

The Barnet Society

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Council says it needs to have a 'brutally honest' conversation with residents over the deficit

£200m shortfall raise spectre of fortnightly bin collections

Barnet Council's dire financial position has led to a warning that "very painful" decisions will have to be made within weeks to find ways to reduce a predicted shortfall of £200 million, writes Nick Jones.

A five per cent increase in council tax and a switch from weekly to fortnightly bin collections are two of the most likely options.

The council says it needs to have a "brutally honest conversation with residents" about how to balance the books to find £200 million of savings.

The warning follows release of a government-commissioned review that says the Borough of Barnet is in "a highly fragile financial position" and its deficit is projected to increase to £243.5 million by 2030-31.

By next year Barnet will have the largest budget gap of any London borough and it is one of nine councils relying on exceptional financial support from the Treasury.

East Barnet councillor Simon Radford, who is Barnet's cabinet member for financial sustainability, says their budget for next year assumes there will be a council tax increase close to the legal maximum of 5 per cent and the council will review its waste collection service.

A failure to save costs by switching bin collections from weekly

By next year, Barnet will have the largest budget gap of any of the London boroughs

to fortnightly – a measure already introduced by many other councils – was a "missed opportunity", according to analysis conducted for the government by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountability.

Cost savings were not being implemented by Barnet Council at the "pace of scale required" because of "cautious decision making" and being slower to implement difficult reforms.

Recommendations about a switch to alternate weekly bin collections, as well as reforms to the provision of temporary accommodation, children's services and adult social care, needed to be in place by the end of September ready for a meeting of the council cabinet on Monday 12 October.

When the possibility of switching Barnet's bin collections from weekly to fortnightly was last considered in 2019 under the *Continued on Page 2*

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previous Conservative administration, moving the waste collection to an alternate weekly service would have saved an estimated £400,000 a year.

At the time, three-quarters of English local authorities had already moved to fortnightly collections, and the CIPFA report says this was “a missed short-term opportunity”.

Barnet’s productivity and recycling performance in its waste services was weaker than in other comparable London boroughs.

The report also identified what it said was evidence of “savings fatigue” and the deferral of difficult decisions.

Another factor had been the council’s previous approach to council tax increases. “Due to historic decisions to increase council tax by less than the maximum permissible, the council’s low tax base further constrains income flexibility.”

Previous Conservative administrations had taken pride in their policy of keeping Barnet’s council tax as low as possible – but the CIPFA analysis suggests that this failed to acknowledge that Barnet faced “materially higher demand and cost pressures”

than other comparable boroughs for adult social care, temporary accommodation and children’s social care.

Responding to the findings, Mr Radford said reaching financial sustainability was Barnet’s top priority and the council welcomed recognition of the “scale and pace of change” required to solve £200 million structural deficit by March 2029.

The need for services which the council had to provide was growing twice as fast as its income. “We have brought council spending under control, maintained high standards of adult social care while reducing the cost below national average, stabilised in-year spend on temporary accommodation and reduced our call on exceptional financial support by £10 million.

“The reality is that none of the levers in our control can tackle the scale of future demand without national policy intervention.

“Even if we were to cut all non-statutory spend, the short-term impact would be an £18 million budget reduction compared to the £200 million forecast gap.

“The report recommends reviewing council tax levels and waste collection, which we will do.”

Dollis Valley eyesore

Vandalised homes awaiting demolition are likely to remain an eyesore following the collapse of a deal previously approved by Barnet Council to complete the regeneration of the Dollis Valley Estate.

Properties that were condemned as unfit some years ago were about to be replaced by developers Vistry under a scheme which had qualified for a £58.85 million grant from the Greater London Authority.

In a rarely used procedure, Barnet’s Conservative councillors ‘called in’ the agreement on the grounds that it lacked “financial sustainability” – a process that halted the deal and resulted in the loss of the GLA grant.

Barry Rawlings, Labour leader of the council, told the Barnet Society that it would be early next year or even later before it would be possible to come up with an alternative scheme.

In the meantime, the council faces a dilemma. The cost of demolishing the flats and maisonettes, which was due to start in September, could be as high as £3 million – money which Councillor Rawlings said the council had not budgeted for. The only alternative might be to fence off the whole site with secure hoardings to prevent access and deter further vandalism.

Given the presence of squatters in some of empty flats and the general state of decay – with large pools of stagnant water formed by leaking pipes and mains – the owners of nearby houses on what is now the Brook Valley Gardens estate say they should not have to put up with such gruesome dereliction.

