

BARNET SOCIETY

CAMPAIGNING FOR A BETTER BARNET SINCE 1945

AUTUMN 2019

Uproar over Tube apartments plan

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

There were no proposals to change the station itself.

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



Aerial view of the proposed site of the apartments

Special focus on Environment and Planning issues

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



Robin Bishop and architect Steve Pike

Continued on page 2

If it goes ahead, we must have say in design

Continued from Page 1



Drawing of the apartments

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

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

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



Protest meeting by local residents

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

What we want when it comes to development

Barnet Society criteria for development at High Barnet Station

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8. Rationalisation of the station

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Unfortunately, Whalebones doesn't cut it

The Society opposes an application to build 152 new homes and a replacement artists' and bee-keepers' studio on the site as a breach of Conservation Area policy, writes Robin Bishop.

This is probably the most significant proposal for Chipping Barnet for many years (unless the High Barnet Station development goes ahead).

Although Whalebones is not designated as Green Belt, it includes the last remaining fields near the town centre and is in the Wood Street Conservation Area.

The Society considered the applications to be sufficiently important enough that we consulted as widely as possible among our membership.

Our Committee, President, Vice Presidents and expert advisers were minded to object, but we emailed some 500 members to check whether they agreed or not. Approximately 10% replied – a fair response rate, taking account of the holiday period.

A decisive majority – nearly 90% – objected to the scheme in its present form, and only three members supported it. So we had no alternative but to oppose the application.

We did so with some regret. We accept the principle of some new housing to fund replacement facilities for the artists and beekeepers and future maintenance of the estate, and it is unusual to have building and landscape design of such quality proposed in Chipping Barnet. So why are we opposing it?

We object to the proposals on two basic grounds: first, it is an unacceptable breach of Conservation Area policy; and second, in our view it would be overdevelopment of the site. We also have concerns about its sustainability.

Conservation Area Policy

The Council's Wood Street Conservation Area Character Appraisal Statement says that, 'The Council will seek to ensure that new development within the conservation area seeks to preserve or enhance the special character or appearance of the area...' We believe that this application would do neither.

It also states, 'The open rural character of the grounds and views in and across the site are highly important aspects of the character of the conservation area and echo the Green Belt and the open country beyond.' But if the project proceeds in its present form, they would be lost.

Historic England agrees that 'this would present harm [to] the character and appearance of the conservation area.'

As is particularly evident from the top deck of the bus along Wood Street, in addition to offering fine open views across the site north and south, the meadow at the west end is an essential natural and visual buffer between Chipping Barnet and Arkley; without it, they will lose their separate identities forever.

Were the proposed layout to be flipped, with most of the housing at the eastern end of the site and a green corridor/park between the Whalebones and Elmbank, this could be avoided. But the developer does not seem to have considered that or other possible layouts.

It is accepted that commercial agriculture is no longer viable on the site. But the developer hasn't explored other land-based activities of a kind likely to have interested the former owner, Gwyneth Cowing.

These include education, training and/or therapy in horticulture, animal husbandry and environmental studies, perhaps in partnership with a local school or college. A city farm for young and old people, including those with special needs, is another possibility in keeping with the spirit of Ms Cowing's will.

Altogether, approval of this application would create a very bad precedent for other Barnet CAs.

Overdevelopment

We doubt that so many homes are necessary to pay for replacing the studio and upkeep of the rest of the estate. Given the profits to be made on such an attractive site, such a large development needs proper justification.

A serious consequence of the quantity and type of new homes would be some 200 additional cars and 300 cycles (curiously scarce in the visualisations).

These would exacerbate what is

already heavy congestion at peak times. This would be particularly problematic in Wellhouse Lane around the bus terminal, where ambulant and semi-ambulant pedestrians and wheelchairs compound the hazards of increasing hospital traffic.

A further consequence would be higher levels of air and noise pollution – especially unfortunate near a hospital.

We are also concerned about potential ground-water problems on this heavy clay site with a spring in the western meadow.

Sustainability

Although the developer promises a net gain in biodiversity, we do not believe that the ecological impact of such a large development and extended construction period could be entirely mitigated.

And although we acknowledge that the developer's environmental standards represent an advance on today's norms, they fall short of tomorrow's challenge: we face a climate emergency. New homes need to be zero-carbon, but these will need a carbon-offset payment to achieve that.

Cutting-edge green technology is not (yet) a planning requirement, but in our view development of this exceptional site on the proposed scale could only be justified by adopting exemplary design targets. A more modest and revised scheme, with exemplary environmental technology, would be something Barnet could be proud of.

