



Premier Inn has said that the new hotel on the site of Barnet Market would blend in well with the terraced houses in Chipping Close

Premier Inn wins appeal - but will it help to revive High Barnet's town centre?

Plans for a 100-bed Premier Inn on the site of Barnet Market were approved by a clear majority at a meeting of Barnet Council's planning committee despite the continued, forthright opposition of residents in the adjoining Chipping Close, writes Nick Jones

Criticism of the scheme, which the residents' spokesman claimed would turn living in their road into "a nightmare", was supported by the committee chair, Councillor Wendy Prentice, who is one of the three High Barnet councillors.

But when the application was put to the meeting (5.11.2018), she was heavily outvoted with seven votes in favour, three against and one abstention.

Councillor Prentice expressed her opposition from the start, challenging the evidence given in support of the hotel by Gordon Massey, former chair of the Barnet Residents Association, who spoke

on behalf of Chipping Barnet Town Team and who had explained that all the town's traders and community groups were in favour of the project.

"I don't think a new hotel on the market site will improve the shopping centre," declared Councillor Prentice when challenging Mr Massey.

"It's my ward...I am not sure a majority of people are for this hotel...I want to know how it will regenerate the High Street...I am worried about congestion in St Albans Road...There will be a tailback in Bruce Road...I think the parking will affect the High Street."

Mr Massey - who earlier had argued that building a Premier Inn in the centre of High Barnet would create confidence in a shopping centre that faced decline - expressed sympathy for residents of in Chipping Close and commended their "very well-orchestrated campaign".

"Notices were pinned on lamp posts,

leaflets pushed through doors, a lot on social media, but it has given the impression of a disproportionate amount of opposition.

"I have talked to many people. They are for it. The Barnet Residents Association held three events in the Spires over the summer and we estimated over 80 per cent were either in support or neutral. There is not overwhelming opposition to it."

Except for the 10 houses in Chipping Close, there were only three objections from the 200 houses in the three nearby roads, and the Barnet Society, which had consulted the 23 members living nearest the site, found that of the 12 who replied, eight were in favour and four against.

"We all know shops are leaving High Barnet...the current vacancy rate is around 10 per cent; the Spires shopping centre has a vacancy rate of over 20 per cent.

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Page 9: Council leader Richard Cornelius gets it in the neck from High Barnet residents at a public Q&A session

Premier Inn hopes to prove the doubters wrong

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“The wider issue is the future of the town and how we adapt to a primarily service-based economy.

“This is already happening with noticeably more hairdressers, health spas, coffee shops and restaurants. A Premier Inn precisely fits this model; it will bring jobs and, more important, up to 100 people a day who will spend money in the local economy, especially evening food and drink,” said Mr Massey.

Richard Gardham, a Chipping Close resident who voiced the opposition of his neighbours, appealed to the committee to reject a plan for a three-to-four storey hotel that would have an irrevocable impact on their homes.

“It will be a nightmare 24/7 with additional cars turning our close into a noisy alleyway. “All guests will do is eat breakfast. They won’t shop in local shops and the restaurant will under cut independent eateries.

“The vision of the Premier Inn as an economic saviour is an exaggeration. Many of those working in the hotel will be in low-paid, minimum-wage jobs.”

When questioned by councillors, Mr Gardham said the residents accepted the site would be developed and he thought they might well be supportive of a smaller hotel with its own on-site car parking.

“The vision of the Premier Inn as an economic saviour is an exaggeration. Many of those working in the hotel will be in low-paid, minimum-wage jobs.”



Gordon Massey was congratulated by Gail Laser for co-ordinating the Chipping Barnet Town Team’s presentation in favour of the Premier Inn on the Barnet Market site.



The hotel site is an unused car park, which was used for a market twice a week. The market has now moved about 20m to the Bandstand, outside of Waitrose on Stapylton Road, a more prominent site



Premature reaction: Posters appeared regularly in and around Barnet Market opposing the hotel

Chris Benham, planning consultant for Locate Developments, which purchased the site and will build the hotel for Premier Inn, outlined the steps that had been taken since the rejection of their previous application.

After consultation with the council and local groups, the hotel had been reduced from 120 beds to 100; the main entrance had been removed from Chipping Close to a new access and exit in Bruce Road; the restaurant entrance would front directly on to St Albans Road, rather than the corner with Chipping Close; the Chipping Close pavement would be cushioned to reduce noise from wheeling suitcases; and the hotel windows glazed so as to reduce overlooking into the Chipping Close houses.

Councillor Prentice questioned the arrangement with the NCP car park in the Spires for Premier Inn guests to park at a charge of £3 a night. What would happen if there was not enough room for shoppers, she asked. “People will turn away and this will encourage people to park in local streets,” said Councillor Prentice.

Mr Benham insisted there was more than sufficient space in the car park to meet the hotel’s requirements. He said the developers were ready to finance a review of the local controlled parking zone should this be required.

The Spires had agreed to provide improved facilities for the market, which moved to the Bandstand on November 10. Locate Developments estimated that 40 jobs would be created during construction of the hotel – due for completion in late 2019 – and there would be 50 full and part-time jobs in the hotel. To assist recruitment, the company would contribute £91,000 to apprenticeships and employment training.