Conservative group leader Councillor Peter Zinkin recognised that the cost of securing the abandoned blocks of flats was high, but he thought the council probably had no option but to wait for the housing market to improve. His preferred course of action – one backed by a Brook Valley



Vandalised flats at the Dollis Valley Estate

Gardens residents’ group – was for the council to return to the original proposal to finish off the Dollis Valley regeneration with 126 new privately owned and 95 affordable homes.

When Vistry declared this scheme was unviable, the council negotiated a fresh agreement with the developers to complete the regeneration with 208 new affordable homes, a deal which qualified for the £58.85 million GLA grant towards the cost of new affordable housing.

Once the renegotiated deal was called in by the Conservatives on the grounds it lacked “financial responsibility” the council was unable to meet the GLA’s deadline of Friday 31 July for approving the project and the offer of a grant was withdrawn.

A hurriedly arranged meeting was held on Tuesday 4 August at which a group of residents and the Barnet Society were excluded on the grounds that issues regarding the “financial responsibility and financial sustainability” of the council’s agreement with Vistry had to be discussed in private. This was the first time for 14 years that the call-in procedure had been triggered.

New housing developments add to burden for over-stretched GPs

New developments locally are likely to lead to an increase of more than 2,000 people but without the promised boost in capacity at already over-stretched doctors' surgeries, campaigners say, writes Nick Jones.

Of the five GP practices within a two-kilometre radius, three already have fewer doctors than recommended by the British Medical Association.

Long-standing Save New Barnet campaigner, John Dix says assurances given by developers when recent planning applications were approved have turned out to be misleading and so far, have not been honoured.

Despite the absence of any plans to expand GP practices, developers are continuing to claim that these five local surgeries are accepting new patients, indicating that there is "some spare capacity in the local area".

Mr Dix said that these assurances are not supported by the latest Barnet-area statistics from the General Practice Workforce for the ratio of patients per doctor.

A failure to get meaningful replies from the integrated care board for north London highlighted what he believes is the failure of the health authorities to address the extra demand being placed on doctors' surgeries by the scale of housing redevelopment underway in High Barnet and New Barnet.

When permission was given for nearly 500 new flats on the site of New Barnet's former gas works, local residents were led to believe that there were proposals to merge three nearby doctors' surgeries to create a combined practice at the East Barnet Health Centre.

But Mr Dix has discovered that the original proposal to increase the number of doctors and enlarge East Barnet Health Centre – at an estimated cost of £1.4 million – appears to have been shelved.

He has now been told by the integrated care board that it disputes whether there was ever a proposal to merge The Addington and The Village surgeries with

the practice at the East Barnet Health Centre.

"Apparently the developers Fairview did offer some of the retail space in the Park Quarter development for a new GP surgery, but this was considered unsuitable and the board said it did not get the money it needed to enlarge the East Barnet Health Centre.

"So, the net outcome is that we are going to have 486 new flats at Park Quarter and no additional GP services for 1,000-



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plus new residents." Mr Dix said the GP shortfall had been acknowledged by Berkeley Homes when it obtained planning approval for 80 new homes next to Park Quarter on the site of the former gasometer.

"Berkeley Homes' consultants recommended that Barnet Council should undertake measures to increase GP capacity through the use of community infrastructure levy money, but again there is no sign that any action is being taken."

The GP shortfall in New Barnet is likely to be mirrored in High Barnet where major housing developments could add nearly 600 new homes – 145 in Moxon Street; 115 at Whalebones in Wood Street; and 283 at High Barnet tube station.

There is still the possibility of a High Court challenge to the decision by the Deputy Mayor of London to approve the construction of five blocks of flats on the station car park and adjoining land, but Mr Dix says consultants for Transport for London relied on the same assurances given by other developers.

A consultants' report for TfL's subsidiary, Places for London, said there were "five GP surgeries within 2 kilometres of the site, all of which are accepting new patients", and that any increase in demand could be offset through financial contributions from Barnet Council's income from the community infrastructure levy.

Mr Dix believes the failure of the integrated care board and Barnet Council to address the local GP shortfall results from their concentration of resources into the provision of primary care facilities for major housing developments at Brent Cross and Colindale.

"Unfortunately, the health authorities and the council are failing to look at the bigger picture and recognise that all the infill developments ... are having a significant cumulative impact on already over-stretched GP services.

