

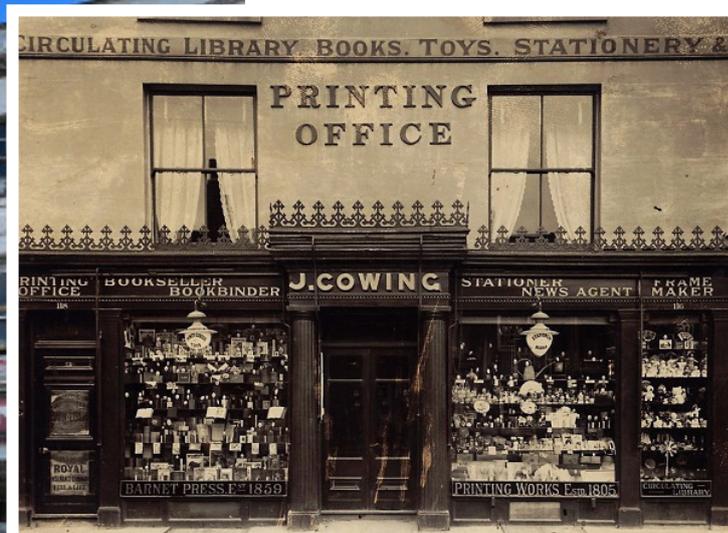
The Barnet Society

WINTER 2022 | £2

Still all to play for on bingo hall



The empty TSB building (left) and in 1913 when it housed the Barnet Press



A bingo premises licence has been approved for a former bank building in Barnet – but the key decision has yet to be taken on whether Barnet Council will give planning permission for an adult gaming centre in the High Street.

Opponents of the plan tried without success to persuade the council's licensing sub-committee to delay its decision on the bingo licence until after a planning committee meeting to consider whether to allow a change of use of what was

formerly a branch of the Trustee Savings Bank.

Local objectors hope to express their opposition to the proposal to install gaming machines in the High Street at a planning committee meeting, possibly in late November or December.

After 666 objections were registered by the original deadline in July, a full hearing was promised and there were a further 100 objections during an extended period of consultation.

The Barnet Society was the only objector when the application for the

bingo licence was heard by the licensing sub-committee (25.10.2022).

Nick Saul, who spoke for the society, and who was disappointed by the decision, believes that a far stronger case can be presented on planning grounds.

Under the draft Local Plan for Barnet, gambling places are prohibited within 400 metres of a school – and the argument will be that the nearby Barnet and Southgate College falls within this limit and that young students need protecting and should not be enticed into gaming centres.

A previous attempt in 2008 by Agora to open a High Street gaming centre in the former Mothercare shop was refused and local community organisations including the society, Barnet Residents Association and the Chipping Barnet Town Team say this precedent should be respected.

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The famous clock at no 118 High Street, which has long been a Barnet landmark

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At the licensing sub-committee hearing, Mr Saul argued that a decision on the building's possible change of use should have been taken first, but council officials assured the society that the granting of a bingo licence under the Gambling Act would not influence the outcome of the planning application.

Merkur Slots, which already operates an adult gaming centre in Ballards Lane, Finchley, has applied for permission to convert the ground floor of the building.

The former bank was once the offices and printing works of the Cowing family, who published the former Barnet Press weekly newspaper.

Merkur Slots' argument in favour of the bingo licence was that another three have

already been agreed across the borough and that the Metropolitan Police made no objection to an adult gaming centre in Barnet High Street.

So far, the company has established 220 adult gaming centres across the country, each with as many as 50 gaming machines which offer winnings of up to £500 for stakes of a minimum of £2.

Because of the strength of the opposition, Merkur Slots was asked by the council to outline its security measures and the steps taken to protect young people from the impact of 24-hour gaming.

It said its adult gaming centres admit only over-18s and staff adopt a "Think 25" policy challenging anyone who appears to be under 25.

Eyes down for a big showdown ahead

Robin Bishop writes:

We and 771 others strongly objected to Merkur Slots' planning application to change the use of 118 High Street from banking to 'bingo'. We also objected to the harm its signage would cause to the appearance of the Grade II-listed building. The Council and Chipping Barnet Town Team have worked hard to preserve and enhance the town centre for over 20 years. Despite Covid-19 and economic trends, it's showing signs of regeneration. Permitting a gaming centre - in addition to the existing betting shops - would negate these aims.

Barnet's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2025 explicitly mentions adult gaming centres, amusement arcades and betting shops as of particular concern regarding their impact on their users' mental and physical health and wellbeing.

And its draft Local Plan would forbid such uses within 400 metres of educational establishments. We pointed out that Barnet & Southgate College, Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School, Susi Earnshaw Theatre School and The Windmill Special School are all within that distance of No.118. As I write, the Council has yet to make a decision on the change of use. But thankfully it's already refused permission for the proposed alterations to its street façade.

No.118 is one of few buildings in Chipping Barnet listed as Grade II on Historic England's national register. Behind the accretion of paint, cables and paraphernalia a masterly piece of mid-19th century joinery survives, complete with Doric columns, pilasters, cornice and parapet. It's the best Classical shopfront in town, and perhaps the best in any style.