Mr Benham was challenged by several councillors when he claimed the new hotel would generate £2.8 million a year in visitor expenditure in High Barnet.

This was based on a hotel occupancy rate of 86 per cent, but he struggled to convince councillors that this spend equated to an average spend of £73 per person per night – a figure which Mr Benham said was supported by London tourist authorities, but which the councillors believed might apply in central London, but not the outer suburbs.

TfL looks at changing three key bus routes in the High Barnet area

In October, Transport for London (TfL) proposed reducing bus services in Barnet, changing the 292, 384 & 606 bus routes and a bus stop on Barnet Hill, writes Robin Bishop

The Society didn't initially have a view on the 292 or 606, but thought that we might support the proposed extension of the 384 to Edgware, and to move the bus stop on Barnet Hill closer to the High Barnet Station access road. But we decided to ask readers of our website for their comments first.

After carefully weighing them, we concluded that for the moment we support the present arrangements. With radical developments on the horizon in New Barnet and High Barnet, however, we think they should be kept under review.

Below is a summary of our final submission to TfL.

Route 384 – Extension to Edgware

We value the reliability and inclusivity of the present Cockfosters-Quinta Drive route. The gains of extending it are unproven compared with the clear detriment of the proposed change to existing users. We are left wondering if an important TfL consideration is to compete with Uno's 614 route between Barnet, Edgware and Queensbury at minimal additional cost.

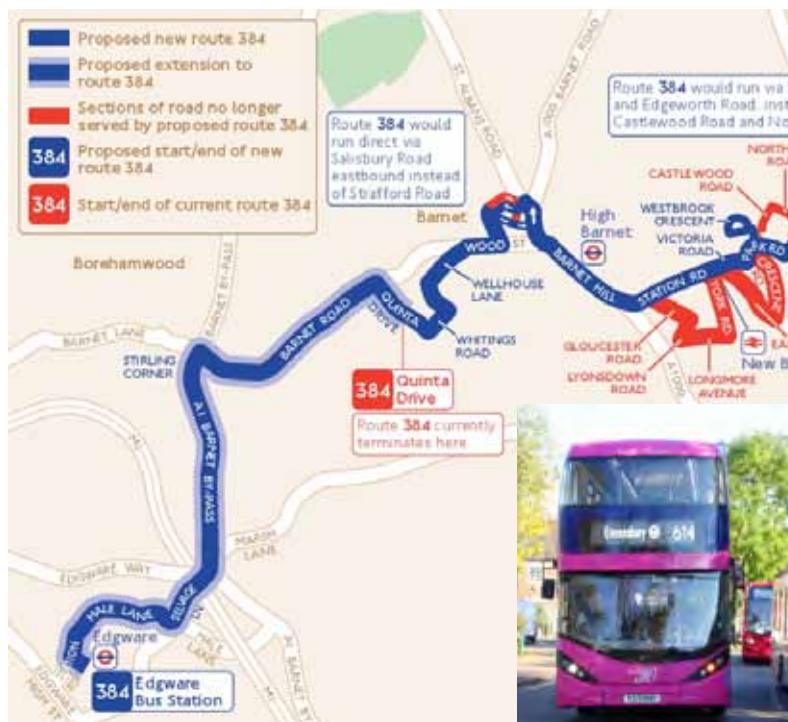
Route 384 – East & New Barnet

If TfL's proposal goes ahead, direct service to the following facilities would be lost:

- New Barnet Station
- The Post Office



384 bus negotiating Strafford Road, High Barnet. TfL propose switching it to Salisbury Road



TfL's map to show the proposed changes to the 384 bus route

Is the proposed 384 extension a cheap way of competing with 614 route?

- The East Barnet Health Centre
- Sainsbury's
- The British Legion
- Several nursery, primary and secondary schools
- The tennis club (where voting takes place for local and government elections)
- The new Aldi store (at the junction of Brookhill and Crescent Roads).

We are also concerned about re-routining the 384 along Victoria Road, where pavements are narrow and peak-time congestion is frequent.

This will be exacerbated when the Victoria Quarter is complete. That will add 350 new homes – i.e. at least 1,000 new residents. Large office blocks around New Barnet Station are also being converted into flats.

Route 384 – High Barnet

We are unconvinced of the merits of moving the route from Strafford Road to Salisbury Road. The small advantage of speeding up the buses would be offset by considerable detriment to residents of the streets to the north and west, and by the greater risk of congestion and delay in Salisbury Road.

Route 384 – Hail & Ride

We support retention of existing Hail & Ride sections, though we acknowledge that in places its usefulness is reduced by parked vehicles, and that more fixed

stops may be a solution.

Bus route 606

We oppose the proposed cut to this service. The stretch between Chipping Barnet town centre and The Totteridge Academy already risks overcrowding if one third of the service is cut, and this will be exacerbated when the Ark Pioneer Academy opens in September 2019. We are pleased that TfL plan to keep the changing pupil, parent and staff needs under review.