"To be fair, the integrated care board insists it continues to keep local primary care capacity under review and remains interested in exploring future opportunities to expand services at East Barnet Health Centre should funding become available."



John Dix: GP shortfall has been acknowledged by developers



Planning & Environment

Autumn Report, by Robin Bishop



Barnet residents voice their objections. From top L clockwise: Simon Kaufman, Janet Littlewood (for Gordon Massey), Laura Ouseley, Nick Saul, Cllr David Longstaff, Dame Theresa Villiers

Voices against application for High Barnet Place fall on deaf ears

At a public hearing on 27 May Deputy Mayor of London Jules Pipe approved the planning application for **High Barnet Place** despite powerful arguments by local residents Gordon Massey, Laura Ouseley, Nick Saul and Dame Theresa Villiers; by Councillor David Longstaff; and particularly by Simon Kaufman, who spoke on behalf of both our Society and Barnet Residents Association.

The Deputy Mayor also approved the **Great North Leisure Park**, Finchley application.

We and BRA are considering whether to seek a judicial review of the Mayor's decision. As I write, we await our solicitor's report on our chances of success.

Barnet Council has complained about the Mayor of London overturning its decisions.

Turning to other recent cases...

Historic England is updating and expanding its listing entries for **Nos 52-58 High Street**, all of which have remnants of 14th-century timber frames. We've submitted detailed comments on its draft reports.

Restoration of **98-100 High Street (fka Foxtons)** with a roof extension for flats (see separate article).

We await the outcome of an appeal against the reinstatement of the traditional shopfront at **190 High Street (Wilkinsons Chemist)**.

The planners have deemed unlawful an application to repaint the purple and violet façade of **204 High Street (Creature Comfort Vets)** in the Monken Hadley Conservation Area (MHCA) because it didn't state what new colours were proposed.

An Inspector has dismissed an appeal by developer Christchurchgrove Ltd against Barnet Council's refusal of its planning

application for a house in **Christchurch Lane spinney**. That concludes a successful campaign by local residents, with help from the Society, to save a cherished natural habitat in the MHCA.

Queen Elizabeth's (Boys) School has a masterplan for new buildings and hopes to apply soon for planning permission for a large sports hall with classrooms above.

In connection with the proposed **Hadley Common/Bakers Hill Eruv**, we objected to two 'gateways' in the MHCA. We don't object to the principle of the eruv, nor have we objected to eruvs in other parts of Barnet. But we considered that the proposed designs would detract from views of Monken Hadley and Hadley Wood.

Berkeley Homes have been given approval for 80 homes up to three storeys high, most with gardens, on the **Albert Road gasworks site**. We supported this welcome contrast with the high-density flats of its neighbouring Victoria Quarter.

In the Green Belt, the Hadley Wood Association is optimistic that **Duchy Fields** will be removed from Enfield's Local Plan. The new Green/Conservative administration in Enfield has withdrawn previous Council plans to build a new town at Crews Hill and Chase Park of 21,000 homes, but the government and Mayor of London may yet have their way.

An Inspector's decision on 900 homes on fields between the **M25 & Potters Bar** is still awaited. But the battle to prevent development on **Horses Field** has been lost, and the neighbouring **Woodcock Hill Village Green**, an Asset of Community Value, is threatened. Both sites are off Barnet Lane.

Mayor Khan wants 32,730 new homes in Barnet under his latest plan

Barely five years after Mayor Sadiq Khan's current London Plan came into force, he's consulting on a new one, writes Robin Bishop.

The good news is that it will be a lot slimmer than the present version. The bad news for Barnet is that he's upping his target for new homes in our borough, and he's identified places in the Green Belt where some of them could be built.

The draft new Plan was published in July and is open for comments until 15 October. Its housing target for Barnet is to build 32,730 new homes between 2028 & 2037 – a 38% increase on the present London Plan.

That still won't be enough to deliver the Labour government's pledge of 1.5 million new homes over the lifetime of this parliament. The Mayor and other Labour politicians are increasingly keen to pull any levers that might boost supply.

Since brownfield sites within Barnet are limited and more expensive to build on, the Mayor wants the Council to build 7,000 homes in its Green Belt. He states a preference for using those parts of it deemed 'Grey', which could include derelict land in Arkley. But he acknowledges that some greenfield areas will have to be sacrificed.

On his election as MP for Chipping Barnet, Dan Thomlinson said, "Our green

spaces and the beautiful Green Belt here in this constituency is something that I will always fight for and protect." We hope he still keeps that promise.

