

THE ARCHER



GLH
CAR SERVICE
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ISSN 1361-3952 **20p**
 February 2001 No. 93

A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.



The Stag, one of East Finchley's remaining landmarks, keeps a watch over the High Road developments. Photo by David Tupman

Residents 'appalled' at building bonanza

Overcrowded and overdeveloped

Local residents are becoming increasingly concerned at the growing number of housing developments planned for East Finchley. Local MP, Rudi Vis, told one resident that East Finchley was already the most densely populated ward in the whole of Barnet and many local people fear that if any more developments are approved it will make the area's long-standing parking and traffic problems even worse.

In the last eighteen months there have been a number of planning applications for new blocks of flats in East Finchley. Although many of them are still awaiting planning consent, McCarthy and Stone have won their appeal to build 43 sheltered flats on the Texaco garage site at 178 High Road.

This development was granted by Michael Clark, the Government Planning Inspector, despite Barnet Council having originally rejected it because it does not include any affordable housing.

Profit first

Although the council's draft Urban Development Plan would require all new developments to include an element of affordable housing, the inspector accepted the developer's argument that including affordable housing in the scheme would render it unprofitable.

Planning Committee member, Councillor John Marshall, said 'I feel it is unfortunate that once again a planning inspector has overruled the views of local residents and the

advice of local planners'.

That is not the only development proposed for that end of the village. To the horror of local residents, an application has been made to build a block of flats with four shops underneath on the site of the old car showrooms at the end of Leslie Road. One local resident described the prospect as 'appalling' and said that a petition against it was already being organised. Other residents have called on all those who felt the same to write to the council and complain.

A planning application has also been made to build a block of flats behind Budgens and this is causing further concern amongst local residents.

Cllr Marshall told *The Archer*

that he "expected the planning committee to listen closely to local residents" and that he "would be surprised if any planning inspector would be foolish enough to approve it".

Congestion concern

The main concern throughout the area is prospect of these new developments leading to increased congestion as more cars flood into the area. As Cllr Marshall pointed out "East Finchley was designed before the car was as central to our lives as it is today", adding that "any additional housing creates further congestion".

Unfortunately, as one resident put it, "developers seem to want to build some monstrous carbuncle or other on every vacant plot in the area".

Forum Report

By Daphne Chamberlain

The Finchley Forum at the Old Barn on 9 January was dominated by supporters of the Baronsmere Road scheme.

Paresh Shah, of Andrew's Chemist, was due to present the petition against the scheme as it stands. Unfortunately, as he had received only three days' notice, he was unable to leave his work to attend in person. A representative asked on his behalf whether the debate could be postponed until the next Forum, but the majority of attendees voted to hold the discussion that evening.

Speakers agreed that the effect on Baronsmere and surrounding roads was "incredibly beneficial". Quality of life, they said, had improved. They no longer suffered damage to parked cars; they could cross the road in safety, and had got to know their neighbours.

Illegal entry

They conceded that the present scheme had been abused by drivers making illegal road entries and U-turns, but one speaker said that police believed that these abuses would decrease. It was also claimed that the traffic queue up the hill to Fortis Green was actually shorter now.

One speaker said that he had written to Barnet, suggesting a filter light at Fortis Green. However, the Traffic Department's representative told the Forum that the signals were already working "at

capacity". A filter would mean additional delay for southbound traffic. The speaker considered this acceptable, but the Chair, Cllr Kathy McGuirk commented on existing delays in that direction.

The scheme will be reviewed later this year, when statistics of use after 12 months will be examined. (The Forum was assured that these would also include details of any incidents at the junction with Summerlee Avenue.)

Bun fight

The debate included an attack on *The Archer*, which was accused from the floor of being "outrageously one-sided, giving a false picture, and inciting readers to protest against the scheme".

Third time lucky?

Editorial statement by David Hobbs, Editor
***The Archer* is not opposed to measures designed to stop residential roads being used as commuter short-cuts. In fact the paper has consistently supported measures to improve the quality of life for local residents.**

What does concern us is the failure of Barnet Council to introduce a proper, integrated transport policy for East Finchley. Consequently we are critical of the council and felt it necessary to voice our concerns about the inadequacies of the Baronsmere Road scheme as it currently stands.

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