Barnet Hill bus stop

On balance we oppose moving the existing stop. We recognise the advantages of doing so to some tube travellers, but it would create new difficulties for traffic near the pedestrian crossing unless a new lay-by were to be built. But the latter would require removing several trees in the middle of the splendid line that was planted 20 years ago – as a direct result of a Society campaign – and which we would therefore oppose.

Accessibility

We do not support the recent increase of TfL's target distance from a bus route from 400 to 450 metres.

Not only does Chipping Barnet already contain one of London's highest proportions of elderly people – and therefore probably disabled or with impaired mobility – but it is unusually hilly.

Gail makes it to High Street Heroes Awards

Gail Laser, founder of Love Barnet, has won national recognition for the decade she has spent working tirelessly to improve trading conditions in Barnet High Street

Gail has been declared one of four local champions for 2018 by the Save The High Street campaign, and she is on the short list for one of the High Street Heroes Awards to be announced in mid-November, in a contest sponsored by Visa and the Daily Mirror, writes Nick Jones.

In its citation, www.savethehighstreet.org says Ms Laser is one of the “dedicated individuals”, who through an “impressive mixture of entrepreneurship and dedication”, is fighting constantly against the narrative that mindlessly echoes the headline that “the High Street is dead.”

Her efforts to re-invigorate Barnet High Street began in 2008 when she became a Barnet Society committee member and started chairing meetings of local traders in a bid to find ways to halt the rising number of shop closures.

In 2011 she pulled together a successful bid for almost £500,000 from the Outer London Fund to smarten up the High Street. With Barnet Council acting as banker, the Chipping Barnet Town Team – of which she became vice chair – embarked on an ambitious programme to de-clutter the High Street, removing unnecessary railings, repainting shop fronts and installing awnings.

Her next initiative was to establish her Love Barnet campaign with its Love Barnet Facebook and Twitter pages.

In a demonstration of her love affair with retail therapy, Ms Laser has opened three temporary pop-up shops, including 89 High Street and the Tea Station in the Spires shopping centre, which with the assistance of students at Barnet and Southgate College, offered tea and cakes.

Other ventures have included establishing a local branch of Make It Your Business, a business group encouraging



Gail Laser with Barnet Teenage Market stallholder Luke Farrelly (left) who with his brother Matthew, has started Stencil King, selling hand-made stencil-based art work

women to open or seek funding for new local enterprises. She was at the forefront of efforts to boost the Barnet Society’s “Save Our High Street” petition to secure an hour’s free parking in the High Street – a long-running, but unsuccessful campaign that was launched in 2015 and which attracted the attention of the BBC television programme, **Dom on the Spot**.

Ms Laser took the presenter Dom Littlewood on a guided tour of Barnet’s “parking wars front line” and told him in no uncertain terms that parking restrictions and fines had played a large part in killing off many of the High Street’s traders.

More recently she has stepped up her efforts with those pressing for the regeneration of the High Street with pavement build-outs, and in supporting plans for the construction of a Premier Inn on the Barnet Market site.

In an interview for the Save The High

Street campaign, she says High Streets must change with the times, becoming smaller and increasing footfall by encouraging facilities that would allow people to socialise more, perhaps with play areas for children.

Ms Laser is on a shortlist of 12 for High Street Heroes Award, sponsored by Visa, in association with the Daily Mirror, to be announced on November 15.



Gail with Robin Bishop (left) and Cllr David Longstaff

Help us to help build a better Barnet

Could you make a donation towards the Society’s important work of preserving and improving Chipping Barnet and protecting the Green Belt, now or in your will?

Over the last few years we have invested in an active and informative website as well as a more professional quarterly newsletter. We also wish to build on the success of our spring public meetings, especially Your Vision for Barnet last February, which was attended by 120 residents and 13 prospective councillors. All of these activities attract wide audiences and enable us to influence the Council and developers over the increasing number and size of proposals threatening to damage the character of our neighbourhood. With the recent loss of the Barnet Press and downsizing of the Barnet Times, we believe that we can provide a more and more valuable service to our community. Because the cost of these is significantly greater than in the past, however, we must economise and/or raise additional funds. Although we could put up membership fees, we are reluctant to do so without first exploring other options.

So if you are in a position to make a donation, please add something to your annual payment to John Hay at membership@barnetsociety.org. uk or contact me at robin.bishop@gmx.co.uk. Many thanks.

Robin Bishop, chair, Barnet Society

Planning and Environment report

Robin Bishop writes:

Headline cases

The proposed Premier Inn has continued to be the most controversial planning case, closely followed by Transport for London's proposal to alter and extend the 384 bus route. Both are covered in separate articles on Pages 1-3.

Major housing developments

Other major applications under consideration as I write are for:

- 68 flats on the Brake Shear House site – We're neutral about it.
- 63 flats in the former office block at N91 Station Road, by New Barnet Station – We're neutral. Next door to it, Kingmaker House is to be converted into 94 flats. No change to its exterior was proposed, so planning approval was not required.
- 57 homes on the former Meadow Works site, Prickler's Hill – We've objected.
- A 100-place care home on the Marie Foster Home site, Wood Street – We support this.