The Plan would require at least 50% of new homes in the Green Belt to be 'affordable', or 35% in the case of schemes for 10-35 homes. (Developments of fewer than 10 homes are exempt.) These targets are significantly higher than normally offered by developers. If they can be achieved, the Barnet Society might consider that a reasonable trade-off for the loss of some poor-quality Green Belt.

The Plan would subject any residential development in the Green Belt to conditions. Notably, the vast majority of the new homes would have to be located either within 400m of an eligible bus route or 1.2km – 15 minutes' walk – from one of seven 'well-connected' rail and tube stations in Barnet. But that puts most of the constituency of Chipping Barnet in the frame, i.e. from Arkley to Hadley, and from New Barnet to Whetstone.

In addition to these seven 'broad locations for growth' (BLGs), the draft Plan also identifies 'future industrial-led Green Belt candidates' around the A1 at Borehamwood. This could include the extensive tract of land north-east of Stirling Corner.

The Plan also sets out strategic criteria

for the construction of additional data centres across London to meet the growing demand. These are typically enormous boxes that consume large quantities of electricity and water (for cooling).

The draft London Plan makes no mention of the proposal in Barnet's Local Plan to create a new Regional Park on the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Space stretching between Arkley, Scratchwood and Mill Hill. Unless residential or commercial development within the Park is kept to the absolute minimum necessary for its sustainable management, its whole point would be defeated.

Barnet Council has declared its objection to the Mayor's proposals for housing and the Green Belt, which contradict the Local Plan it adopted only last year. Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Homes and Regeneration, Councillor Ross Houston, said:

"Barnet Council will carefully assess the detail of the draft London Plan before submitting its formal response to the consultation and we will continue to work with residents, communities and partners to ensure any future growth delivers the homes, opportunities and neighbourhoods that people need and want to see."



Cllr Ross Houston speaking at a Barnet Society public meeting on housing in Barnet in 2023

Derelict 'Grey Belt' land north-east of Stirling Corner, Arkley



Image of the replacement for Foxtons at the corner of Moxon Street and High Street
Image Simon Kaufman Architects



Moxon Street development is finally given go-ahead

Planning approval has finally been given after four years of negotiations and discussions for a new four-storey building at a prominent site in Barnet town centre at the corner of High Street, writes Nick Jones.

Architect Simon Kaufman (inset) is confident the new building with 11 new homes over commercial premises with a traditional shop front will enhance the character of a site at the heart of the Wood Street Conservation Area.

Moxon Street itself is currently being transformed by new housing developments.

Demolition is underway at the former Checkalow Tiles showroom, where there will be 21 new homes, and at the much larger site of the former Intec House, where there is approval for a new block of flats.

Discussions over how to redevelop the two empty shops at the corner of High Street and Moxon Street – where there had been a copying business, a Foxtons estate agency and then a community pop-up shop – began six years ago.

Simon Kaufman Architects consulted planners, conservation officers, the Barnet Society, nearby residents and other local stakeholders.

“A collaborative design process has helped shape a scheme which responds positively to both the site and its historic setting, while delivering an exciting new future for this important High Street building,” said Mr Kaufman.

Once the planning application was submitted, negotiations with Barnet Council’s planning department took a further four years.

“This has been a long journey.”

“It is tremendously rewarding to see this prominent High Street

building restored and given a new lease of life, making a positive contribution to the local community once again.

“The approved design carefully restores and enhances its historic character through the recreation of a

traditional shop front, sensitive restoration of the masonry and architectural detailing, and a carefully designed roof extension that complements the historic townscape.

“This will bring 11 new homes, fresh investment and new life to this important part of Chipping Barnet.”

Demolition and other preparatory work has been underway on the Checkalow site in Moxon Street where a car-free mews with two rows of terraced homes is to be built to provide a total of 21 new homes for Barnet Homes.

The tree-lined mews will connect Moxon Street to Tapster Street and will be open to pedestrians but have no vehicle access.

Half the new one- and two-bedroom houses will be affordable housing, some perhaps under shared ownership.

At the bottom of Moxon St, demolition of the former Intec House, a three-storey office block, will make way for an eight-storey block of 113 homes of which 17 will be for social rent. Approval for the redevelopment was given in November 2023.





the end of 2025, Barnet already has one of the largest networks in the country.

More than 500 charge points have been attached to lamp posts including an installation by char.gy in Union Street Barnet.