We successfully argued that the black horizontal band

Merkur proposed over the central doorway and the obscured shop windows (required under the Gambling Act) would harm its character. Refusal of their signage may not be enough to stop Merkur, however. Change of use must also be refused.



Drawing of shop front under Merkur's plan for the gaming centre and (below) when the premises were still TSB bank





Julian calling it a day

Julian Stewart, the longest serving independent trader in Barnet High Street, is about to retire after 43 years in business, writes Nick Jones.

He opened his hardware shop, Bargain Buys – as it was originally known – in 1979.

Renamed Julian's Hardware, it soon became a High Barnet institution, an enticing Aladdin's cave for any resident or do-it-yourself enthusiast searching for the right tool, tin of paint, piece of ironmongery or any other household item.

At the age of 74, he has decided to call it time and a "To Let" sign will soon be appearing on the front of his shop, ready for a new tenant.

"I am going to miss the business and especially all my loyal customers. The shop has been like a social club – three-quarters of my customers know me by my first name."

After a triple heart by-pass in 2019 and an enforced closure, he re-opened only to be hit by the Covid.19 pandemic and closure again.

"Despite it all, business picked up again, but at 74 it can be hard going running a shop and my wife Nilly, who does the book work for me, is really looking forward to me retiring from the shop."

His departure from the High Street – he thinks probably by Easter next year – will have to be preceded by what he agrees will be the "sale of the century" as he sells off his stock in order to empty the shop.

Long-standing customer Lyn Brimson was sad to hear the news.

"I have been coming to Julian's for 40 years.

His shop really is an Aladdin's cave, but Julian knows precisely where everything is and finds what you are looking for straight away.

"He is so knowledgeable as well, always ready to give advice on what product to use or how to sort something out."

Another fan disappointed by the news is Gordon Kerr who said Julian's knowledge and expertise was unbeatable. "There is nothing in the world of do-it-yourself (which is legal) that Julian doesn't stock or knows where it can be found."

Julian recognised that competition along the High Street had increased in recent years with the opening of another two independent hardware and ironmongery shops.

"For many years I was the only independent in my line on the High Street and although trade did dip after the second lockdown, it has recovered."

He said that the rebranding of his business ten years ago – when the Chipping Barnet Town Team helped finance the sprucing up of High Street premises – had helped.

A new awning renaming the shop Julian's Hardware had been a great help – "even more customers started addressing me by my first name, and that has made it all very friendly."

Julian said that Peter Wander – proprietor of Wanders shoe shop – will now take on the mantle of the High Street's longest serving independent trader, an accolade which is bettered only by Dory's Cafe, round the corner in St Albans Road, and which opened in 1956.



Some of Julian's loyal customers have taken to Facebook to thank him

Nicky Daulton

Omg happy retirement Julian. I know the community will miss you, Mum had the hairdressers next to you (Jeans) I will tell her and dad the news

Pina Griffin

Thank you Julian. You're amazing and have been amazing

Neil Martin

A shame but well deserved! How does he know where everything is?

Jamie Maserati

A legend.

Jane Chalke

Oh no, will miss him lots good times growing up and going to school with his children. He's a part of the community, enjoy your retirement u deserve it x

Verity Lythgoe

Enjoy your retirement Julian! Well deserved x

Elaine Davies

He knows where everything is in his shop an Aladdin's cave, he will be missed x

Caroline McElhatton

You will be missed from the High Street. But fully understand that it is time to enjoy your retirement. Thanks for all your tips over the years, All the best, Caroline & Paul.

Des Michael

Oh no it will become another cafe or restaurant

Emma Dean

Used to buy buckets and other stuff for my horse here in the 80s. There was nothing Julian didn't have in that shop. Well earned retirement.

Pauline Forster

I taught all your beautiful daughters.

Court bid to overturn flats ruling

A fourteen-year dispute about redeveloping the former gas works site in New Barnet is about to kick off in the High Court when house builders Citystyle Fairview will try to overturn the decision of a planning inspector, writes Nick Jones

A judge will be asked to give a ruling on whether the planning inspector John Wilde “erred in law” when he rejected an appeal against Barnet Council’s refusal to grant planning approval for 13 blocks of flats, to be known as Victoria Quarter..

In asking for a judicial review on behalf of Citystyle Fairview, Reuben Taylor, KC, has set out detailed reasons why he believes the inspector’s decision was wrong in law.

The High Court will have to decide whether to order the Secretary of State to hold a fresh public inquiry into the plan for 539 flats in 13 blocks, ranging in height from four to seven storeys.

Because of the legal costs, neither Barnet Council nor the other interested party, New Barnet Community Association, which opposed the planning application will be represented, After a two-week inquiry in July, the inspector dismissed Citystyle Fairview’s appeal against the council’s refusal to grant planning permission.

Mr Wilde was in no doubt that a mass of tall blocks

of flats would be an unacceptable intrusion into the New Barnet neighbourhood.

“Overall, I consider that the sheer scale of the proposed development would cause a dislocation within the area, inserting an alien typology of larger mass and scale and disrupting any sense of continuity between the areas to the west and east of the site,” said Mr Wilde.

At the planning inquiry, John Dix, a founder member of the Save New Barnet Campaign, presented the case against Fairview’s latest plans for the gas works site on behalf of the New Barnet Community Association.