To put these developments in perspective, Hertsmere Council is currently consulting on the possibility of building up to 2,620 new homes between the M25 and Potters Bar, west and east of Baker Street and Barnet Road. This would be a huge loss of Green Belt.

Ones to watch

High Street pedestrian improvements – Four months after consultation closed last June, we were told that the scheme had received approval from both public and Councillors, and that work would begin in January 2019. But we now hear



1 Station Road prior to its conversion



What 1 Station Road will look like on completion of its conversion.

Visualisation by Pinnacle Architecture

that there was an objection, necessitating a public enquiry.

Whalebones estate – a promised update by the developer for autumn has not materialised.

Other casework highlights:

Approved

85 High Street (fka Lloyds Bank) – We objected unsuccessfully to the proposed glass door and signage.

Withdrawn

2 Bruce Road – A proposal to convert the building adjoining Dory's café into a house in multiple occupation (HMO), i.e. minimal bedsits for students or low-income singles.

Refused

Three other proposed HMOs in Stapylton Road, Plantaganet Road and Quinta Drive.

Awaiting a decision

127 Barnet Road (fka Cottage Garden Centre) – Following a series of unauthorised works on this Green Belt site and adjoining garage, an application has been made to replace a greenhouse with what looks suspiciously like a warehouse. It would be twice the volume of the greenhouse, and we strongly objected.

141-143 High Street – We objected to the latest proposal for four stories of offices and flats.

Moxon & Tapster Street (former Royal British Legion) – The developer is back with a fifth planning application, this time for six apartments on three stories.

When I Grow Up, 204 High Street – We supported this imaginative proposal for a family hub for 'pre-schoolers and their grown-ups' in former estate agency premises.

Gone to appeal

1 Sunset View – A small proposal for the

rear of this house in the Monken Hadley Conservation Area has been approved, despite our objections. More seriously, the owner appealed to the Planning Inspectorate over the rejection last June of a much larger side extension. If the appeal is upheld, it will undermine the basic principle of a Conservation Area. We submitted further arguments against the proposal.

Fern Room site, Salisbury Road – Boxy flats and a community facilities.

Council news

Local List – Additions to the list of buildings of architectural or historic significance are likely to be unveiled in December.

Consultations – The Council has consulted us on several new initiatives. Two will be closed by the time you read this:

- Should the right to convert offices into dwellings without planning permission continue in High and New Barnet Town Centres, Alston Works and Hadley Manor Trading Estate. Our answer is no: we are in danger of losing the floorspace necessary for a diverse local economy.

- Should new sports and community hubs be built on Barnet & King George V Playing Fields – Only, we argue, if they don't duplicate facilities that could be provided more economically by Ark Pioneer Academy and The Totteridge Academy.

The other two will continue until February 2019:

- Draft Housing Strategy
- Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

You can find out more at <https://engage.barnet.gov.uk/>. Please tell me what you think at robin.bishop@gmx.co.uk.

Pledges needed for new Barnet Medieval Festival

Scenes from the battles of St Albans and Barnet will be re-created as part of the Barnet Medieval Festival to be held over the weekend of June 9 and 10 next year

Volunteers hoping to organise a repeat of this summer's Barnet Medieval Festival are mounting a campaign to persuade local business leaders, donors, charities and community groups to pledge their financial support, writes Nick Jones

Organisers have set themselves a provisional target of £35,000 for a festival next year over the weekend of June 8-9, 2019.

Significant funding is essential to help finance a second re-enactment of the 1471 Battle of Barnet – a spectacle that attracted 6,000 spectators last June.

This year's event was funded by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of its support for the Battle of Barnet project which has included an archaeological investigation of the likely battlefield site and numerous initiatives to encourage and sustain interest in Barnet's role in the Wars of the Roses.

The aim of organising another festival next year is to reinforce Chipping Barnet's identity as an historic market town by reconnecting to its medieval past with a



Volunteers rallying support for a repeat of this summer's Barnet Medieval Festival and Battle of Barnet re-enactment. The heraldic banners are those of the Yorkist Edward IV and Lancastrian Henry VI. From left to right, Dennis Bird, Hilary Harrison, Howard Simmons, Margaret Luck, Susan Skedd and Dorothy Cohen



Action from this year's successful re-enactment of the 1471 Battle of Barnet

THE LARGEST PLEDGE SO FAR IS FOR £500 BY THE BATTLEFIELDS SOCIETY AND THE ORGANISERS, BACKED BY THE CHIPPING BARNET TOWN TEAM, ARE HOPING THAT AS MANY RESIDENTS AS POSSIBLE WILL PLEDGE SUPPORT.

sustainable annual community festival.

The largest pledge so far is for £500 by the Battlefields Society and the organisers, backed by the Chipping Barnet Town Team, are hoping that as many residents as possible will pledge support.

Although the medieval festival appeal failed to get the promise of match funding from the Mayor of London's annual appeal, the organisers are hoping to get support from Barnet Council's Barnet Together Fund.

Pledges can be made via www.spacehive.com/making-barnet-a-festival-town

or by contacting barnetbattleproject@gmail.com

The closing date for pledges is 9 December.