There are plans to install a further 500 points on lamp columns. These points are suitable for residents who do not have off street parking to charge their vehicles from home.

A lamp column point takes 8-12 hours to fully charge a vehicle, and they are considered ideal for overnight charging.

Where lamp column charge points are not appropriate, they are set in the pavement.

PodPoint operates a network of charge points across Barnet Council car parks and there is no parking charge when charging an electric vehicle.



A breath of fresh air...

A steady and significant improvement in air quality in Barnet High Street is continuing to be recorded by the Council's scientific services, which indicates that levels of nitrogen dioxide should fall at even faster rates with the growth in the number of electric vehicles, writes Nick Jones.

To encourage progress towards Barnet's net zero targets, more on-street electric charge points are to be added to what the council says is already one of the largest networks in the country.

Tests for nitrogen dioxide carried out in Barnet High Street show a significant decrease between 2013 and 2025.

The latest samples indicated a reading of 25.3 for the High Street (down from a reading of 51 in 2013) and this is comparable with other similar locations such as the High Road Whetstone and Ballards Lane.

Concentrations of nitrogen dioxide in these high street shopping areas are much

lower than at testing points on major through roads such as Hendon Way.

Air quality is monitored at locations across the borough because of elevated road traffic emissions.

A report last year by the Mayor of London estimated that across the outer London boroughs, the extension of the Ultra Low Emission Zone in August 2023 achieved a 21 per cent reduction in nitrogen dioxide and that particulate matter from exhaust emissions dropped by 31 per cent.

The mayor's target is to reach World Health Organisation's guidelines by 2030. Barnet is committed to becoming a net zero borough by 2042.

Use of electric vehicles is being encouraged with the rollout of electric charge points. With 2,045 installed by

Tests for nitrogen dioxide carried out in the High Street have shown a significant decrease between 2013 and 2025

Where residents would like an electric charge point in their street, they are asked to email EVCharging@Barnet.gov.uk

Barnet Council continues to promote its scheme to promote play streets – where minor roads are closed temporarily to encourage children to play safely outside in an environment free of traffic and exhaust emissions.

Five applications were made in 2025 and there was a first for High Barnet in April this year when a cul-de-sac at the end of Calvert Road became a designated Sunday morning play space.

Volunteer guide Bob Langley checking the water level in the well house



Physic Well survives drought...

Spring water continued to flow without interruption at Barnet's historic Physic Well despite the record-breaking summer drought, unlike other parts of the borough.

When visitors descended the wellhouse steps at the monthly open day in mid- August, they found the water level was unchanged. The well's two tanks are filled by mineral water from a spring which was first mentioned in a Tudor guidebook in the late 16th century.

In almost 20 years since Barnet Museum first started campaigning to get the wellhouse restored and re-opened, lead volunteer Mike Jordan says the water level has rarely ever changed. Occasionally during exceptionally wet weather the well tanks overflow a little, but otherwise the water had remained at a constant depth.

After re-opening in 2018 following repairs, the well house has become a popular attraction on its monthly open days on Saturday afternoons from February and November. Once it was fashionable to drink the well's chalybeate spring water and it was sold in London and attracted gentry to Barnet because of what were said to be its healing and other medicinal qualities.

The well's most famous visitor – and consumer – was the renowned diarist Samuel Pepys who after lunch at the Red Lion in 1664, continued to the well “and there I drunk three glasses and went and walked and came back and drunk two more”.

Among open day visitors in August was Eamonn Brady who as a child lived opposite in Well Road and who had never been inside the well house or seen what the well looked like.

“When I was a child in the 1960s the wellhouse was always padlocked. We used to play football on the green outside so what went on inside the well house was always mystery”, said Mr Brady.

“Soon after we moved from Well Road to Potters Bar, so I never got the chance to look inside. As you can imagine this was something I had to put right.”

Mr Brady was fascinated to descend into the well chamber and learn more about its history.

He recalled a family story about how his grandma and aunt, who lived next door in Well Road, saying that one night they separately saw a black shadow cross the landing of their houses.

“They both described an old-fashioned man with a hat on, and we have always wondered whether it was the ghost of Samuel Pepys.”

Open days at the Physic Well are always a moment of great pride for Mike Jordan who was chairman of trustees at Barnet Museum for 14 years and on retirement was appointed president.

For many years the Physic Well, which is in Well Approach, a short walk from Barnet Hospital, was in such a sorry state that the building was placed on Historic England's at-risk register.

The well house was constructed in 1937 to protect the dis-used well and its spring.