Together with three colleagues from the association – Fiona Henderson, Nick Hufton, and Karen Miller – Mr Dix had spent weeks preparing for the inquiry and they were delighted with the result, hoping that Fairview would now develop a housing scheme more in keeping with the area.

“We are disappointed, but not surprised that Fairview are seeking a judicial review and are trying to get a new planning inquiry”, said Mr Dix.

“Fairview have probably spent close to £1million on two planning applications, a planning inquiry and hiring a KC, so appealing to the High Court must have its attractions.

“In this case the defendant is the government’s planning inspectorate, and the community association is

Reuben Taylor KC, who represents Citystyle Fairview in its bid to overturn the planning inspector’s ruling (Below) The old gas works site, and the High Court claim



just an interested party.

“Only lawyers can get involved as the hearing will be all about the interpretation of planning law and there is no way we can pay for a barrister.”

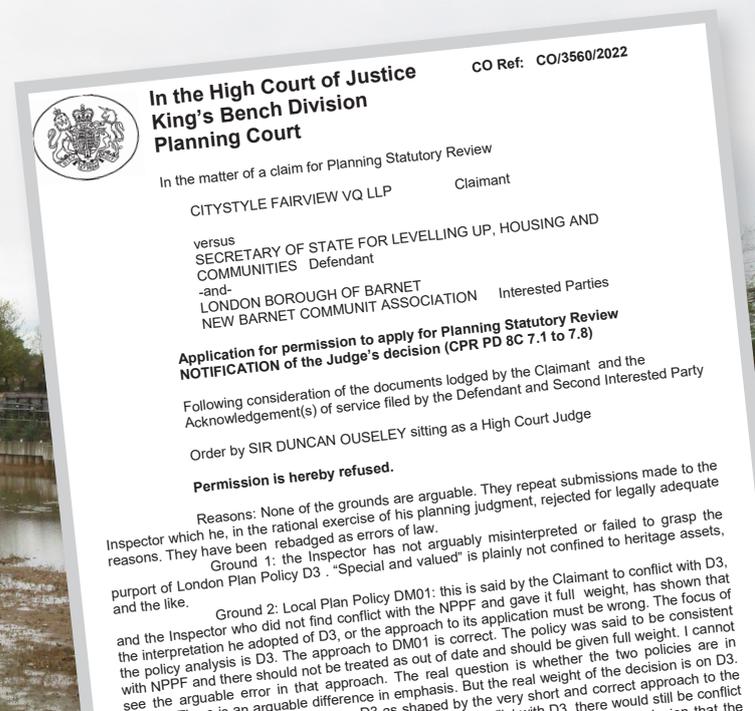
In his submission to the High Court applying for the inspector’s decision to be overturned, Mr Taylor, contends that Mr Wilde misinterpreted London Plan Policy when considering whether the Fairview redevelopment would harm the overall character of the area.

This failure had “substantially prejudiced” Fairview’s case.

“These errors of law render his decision unlawful, and it should be quashed.”

No date has yet been set for the hearing,

“These errors of law render [the planning inspector’s] decision unlawful, and it should be quashed” - Reuben Taylor KC





John Dix: "Our team of four were up against Reuben Taylor, one of the top QCs – now KC – handling planning and property disputes"

New Barnet's Mr Reasonable

A chance remark about the big supermarkets overriding the wishes of councillors and residents prompted a New Barnet management consultant to use his expertise on behalf of the local community, writes Nick Jones,

John Dix – or Mr Reasonable as he is known on social media – has become a name to be reckoned with, a community activist who is one of the driving forces behind the highly successful Save New Barnet Campaign.

He cut his teeth back in 2008 when New Barnet faced the prospect of having ASDA and Tesco open supermarkets close to the existing Sainsburys, John joined other residents in organising a public meeting. This ultimately led to two new likely interlopers backing down.

In the 14 years that have elapsed, the Save New Barnet Campaign – an integral part of the New Barnet Community Association – has notched up a string of successes in its efforts to guard the New Barnet neighbourhood and see off unnecessary and unwelcome development.

Now, with the rejection of Fairview's challenge to the planning inspector's ruling on Victoria Quarter, John and other campaigners have chalked up a notable victory. (See main story on Page 4)

The background to this was that One Housing, a housing association and a developer, Fairview, teamed up to build flats on the old gas works site, which had been sold by ASDA when it dropped its supermarket plan. Initially, the developers put forward a plan for 317 flats but this soon snowballed in 2019 to 652.

After that application was refused, Fairview put in a revised proposal for 539 flats, an application which Barnet Council rejected in 2021 – a refusal which was supported by a planning inspector in July this year and which has now been upheld by a High Court judge.

John represented Save New Barnet at the planning inquiry in July this year. "We were on a fast-learning curve. Our team of four were up against Reuben Taylor, one of the top QCs – now KC – handling planning and property disputes.

John said that because of the heatwave in July they realised climate change would be an issue because many of the flats faced west and would be in danger of overheating in the summer.

Fairview had been advised that air conditioning would be an issue but admitted this had not been a priority; another suggestion was that the orientation of the flats should have been changed so that only kitchens and bathrooms faced west, not the living rooms and bedrooms, but again Fairview had rejected the advice.