Conclusion

Since there's no chance of altering the proposals at this stage, we are opposing them in the hope that the planning committee will reject them and the trustees will have a rethink – preferably in consultation with the Society.



Proposed plan for Whalebone plot

High Street pavement build-outs start to take shape



Illustration of proposed pavements, designed to improve the High Street

Construction work has started on the pavement build outs in Barnet High Street – an improvement which community groups have campaigned for and which could be backed up by other measures proposed in Barnet Council’s draft growth strategy plan for the borough, writes Nick Jones.

Improving the “health and wellbeing” of high streets is regarded by the planners as one of the steps that can be taken to strengthen the identity and diversification of town centres.

The draft plan for 2019-2030 was out for public consultation during the summer and the council says its aim is to deliver “an improved mix of town centre uses” and to do more to promote and celebrate their individual characteristics.

Robin Bishop, Chair of the Barnet Society, welcomed the strategy and the council’s commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of shoppers and visitors.

This had been one of the motives of the Chipping Barnet Town Team in its campaign to persuade the council to widen the pavements in the High Street and encourage tree planting. There will be a new drainage system, improved footways at the Union Street and Salisbury Road junctions and upgraded pedestrian traffic signals at the crossings by the Post Office and Spires’ entrance.

Construction work in the High Street is due to last about three months as the pavement widening is being done in stages to reduce disruption.

In welcoming the council’s aim to expand the “leisure offer and evening economy” of town centres by enhancing the range and quality of local food and drink, heritage and culture, Mr Bishop said the most obvious priority for Chipping Barnet was to build on the success of the Barnet Medieval Festival and other events and attractions celebrating the 1471 Battle of Barnet.

“The aim should be to grow the

visitor economy by encouraging, supporting and promoting the hospitality sector to deliver a great experience for visitors as well as residents.”

Another key to the regeneration of the town centre was to encourage creative businesses by ensuring “a good proportion of affordable workspace”.

Protecting and benefiting from Barnet’s green assets – the fields and woods that surround the town on three sides – was also seen as a key objective.

Another key to the regeneration of the town centre was to encourage creative businesses by ensuring ‘a good proportion of affordable workspace’

The draft strategy calls for a masterplan for managing Green Belt land within the borough and one proposal was for action to establish the Upper Dollis Brook as a “conservation-minded leisure destination” with improved access to open spaces, perhaps from Hendon Wood Lane.

A priority for the next decade would be to explore Chipping Barnet’s delivery of new housing in ways that build on the “heritage and character” of the town.

The council intended to work with Transport for London to shape developments around High Barnet tube station – an indication that the council seemed committed to high-density housing in the station car park and storage yards.

Read the growth strategy in full at www.engage.barnet.gov.uk/growth-strategy A public consultation session was held at Chipping Barnet Library in early September.



Building work is in progress to construct the pavement build-outs

Local list triumphs – and tragedy

I'm delighted to report that the Society has succeeded in getting 45 buildings added to Barnet's Local List – but success has been bittersweet, writes Robin Bishop.

Two years ago, the Council's Conservation Officer asked for volunteers to help with the formidable task of reviewing the 1,000-odd buildings on the existing Local List and – because it hadn't been systematically updated for decades – of recommending additions.

The Local List isn't in the same league as the National Heritage List, which is administered by Historic England and gives statutory protection to our finest architecture such as the Grade II* St John the Baptist's Church. But it should help safeguard built assets of local social, communal or landmark importance.

Society members Guy Braithwaite, John Gardiner, Jim Nelhams, Susan Skedd, Frances Wilson and I spent days on the streets – sometimes attracting suspicious questions! – and recommended some 80 additions to the List. Elsewhere in Barnet, volunteers nominated hundreds more.

The Council and its consultants then spent many months checking, weeding, moderating and selecting. The new draft List was recently published for consultation (closing on 9 September).

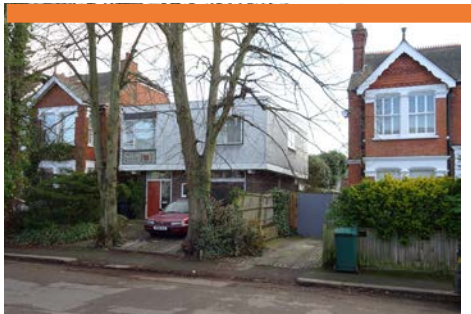
Our successful nominations



Ravenscroft Cottages in Potters Lane



The inter-war 1-33 Raydean Road



1960s-home at 30 Granville ~Road

range from quite grand Barnet's first Town Hall in Union Street and the earliest parts of Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School to humble Barnet's first council housing in May's Lane and Ravenscroft Cottages in Potters Lane.