Restoring the building to its full mock-Tudor glory and making it safe for visitors cost £150,000. It is now in the care of Barnet Museum. “My main commitment nowadays is the well,” said Mr Jordan. “When we open the doors on a Saturday afternoon, we are always so pleased to welcome visitors to what is one of the best-preserved medicinal wells in the country.”



...unlike ponds

All around High Barnet the summer heatwave took its toll, drying out ponds and streams which are filled with surface water, and which are such a popular feature of the town's green spaces.

Joslin's Pond on Hadley Green, where generations of children have fed the ducks, was reduced to an expanse of mud with the duck house beached in the middle.

Brewery Pond, the largest on the green, was much depleted but continued to provide an aquatic refuge for ducks, other birds and wildlife.

Next to the site of what was the former Hadley Brewery, the pond is naturally replenished by local groundwater and springs. The brewery, which had its own artesian well, opened around 1700, was demolished in 1978.

London firefighters drew water from the pond in 2025 when fighting a fire which gutted a Georgian property Hollybush House close to the junction with Sydney Chapman Way.

Other smaller ponds on the green dried out completely including a pond close to Old Fold Manor Golf Club.

Another casualty was Gladsmuir pond, which borders the Hadley Common roadway, close to the junction with Camlet Way.

Bullrushes have grown across the base of the pond which in the spring is said to host Great Crested Newts, a protected species whose habit must be preserved.

Black Horse back up and running

After their first two “incredibly busy” months, the three former regular customers who took on the tenancy of the Black Horse public house believe they have more than delivered on their undertaking to restore its place at the heart of High Barnet.

Charity fund raisers over the summer were so well supported that more events during the autumn and run-up to Christmas are planned.

Prospects for the Black Horse looked bleak last September when it closed unexpectedly, prompting a campaign which succeeded in getting the pub listed as an asset of community value.

Working behind the scenes, without any fanfare, the three former regular customers who live nearby – Simon Anderson, Danny Daly and Martin Taylor – started putting together a business plan and began negotiating with Star Pubs, part of the Heineken group.

Months went by because of legal complications, but the trio pressed on



establishing Barnet Community Pubs Ltd to take on the tenancy.

“We three all live within a five-minute walk of The Black Horse, we understand what the locality wants, and Star Pubs realised we were really serious about wanting to run a proper community pub,” said Simon.

“We have secured a first year’s tenancy. We finally got the keys on June 8 and there we were serving drinks a fortnight later.”

Since reopening, the Black Horse has gone from strength to strength, on one weekend nearly running out of beer.

Such is their confidence about the

pub’s prospects, the three directors have made what they say is the next big “big investment” in fitting out an up-to-date kitchen.

Taking pride of place is a large new rotisserie which was installed with the help of the newly appointed head chef Karl Omell. He is working on a menu offering a range of chicken, lamb and pork dishes and other specials.

Work repairing and stabilising the front wall of the pub has taken longer than expected but should be completed by the end of September when the scaffolding will be removed.

Martin Taylor, who handles finances for Barnet Community Pubs, said that he and his two fellow directors had been heartened by all the support they had received from the community.

“We have had regulars coming here for 25 years or more who told us they are delighted to be back in the Black Horse. They had never seen the pub so busy and so friendly.”

And the night of the solar eclipse, they bought in 100 special spectacles to share among customers.

The world-wide war

Family stories about the life and times of the townspeople of Barnet during the Second World War are to feature in a new play to be staged by the Blue Door Theatre Company at The Bull Theatre in October.

A Nightingale Sang in Barnet – All About the Blitz and Beyond is based on family memories and imagined scenarios.

Much of the action revolves around the wartime comings and goings at Barnet Odeon – now The Everyman – which opened in 1935 and became a popular venue during the war.

Director Siobhan Dunne says the newly built picture house and a dusty, makeshift air raid shelter where cinema patrons and staff gathered during air raids, are two of the settings which allow the cast to weave “a rich tapestry of verbatim stories and imagined events”.

For at least four members of the Blue Door company, the new play is a personal affair as they have family stories of life in Barnet during the Second World War.

Ms Dunne said they had all jumped at the chance to build a production around Barnet of the 1940s and extend Blue Door’s well-earned reputation for delivering sell-out shows that reflect the town’s history. They aim to recreate a Barnet where some say they continued to hear the nightingale sing when life in the town was “ruled by the skies, the sirens, the



Director Siobhan Dunne, above right, with cast members Mrs Leonard (Val Golding) far left, and Mrs Sprat (Jan Parker).

thrum and the silence. Because we are portraying wartime experiences, not all the story lines have a resolution so that adds to the drama and poignancy of the production.”

