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From left to right, Bob Burstow, Nigel Murchison and Gail Laser at the launch of their campaign

# Love is in the air



**Two local groups are helping traders rebuild their businesses after the fallout from the pandemic, writes Nick Jones.**

Love Barnet and Chipping Barnet Town Team are supporting new initiatives to boost footfall and help retailers take advantage of the switch to online shopping.

They have set up an online directory, High Barnet Digital High Street, ([www.lovebarnet.co.uk](http://www.lovebarnet.co.uk)) which already lists 240 businesses.

Shops and businesses, with names, addresses, illustrations, and logos, are listed on the website in a random order that changes at the start of each hour to ensure that there is equal promotion and no favouritism.

A search for a category throws up the relevant list –

for example, hairdressers 15; public houses 9; restaurants, eat-in 36; take-away 37; churches 9; dentists 5, and so on.

But some retailers fear that the task of encouraging shoppers to return to the High Street is being hampered by the council's restrictions on pedestrians and vehicles.

At one point in August, the council wanted to close the High Street, with traffic diverted along Wood Street, Stapylton Road and Alston Road – a plan that produced such an outcry that it had to be withdrawn the following day.

The move was prompted by concern over the lack of space for social distancing on the narrow High Street pavement opposite St John the Baptist church, between the junctions with Moxon Street

and Wood Street.

After discussions with traders – and several alternative plans – the council opted for an appeal to drivers to slow down at the church pinch point.

Barriers have been installed to protect pedestrians and pavement hazard signs encourage social distancing.

Over a dozen parking bays have also been withdrawn along the central section of the High Street to give pedestrians more room.

Lines of hazard tape and barriers – as well as vacant shops – are a constant reminder of the continuing impact of the coronavirus emergency.

After the closure of Carluccio's restaurant, there are empty premises either side of the entrance to the Spires shopping centre. Nearby,

several charity shops that have also been forced to close.

"Goodbye" says a forlorn notice in the window of what was the PDSA shop; Age UK's outlet announces it is "permanently closing".

At the start of the year, the High Street had been poised to take advantage of long-awaited improvements but no sooner had pavements been widened and trees planted than the Covid-19 lockdown began.

Most retail outlets were told to cease trading and for weeks only food shops, chemists and newsagents remained open.

When lockdown started easing in late spring, shoppers saw the full extent of the economic fallout from the pandemic.

Efforts by Love Barnet and the Town Team to revive the town centre have been supported by the Barnet Society and its chair, Robin Bishop, had pressed council engineers and main contractor Conway to complete the improvements.

Only recently, benches, bike stands, and a Battle of Barnet information board have been installed, much later than expected

Covid-19 has also delayed until October the public exhibition of a draft Chipping Barnet Community Plan, aimed at regenerating the town centre. Consultant Architecture 00's team of architectural, retail and transport advisers were bombarded with ideas at a public meeting in January.



**Get involved at**  
<https://lovebarnet.co.uk>



# 11-0 home win against Victoria

By Nick Jones

**It was a case of 11-0 when Victoria Quarter's developers came up against doughty opposition in the shape of the council's planning committee.**

Councillors unanimously rejected plans to build tower blocks on the former gas works site at New Barnet that would have provided almost twice as many flats as previously agreed.

Councillors, residents, and MP Theresa Villiers criticised what they said would be a "horrendous, high-rise monstrosity", out of keeping with the village-like atmosphere of the locality.

Planning committee chairman, Shimon Ryde, said he would appeal to the Mayor of London not to try to force through the development.

There were more than 1,000 objections to the scheme

and councillors overturned the advice of the planning department, which had supported the application to construct blocks containing a total of 652 flats, instead of the original scheme for 371 flats, approved in 2017.

Planners described an application by Fairview New Homes and One Housing Group as being of a "consistently high-quality appearance".

Construction of 14 new buildings, with one block ten storeys high, was considered appropriate as "extensive landscaping" would have integrated the scheme with the nearby Victoria Park.

Mark Jackson, Fairview's director of planning, told the committee that the previous proposal for only 371 flats was no longer viable due to the cost of decontaminating the site.

He said that a higher density than previously agreed would allow a "considerable uplift" in the proportion of affordable

housing, of up to 35 per cent, of which 60 per cent would be affordable rent and the remainder shared ownership.

Widespread opposition to the scheme – and anger at the way the plans agreed in 2017 had been cast aside by Fairview – was evident. Nick Hufton, a New Barnet resident and architect, argued that the scheme contravened council rules on high density, whereas the previous plan for 371 flats had been agreed after community involvement.

He criticised the development for the way that almost all the affordable homes would be next to the main railway line. There were concerns over fire safety, especially the PVC windows and length of corridors leading to staircases.

In attempting to almost double the number of flats the developers were, said Councillor Felix Byers, guilty of a "moral betrayal" of the work

done by residents in agreeing the 2017 scheme.

High-rise blocks including one of ten storeys were an "affront" to the local street scene of Edwardian houses. "We need family homes, not high-rise blocks of one and two-bedroom flats."

In her contribution, Ms Villiers recalled how residents had objected to an earlier proposal for a supermarket on the gas works site and how they had joined forces with developers and planners to work out an acceptable compromise and approval of the original scheme for 371 homes.

"That approval was the culmination of 10 years' local debate. This high-rise development would overturn a decade of community involvement and it would change New Barnet irrevocably, for ever.

"It would loom over the Victoria Park recreation ground and open the way to future city-style development. Applications will flood in for tall, high-rise buildings in the neighbourhood."