They celebrate film pioneer Birt Acres, who lived at 19 Park Road and made the first British movie outside his front door

They also include examples, rare in Barnet, of early modern houses. The interwar 1-33 Raydean Road and 1960s 30 Granville Road.

The List also includes a building the Society has championed for years, 1 Sunset View in the Monken Hadley Conservation Area. It featured in our last issue because both Barnet planners and the Planning Inspectorate had rejected the owner's attempt to make significant changes.

But the owner has ripped off the tiles and upper brickwork and gutted the interior, making no attempt to salvage the materials.

Barnet's planning enforcement team was immediately informed, but didn't intervene soon enough to prevent massive damage to this lovely Arts and Crafts house. The owner has now been served with a planning contravention notice, and can be required to restore the exterior in full – but it can never be the same.

Ironically, 1 Sunset View is included on the new Local List...



Barnet's first Town Hall in Union Street, from 1889 to 1912



1 Sunset View – before and after



Act needed to safeguard Hadley Common

Hadley Common, thought to be the seventh largest stretch of common land in Greater London, might soon be freed from archaic legal constraints that date back over 250 years to the reign of George III, writes Nick Jones

If Parliament gives approval, a new charity would take over the ownership of the common from the churchwardens of Monken Hadley parish church – an arrangement dating back to the Enfield Chase Act of 1777.

Establishing a new charity to own and manage the common – the last tract of Enfield Chase still preserved as common land and saved from development – is considered the most efficient way to ensure the land is maintained for public recreation and for nature conservation.

Cattle were grazed on Hadley Common until the 1950s. A much-loved relic of those early traffic-free days are five white-painted wooden gates that used to control access, and which are listed as being of Grade II historic or architectural merit.

Proposals have been prepared for a new Act of Parliament – to replace the 1777 Act – and a public consultation process was conducted during the summer in preparation for a new private bill to be deposited in Parliament on November 27.

Managing and maintaining the common is a task that has been hampered by the archaic arrangements set out in the 1777 Enfield Chase Act, which divided up the Chase into smaller areas, but which is said to be “a complicated and almost unreadable document”.

Currently management and maintenance are in the hands of volunteers, funded by voluntary

contributions, under the supervision of the Friends of Hadley Common, whose chair, Les Bedford, had encouraged residents and members of the public to engage in the consultation process.

“A new Act of Parliament would be a long-term safeguard for the common and we need new powers to ensure that the land is preserved and maintained for recreational purposes.”

If the new Act is approved, the aim would be to establish a new charitable incorporated organisation to take over ownership of Hadley Common – a future arrangement comparable to the community interest charitable company established by Totteridge Manor Association which owns and manages common land alongside Totteridge Lane.

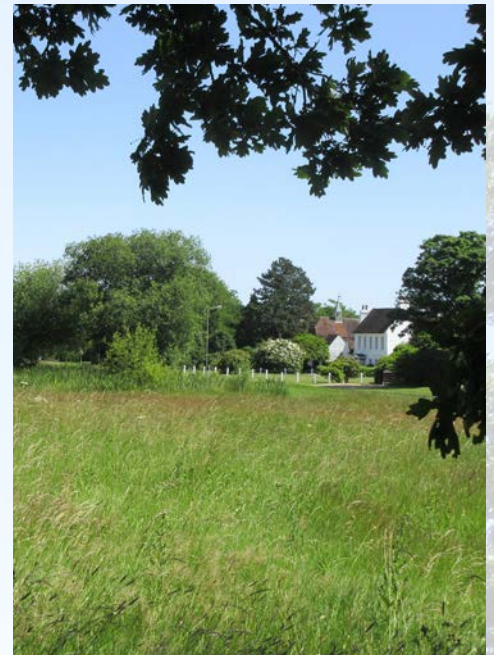
The provisions of the 1777 Act are no longer considered relevant because instead of the land being used by surrounding landowners for grazing and other rural activities, the common is now a largely wooded area providing “a vital habitat for flora and fauna on the edge of north London which is used for recreational purposes by the general public”.

In 1978, without the churchwardens’ knowledge, the 1777 Act was repealed on the recommendation of the Law Commission, but that decision was reversed in 1993 in order to preserve ownership of the common, a responsibility the churchwardens are keen to pass on to a newly established charity.