John and his team had a quiet sense of satisfaction when they read the planning inspector's reasons for rejecting Fairview's appeal. Failings on overheating and air conditioning were two of the issues he mentioned. "As a group of community activists, we had shown we could take on a top QC. We had done our homework and we had leveraged our expertise as much as we could." Now they have the added satisfaction of the High Court ruling, but John has still left the door open to consultation resuming with Fairview on a more sensible plan.

If it smells, then it's probably bad

As more of Barnet Council's services are withdrawn from the outsourcing contractor Capita, John Dix feels increasingly vindicated that his "sniff test" was correct: that the Capita deal was a costly mistake for the council taxpayers of Barnet.

Many of the services contracted out to Capita are due to be taken back in house by Barnet Council by September 2023. Barnet Council signed a ten-year contract with Capita and a joint venture, Regional Enterprise Ltd (Re) which the council claimed would save Barnet taxpayers £165 million over ten years.

At the most recent count John says the running total for the amount Barnet has paid Capita is £607.7 million - £246.8 million more than the contracted sum.

Although this contract ends next September, Capita has secured an extension of the contract to continue to deliver human resources and accounts payable services until 2024

When the council first proposed outsourcing services to Capita in 2013, John – then a leading member of the Save New Barnet Campaign – was determined to test the accuracy of the council's claim that this would save money.

His 18 years' experience as a management consultant had left him with a keen sense of smell when it came to checking out the validity of contracts.

"My sniff test on Capita proved correct. We were told the contract would be financially advantageous to Barnet – but a decade later we are still waiting for the evidence."

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT

Robin Bishop writes:

Examination in Public of Barnet's draft Local Plan (LP) is nearly over. I've spent several days at the Town Hall over the last seven weeks. One of our main concerns has been met: all references to the flawed 'value' and 'quality' assessments in Barnet's Parks & Open Spaces Strategy have been scrapped.

I expressed our concern about the excessive housing allocations for High Barnet Station (292) and Whalebones (152). One of the Inspectors said we'd given them 'a lot to reflect on', but what difference we'll make I don't know. A final draft of the LP will emerge early next year for consultation. If all goes well, it will be adopted next summer or autumn.

REFUSED

70 High Street (fka After Office Hours) – After several unsuccessful redesigns, it now faces demolition.

Victoria Quarter – The developer's request for a judicial review of the dismissal of their appeal has been turned down in the High Court. (See story on Page 4)

DECISION AWAITED

47 High Street (Crown & Anchor) – The owner's appeal against refusal of permission to alter ground floor openings has been dismissed. We had objected to lack of detail in the application. We've also objected to the design of a new pergola and building behind, the pub, which is Locally Listed and in the Wood Street Conservation Area.

The Mitre, 58 High Street – We welcome the desire to restore this historic pub, but are disappointed by the proposal's lack of historical awareness, dendrochronological analysis and detailed design. We've objected.

98-100 High Street – We were neutral. The plans have been slightly amended and one flat omitted (now 11 in total).

150 High Street (Gaziantep Pastanesi) – Following our objection to the garish initial proposal a more restrained design has been submitted.

152 High Street – Extension up to the



"I expressed our concern about the excessive housing allocations for High Barnet Station and Whalebones"

roof line of neighbouring buildings. We objected.

202 High Street (fka Bentleys) – The developer is back again with fewer units (commercial + 4 flats and 1 mews house) but the same roof line. We've objected again.

2 Clyde Villas, Hadley Green Road – A new application, this time for adults recovering from mental illness and involving less external work to the Locally-Listed house and garden.

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

49 Moxon Street – We objected to this attempt to squeeze 92 flats and several businesses into a 7-storey building next to the Green Belt of King George's Fields.

Land behind 36 Park Road – 6 new houses on vacant backland. We supported them.

Land off Mays Lane, Greengate Stables – We supported two applications by Strength & Learning Through Horses. A new manège has been approved, but the temporary buildings have yet to be approved.

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

Internet café (site of former public WCs), Great North & Station Roads – We were neutral.

1 Raydean Road – One of an interwar row of houses in the International Style, rare in Barnet and Locally Listed. We've supported an extension and minor alterations in keeping.

Western half of Meadow Works site, Pricklers Hill (8 x 3-storey houses) – We supported these.

Tudor Park – The Council is considering responses to its plan to spend £150,000 on replacing the existing playground; we thought it would be better spent upgrading other parts of the park. *The Friends of Tudor Park and Pavilion invite you to a winter celebration there from 2 to 4pm on Sunday 18 December.*

1 Albert Road, New Barnet – We objected to the over-development and poor environment of this 5-storey block of flats by the railway line and next to the Victoria Quarter.

Sky Studios North, Rowley Lane – Application for 10 more sound stages on the Green Belt. (See story on Page 7)

APPEALS

New appeals are in for a flat in the roof space of 159 High Street, and for an extra floor at 10-15 Richard Court in Alston Road. We've objected to both.

STILL STANDING

33 Lyonsdown Road – Martyn Gerrard have not responded to our offer to discuss Simon Kaufman's alternative scheme converting and extending this Locally-Listed Victorian villa. Granted permission for demolition on 1 October, it still stands as I write, though internal panelling has been gutted.