In closing the debate, Councillor Ryde said the suburban nature of the site tipped the balance against approval.

He said the next step was to pull together the grounds for objecting to the application which he thought would include councillors' concerns over height and density and that over development on this scale was a departure from the local plan and contrary to the council's planning policy.

A formal vote on the application is to be taken at a later meeting, but Councillor Ryde acknowledged that the future of the proposed development would now be considered by the Greater London Authority; Barnet was saying that the Mayor of London "should listen to local voices".

**An aerial view of the old gas works site and (inset) ground works.**

**(Below) Visualisation by EPR Architects of the rejected application**



**Read more News at**  
<https://www.barnetsociety.org.uk>





# TfL defiant as 384 changes mean 10 streets left behind

By Nick Jones

**TfL has pushed ahead with its controversial decision to lengthen the route of the 384 bus to provide a direct connection to Edgware, despite opposition from campaigners, angry at the removal of existing stops across New and High Barnet.**

It hopes that the changes will give "a new lease of life" to the service by ensuring faster travelling times and by providing a new direct connection to Edgware.

In a live online debate, TfL mounted a strong defence of the changes, which were implemented on August 29th.

Geoff Hobbs, TfL's director of public transport service planning, said that extending the 384 to Edgware would reduce journey times from the west of the borough to Barnet Hospital by 20 minutes.

"This way we think we can make more of the 384 route and provide it with a new lease of life, given that it is not terribly well used. We can

make the 384 more useful by speeding up journeys."

But Mr Hobbs was forced to acknowledge the strength of the "Save the 384" bus route campaign, which was backed by local MP Theresa Villiers, London Assembly member Andrew Dismore and several Barnet councillors.

A Facebook page, Save the 384, had more than 250 members.

He said: "The passion that the 'Save the 384' campaign brings with it is exciting...if

**"The passion that the 'Save the 384' campaign brings with it is exciting...if only we had the same level of interest in using the bus itself"**

**Geoff Hobbs, TfL's director of Public Transport**

only we had the same level of interest in using the bus itself," said Mr Hobbs.

He said that there were only about four passengers on the 384 at any one time compared with 14 passengers per bus on other London-wide routes.

On the new route, ten streets will no longer be served by the 384, including Strafford Road in High Barnet; Gloucester Road, Lyonsdown Road, Longmore Avenue and York Road in New Barnet; East Barnet Road, Brookhill Road and Crescent Road in East Barnet; and Castlewood Road and Northfield Road in Cockfosters.

Shortening the route from Cockfosters to Barnet Hospital "should reduce journey times by nine minutes and this should improve its popularity".

The extension of the 384 route from its current terminus at Quinta Drive to end at Edgware bus station would be via Barnet Road, Barnet Way, Selvage Lane, Hale Lane, and Station Road.

Mr Hobbs said TfL hoped there would be a 30 per cent

**Geoff Hobbs, (above) TfL's director of Public Transport, hopes that the 384 route changes will eventually lead to a 30 per cent increase in passenger numbers**

increase in passengers on the route

However, Joshua Yates, who organised the "Save the 384" campaign challenged Mr Hobbs on the impact that the changes would have on streets in New Barnet, where residents would face a long walk to the nearest bus stop.

In hilly areas towards Cockfosters, passengers would have to walk an additional 630 metres. Mr Hobbs insisted that the average additional walk resulting from the new route was 160 metres.

"An average additional walk of 160 metres is one of the trade offs we have to make. We want to make the bus route more useful to more people.

"We are seeing a decline in the use of the 384 over the last five years which pre-dates the cut in frequency five years back."

However, Mr Yates said that TfL had essentially run down the clock on the three-month time limit for challenges to reach their chosen implementation date of Saturday 29 August.

# Environment & Planning



By Robin Bishop

**Two building projects under construction in Chipping Barnet's Conservation Areas are flouting planning laws. They are tests of Barnet Council's will to enforce its planning decisions.**

They're merely the most flagrant of numerous planning abuses that are gradually degrading our Conservation Areas. These are areas identified by the Council as having special architectural or historic interest which merits designation. Any alterations or additions must preserve or enhance these areas' character or appearance, and require planning permission. And obviously, the completed building works should conform to the approved designs.

We're lucky to have two Conservation Areas, Wood Street and Monken Hadley,

one at each end of the High Street. Between them, they cover over a square mile. So they play a major part in defining the identity of Chipping Barnet. Even if we don't actually live within one, their historic and aesthetic appeal is likely to have been one of the reasons we moved here, and why many of us wish to stay.

The two buildings featured here are quite different but both typical of our area: one on the High Street, the other in a suburban road. They deviate from their permitted designs in different ways: the first by building substantially higher than allowed, the second by an accumulation of small changes that together vitiate the quality of the original house.

## 70 High Street

Next to The Bull and diagonally opposite St John the Baptist's Church, readers

may recall the After Office Hours bar (previously a shop) with a first floor and attic above. The building once had some historic features, but had been much altered externally and internally over the years. Nevertheless it fitted into the old High Street, and provided a nice transition from No.72, the three-storey building to its left, to the petite Bull to its right.

The site has seen a succession of planning applications. In 2014 one was submitted for 15 student bedsits in a four-storey building, but withdrawn. Later that year, another was made for 9 'studios' and a flat, also on four storeys. The Barnet Society objected, and it was refused permission.

In 2015, application was made to replace the old building with a bar and two floors above (the top one within the roofspace) containing 7 'studios'. We supported it, albeit subject to several conditions. In July 2017, planning permission was granted on condition that work began within three years.