When in 1996 the London boroughs of Barnet and Enfield both ceased making annual grants for the maintenance of the common, the Friends of Hadley Common was formed to maintain upkeep, cutting grass, relaying paths and drains and the like.

The common was reduced from 76.9 hectares to its current size of around 74 hectares in the mid-19th century after the acquisition by the Great Northern Railway of land used for the construction of the east coast main line that cuts the common in two.

Commoners continued exercising their grazing rights over the common



until increased motor traffic and the high cost of manning the gates rendered this impossible after the Second World War.

Two thirds of the common is mixed semi-natural deciduous woodland with some open glades and the remainder is grassland.

In addition to the spring-fed pond opposite Gladsmuir, there are the remains of two other substantial ponds, and also Jack’s Lake, about 70 per cent of which is within the common; fishing is currently licensed by the Hadley Angling and Preservation Society.

Members of the public have access to the common for “air and exercise” and there is a right to ride horses on the roads and bridleways.

Considerable protection is afforded to the common: it lies within the Monken Hadley Conservation Area; the woodland to the west of the railway line is protected by a Tree Preservation Order; and in recognition of its significance as a habitat for flora and fauna, the western half of the common has been awarded the classification as a site of Nature Conservation importance.

For further information about the future of the common email consultation@monkenhadleycommon.net or by post to W. O. Boyes, clerk to the churchwardens of Monken Hadley, 45 Clifford Road, Barnet, EN5 5PD.



Playing Fields hub a threat to Green Belt

Barnet Council held its third public consultation on Barnet Playing Fields (north of the Dollis Brook) and King George V Playing Fields (south of the Brook) in the summer,
writes Robin Bishop

The draft masterplan's major feature would be new sports and community hub – the size and height of a small primary school – in the middle of Barnet Playing Fields. It would come with another multi-use games area, parking for 66 cars and yet more street and flood-lighting, all of which would be detrimental to wildlife in the area. Its capital cost is estimated at £11.2m.

The Barnet Society supports the idea of enhancing sport and leisure facilities – but not on that precise spot. We've objected to the proposal on three main grounds:

1. It would be in the middle of Green Belt land – which the Council, Mayor of London and Government are committed to protect. It would destroy the openness of the site and set a precedent for other developers, to build on the Green Belt.
2. Its sports hall, multi-use games court, changing and meeting rooms would duplicate facilities that Ark Pioneer Academy undertook to make available to the community, as part of its planning approval.



Barnet Playing Fields - The box indicates the probable bulk of the building.

3. No-one appears to have looked at less visually intrusive and less ecologically damaging solutions, for example linking it with the Gaelic football facilities in the (currently dilapidated) south-west corner of the site. There it could share a car park, toilets and other facilities with a refurbished table tennis club – and would almost certainly be much cheaper to build and run.

Elsewhere in the Dollis Valley and Tudor Park, sports and community facilities have been built in the past with the best intentions, but have been under-used and left to decay. It

would be stupid and irresponsible not to learn those lessons.

A convincing masterplan for Barnet & King George V Playing Fields would make the best and most economical use of facilities in The Totteridge and Ark Pioneer Academies, the Table Tennis Centre, the Hadley Wood Trust and the old cricket pavilion.

The Society would support the right kind of building, the right landscape features, in the right place, and to high standards of design and environmental quality. A rethink is essential.

Barnet's knife bin for saving lives

A large bin for the safe disposal of all bladed weapons and instruments has been installed in Union Street, High Barnet, in support of the drive to curb the rise in knife crime.

"Collecting knives, saving lives" is the slogan of Word 4 Weapons, which says it is the UK's leading weapons surrender charity.

It has sited the knife bin next to the pavement but inside the driveway and pathway beside the Roman Catholic church of Mary Immaculate and St Gregory the Great.

The message could not be clearer: "Bin weapons here. This box is for the safe disposal of all forms of knives, weapons and bladed DIY tools from your home."

Most of the knife bins installed by Word 4 Weapons have been placed in

inner London, but there are bins at both Boreham Wood and Edgware.

The location of bins is designed to encourage the surrender of knives and they are "primarily positioned away from CCTV allowing weapons to be deposited anonymously".

Advice can be obtained from the help line number on the box: 07452 743443 and information on bin location can be found at <https://www.word4weapons.co.uk/>

Word 4 Weapons is extending its work across the UK.