Jan Parker has the role of Mrs Sprat who is a wartime dealer in the black market with her son. By contrast Val Golding’s role as Mrs Leonard is a reminder of the legacy of the First World War. Her husband was killed at the Somme, and she is upset by the renewed outbreak of war across Europe.

There will be four performances – Thursday 15th, Friday 16th and Saturday 17 October (2pm and 7.30). Tickets at £19 plus booking fee now available at www.thebulltheatre.com

Vintage performance

Ten classic and vintage cars lined up outside Noah's Ark Children's Hospice in Byng Road for the handover of a cheque for the proceeds of the 13th annual show held in May by Barnet Classic Car Club.

Match funding from sponsors increased the money raised at the show and other club events to a total of £9,397.70.

Club committee member Chris Frost handed over the cheque to Faye Armitage, Noah's Ark's community engagement officer, who praised their support for the children's hospice, which she said was always more generous than the year before.

"The classic car owners and enthusiasts do an amazing job fundraising on our behalf."

The club's contribution of just over £5,500 included match funding of £1,500 from the Royal Bank of Canada whose staff were among volunteers who assisted at the show staged on the top floor of The Spires car park.

Chris Frost said Classic Car Club and Barnet Rotary Club members were full of admiration for the contribution made by Noah's Ark – "a children's hospice is a vital resource for our community".

Cars processed to the presentation from the playing fields car park in Byng Road.



Classic Car Club committee member Chris Frost handed over the cheque to Faye Armitage, Noah's Ark's community engagement officer.



Jeremy Alford, who helped co-ordinate the development of the new garden, with the Reverend Sharon Ejinkonye, the newly installed vicar at St James Church, New Barnet

Blooming good relationship

A new community garden has been established in New Barnet through a partnership between a church and a bowls club.

A blessing to celebrate the opening of the garden at the East Barnet Valley Bowls Club was conducted by the Reverend Sharon Ejinkonye, the newly installed vicar at St James Church, New Barnet.

Produce from the garden will be offered to needy residents visiting Jim's Café, a Wednesday morning community advice centre and coffee morning organised by the church.

The partnership came about because the bowls club, next to Victoria Recreation Ground, New Barnet, had spare land and the church was looking for a new site for its community garden.

In her blessing to celebrate the opening of the new garden, Sharon thanked Barnet Council and the bowls club for sharing their vision and creating a space where they could work together nourishing plants and vegetables.

Jeremy Alford, who helped co-ordinate the development of the new garden, said it was a replacement for a previous community garden in the former St James vicarage.

"When we lost that garden at the old vicarage, we realised the bowls club had spare land on an ideal site where we could work together and we have now adopted the space."

A garden shed purchased with a grant from the National Gardens Scheme was moved successfully from the vicarage to the bowls club.

Every Tuesday morning, volunteers care for the garden which was developed with raised beds and stocked with the help of grants from the Faiths Forum for London and the National City Park Foundation.

Bowls club secretary David Mulford said it was the ideal solution to use their vacant garden to host a community garden for the church.

An extra bonus was that following the reseeded of the club's green, there was plenty of surplus soil to build up the new beds for the garden.

Work started developing the garden last November and despite the summer drought, they are hoping for a good crop of vegetables, including tomatoes, runner beans, sweet corn, garlic and other crops.

Now that the community garden is a visible presence in Victoria Recreation Ground, the bowls club and church are hoping users and visitors to the park and leisure centre will get involved.



Villiers shuts the door on her political career

Former Chipping Barnet Conservative MP Dame Theresa Villiers has decided to leave the political fray of competitive politics to focus instead on an academic career, undertaking advanced postgraduate research at University College London.

She has told members of her local Conservative Party that she will not be putting her name forward as a candidate at the next general election.

Despite her defeat in 2024 when the Chipping Barnet constituency elected Labour MP Dan Tomlinson, Dame Theresa remained active in the politics of the Barnet area.

She campaigned on behalf of the Conservative candidates in recent

council elections, attended numerous political events, and appeared to have left open the possibility of standing again.

Her decision to focus on writing and her academic career of university teaching and research has disappointed many of her admirers.

Posts on social media expressed regret at her withdrawal from local politics.