The old building was then demolished leaving a hole in the High Street, but for two years nothing happened on

site except an archaeological investigation. This found artefacts and animal remains consistent with a former inn, though none seem to have been of special value or interest. In the absence of progress, last September Barnet planners served an Enforcement Notice to complete the building. Now it's under construction – but is much higher than it should be.

Although the site is currently shrouded with scaffolding, a gross deviation from the approved design is plain: the roof is two-thirds of a storey higher than it should be. Instead of lining up with the cornice of No.72 High Street, its roofline actually exceeds that of No.72. And the windows, as well as being higher, seem to be wider than drawn.

Instead of forming a gentle step down from No.72 to The Bull, the new building actually steps up, presenting an ugly and overbearing flank to The Bull and the street. It's unacceptable.

**Although the site (below) is shrouded with scaffolding, a gross deviation from the approved design is plain to see**

## 1 Sunset View

No.1 Sunset View was one of the best and most prominent houses in a road that is a North Barnet classic of garden suburb design, master-planned and largely designed by local architect William Charles Waymouth in the early 20th century. The houses are attractive variations on Arts and Crafts themes, and together comprise an unusually complete and high-quality development for its period. It's an important part of

### Spot the Differences!



As Approved



As Built



# Enforcement not a job for faint-hearted

**Planning enforcement is not easy. In the first six months of 2019 (the last period for which a report has been published), Barnet Council received 1,012 requests to investigate an alleged breach of planning control and issued 89 Enforcement Notices. Both statistics have been trending**

**upwards in recent years.**

In June 2018, Planning Magazine gave its award for Local Authority Planning Team of the Year to our Planning Enforcement team for (amongst other things) issuing more than eight per cent of all Enforcement Notices given in England in 2016-17. In March 2019, the Local Government

Chronicle recognised its innovative approach to service delivery. And according to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, in the year ending June 2019 it served the second most Enforcement and Breach of Conditions notices in England. So it's doing a lot right. But the Enforcement

team is small, and its authority is limited. As one officer puts it, "The powers of the planning department to prevent a breach of planning control are incredibly limited with the law clearly being designed to deal with breaches after they have occurred." So it's all the more important that cases for enforcement are

selected for maximum effect. The Planning judges praised "an enforcement team that has embraced the importance of service improvement in an unsung area of planning that is important to public faith in the system". Too right. But unless Barnet planners make public examples of such conspicuous offences as 70 High Street and 1 Sunset View, prospects for our Conservation Areas are poor.

the Monken Hadley Conservation Area. The Barnet Society first became concerned about No.1 in 2017, when a planning application was submitted to make drastic alterations and additions. This received strong opposition from local residents and Society, and was withdrawn. We nominated the house for addition to the Council's Schedule of Buildings of Local Architectural or Historic Interest to give it extra protection, and in July 2019 it was formally Listed. The Council's citation draws attention to the "considerable variety of well-crafted brickwork, door and window details...unified by consistency of materials" and mentions its attached garage, something of a novelty in the early days of mass motoring. In 2018 another application



was made. Again we and local residents opposed it, and the Chipping Barnet Area Planning Committee refused it. Within a month a third application was submitted. Although less damaging than the previous two it was still strongly opposed, but this time the Committee approved it. In spring 2019 work started on site, but we became

concerned again in May when neighbours told us the roof tiles were being stripped off. Oddly, since traditional second-hand clay tiles are quite valuable, they were smashed and discarded. In August unauthorised rooflights appeared. The planners responded by serving a Breach of Condition Notice. Over the next two months, the rear chimneys and balcony were demolished. Although the chimneys were later rebuilt, they were not exactly as before.

**The Barnet Society first became concerned about 1 Sunset View (above) in 2017**

In February this year, the integral garage was rebuilt – but taller than before, and with a new window behind fake garage doors. New side windows were also revealed. Again, the planners issued Enforcement Notices. Although not Listed, the attractive Arts and Crafts interior was gutted. In April the freestanding garage in the same style as the house was widened, and a modern up-an-over metal door replaced the original. In June the low brick boundary walls were replaced with higher ones, the front garden entirely covered with concrete paving blocks, and the front door replaced – none of them in materials or style faithful to the original.

Nor have these changes been made with planning consent, normally a requirement in Conservation Areas. Cumulatively, they're seriously eroding the house's original quality – not to mention intruding on the privacy of No.3 Sunset View.

Several Councillors have intervened, to little effect. The Planning Enforcement Manager agrees that there are issues and has been on the case for nearly a year, but the developer is blatantly ignoring Enforcement Notices. It's not good enough. If the developer gets away with trashing a Locally Listed building in a Conservation Area, what hope is there of protecting others in future?



**Read more News at**  
<https://www.barnetsociety.org.uk>

# Environment & Planning

## Government Planning Reforms

The government's proposed planning reforms are the Society's biggest challenge since it was founded. The present system enables us to comment on individual planning applications; the new one will greatly curtail that.

Briefly, the Planning for the Future White Paper aims to simplify local plans and speed up building, particularly of the 300,000 homes it says are needed annually. In parallel, the government is consulting on an algorithm to determine local targets. Good luck with that.

New local plans will zone all land as either Growth, Renewal or Protected areas. In Growth areas, outline planning permission will automatically be granted. In Renewal or Protected Areas automatic approval will be given to pre-established types of development.

The latter would be in addition to the already considerable range of development which no longer requires permission. Barnet can already expect a



flurry of roof extensions and changes of use, especially in and around high streets, subject only to a minimum of restrictions.