"There are too many lives being lost through the use of weapons on the UK's streets. We are playing our part in an attempt to save lives by installing knife bins across the country.

"To date, tens of thousands of



weapons have been deposited in our bins and with your help we will collect many more."

The Union Street bin has been funded by Caritas Westminster, the Catholic relief and development agency for the Diocese of Westminster

Planning & Environment Report

Robin Bishop

Just as I was looking forward to a summer break, two of the biggest projects in my time on the Society Committee came along: a proposal to build 450 homes at High Barnet Station and the long-awaited planning application for 152 homes on the Whalebones estate. They're covered in separate articles on Pages 1-3.

Two other very important initiatives have also been launched, with far less public attention.

The first is the Council's draft Growth Strategy. This sounds dry, but could hardly be more important for the future of Barnet. In the absence of the Council's new Local Plan (not published until later this year), it proposes guidelines for development and identifies actions that could benefit Chipping Barnet considerably. To mention a few:

- A regional park in the north of Barnet.
- Investment in a reliable and fast east-west connection across the borough.
- A conservation-minded leisure destination on the Upper Dollis Brook.

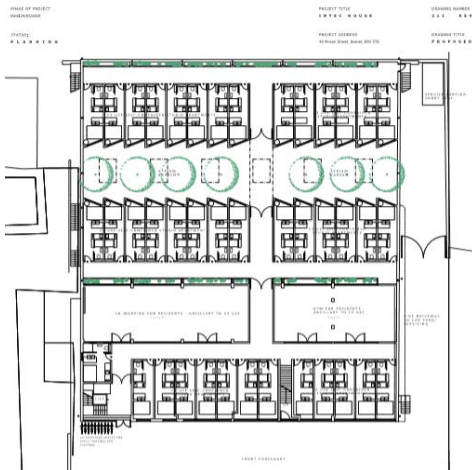
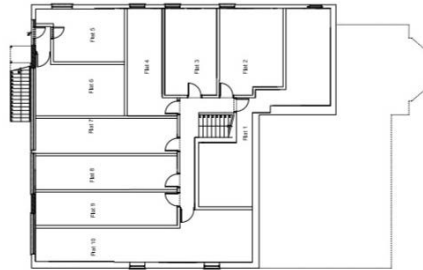
The Strategy can be found at: <https://engage.barnet.gov.uk/growth-strategy>
The deadline for comments is Sunday 15 September.

The Strategy also proposes to explore the potential for town centre diversification building on Chipping Barnet's heritage and character, which leads me to the second initiative.

Following the Chipping Barnet Town Team's rapid (albeit unsuccessful) bid last spring for a grant from the government's Future High Streets Fund, the Council has taken on a Town Centre Investment Manager to boost future regeneration, and is recruiting consultants to work with local stakeholders to draw up a Community Plan identifying at least five projects to enhance the area. As active members of the CBTT, we will be fully involved – and so could you be, if you have ideas and time to offer!

A symbol of our intent to revitalise the town centre is the High Street pedestrian improvements. We've agreed nearly all the design details with Highways, clustering benches and bins close to trees to leave the pavements as uncluttered as possible.

Widening of pavements and moving of lamp posts is under way, and we're



promised that they'll be ready for the Christmas Fayre. Street furniture will follow later.

Turning to recent building developments, much the worst have been for conversions of commercial buildings into micro-studios at 49 Moxon Street (107 units) and 17 Park Road (36 units) Plans above.

The tiny size of the flats and their lack of decent daylight and views would never normally be allowed. Unfortunately they were prior notifications (not full planning applications) so, under

the government's recent planning relaxations, the planners were obliged to grant permission unless they raised issues to do with such things as highways, contamination or flooding. We objected nonetheless, and the planners did refuse permission – though a smaller proposal for Moxon Street (39 units) has been submitted.

The Council (and we) are concerned about the considerable loss of workspace in Barnet – particularly evident in places like New Barnet, where most of the offices near the station have been turned into flats. The Council has introduced an Article 4 Direction controlling employment-resi conversions in High and New Barnet town centres, but it won't come into effect until 20 September, and won't cover Park Road or Moxon Street.

If you are concerned too, please sign this petition to Parliament: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/267559>. More information can be found at: <https://www.levitthbernstein.co.uk/research-writing/why-the-government-should-end-pdr-for-office-to-residential-conversions/>

Other recent cases:

Refused

New house off Langley Row, Hadley Highstone – On a patch of Green Belt littered with shacks in the hope that they could be exchanged for a permanent building.