SAVED

Our new Council is walking its talk about listening to public opinion:

- **Hendon Central Library** – Following objections from us and many others, the previous administration's plans to sell this Grade II building have been abandoned.
- **Grange Estate, East Finchley** – Plans by Barnet Homes to build on the existing green space have been withdrawn.

EXPECTED NEXT YEAR...

High Barnet Station – TfL is looking for a new development partner and aims to start on site within 2-5 years.

Whalebones – The developers are discussing 100-120 homes with Barnet. They hope to consult us early next year and submit an application next summer. We could only support a single-digit total of new houses in the Wood Street Conservation Area unless more powerful community and environmental benefits are offered.



Forget Hollywood, it's Borehamwood!

There has been widespread support from within the film and television industry for a planning application to almost double the size of the Sky Studios Elstree complex, which is nearing completion at Borehamwood, writes Nick Jones.

Thirteen new sound stages are due to be fully operational by February next year at a cost of £230 million.

But even before completion of the first phase, planning approval is now being sought to construct an additional ten sound stages on 38 acres of adjoining Green Belt land.

Extra studio facilities are said to be needed if the UK is to continue attracting the production of international feature films and high-end television.

There has been speculation in the entertainment press that one of the first productions in the new Sky Studios will be the first of two planned *Wicked* movies – a *Wizard of Oz* spin-off – which will feature American stars Cynthia Erivo, who will play the Wicked Witch of the West, and Ariana Grande, who will play the good witch.

American film and television

There has been speculation in the entertainment press that one of the first films made at the studios will star Cynthia Erivo (above, top) and Ariana Grande (above, bottom)

producers are being attracted to Borehamwood – rather than Hollywood – partly as a result of tax relief on international film and television production.

At the September meeting of its executive, Hertsmere Borough Council agreed that its aim for 2022/27 was to ensure that Borehamwood became “the first-choice location” for inward investment in the creative sector.

Elstree and Borehamwood, which have deep roots in the film and television industry, might be the beneficiary of even greater expansion as there are long-term proposals for yet another complex of 21 sound stages which would become Hertswood Studios.

A six-week consultation period regarding the ten additional sound stages for Sky Studios – taking the total to 23 – closed in October.

Hertsmere expects to make a decision early next year on whether to give the go ahead.

Documents in support of the planning application acknowledge that a further extension of the Sky Studios complex will have “some impact on the openness

of the Green Belt”. But the applicants argue that the farmland between the eastern boundary of Borehamwood and the A1 Barnet by-pass has “a low-medium landscape value”.

Potters Bar, the nearest neighbouring town in Hertsmere, is four to five miles away and is said to be separated by “a significant area of countryside”.

Under a previous plan, the five fields now earmarked for studios, were to become the site of a sporting academy with outdoor and indoor pitches.

This proposal was abandoned in 2014 by the landowners, Legal and General Investment Management, who have made this new joint application with Sky Studios.

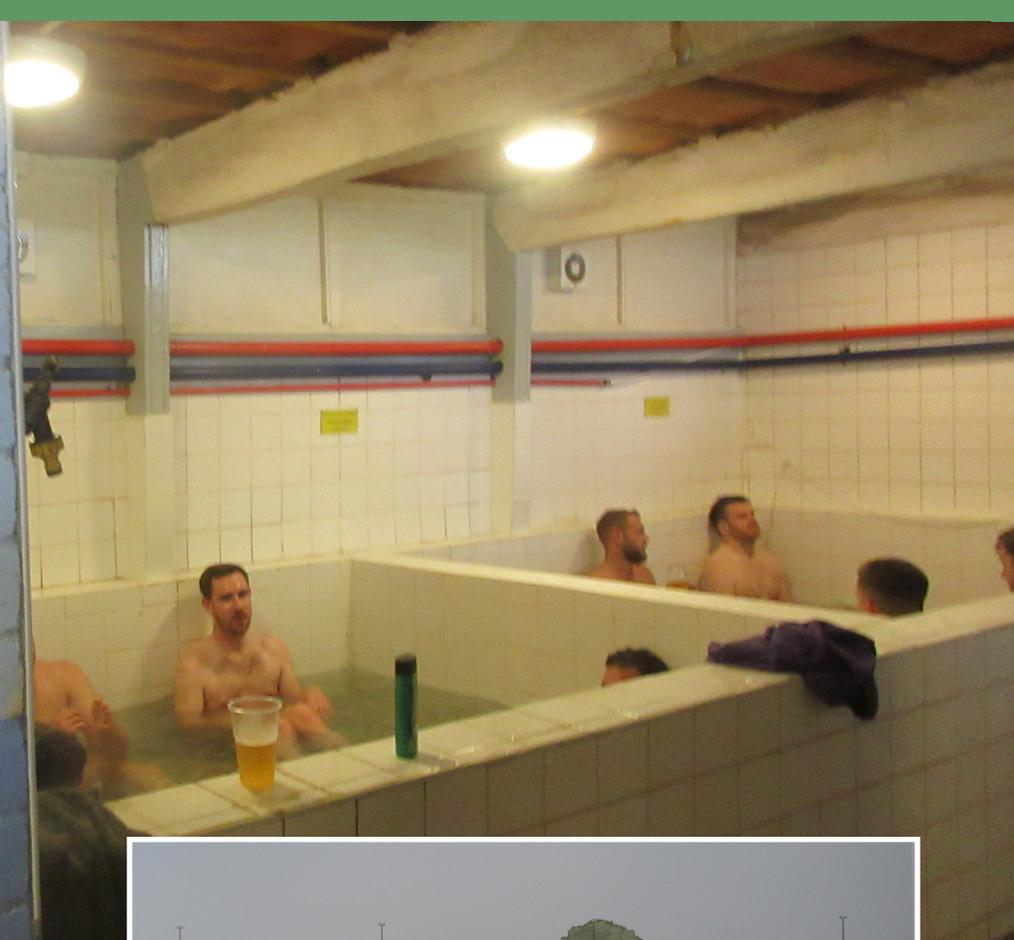
A survey locally produced only 17 negative responses (25 positive, 52 neutral) and only two negative emails (37 positive, 14 neutral).