The public will be encouraged to comment on the Council's draft Local Plan and on design codes for local development. Improved digital technology will apparently make it easier for us to get

involved in local plans and design codes via social networks and mobile phones.

Leaving aside the touching faith in technology, the main problem here is that without greater public education and council willingness to share information, most of us are unlikely to have the time or inclination to participate. The proposals are not

without merit: the present system is definitely over-complicated. The Green Belt, Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings will continue to be protected, and enforcement of planning law will be strengthened. But the present legal safeguards are imperfect, and no improvements are proposed.

The reforms will be deeply disruptive. The future of Sadiq Khan's London Plan and Barnet's Local Plan – long in preparation – is now in doubt. The Council planning department will have to be reorganised. Drawing up design codes is likely to be lengthy and problematic. It will take years before the new system is fully working. Meanwhile, much damage could be done.

The Society is preparing a response, together with the Federation of Residents' Associations of Barnet, by the deadline of 29 October.

If you have any planning, design or building expertise to offer, please let me know at [robin.bishop@gmx.co.uk](mailto:robin.bishop@gmx.co.uk) or 020 8449 0088 / 07913 107046. You can view the White Paper at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>.



Sadiq Khan:  
plan in doubt

## Decisions

A large crop of developments at tube stations are in the pipeline in or near our area. Planning applications are expected imminently for High Barnet (292 flats) and Cockfosters (351 flats), and later this year for Finchley Central (560 flats). A decision is awaited for Arnos Grove (162 flats). Approval has been given for Woodside Park (86 flats).

Other important developments awaiting a decision are:

- **Whalebones estate** – The roundabout originally proposed at the Wood Street/Galley Lane junction has been omitted, but our objection to the size of this development (152 homes) in the Wood Street Conservation Area still stands.
- **151-153 High Street** (former car showroom) – We support the conversion of two buildings, one listed Grade II, into 3 flats, with a new retail unit and 3 houses behind.
- **Gas peaking station off Partingdale Lane** – We object to this intrusion into the Green Belt.

Recently approved cases include:

- **The Totteridge Academy city farm** – We supported this use of Green Belt land.
- **Old Courthouse Surgery, 27 Wood Street** – We were neutral about this extension.
- **17 Park Road** – We opposed 7 flats on 2 floors of former offices (6th time lucky for this developer).
- **2 Bruce Road** – We objected to this 8-room house in multiple occupation.

There have also been some noteworthy planning refusals:

- **28 Prospect Road** – We objected to the replacement of this good Arts & Crafts house by a block of six flats.
- **22 Hendon Wood Lane** – We supported the replacement of decrepit sheds in the Green Belt by four unobtrusive houses.
- **Kingmaker House, Station Road** – The developers' proposal for 145 flats was dismissed by the Planning Inspector. He will have to be content with the 139 already approved. Hertsmere is considering new housing in the Green Belt:
- Building over the farmland between the M25 & Potters Bar.
- N-W of South Mimms, **new Rabley Green & Redwell** "garden villages"
- Two sites at Ganwick Corner (near The Duke of York pub on the A1000).

*I'd like to record the Society's gratitude to Markus Geiger, who has represented us on the Conservation Area Advisory Committee for nearly 10 years, but has decided to step down on health grounds.*





Spot on: a picture of a leopard that Sam took when he was filming in Zambia. Sam (below) on location



# Call of the Wild

By Nick Jones

**On his lockdown walks in the countryside around High Barnet, wildlife cameraman Sam Meyrick is having to substitute the local population of foxes, muntjac deer and parakeets for the likes of the polar bears, sea otters, penguins – and his favourite the leopard – that he usually films around the world, writes Nick Jones.**

Sam has been grounded since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, and is back at home with his parents in Sunset View, determined to keep as close to nature as possible.

Because of the quarantine restrictions that apply to foreign travel, and the continuing demands for social distancing, he fears it could be some months yet before he and other camera operators can resume work on natural history films and programmes.

In the five years since qualifying in wildlife filmmaking – a job that had

been his dream since his schooldays – he has worked on numerous high-profile assignments, including shoots for the BBC's Natural History Unit and Netflix.

Just before lockdown he was in California for 13 weeks filming sea otters for a Netflix series due to be broadcast in 2021, but then planned visits to locations in Iceland, Costa Rica and Canada have had to be postponed.

Sam, 28, who was a pupil at Christ Church Primary and Dame Alice Owen's School, studied geography at Loughborough University and in 2012 gained a place on the University of the West of England's first MA course in wildlife filmmaking.

"As a boy I had always been gripped by natural history films, especially David Attenborough's Planet Earth series.

"What fascinated me most of all was the last ten minutes of every programme when camera operators and crews explain the challenges they

**"I sat next to [David Attenborough] in the lunch break and we shared a packet of crisps"**

faced and how they had managed to capture the shots and put together a wildlife sequence.

"I was so lucky to gain a place on the first University of the West of England wildlife filmmaking course which had been organised in conjunction with the BBC's Natural History Unit in Bristol.

"After university one of my first breaks was to assist a top cameraman Robin Cox with filming an ITV series by Alan Titchmarsh on the Queen's Gardens.

"The next opportunity was helping Cox on a David Attenborough programme, the Natural World of Frogs.

"So, within two months of leaving university I had met Attenborough on a shoot after being an avid fan of his in my schooldays. I sat next to him in the lunch break and we shared a packet of crisps."

Five years after meeting Attenborough, Sam has worked in Russia, Tibet and South Georgia filming for the latest Frozen Planet

series, which Attenborough is expected to narrate and is due to be broadcast next year or the year after.

