and danced with friends to her favourite songs on the top deck."

**Nick Jones**

# 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.

Additional donations are greatly appreciated

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