Support for the expansion has been registered by several industry-wide organisations.

International feature film and high-end television production in the UK is likely to generate £7 billion a year by 2025.

“Film and TV production is likely to generate £7 billion a year by 2025”

Pulling the plug on rugby club baths



Taking a bath together is still the only option for Barnet rugby players until a new clubhouse is built, writes Nick Jones.

Having a wash after a rugby match in Barnet can be quite a spectacle to behold. Mud-splattered players are still having to jump into one of two huge communal baths inside their dilapidated clubhouse at the Byng Road playing fields.

Images of rugby and football players washing themselves down together in a sea of steaming, soapy water amid plenty of bubbles were a regular sight during post-match celebrations until the 1960s and 1970s.

But with the spread of the HIV epidemic in the 1980s – and concern about blood infections – the idea of a communal wash down was increasingly frowned upon, and most clubs dropped the practice almost immediately and installed showers.

Barnet Elizabethans Rugby Club is desperate to rebuild its antiquated clubhouse and meet the hygiene standards required by the Rugby Football Union.

After having tried for 30 years to raise sufficient money, a new building is finally being planned

Elizabethans are the only rugby club in the wider area to have communal baths.

Artist's impression (right) of what the new clubhouse and grounds would look like.



thanks to the backing of a significant charitable donation through the Barnet Recreational Trust.

Barnet Elizabethans are the only rugby club in Hertfordshire and North London where players have to clean up in communal baths.

All being well, Barnet's amateur club, which is run by a team of volunteers, hopes to submit a planning application by January or February next year for a new two-storey clubhouse with eight self-contained changing rooms and shower blocks.

There would be a large flexible area on the first floor where there would be space for club events and hosting other community activities and functions as well as a balcony overlooking the pitches.

Club director Alex Bell said the health and welfare of players was of paramount importance for the club and the only answer was to replace the existing clubhouse which was built in 1957 and is way out of date in its facilities.

"Players do accept that a communal bath is all that we

can offer at the moment, but the changing area is for men only and does not meet today's hygiene standards or the current health and safety regulations."

Currently, Barnet Elizabethans have no secure changing room for either women or children.

The lack of adequate facilities is all the more pressing given that at weekends, and often on weekday evenings, the playing fields are a hive of activity, hosting matches for 75 adult players, 350 children and a newly formed women's team.

Another priority during the improvement of the clubhouse would be to relay the club's three main rugby pitches.

Two of them have not been improved since 1957 when they were laid on a clay base, which can turn into a bog in winter and then bake hard in the summer, becoming unplayable.

As part of the ground improvements, the club would install an all-weather multi-games area for netball, basketball, tennis, and wheelchair sports.



"Players do accept that a communal bath is all that we can offer at the moment"



Police soothe fears over violent crimes

Police offer reassurance after two “frightening” incidents in Barnet town centre.

One was an imitation firearm brandished in the High Street and the other a stabbing in the nearby recreation ground.

Two constables and a community support officer from the Safer Neighbourhoods team recently spent an hour in Greggs bakery talking to residents and reinforcing their appeals to the public to report suspicious behaviour.

Mahender Khari, chair of the panel that monitors the local police response, said numerous posts on social media sites reflected local concern about what for some residents had clearly been two frightening incidents.

Mr Khari said complaints about rowdy and anti-social behaviour were at the top of the agenda for the Community Action Panel.

In the first of the Saturday afternoon incidents armed police, backed up by a police helicopter hovering overhead, responded to a disturbance outside McDonald’s after reports of a firearm being brandished.

“We are keen to take every opportunity to get to know local people, so do come along and say hello”

One person was arrested for possession of an imitation firearm with intent to cause fear and alarm.

The second incident involved fighting between a group of youngsters in the Old Court House Recreation Ground.

A 12-year-old boy was stabbed and taken to hospital. His injury was not life threatening and he was said to be fine and stable after treatment.

But Mr Khari, who is also on the committee of the Barnet Society, said despite these two alarming disturbances, he agreed with the Safer Neighbourhood Team that these tended to be isolated.

High Barnet had a lower crime rate than in other parts of the Borough, well below the average for London.

Because there were relatively few potentially violent incidents in Barnet High Street – compared with Cricklewood, Kilburn or Finchley –

From left to right, PC Daniel Boon, PC Umar Fida, Mahender Khari, and Paul Horgan of Barnet Residents Association.

residents were not as used to seeing the high level of police response that was needed for stabbings or reports of possible offensive weapons.