While he admits wildlife camera work is highly competitive, he thinks there is no better time to qualify in filmmaking and apply for work.

"Natural history filming and photography has never been busier because in addition to the BBC and National Geographic, there are new streaming services on Netflix, Apple and Disney Plus and they are all planning wildlife series."

On his frequent walks around High Barnet he has been keeping an eye out for local wildlife, a chance to put into practice all the necessary routines like keeping downwind in order to get as close as possible.

In addition to keeping fit on his walks, his enforced stay at home has also been a chance to play regularly again at Ravenscroft Tennis Club which he joined 20 years ago while a pupil at Christ Church Primary.

Sam, rated by club coach Steve Porter as one of their best players, has in previous years represented Ravenscroft in league matches around north London, Hertfordshire, and Middlesex.

Although league fixtures had to be cancelled this year, he still hopes to play in Ravenscroft's annual tournament, postponed from July until October.

"Tennis is one of those sports you can play while maintaining social distance, so long as you remember not to shake hands at the end of the match."

One disappointment has been the absence of local football matches following the departure of Barnet Football Club and the opening of Ark Academy School on what was the site of Underhill stadium.

He was a regular supporter with his father. His grandfather Dennis D'Arcy was Barnet's skipper in the 1950s and together with his uncle, Alf D'Arcy, they played in the 1959 FA Amateur cup final at Wembley, losing to Crook Town.



## Sam's globetrotting

- Australia
- Botswana
- Canada
- China
- Costa Rica
- Ecuador
- Netherlands
- Russia
- South Georgia
- South Korea
- Tanzania
- UK
- USA
- Vietnam
- Zambia



**Sam's website can be found at**  
www.sammeyrick.co.uk

# On your bike, Barnet councillors!



Below: Derek Dishman



By Nick Jones

**Separate cycle lanes up and down Barnet Hill, which for so long have been ridiculed by Barnet councillors, may be a step closer as a result of the government's decision to pump £2 billion into schemes to encourage cycling and walking as a way of fighting the coronavirus pandemic, writes Nick Jones.**

Transport for London's aim is to establish "pop-up social distancing" cycle lanes the entire length of the A1000. Work is to start immediately installing cycle lanes along the 3.2 km section of the A1000 between the junction with Bishops Avenue at East Finchley and Tally Ho corner in North Finchley.

Space will be made for the twin cycle lanes by reducing the A1000 to one-lane traffic flow in each direction; by suspending 120 or more parking bays; and by reducing or removing built-out footways.

Barnet Council has been awarded a grant of £318,000 to complete the installation of East Finchley to North Finchley cycle lanes by the end of September.

Funding to continue the cycle lanes north from Tally Ho corner – through to

Whetstone, then up to High Barnet and on to Monken Hadley – was unexpectedly rejected by TFL and the Department for Transport.

However, plans are still under consideration and future approval is now a possibility for the second phase of the project, depending on the use and success of the first section.

**'Having just ridden nearly 2,000 miles and seen what other local authorities do for cyclists, I know how pathetic Barnet Council has been'**

Derek Dishman

Decades of hostility towards cyclists by Barnet councillors are blamed by Barnet Cycling Campaign for the council's failure to secure the extra money immediately for the cycling lanes to continue north up the A1000, from North Finchley to Monken Hadley.

Ashley Grossman, a leading member of the 300-strong

Barnet campaign, said there had been an "abject failure" borough wide by the council to introduce any significant schemes to encourage cycling or to safeguard cyclists.

"We are delighted that Barnet will finally be getting its first meaningful safe cycling route along part of one of its main thoroughfares.

"We are trying to work with the council to ensure the details in the design will make the route really succeed.

"We are also eager for the

council to resubmit their bid to extend the route to Monken Hadley so that more people will benefit."

In a statement on its failure to secure funding for the entire length of the A1000, Barnet Council said it was investigating why this had happened and was still "very much committed" to the overall project.

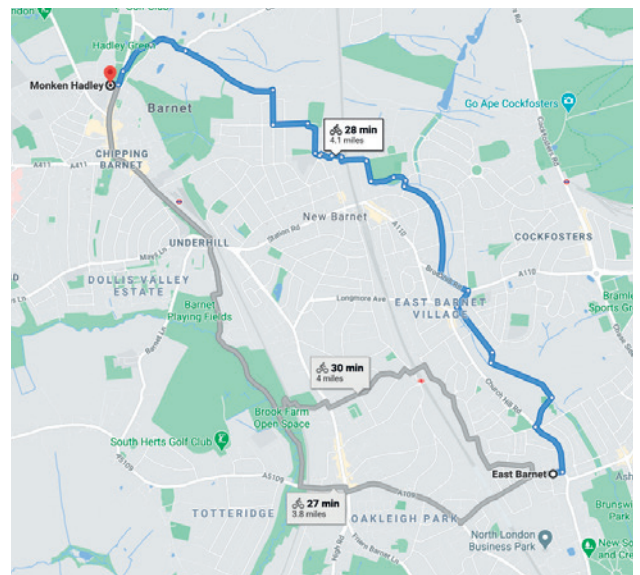
Meanwhile, the London Cycling Campaign has condemned Barnet for having one of the worst records on cycling provision among the London boroughs.

And Derek Dishman – the Barnet blogger 'Mr Mustard' – who has been cycling from Land's End to John O'Groats helping to raise money for the North London Hospice is far from impressed by the council's attitude: "Having just ridden nearly 2,000 miles and seen what other local authorities do for cyclists, I know how pathetic Barnet Council has been."