Carport, 23 Hillside Gardens – This had been built over a front garden, and would have created a dreadful precedent for other residential streets.

Awaiting a decision

Fern Room site, Salisbury Road – The developer has returned with a design more sympathetic to the existing street.

Brake Shear House; Kingmaker House, Station Road and 2 Bruce Road – Controversial proposals, all still undetermined. Meadow Works have appealed over the delay.

Gone to appeal

Avalon palazzo, Barnet Road – We had objected, and the planners had refused it.

151-153 High Street – We were neutral, but the planners refused it.

Cotswold Lodge, Stapylton Road – We supported it, but the planners have refused it.

Closure of historic Barnet bakery



James Freeman and his staff on the final day of business

Victoria Bakery, a High Barnet institution for well over half a century, closed in June after the retirement of its owner James Freeman, a fifth-generation baker, writes Nick Jones.

Customers queued out into the High Street on the last day of trading.

A free donut with every purchase and champagne for the staff ensured a day to remember despite the sad loss of yet another independent High Street trader.

While waiting to get inside the shop, customers were invited to write a farewell message on the bakery front window.

Sadness was coupled with best wishes for Mr Freeman who retired at the age of 60 and had no alternative but to close down after being unable to sell the business as a going concern.

“Where will the Artful Dodger meet Oliver now! Bye, bye” was just one of the postings that reflected the history of 83 High Street where bread was first recorded as being baked in 1884.

The original shop doorway is said to have been where Charles Dickens envisaged Oliver meeting the Artful Dodger in *Oliver Twist*, written by Dickens in 1837.

The Freeman family had been baking in north London since the 1820s, but Mr Freeman's three sons

all had successful careers of their own and to his great disappointment he failed to find a buyer.

Closure meant his 14 members of staff, who included two bakers, other full-time staff and part-timers, had to be made redundant.

“We were a profitable business but unfortunately there was no demand for a business like this when the

supermarkets and multiples have taken over so much of the bakery trade.

“After a lifetime of days getting up at either 3am, 4am or 5am I think it's time I enjoyed my retirement.

“It is a great shame. I have known this shop, man and boy, all my life.”

For their last day in business, Mr Freeman and his team baked three times the usual amount of bread and cakes, plus 1,000 free donuts as a farewell gesture.

In the queue outside the shop, customers swapped fond stories and memories of shopping at Victoria Bakery.

“I bought my daughter's first birthday cake at Victoria Bakery – and now she's 28”, said one loyal customer. Another regular said she had ordered three spelt loaves to put in the freezer as they were hard to find.

“We'll miss you” said message after message written on the window with a box of wax crayons.

“Many thanks for the very best bread. All the best in your retirement.”

Victoria Bakery was one of the oldest retail premises in Barnet High Street and was listed as a shop until 1867, then traded as an alehouse and became a baker in 1884.

Mr Freeman's father took over the bakery, previously known as Bucklings in 1968.

“In 1820 the Freemans had a bakery on Highgate Hill. We then



Customer farewells written on the window

moved to Kentish Town, and later Enfield, before coming to Barnet.”

A notice in the Victoria Bakery's window gave a full account of the decision by Mr Freeman and his wife Debbie to close the business.

“It's been great fun, a challenging time, and a real pleasure to be part of High Barnet...The team at the bakery, Debbie and I, would like to thank all our lovely customers.

“We have come to know generations of families who have come to us not just for bread and cakes but for wedding and birthday cakes year after year.”

Mr Freeman paid tribute to the staff who had worked at the bakery over the years, all hours, day and night.

“After 40 years in the bakery trade, man and boy, the time has come to hang up my oven gloves and retire... the Victoria Bakery has been in Barnet High Street for over 50 years, but all good things come to an end.”

Although it is the end of the line for Mr and Mrs Freeman, their nephew Lewis is carrying on the tradition into the sixth generation at Dunns Bakery, Crouch End.



Another shop shuts on the High Street

Swift action pays off for bird-lovers



Nesting box. L-R David Martens, Robin Bishop, Alex Coltman and Tim Friend

No wonder Tim Friend of Fitzjohn Avenue was smiling: a pair of swifts that spent the summer in High Barnet raised two chicks in the nest box fitted under the roof of his house, just above the window of his front bedroom, writes Nick Jones

Swifts swooping and squealing high overhead have always been a regular sight in some parts of the town, but local ornithologists fear these summer visitors are diminishing in numbers because of a lack of suitable nesting places.