She was described as having been “a great local MP” who had every chance of being elected once gain. Well-wishers said they hope she enjoys academic life.

In her statement she said after careful reflection she had decided not to put her name forward when Chipping Barnet Conservatives start the process in a few weeks’ time of selecting a new parliamentary candidate. Nor would she apply to stand in any other constituency.

“I believe the Conservatives have a great chance of regaining Chipping Barnet, but it is time to hand over to someone new to tackle that challenge.”

Dame Theresa, who was made Dame Commander of the British Empire by the Prince of Wales at Windsor Castle last December, said she was grateful to Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch for having included her in the Conservative candidates list.

“I strongly back Kemi’s leadership. I will continue to campaign energetically for the Conservative cause, in Barnet and beyond.”

During her two decades as an MP at Westminster – after previously serving for six years as a Member of the European Parliament – Dame Theresa was frequently in the national news.

Her roles as a cabinet minister included nearly four years as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. She became a leading and much-quoted supporter of Brexit.

She thanked Chipping Barnet Conservatives for having chosen her as candidate in five successive general elections.

“I feel immensely proud to have been given the opportunity to serve the community in which I live as its MP.

“Now I will be focusing on the writing and academic career – university teaching and research – to which I have returned after my stint in elected office.

“I am delighted to say that this will include research for an MPhil/PhD at University College London in October.”



Parking reprieve

Retailers in Mays Lane have welcomed Barnet Council’s decision to remove all but one of the parking charges which were introduced at the end of last year outside their parade of shops.

Charges now apply for only one hour between 2pm and 3pm which aligns with the restrictions and charges which operate in the rest of the Chipping Barnet (D) controlled parking zone.

Imposing a parking charge between 2pm and 3pm is aimed at deterring all-day parking and the Mays Lane traders accept that this is a possible compromise.

When the council imposed six-day-a-week pay-by-phone parking charges on the Mays Lane parade from 8am to 6.30pm the shopkeepers feared it would kill off their passing trade and threaten the viability of their businesses.

Local residents rallied to their support organising a petition which attracted over 1,300 signatures.

A case for lifting the restriction was presented to Barnet Council by Gina Theodorou, chair of the Quinta Village Green Residents Association and Jon Wolfson, lead organiser of the Underhill Residents Group.

Mohinder Dhingra, (above) proprietor of Coopers of Barnet, said he was “very pleased” the council had changed its mind.

“We can see how applying a parking charge between 2pm and 3pm does fit in with the CPZ for the surrounding area.

“Getting the council to back down is all due to the work of Gina and Jon who we cannot thank enough.”

Aubrey Rose, remarkable President of the Barnet Society, dies aged 99

Aubrey Rose CBE, President of the Barnet Society, died in June, aged 99.

He was elected in 2005, succeeding Sir Sydney Chapman MP and Gwyneth Cowing, the Society's Co-founder and first President.

Born to Polish immigrants in London's East End, Aubrey became a lawyer and set up his own practice at 25.

His first client was a young woman and her aunt. He married the young woman, Sheila, in 1954 and lived happily with her until her death in 2007.

Aubrey built up a successful and varied practice until his retirement as Senior Partner in 1995. He described his life as a solicitor very amusingly in his book, *Brief Encounters of a Legal Kind* (1997).

Although a practising Jew in the Liberal tradition, Aubrey was ecumenical in his outlook. He was a member of the Council of Christians and Jews and became the first Jewish Commissioner on the Commission for Racial Equality, and its Deputy Chairman in 1995. He supported

many causes and in 1997 was honoured with the CBE for his community work, notably helping to set up the National Lottery.

In the 1970s, Aubrey moved with his family to Hadley Green. Our Vice President, Jenny Remfry, first met him in 1979, when he became a great supporter of the Old Bull and chaired a committee to raise money for the theatre that opened there in 1988. He also supported the Barnet u3a and is fondly remembered by those he introduced to bridge.

Jenny remembers him as a wise man to whom one could take one's problems, modest in appearance and gentle in manner, but jovial and very sociable.

He was a great supporter of the Society, always ready with encouragement and advice. His experience of town planning – which included advising on the development of Carnaby Street in the heart of 'Swinging London' in the 1960s – was a help to the Society's planning and environmental work. Barnet has lost a remarkable man.

Robin Bishop



Aubrey Rose: a great supporter of the Barnet Society

Join the Barnet Society and help carry on its work

Annual subscriptions for new joiners are £10 for an individual or £15 for a family.

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