"We have a leader of the council who even likes to joke that you can't expect High Barnet residents to cycle home from the City of London when they would be faced with having to cycle up Barnet Hill.

"But hundreds of cyclists ride up and down Barnet Hill all the time and instead of treating cycling as a joke, it is time Barnet Council got its act together, not least because it probably has more road mileage than many other boroughs because of its size."

Right: Preferred route



Read more News at <https://www.barnetsociety.org.uk>





# Elstree predicted to be new 'British Hollywood'

By Nicholas Jones

**Work has started clearing a site at Borehamwood, between Rowley Lane and the A1, for the construction of the new Sky Studios Elstree which were granted planning approval by Hertsmere Borough Council in early July.**

The new studio complex – the size of 17 football pitches – will provide more than 2,000 jobs when it opens in 2022 and is expected to generate film and television production worth £3 billion over its first five years of operation.

Sky Studios Elstree will rank in size and potential importance to two other studio complexes at Borehamwood – the world-renowned Elstree Studios, where extra studio space is planned, and BBC Elstree, home of *EastEnders*, *Strictly Come Dancing* and other BBC productions.

Councillor Morris Bright, Hertsmere's council leader, hailed the go ahead for the new Sky Studios – around 100 yards from the site of the former MGM British studios in Elstree Way – as the start of a new era of American film

making in Borehamwood and the restoration of its links to Hollywood.

Sky Studios Elstree is a joint project between Sky's owners Comcast, NBC Universal and Legal and General and the complex will cost £230 million.

Councillor Bright said construction of the new studio complex heralded a major injection of skills and expertise that would strengthen creative industries in the area and, together with a huge production spend, would provide a massive boost to the local economy – "a moment of huge pride for residents and businesses".

"With the council-owned Elstree Studios and BBC Elstree nearby, and now Sky Studios Elstree, this really does mean the return of the British Hollywood to Hertsmere."

The 28-acre site off Rowley Lane was formerly in the Green Belt but was recently designated by Hertsmere for employment development.

An earlier planning application, approved in May, gave permission for preparatory work to start on the site ready for construction to begin.

**Preparatory work has started off Rowley Lane, Borehamwood, on the new Sky Studios Elstree. From left to right, Nigel Wilson, chief executive officer Legal and General, Helen Parker, NBC Universal, Caroline Cooper, chief finance officer Sky Studios, and Councillor Morris Bright, leader Hertsmere Borough Council.**

The project will create 900 jobs during construction this year and next and a further 1,500 posts once the studios are operational.

Full-time roles will include a significant number of production jobs, alongside roles supporting the operation of the studios.

There will be 12 sound stages on the site, with the ability to merge together and subdivide.

This means that the biggest sound stages on the site can increase to cover 60,000 square feet if needed or reduce to much small segregated studios providing a Covid-19 ready layout for the future.

In its statement welcoming approval, Sky said the new

studios would provide much needed space for the ongoing boom in film and television production work in the UK.

Elstree will become home to a host of Sky Originals, as well as major film productions from Universal Pictures, Focus Features, and television series from Universal Studio Group.

Sky Studios says it is committed to supporting the next generation of young and diverse talent and will use Elstree to build on its existing work in this area which includes Sky Academy Studios and Mama Youth Project, an initiative to equip young people aged 18-25 from under-represented groups, to work in the television industry.

The former MGM British Studios were constructed in 1936 on a 115-acre site on the northern side of Elstree Way and MGM produced films there from 1944 until the studios closed in 1970.

A new book, *MGM British Studios: Hollywood in Hertfordshire*, by film historian Paul Welsh, is available from the Elstree Screen Heritage website [www.elstreescreenheritage.org](http://www.elstreescreenheritage.org)



# Something to crow about – how *Barnet bowls club* scored in dummy run

By Nick Jones

**By installing two male mannequins dressed in white in the Old Courthouse Recreation Ground, Barnet Lawns Bowls Club has managed to frighten off crows that have been digging holes in the fine turf of their two bowling greens.**

All went well for the first three weeks until one of the mannequins was stolen overnight by vandals and left in a footpath leading to Mays Lane.

Next morning a passer-by discovered the decapitated mannequin, covered in tomato sauce. Park keepers said they were alerted by a lady who thought she had found a dead body.

Club president Brian Wass said the remaining mannequin protected both greens until the stolen one was repaired. His missing head has been covered up with a large Mexican sombrero.

Installing mannequins dressed as bowls players – instead of scarecrows – was the brainchild of club greenkeeper and coach, Alan Henderson.

He had been plagued for weeks by crows using their beaks to drill holes into the grass as the birds search for insects such as earwigs and leather jackets.

"We had thought of putting scarecrows on the grass, but the birds know me, and they used to fly off the moment they saw me arrive.

"So, we had the brilliant idea of dressing up two mannequins in white trousers and shirts and then standing them in the middle of the two greens.

"The mannequins look just like bowls players and they've been brilliant at keeping the crows off the grass,"

said Mr Henderson.

President Brian Wass admitted the crows were formidable opponents. "They are very clever birds, they walk on the grass, listen for insects, and then drill down to find them.

"But the greenkeeper was having to fill as many as 100 tiny holes every morning with sand and seed, so we had to find a solution. Alan was having to come an hour earlier just to repair the greens.

"We bought the two mannequins for less than £50 each off eBay and then members donated white clothes to make them look as realistic as possible. They each hold silver flashings in their hands which give some movement in the wind."