In a bid to encourage interest the Medieval Siege Society – which was one of the societies taking part in this summer's re-enactment – is organising a draw among those making a pledge.

The winner would be called upon to fire the first round from a medieval cannon

and start the re-enactment – a task performed this year by Martin Russell, Deputy Lieutenant of Barnet.

The closing date for pledge is 9 December and the organisers intend to spend the coming weeks appealing for pledges from local businesses and traders.

If a festival next year gets the go ahead, the aim will be to hang even more heraldic banners along Barnet High Street and organise a range of events in the weeks preceding the festival weekend.

Church wants public's help to find out more about the lives of 29 First World War soldiers

St Mark's Church has a finely decorated wood panel listing the names, ranks and regiments of local men who died in the Great War. Now churchwarden John Hay is keen for relatives to fill in details of their lives

St Mark's Church, Barnet Vale, is launching an appeal to find out more about the families and relatives of the 29 men whose names are commemorated on a First World War plaque about which little is known.

Beside the finely decorated wood panel, just inside the entrance to the church, is a leather-bound roll of honour listing the names, ranks and regiments and the battlefields where the men died.

Each man has a separate page to himself and their military history is written up in pen and ink and a clear script.

"In this the centenary year of the end of the Great War, we would love to find out more about these men and what their connections were to Barnet," said church warden John Hay, who is chair of the fabric committee.

"Perhaps there are relatives or descendants who could fill us in with missing details. We don't know who designed the panel or when it was installed – just some of the questions we would like answers to."

St Mark's was opened in 1899, and at the outbreak of the First World War the church had built up a sizeable congregation following the expansion of Barnet Vale and New Barnet.

"In those days there was just a muddy track up to the parish church at the top of Barnet Hill; there was no Meadway until the 1930s.

"But New Barnet was very fashionable and the military ranks of those who are commemorated are an indication of the status of the families who had moved into the area."

Among those listed is Aubrey Lloyd St Clare Thomson who joined the Public Schools Battalion in August 1914 with the rank of lance corporal. He became a captain in the King's Liverpool Regiment, was mentioned in despatches and died



Churchwarden John Hay is hoping to find out more about the family history of the 29 men commemorated on St Mark's First World War memorial panel.

from his wounds in November 1917.

He was buried in the cemetery at Blockley parish church in Worcestershire.

Another of the five names of those not listed on local war memorials is that of Gordon Minter Frieake, a second lieutenant in the 1st/4th Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, who died at the age of 19 in August 1916 and was buried at the St Sever military cemetery in Rouen.

He had joined the London Fire Brigade in 1914. His parents lived in North Wembley.

Other names being researched include, Mansell Ernest Carey, a second lieutenant in the Royal West Kent Regiment, who died in action at Cambrai in November 1917.

Emmanuel William Setterfield, chief engine room artificer, died when HMS Hogue was torpedoed in September 1914.

William Bearman, of the London Regiment of the Royal Fusiliers, was

killed in action on the Somme in July 1916 after serving in Egypt and Gallipoli.

In the middle of the panel are the words, "These are they who went out from us to the Great War and returned not again."

Mr Hay hopes St Mark's appeal -- to coincide with Remembrance Sunday services -- will jog some family memories and reveal more about the men's links to the area.

Susan Skedd, a local historian, is assisting with the project by checking the St Mark's names against those listed on nearby war memorials.

"Five of the names on St Mark's panel are not listed on either the Chipping Barnet or New Barnet war memorials, so we have some interesting research to do.

"I saw some of the St Mark's names appear in the remembrance commemoration at St Albans Cathedral when the names of all those from the St Albans diocese were featured."

Ms Skedd is hoping to involve pupils at Cromer Road Primary School – the only school in St Mark's parish – to see if they can help collate information and learn more about the First World War.

The next task is to check census returns for 1911 and electoral registers to see if they shed some light on where these families lived before the Great War.



St Mark's Church in Barnet Vale, which contains the WWI plaque

Underhill prepares for new life as school

Barnet Football Club, which left Underhill in 2013 and now plays at the Hive, in Edgware, was established in 1888 and has been celebrating its 130th anniversary. Meanwhile, its rugby counterpart, a mere 100, still has its roots firmly in Barnet, writes Nick Jones

Demolition of the stands at Underhill Stadium and site clearance was completed earlier this year.

Construction is now well underway of a 1,200-place Ark Academy secondary school due for completion next July, ready for its first pupils in the autumn of 2019.

Supporters against the move formed the Back2Barnet campaign and tried without success to prevent the sale of the stadium and football pitch to the government's educational funding agency, which provides sites for free schools.

Local residents fought an equally long campaign against the use of the site for an academy school, insisting there was no demonstrable demand for a new school of this size in High Barnet.

Initially Barnet Council's planning committee voted unanimously against approving a 1,700-place school on the site, but when a revised application was submitted for a 1,200-place school, the committee voted 6-5 in favour – with the six Conservative councillors all accepting the revised proposal, despite the protests of Labour councillors who said new the academy would cause traffic congestion and was a breach of the green belt.