During June and July leaflets were distributed in streets where swifts

are known to nest – including Fitzjohn Avenue, Normandy Avenue and Cedar Lawn Avenue – encouraging householders to install nest boxes.

Swifts usually arrive in the first week of May

the future of these “amazing aerial athletes”, the efforts of Fitzjohn Avenue resident Tim Friend finally paid off and he had the pleasure of seeing a pair of swifts raise two chicks in a nest box fitted under the eaves of his semi-detached house.

In May, once the swifts were due to arrive, he put a speaker on the upstairs window ledge and played recordings of the swifts’ call – the squealing sound that gives them their nickname “squealers” – which can be downloaded from YouTube.

To Mr Friend’s delight he saw swifts flying into the box and then the chicks emerged.

“I kept checking the box and then one day a small face appeared. After I saw that head peeping out, another fledgling flew out. It was an amazing sight and worth all the effort.

“I love to see the swifts swooping overhead in Fitzjohn Avenue. One year a swift flew into the house. I captured it in a towel and then released it outside, and it was fine.”

Four houses in Fitzjohn Avenue had swifts nesting this year.

and depart for Africa around the final week of July and as in past years High Barnet residents were encouraged to take note of sightings.

Ornithologist David Martens, who has been monitoring High Barnet’s swifts for some years, led the leafleting drive and hopes to arrange a High Barnet swift awareness week in June next year to encourage residents to monitor the number of birds arriving and nesting.

“These iconic birds are barely clinging on in High Barnet and sadly, with only a few houses left where they can nest, numbers are dwindling rapidly from a once healthy population.” Despite fears for

Boosting High Barnet’s bat population

Barnet Environment Centre is planning to install three bat boxes to help increase the biodiversity of the Byng Road nature reserve. Common pipistrelle bats have been seen flying in and around the 7.5-acre reserve, but activists at the centre are keen to learn more about the local bat population and have been waiting to get advice from experts on where best to site bat boxes.

The centre was due to hold a bat event in mid-September when experts planned to use frequency detectors to determine the types of bats visiting the nature reserve.

When the centre held a 24-hour “bioblitz” of the reserve in 2012, common pipistrelles were identified as well as the rarer soprano pipistrelles.

“We do know that bats are regularly seen along the boundary between the nature reserve and Byng Road allotments,” said Dick Elms, vice chair of Friends of Barnet Environment Centre.

“Hopefully we will get much more information in September as to where the bats are flying and whether they are roosting or perhaps breeding within the nature reserve.

“We know that bats like to fly alongside rows of trees and hedges, and we think they might roost in the boundary oak trees, between the reserve and the allotments.

“We have three bat boxes which we are eager to install, where bats might be encouraged to breed in future.

“But the placing of the bat box is all important, as they have to face in an east to south direction, so that they warm up in the sunshine.

“These eco-friendly bat boxes are made out of light concrete, and are extremely durable, so once installed would be long lasting and give protection against the weather.” Mr Elms said the centre was always looking for ways to increase the biodiversity of the nature reserve.

In mid-summer two beehives were installed on the site by the Barnet Beekeepers Association.

“We are delighted to welcome back the beekeepers and they are promising to install another three or four hives in the autumn, so that should be a real boost.”

Yet again the centre was fully booked last term for school visits. Over 1,800 children have visited the reserve in the last 12 months.

Other recent events have included a dawn chorus walk in May when 27 bird species were identified. Two of the six bird boxes installed on the reserve were found to be used by pairs of great tits.

For more information about open days and for opportunities to volunteer see the Barnet Environment Centre website, www.fobec.org.uk

For advice on bat boxes www.bats.org.uk

Noah's Ark Children's Hospice to offer state-of-the-art care

During the summer internal work concentrated on fitting out the care suite, which will include six bedrooms for children and three family rooms, writes Nick Jones.

Alison Goodman, director of fundraising, said the whole of the Noah's Ark family was delighted to have finally taken possession of a state-of-the-art children's hospice serving north London and Hertsmere.

An opening ceremony will be held this year. "Over many years our supporters and volunteers have put in so much effort raising the money to Build the Ark that we can still hardly believe that we've finally made it and moved into such an inspirational building.

"We are so looking forward to being able to welcome our first children and families into the Ark later this year, once everything is ready.

"The Noah's Ark team would like to say a huge thank-you to the local community for their support in enabling the project to near completion.

"We want to make sure our local community is a crucial part of The Ark's journey in the years to come."

Office staff and out-reach care teams, previously based in premises in Victors Way, off Moxon Street, moved into new hospice at the beginning of July.