Mr Wass said Barnet's two bowling greens were judged to be the best in the Borough of Barnet because of the quality of the turf.

"We are very proud of our two greens and Alan has done a tremendous job as greenkeeper.

"When Barnet withdrew all funding for the club four years ago, the council wanted to charge us £9,000 a year to maintain both greens, which was

prohibitive and now it's all the more important that we look after our prime asset."

Barnet Bowls Club ([www.barnetbowlsclub.org.uk](http://www.barnetbowlsclub.org.uk)) was established in 1926 and according to club history some of the marchers on the Jarrow March stopped off on their way home to help lay out the greens and build the clubhouse as a "thank you" for the support they had been given.

Club members have been playing again since May 18 when the government relaxed the coronavirus lockdown rules to allow sports such



as bowls to resume.

"Initially only singles were allowed, but we are now playing pairs and trebles as well," said Mr Wass.

"Because of pandemic and lockdown, more people are acknowledging the need to undertake sporting activity and since we resumed playing, we have picked up 16 new members, which is very encouraging.

"We now have 32 playing members, but ideally we'd like around 40.

"Playing bowls is good, healthy exercise. A player walks 21 ends per match, which is about one-and-three-quarter miles, bends down 80 times, and then has to throw the fair-sized weight of the bowl."

Mr Wass's wife, Rosario Wass-Berru, is another stalwart of the club. Until ten years ago the men and women played separately, but then the two sections combined.

In 2018, Mrs Wass-Berru won the singles championship – the first woman to hold the title in the club's history.

After their success in recruiting new members, the club is looking forward to resuming a full playing season from April next year. They also have the satisfaction of finding that other clubs in the vicinity have adopted their idea of using mannequins dressed in white to scare off birds.

**Rosario Wass-Berru, Alan Henderson, and Brian Wass, with one of the latest additions to the club**





# Hospital problem parked

**Residents were asked in an online survey whether more roads should be included within the Barnet Hospital controlled parking zone and whether pay and display parking should be allowed in those streets where parking is currently restricted to residents only.**

A CPZ was applied to roads closest to Barnet Hospital after years of complaints about uncontrolled parking by staff and patients blocking up access to homes and businesses and clogging up the area.

The invitation to residents to give their views made no mention of the fact that Barnet Council's revenue from the CPZ would be higher if the zone was widened to other streets and if pay and display parking was introduced in those bays which are under-used by local householders.

When the Barnet Hospital CPZ was introduced in 2018, the council agreed a review should take place.

An informal online consultation, which closed in August (20.8.2020), gave



residents an opportunity to indicate if they think changes should be made in either in the boundary of the CPZ or in the type of restrictions.

The area surveyed was much larger than the existing zone and included roads within an area stretching from Bells Hill and Whittings Road in the south to Wood Street and Barnet Road in the north, and from the Black Horse roundabout in the east to Galley Lane and Quinta Drive in the west.

In addition to the dozen or so roads that are currently included, residents in another

36 roads were consulted.

Householders were asked if they are satisfied with the operation and boundaries of the zone; the restrictions on parking between 8am and 6.30pm, Monday to Saturday; and whether they would support pay and display being introduced when demand from residents is low and where extra paid-for-parking places would assist visitors and workers at the hospital.

Several residents criticised the timing of the survey given the vast reduction in traffic due to the coronavirus pandemic, at a time when far fewer patients are visiting the hospital. They said a better option would have been to have waited until parking demand settled down in a post-pandemic "new normal".

Councillor David Longstaff acknowledged that traffic had yet to return to pre-covid.19 levels, but the review had already been delayed and there were significant issues for residents outside the zone.

Traffic displaced from streets within the CPZ was causing a problem in nearby roads.

*The big 550- but just not this year*

**Ambitious plans are being drawn up to celebrate the 550th anniversary next year of the Battle of Barnet.**

Barnet Medieval Festival – scheduled for the weekend of 5-6 June 2021 – aims to have an even greater range of battle re-enactments than in 2019 or at the first festival in 2018.

In addition to highly-popular firearms demonstrations – with cannon firing by the House of Bayard re-enactment group – the organisers are hoping it might be possible to offer arena exhibitions of men and horses being dressed for mounted combat.

Other events planned for next year include a "medieval presence" in Barnet High Street on Sunday 11 April 2021 – the Sunday before the 550th anniversary of the Battle fought between Yorkist and Lancastrian forces just to the north of Barnet on 14 April 1471.

To the disappointment of the festival's trustees, the continuing coronavirus rules on social distancing and restrictions on public events, meant there was no alternative but to cancel the revised plan to try to hold this year's re-arranged festival over the weekend of 19-20 September.

Bob Burstow, chair of the trustees, said they had been informed by their specialist insurers that for the "foreseeable future" they were not prepared to offer cover for re-enactment events attended by the public.

After the loss of this year's festival, the organisers are determined to make the 550th anniversary year an extra special celebration.

Plans are being drawn up for a community event in Barnet High Street sometime in September to promote the 2021 festival and to kick off fund raising events with the sale of memorabilia.

To help finance an expanded programme for the festival next June, the trustees are also planning to start a crowdfunding appeal.

All the medieval re-enactment groups and societies that join together to bring the Battle of Barnet to life had been booked for both June and then September this year – and they are now being invited to take part in the 2021 festival.

Last year over 350 medieval re-enactors enthralled a crowd of over 5,000 with their portrayal of what was one of the pivotal battles between Yorkist and Lancastrian forces.

In planning for 2021, the trustees have been encouraged by the many expressions of support for what is considered to be London's top attraction for Wars of the Roses military enthusiasts.