The new Ark Academy school can be seen taking shape on the site of Underhill Stadium, below.

The land in front of the building will become the school's playing field.



The 1919 line-up for Barnet Rugby Football Club for its inaugural match against St Barts in a rented field at the bottom of Barnet Hill

Rugby Club centenary

Fans still mourning the loss of Barnet Football Club – now being replaced at Underhill by a super-size academy school – will be encouraged by the news that another of the town's sporting traditions is still making history.

Barnet Elizabethans Rugby Football Club has started a season of commemorative events to celebrate its centenary.

Young men returning home to Barnet from the First World War established the club in 1919, and that October they played their first match against a team from St Barts Hospital in a rented field, Macklin's meadow, at the bottom of Barnet Hill.

Barnet Elizabethans RFC is the oldest rugby club in continuous existence in both the Borough of Barnet and Hertfordshire, and according to Simon Moy, who is writing a history of the club, its formation was probably inspired by the overriding desire of those who had survived the war to return to normal life.

Today the club runs three adult sides

and an academy side – around 80 playing members – at the Byng Road playing fields, which have been the club's home since 1957.

Two hundred young players – plus 30 or so coaches – make up the mini and junior sections.

The grand finale of the centenary season will be The Rematch on Saturday 19 October 2019 – the 100th anniversary of the original Barnet v St Barts match, to be followed by a barbecue and fireworks at the Byng Road clubhouse.

A season of centenary events kicked off in October with a mini rugby festival with local clubs followed by a day of non-competitive games for more than 250 children from local primary schools, giving them a chance to try out rugby.

A junior rugby festival is planned for Sunday 7 April 2019 and a members' centenary ball on Saturday 7 September 2019, with a three-course dinner and live music in a marquee in front of the clubhouse.

Mr Moy, who has been researching the rugby club's history for his book, 100 Years of BERFC, to be published in December, says it was a group of old boys from Queen Elizabeth's Boys' School, including H A Dalton and J L Howton, together with the headmaster, H M Lattimer, who came up with the idea of forming the club in May 1919.



Council leader on the defensive over residents' gripes

Problems caused by uncontrolled street drinking in High Barnet and rough sleeping in shop doorways along the High Street topped the issues raised at an Engage Barnet question time, hosted by council leader Richard Cornelius

After a litany of complaints about drunken behaviour and litter-strewn pavements, the Conservative leader of Barnet Council, Richard Cornelius, promised he would do everything he could to ensure a greater police presence in the town centre and more regular street cleaning.

During a two-hour session at the Bull Theatre, Mr Cornelius faced a barrage of residents' complaints about a lack of police action to deal with drinking and disorder and a rapid deterioration in street cleanliness.

He told the meeting that Barnet paid more towards the cost of the Metropolitan Police than any other London borough, but Barnet was being allocated far fewer police officers per capita than any other borough.

"This has got to change. I hope whingeing by me to the Mayor of London [Sadiq Khan] will get us more police, and I can assure you I will most certainly be doing that."

The session opened with a complaint from Pina Griffin about the sad state of the High Street and the sitting area at the rear of the Spires shopping centre. She said there had been a rapid



Richard Cornelius said that it had been a 'mistake' to close the front counter at the police station

deterioration over the last two years.

"We now have homeless people sleeping in the High Street and urinating outside shops. There has also been a steady increase in street drinking.

"We have become so frightened of political correctness that we don't move them on and we now have a whole community of homeless people living in our High Street."

Gail Laser, founder of Love Barnet, described how residents had been shocked to see homeless people urinating and defecating.

"Because of the lack of action women are frightened to walk behind the Spires shopping centre. The High Street is filthy, and retailers are suffering."

Another resident complained about groups of street drinkers who sat in Church Passage.

"It is very unpleasant to find street drinkers sitting in the dark in Church Passage. People really are intimidated by this sort of behaviour. We need a more visible police presence in the High Street."

A follow-up question raised the issue of rough sleeping in High St shop doorways and the need for Barnet Council to do more to help homeless people.

He criticised

the level of police cutbacks by the Mayor of London and said it had been a mistake to close the front counter at High Barnet police station last November.

"Shutting the police station to the public – while there are still police officers inside the building – sends out entirely the wrong signal.

"Barnet gets the lowest amount back per capita in police spending, but I believe there is enough money in the police budget to ensure we have more police in Barnet and I can, and I will, whinge to the Mayor of London."

He believed Barnet had also lost out from the creation of a combined police command centre for the boroughs of Barnet, Harrow and Brent.

"There are 1,000 police officers for the borough, but because of shift duty, at best there will be only 200 on duty on any one day in the whole of the borough."

Mr Cornelius insisted that the council's policy of outsourcing services to Capita was not the reason for the problems with street cleanliness.

"Street cleaning is a directly run service, with council employees, but I understand the need to ramp up the cleanliness of our streets as a higher priority."

In face of a string of complaints about the difficulties faced by residents in dealing with out-sourced services operated by Capita, Mr Cornelius insisted that every householder was £140 a year better off in council tax because of the savings that were being made.