Mr Khari said the Community Action Panel had expressed concern before about the way rowdy youngsters congregated in the Old Court House Recreation Ground – a problem that was exacerbated at lunch times when students from Barnet and Southgate College tended to congregate around the children’s playground.

This was the first time that the Safer Neighbourhood Team had held a public consultation session in Greggs bakery. Getting-to-know-you sessions are also held outside the Waitrose entrance to The Spires shopping centre.

The aim was to provide a convenient friendly location where residents could call in, meet officers, and discuss issues of concern.

“If people see anything suspicious it is better to report it, and if it is anything serious, we can deal with it

“We are keen to take every opportunity to get to meet local people, so do come along and say hello.”



ALL CHANGE AT CAR PARK

Britannia Parking has taken over from NCP as the operator of the multi-storey car park at The Spires shopping centre.

The switch follows complaints about the untidy and dirty state of parking bays in the four-deck building and a failure to maintain pay machines in working order.

A team from Britannia Parking spent a day replacing the NCP signs sweeping the parking bays, and installing new “user friendly” pay machines which advised motorists of an introductory offer of an hour’s free parking, now ended.

BYM Capital, owners of The Spires, said they had been working behind the scenes to bring an operator on board who could ensure that the car park was run in “a safe, clean, and efficient manner for visitors and the people of Barnet”.

They understood the concern that the previous management of the car park had not been up to standard and BYM were convinced Britannia’s new “state-of-the-art” pay machines would make it easier for customers and allow spaces to be booked in advance.

“Ground staff will also be on site daily to keep the car park safe and clean during operating hours.

COGNAC AT THE CORONATION

Phyllis Oberman, nee Kanter, was a few days off her nineteenth birthday when as a rookie reporter she made her way to one of the press stands at the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on 2nd June, 1953.

“I was a junior reporter in the London office of The Times of Ceylon. The editorial team were assigned to various press stands around the Coronation route and the London Editor was in Westminster Abbey.

The weather that day was awful – drizzly rain – as I set off from home by Underground. I lost my beret at Charing Cross as the train swept into the station blowing my hat onto the tracks.

My location was a press stand in The Mall. I felt a little overawed by the blasé old hands around me.

Much of the time was spent below the scaffolded stand drinking coffee fortified by

cognac from one of the journalists hip flasks. Most colourful in the Coronation procession was the Queen of Tonga, smiling and waving in her open carriage, oblivious to the rain.

Later we made our way back to the office in Tudor Street, off Fleet Street, to file our reports coordinated by the London Editor, John Hocking, who sent them via Cable & Wireless to The Times of Ceylon in Colombo.

After our work, the small team enjoyed a cold buffet that John had laid on; It was especially appreciated as rationing still existed.

I mentioned my lost beret: ‘You had better put it on your expenses’, said John

A memorable day for this junior reporter



BEST FOOT FORWARD

Barnet Environment Centre is celebrating the official opening by Theresa Villiers MP of its newly installed fully accessible paths around the perimeter of its seven-and-a-half-acre nature reserve off Byng Road.

A soft rubberised surface is designed to be mobility friendly providing easy access for wheelchairs and push chairs.

The nature reserve is shared with the adjoining Noah’s Ark Children’s Hospice and together with its paths, woodland and gardens this green oasis provides a tranquil setting.

During the current academic year, the environment centre is hoping to exceed last year’s total and welcome over 2,000 local school pupils and young people to tour the reserve, learn more about its trees and fauna and look out for a variety of pondlife. In bad weather the previous paths often became waterlogged and muddy, but the problem has been solved by laying a new surface made from rubber mulch and resin which is soft and smooth and easy to walk on.



BARNET SOCIETY EVENTS

Sunday 4 December, 12-5pm – Barnet Fayre Drop in at our stall in the High Street and chat to us – why not persuade a friend to join the Society? Open to all

Tuesday 17 January, 7pm at The Bull, 68 High Street – Barnet New Year Quiz Join us in the basement bar for a quiz on your knowledge of Barnet past, present and future – and a chance to meet other members informally over refreshments. Admission: £2 for members, £5 for non-members

Tuesday 21 February, 7pm at The Bull – Public Meeting (speaker tbc) Come hear our speaker and ask them questions on a subject of topical interest. Admission: members – free; non-members – £5 donation

Tuesday 21 March, 7pm at Melange, 135 High Street – Fundraising Dinner Save the date. More details to follow soon! Price: £30 per person for 3 courses, raffle and a fun evening out supporting the Barnet Society

Father Sam Rossiter-Peters (left) and at his installation last November at St John's in front of Bishop Alan Smith



“You don’t have to travel very far from here to find people struggling to make ends meet”

Father Sam, a young man with an old soul

Visitors to Barnet are often struck by an overabundance of pubs and churches, writes Simon Radford.

While today, both struggle for attendance, Father Sam Rossiter-Peters is up for the challenge of trying to change all that as far as his church is concerned.

Walking into Botannika restaurant to meet me, it is clear that Sam has certain natural assets for the job facing him as the new priest in charge of St John the Baptist, Barnet’s parish church.