Once the fitting out is completed preparations will be made for an inspection by the Care Quality Commission and an event to mark the official opening.

The new hospice will provide 24-hour end-of-life, post-death and bereavement care; sensory music and art rooms; and specialised care for new-born babies.

Noah's Ark currently provides

Alison Goodman, director of fund raising, in the atrium of the new Noah's Ark Children's Hospice

assistance for around 300 children across five London boroughs, Barnet, Enfield, Camden, Islington, Harringey, and also Hertsmere.

The aim is to expand existing hospice-at-home services to cater for more of the estimated 1,200 local children with life-threatening or life-limiting conditions.

Now that the hospice has been built, the emphasis of fund-raising will switch to the cost of financing the operational costs.

High-profile events will include another year of charity giving around Tottenham Hotspur Premier League games.

A local innovation was the £50 challenge, sponsored by Immersion Capital – a challenge



Children's bedrooms and family rooms at the rear of The Ark will look out on to gardens and the Byng Road nature reserve

Wanted: Newsletter deliverers



If you like walking around your neighbourhood – perhaps taking the dog for a walk – you might like to help the Barnet Society by agreeing

to deliver copies of our quarterly newsletter.

Each round takes in about half a dozen streets and the support of our team of volunteer deliverers

saves the society around £860 a year in postage and helps keep subscriptions low.

Frances Wilson, who helps organise delivery of the newsletter four times

a year, is appealing for more volunteers to back up the existing team of 23 deliverers. “We have divided the area around High Barnet into zones A-Z and each cover about six streets and ten to twenty properties.

“We would really like some more volunteers that we can call on when one of our usual deliverers is unable to help due to illness or holidays.

“Many of our volunteers enjoy the opportunity to take some exercise and do like to have a reason for going for a walk – perhaps this might appeal to you.”

**Please contact
Frances Wilson 0208 449 3104**

*Classic car show with a view
Barnet’s annual classic car show has a new venue this year – the vast open top deck of the NCP car park at the Spires shopping centre.*

Around 40 vintage and classic cars – and some classic motor-cycles – will be taking part on Sunday 22 September, the sixth annual show organised by the Barnet Classic Car Club.

A parade of cars along Barnet High Street will open the event, starting at 11am, and all the vehicles should be in place on the top floor of the car park by 11.30am.

An added attraction will be a special display of classic Minis to mark the 60th anniversary of its launch.

Show organisers Chris and Diane Nightingale hope the new venue will prove an attractive location to display the cars and for them to be admired and inspected by supporters and visitors.

“The top deck of the car park is a very pleasant open space, with fine views over Barnet,” said Mr Nightingale.

“We have already had a trial run with an ultra-low sports car to check any problems negotiating the speed bumps and ramps on the way up to the top floor.”

The club had been hoping to hold this year’s show at the Army Reserve parade ground in St Albans Road as happened last year, to coincide with National Armed Forces Day in June, but this was not possible due to other Army Reserve commitments.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS – September 2019

First of all, a warm welcome to all our new members who’ve joined since the last membership news update. What a busy time we’ve had since the May renewal batch, our biggest and busiest of the year.

As you all know, we’ve had a push this year to get as many of the renewals over to Standing Order as we possibly can. This to save the Society unnecessary expense in mail outs of renewal letters and on administration. We have had some success here and a reasonably good response. There is still more to do though.

Now that Derek has taken over as Treasurer, his technical wizardry is in full flight with integrated bits of treasury and finance data appearing on the membership database.

There’s always something new and exciting, well, as exciting as finance can get, to look at on the system when you go in.

That brings me neatly on to PayPal and the genius of Martin Standley, our webmaster. Yes I think he really is a genius because he’s now been able to program the PayPal system on the website to take recurring payments from new joiners and renewals from existing members who have already paid using PayPal before.

It means no more renewal or reminder letters or annoying emails need to be sent to those of you using PayPal after you’ve made your next renewal, it’ll happen automatically.

That’s a vast improvement for us as we will keep more members for longer instead of losing people after only one year because they’ve overlooked or forgotten to act on their reminder email.

Christmas is fast approaching – sorry to remind you this early - just see it as another reminder from the Membership Secretary, but it means we’ll be recruiting at the Christmas Fayre in the High Street again, one of my favourite events of the year.

Any problems with membership issues though, please let me know.

Email: membership@barnetsociety.org.uk
Phone: 07717 195662
Until next time.

John Hay