His answers were met with noisy protests and there was applause when several residents said they would happily pay more council tax for better services in the borough, and "paying an extra £140 a year would be a small price to pay to get rid of Capita", said one resident.



Richard Cornelius, leader of Barnet Council, fielding questions

Council backs down over £1,800-a-year tax charge for cash machine outside newsagent

Barnet Council overturns decision to charge a High Street newsagent an extra £1,800 a year in council tax for having a free-to-use cash machine installed in the shop window

writes Nick Jones

There were smiles all around in the Paper Shop – formerly Smokers' Paradise – when proprietor Vajsur (Vince) Gadhavi opened the post and saw that the demands had been reduced to zero.

He thanked the Barnet Society for having publicised his plight and said that once news of the shop's nightmare went on the society's website www.barnetsociety.org.uk and was picked up on line on social media, he had been inundated with offers of support.

"We know that Councillor David Longstaff took up our case, and especially our shock at being landed with a £6,200 bill back-dated to 2015, and we want to thank him and the rest of our customers in High Barnet for having rallied round."

The cash machine was installed by NoteMachine Ltd in February 2015, but it was not until the demands for £6,200 arrived in the post in early September, that he realised that without his knowledge Barnet Council had increased the shop's annual rateable value by £3,750 – to a new total for the shop of £29,000.



Mr Gadhavi was told he had seven days to pay the arrears or the council would take action

Mr Gadhavi was told he had seven days to pay the arrears or the council would start legal proceedings.

But after several weeks of pressure on the council, he received notification that the charge of £1,800 for the current financial year, and £1,747 for the previous financial year, had both been reduced to zero, followed by the withdrawal of the two other demands of £1,815 for 2016-17 and £904 for 2015-16.

When the cash machine was installed, NoteMachine told Mr Gadhavi he would be paid commission when the machine hit 6,000 cash transactions a month – a target that has never been reached.

"We haven't received a penny income for having the cash machine, but we have wanted to offer customers a service and we feel we should not be penalised for helping to attract custom to the High Street.

"Our real grievance was that we were never notified by the council in 2015 that installation of the cash would increase the rateable value of the shop and everyone who has looked into this case on our behalf agrees that it is totally unfair to demand arrears dating back to 2015

when there had never been any warning or notification of the liability.

"We have ended up subsidising the machine – it is costing us about £200 a year in electricity and insurance – so we are offering High Barnet shoppers a service when it is being reported that cash machines are disappearing from High Streets across the country at a rate of 250 a month."

Currently the Paper Shop is paying a council tax bill of £1,112 a month, and Mr Gadhavi said that as he has paid on time for the 31 years he has been in business, he did not expect to be treated in this way by the Council.

Councillor Longstaff told the Barnet Society that he immediately took up the case of the Paper Shop, and another newsagent in Potters Road that also faced a back-dated demand of almost £7,000.

"I am sorry to say, but I think Barnet Council acted outrageously in sending out back-dated bills for almost £7,000. Convenience store chains like Tesco and Sainsbury are already mounting a legal challenge against the government's decision to allow local authorities to increase rateable values in this way.

"It's all the more unfair on small traders because the banks are exempt from charges on their cash machines, and there was no justification when neither of the newsagents seemed to be getting any commission for having allowed the installation of free-to-use cash machines for the public's benefit," added Mr Longstaff.



Paper Shop's Vince Gadhavi with his letter overturning the tax demand

New almshouses build on tradition that dates back to the 17th century

Seven new almshouses being built in Potters Lane for women aged over 50 are continuing a tradition that dates back to the 17th century, and for which Chipping Barnet has a proud place in the history of caring for the needy, writes Nick Jones

There are well over 170 almshouses within a mile of Barnet parish church, perhaps the highest concentration of any market town of its size in the country.

The new development is regarded by the Jesus Hospital Charity as another contribution towards a growing demand for affordable housing within the London Borough of Barnet.

“We are funding this ourselves as we believe it is important for almshouse charities to go on expanding our stock in order to meet housing need,” said Simon Smith, clerk to the visitors (trustees).

The seven new almshouses, due for completion next May, will add to the 15 on the estate at Ravenscroft Cottages in Potters Lane.

Currently Jesus Hospital has three vacancies in its 56 almshouses which are all named after the original benefactors – Ravenscroft’s, Garrett’s, Pagitt’s and Wilbraham’s – on sites in Wood Street, Monken Hadley, Grasvenor Avenue as well as Potters Lane.



Winifred Gale, 98, the oldest resident in the 56 almshouses provided by the Jesus Hospital Charity, and Simon Smith, clerk to the visitors (trustees), at Ravenscroft cottages in Potters Lane, Barnet

Only women over 50 can apply and they must be in housing need; have pressing reasons to move; be able to live independently; have limited means; and have had a previous period of residency in Barnet.

Priority in the first instance is given to applicants in High Barnet, New Barnet, East Barnet and Friern Barnet. The average maintenance charge for each tenant is £85 a week and those who cannot afford to pay the full amount can claim housing benefit.