For a start, an easy smile and round, gently bearded face gives an immediate sense of ease, quickly reinforced by the realisation that Father Sam is a young man with an old soul. A potentially awkward interview quickly felt like a chat with a wise friend.

It’s clear that he feels St John the Baptist is the right spot for him. His face lights up when discussing the building itself and the potential for more to enjoy it:

“The church is absolutely wonderful. It’s beautiful, it’s historic. Each of our pews is unique and hand carved... and our organ was just yesterday described as a Rolls Royce of organ. I want to protect and preserve what’s amazing about our building”. However, in attracting more local families to enjoy it, he sees the need to look at an old space with new eyes

“Maybe we just need to look at it in that, dare I say, childlike way, and say how many

buildings do children get to go into that are like this? There are over 156 stories on our hand-carved pews that have different animals dotted all over the place, and places to hide and places to run. It’s such a cool place for a toddler”.

When Father Sam expounds on attracting more families, he quotes a saying that “the only sound worse than a baby crying in church is the sound of no babies or children at all”. He is keen to go beyond simply attracting more families into the church: his mission is to go out to those who most need the gospel message.

“St John the Baptist was described as a voice crying out in the wilderness... Our wilderness today is the despondency that people are feeling, and some of those people are living in Barnet. As we sit here it would be easy to think that the whole of Barnet is affluent and comfortable, a green and happy gem in an otherwise troubled world, but you don’t have to travel very far from here to find people really struggling to make ends meet, people who were really despairing at the way life is for them”.

The answer to this hopelessness, says Father Sam, is not shying away from being political where necessary, and not being embarrassed that the Christian message goes beyond the material to the profoundly spiritual. “I would say that the Church still has that role and being a moral voice, a moral actor, is

not always a popular or easy thing to do, but I would say – maybe this is a controversial thing to say – but in a society which has increasingly unjust structures, the need for moral conversation is ever greater and I think that the Church has a really prominent part to play in that... The Christian message has something to say about our participation in unjust structures, and what it has to say about that is ‘Jesus’.

“And so I think we have to, as a church, we have to be bold about saying ‘this is who Jesus is, this is what Jesus came to do’”. Ultimately, it is perhaps Father Sam’s own journey into faith that gives him the conviction that Barnet can be awoken from any spiritual slumber.

He was on his way to an interview to be a recruitment consultant near St Paul’s cathedral when he was stopped in his track by a revelation of God’s presence (“I can’t really explain the experience except, as I saw it, it was almost like I walked into something solid. I walked into St Paul’s and just cried”). Coffee with Sam certainly possesses many of the impressive qualities that St John the Baptist must have seen when recruiting him to the position in charge of Barnet’s parish church. But perhaps Father Sam’s days as a recruiter are only just beginning. Whether faithless or faithful, it looks to be to Barnet’s



Something for a variety of taste buds

With public houses said to be closing across the country at the rate of one a day, three licenced premises in Barnet High Street are doing what they can to buck the trend, writes Nick Jones.

The three ventures are offering what a fresh twist to a night out in Barnet town centre: a cafe bar with a special line in cocktails; a pop-up bar offering locally brewed craft beers and real ale; and a traditional pub aiming to become a popular weekend music venue.

At the junction with Moxon Street, the brewers Urban Alchemy offer craft beers and real ale at a pop-up bar in the Chipping Workshop, formerly Foxtons.

Head brewer Matt Javes, who doubles up behind the bar, is delighted with the support so far and are hoping for a busy Christmas and New Year.

"We've done pop-up bars before at Barnet Market and other events, but we are now offering our full range of beers four nights a week, from 6 to 12 on Thursdays and Fridays and 2 to 12 on Saturdays and Sundays."

Matt Javes pulls a pint at the Moxon Street bar. Laura Cornelius at her Library Bar, while The Butchers Arms is going to feature music at the weekends

There is steady demand for their regular brews, the most popular Beach Body Ready, a hazy pale ale, stout, and a session ale.

Urban Alchemy, based in New Barnet, began as a home brewery and now with three directors, managing director Si Morley, engineer Neil Boscoe and head brewer Matt. They hope to remain in the High Street with their pop-up bar until well into the New Year.

Along at the junction with St Albans Road, The Library Bar, has just celebrated its first birthday party – another opportunity for proprietor Laura Cornelius to promote her unique line in cocktails and build on the literary theme of her cafe bar.

"We are trying to do something different in the High Street – the kind of venue usually found in the West End but here on the doorstep for residents and visitors.

"We offer a unique line of cocktails which

we've created especially for the Library Bar, each with a literary connection."

Laura is keen for her venture to build on its literary theme. Already a book group meets there each week.

Taking over two months ago as manager of The Butchers Arms, opposite the main entrance to The Spires shopping centre, has been a real challenge for Jaudine (Jo) Wilson who is trying to create "an old-fashioned boozier, with live music every weekend".

She has made it her mission to try to create a sense of community, bringing customers together and rebuilding The Butchers Arms as a traditional weekday pub and weekend music venue.

"There will now be music every weekend, with a variety of groups on Saturday nights and then an open mic night on Sundays, when local musicians can come along, join in and jam together."

A charity event has been lined up for the night on Saturday 17 December featuring the Barnet based band, The Silencerz with saxophonist Lee Thompson from Madness.

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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