## Swifts return for summer

**Sightings by bird watchers suggest that the swifts which spend three months of the summer swooping, swirling and squealing high in the skies over High Barnet have probably had a successful breeding season.**

On their arrival in early May, there were sightings of around a dozen or more.

By July, well over 20 were being counted at some locations – and one evening in mid-July up to 30 were observed circling and

screaming together above Manor Road and Mays Lane.

Sightings of swifts are a regular feature at many of High Barnet's green spaces, including Dollis Valley, Whittings Hill, Whalebones, Byng Road playing fields and allotments and Shire golf course.

Ornithologist David Martens, who organised High Barnet's swift awareness week in early July, said his gut feeling was that it had been a productive year for the breeding swifts that visited this summer but had departed again for Africa by early August.

"We've had a very good breeding season for all sorts of threatened species because of the fine weather this spring and early summer.

"Swifts do seem to have benefited as well and it is so encouraging to hear they've

returned to regular nesting places."

Breeding swifts were confirmed nesting under the eaves or in nesting boxes in several roads, including Fitzjohn Avenue, Manor Road, Granville Road and Leicester Road, New Barnet.

Other roads where swifts may have nested this year include Cedar Lawn Avenue, Normandy Avenue and Bedford Avenue.

"I'm sure there are probably other roads in and around High Barnet that have breeding swifts – we've just got to find them. Another project for next year," said Mr Martens, who delivers leaflets encouraging residents to monitor swift sightings and to fit nest boxes under the eaves of their houses.

<http://actionforswifts.blogspot.com/>



# I'm (not) still standing

By Nick Jones

**Brake Shear House, one of the last of the many small factories and workshops that were once dotted around High Barnet, has been demolished to make way for a new development of flats and houses on a site just off the High Street.**

The much-interrupted project, which first gained planning approval in 2018, three years after the tenants moved out, was stalled temporarily because demolition contractors discovered asbestos in the roof.

When demolition resumed, the original green sign 'Brake Shear House' was removed and revealed an earlier name plate dated 1893, John Swain & Son, photo-engraving works'.

Shanly Homes' plans for the 1.2-acre site include a stepped block of four to five storeys providing 50 luxury apartments; eight three-storey semi-detached houses; up to three commercial units; and parking space for 54 cars.

Access from the High Street will be improved by the demolition of a vacant clothes shop to allow for the widening of the existing entrance to allow two-way traffic.

Much of the Brake Shear House complex has been boarded up in recent years following the sale of the site for redevelopment in 2015 when long-established firms including two printers, a sheet-metal works and two recording studios where the likes of Elton John and the Spice Girls recorded.

When the site was originally purchased by a previous developer Wrenbridge, the 16 businesses operating on the premises claimed over 100 people were either directly employed there or made occasional use of stores and workshops.

Demolition contractors moved heavy plant into the site several weeks ago and many of the buildings have already been cleared away with the original frontage of Brake Shear House the last to go.

The block of two- and three-

bedroom apartments – nine of which are shared ownership – is to be built on the Brake Shear House side of the site and on the other side would be the eight semi-detached houses with the three commercial units immediately to the rear of the High Street premises.

During the lengthy planning process – and final approval was only granted in February – several of the workshops did have temporary uses and for a time the complex was brought back to life by the arrival of Nightingales Emporium, a collaborative selling point for a group of artists.

"This was the original site of Barnet's Victoria skating rink and swimming baths run by a pioneering entrepreneur Daniel Schmidt. He later had a museum of stuffed animals in his emporium, so we are following in his famous footsteps.



## CHAIR'S REPORT

At the Society's Committee meeting in July, we reviewed the timing of our 2020 AGM/75th celebration and 75th Commemorative Newsletter, and agreed that in view of continuing Covid-19 uncertainty it would not be possible to hold the AGM/celebration this year. We'll aim for a Spring 2021 event instead.

As a result, this issue of the Newsletter is a normal one, and we will postpone the Commemorative Newsletter until November. As well as looking back over 75 years, it will look to the future and herald the Spring Event.

We also co-opted Kim Ambridge, John Hay and Simon Watson as Committee Members until such time as we can hold our AGM. Kim has also taken over from John as Acting Membership Secretary.

Last month I accepted an invitation from Barnet U3A to give a 75th talk celebrating our past, present and future work in and around Chipping Barnet. If you'd like to view my presentation, it's on our website: <https://www.barnetsociety.org.uk/planning-environment/the-barnet-society-campaigning-for-a-better-barnet-for-75-years>." **info@barnetsociety.org.uk**  
**Robin Bishop**



**Read more news at**  
<https://www.barnetsociety.org.uk>

## 15 members forward, 16 back

**The Society has gained 15 new individual or family memberships since June, around half recruited by committee members, but in the same period has lost 16 members, whom about half joined only one year ago.**

Unfortunately, recruitment was inhibited by the cancellation of events such as the Medieval Festival and summer fairs. Mid-August marked 12 months since we upgraded the PayPal payment system to set up recurring subscriptions. As a result, we now have 76 members paying automatically by PayPal in addition to 262 who pay automatically by standing order. A quarter of our members have chosen to pay more than their minimum subscription, for which we are most grateful. Some 90 member households are receiving with this newsletter a letter inviting them to supply us with their email address so that they can join the 340 who receive our all-member emails. Just 12 members have accepted the invitation to receive our newsletters electronically.

**Kim Ambridge, Membership Secretary**  
[www.barnetsociety.org.uk/membership](http://www.barnetsociety.org.uk/membership)