Of the current residents, the youngest is 50 and the oldest is Winifred Gale,

aged 98, who has lived in the Ravenscroft cottages in Potters Lane for the last 24 years.

“It’s so friendly here at Ravenscroft cottages. I’m so comfortable and the outlook is beautiful, looking out on to gardens and trees,” said Mrs Gale.

Jesus Hospital employs two full-time gardeners to maintain the gardens and grounds around the various almshouse sites.

Mr Smith said that Chipping Barnet, as well as the rest of the borough, should be proud of its wealth of almshouses: there are almost 1,000, more than in any other London borough.

Jesus Hospital Charity was established by James and Mary Ravenscroft in 1679. Directly opposite the Wood Street almshouses bearing their name is the Marie Foster site where Signature Senior Lifestyle plans to build a 100-place block of luxury studios and apartments for frail and elderly people.

“Perhaps what’s happening in Wood Street does say something about today’s world,” said Mr Smith.

“On one side of the road are almshouses built by a benefactor for six poor women and on the other side there will be ultra-modern apartment at rents that will be way beyond the means of the women in need that we provide homes for.”



The seven new almshouses at Potters Lane are earmarked for completion by next May

Tributes to Maura Howells, long-serving member

Maura was an indefatigable voluntary worker, not just at the Barnet Society, but also at the Chipping Barnet Day Centre for the Elderly, where she was a familiar and welcome presence



Maura Howells

Maura (Mary Anne) Howells, a life member of the Barnet Society, died suddenly in October. Her late husband Alan was also a doughty supporter of the society for many years.

The couple were well known in High Barnet for their community and charitable work.

Mr Howells, who died in 2013, served tirelessly on the society's committee and his wife assisted with social activities.

Mrs Howells, who was 87, was also a long-standing helper at the Barnet Day Centre for the Elderly, which holds twice-weekly lunches at the United Reform Church in Wood Street.

Requiem Mass was held at the Church

of Mary Immaculate and St Gregory the Great, in Union Street.

Father John McKenna, the parish priest, praised Maura's contribution to the community and her hospitality when looking after priests, deacons and new parishioners.

"Maura was truly authentic. She gave to the community. And she was always right!"

Her friend, Molly Stebbings (88), another stalwart volunteer helper, said that she and Maura were at the day centre's annual fair and she remembers Maura admiring the cakes on display. Mrs Howells was found dead next day.

"Maura was such a character and so well known in Wentworth Road where she and Alan had lived for their entire married life."

Mr and Mrs Howells met when working at the National Bank in Camden. After their wedding in Cork in 1959, they moved into their new home in Barnet, where they raised Owen, Teresa and Timothy.

They were both keen and knowledgeable gardeners and jointly cared for their allotment in Byng Road.

Owen Jones, a long-standing society member, said Maura was a keen cyclist. "She used to ride her bike around High Barnet until relatively recently with the same determination that she applied to all that she did."



Washing up completed, Maura Howells (left) enjoying a St Patrick's Day Irish coffee, at the 40th anniversary of the Chipping Barnet Day Centre for the Elderly in June 2016, with another long-serving helper Molly Stebbings.

Barnet after Brexit

What impact will the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union on 29 March 2019 have on Barnet?

The Barnet Society is devoting its spring public forum – on Thursday 7 March in Christ Church – to a debate on the future prospects for Barnet after the UK's Brexit.

We are assembling a panel of local experts, including councillors, business leaders, academics and environmentalists to speak and answer your questions.

Among those to be invited will be the Chipping Barnet MP, Theresa Villiers, a member of the Chipping Barnet Town Team, a local head-teacher and a representative of the Spires Shopping Centre.

As more details emerge about the terms of the UK's withdrawal from the EU, the Society will prepare an agenda of the key issues to be discussed and around which questions from the audience will be invited.

Our Barnet Beyond Brexit debate will explore the possible need for local changes in policies and practice.

Will steps have to be taken to improve education and training so that more local youngsters are equipped to take on jobs that are currently being filled by skilled workers from the European Union?

Will local demand for housing be affected by a possible loss of jobs among residents employed in finance and the many other services that support the City of London?

What will be the impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy have on farming in the Green Belt countryside that is so valued by Barnet residents?

The precise themes will be chosen nearer the debate to ensure maximum topicality.

Membership News - November 2018

Welcome to all our new members who have joined since the last membership news update. It has been a very busy few months on the membership front as we've been completely overhauling the Membership Database to make things much quicker and more efficient.

It costs around 90p to produce and send a letter to a member, emailing is free. I will introduce this where I can, but out of the current 609 members we have, only 328 have supplied email addresses. I had to send out 60 GDPR Reminder letters this quarter too, and 16 members never responded at all. If we can get more members to take out a Standing Order for renewals, we would save a fortune and be able to keep the subscription at a low rate.

Email: membership@barnetsociety.org.uk

Phone: 07717 195662

John Hay, Membership Secretary

New Treasurer Needed

Mary Pettinger is stepping down as Treasurer in April 19 so if you would be interested in becoming Treasurer – or know another member who might – please contact the Chair at robin.bishop@gmx.co.uk

Familiarity with book-keeping and Excel is essential.

