



Stanley Field

“past the point of compromise”

By Daphne Chamberlain

The plan to save Stanley Road Playing Field as a sports facility for the community was given virtually unanimous backing at a packed public meeting attended by more than 100 people.

Concerned residents who attended the meeting at Holy Trinity School heard Paul Allen from the National Playing Fields Association say that his organisation had already recommended that Barnet make the field a protected space (see right).

Local Labour Councillor Colin Rogers said: “This field is irreplaceable. We are facing a stark choice – houses or fields, and we are past the point of compromise.”

Living in the real world

Councillor Brian Coleman, however, speaking from the floor as the local Greater London Assembly member, blamed the Labour Government for requiring Barnet to build more houses, and said: “You’ve got to live in the real world”. He forecast that the most likely outcome would be a mixed development of housing and recreational space.

“We are in the real world,” said the Green Party’s Mike Gee, insisting that every inch of open space counts. Speaker after speaker said that East Finchley’s infrastructure could not take more housing, and pointed to growing problems of vandalism and drug addiction among young people as a result of recreational facilities being withdrawn.

How can we save the field?

The National Playing Fields Association outlined how the field could be permanently preserved as a community resource. Asked whether Barnet was not already covenanted to do this, the meeting’s chairman

Roger Chapman, from the East Finchley Development Trust, said that the conditions under which Barnet had acquired the land were being looked into.

Other speakers urging the preservation of the field were Tim Bowden and Sylvia Duthie, Head and Chair of Governors from Holy Trinity School, Philip King from The Walks Residents Association. Architect Chris Hampson had earlier displayed the Trust’s plans for the use of the site as a sports centre.

Campaigners are still waiting for a decision by Barnet Council on the future of the field in Eagans Close which was originally expected as early as January.

Youth club

Meanwhile, residents in the Helen Close area of East Finchley, off East End Road, met to discuss the lack of youth facilities in the area and to encourage the local community to get involved in creating a Youth Club.

The meeting was opened by Alex Kaye from East Finchley Safer Neighbourhood Team who introduced various organisations’ representatives who could offer their expertise, including Roger Chapman, East Finchley Development Trust, and Councillor Colin Rogers, East Finchley Labour.

A follow up meeting will be held on 22 February at Paul Byrne House, Helen Close at 6.30pm. For further information, please contact 020 8721 2845 or email eastfinchley.sn@met.police.uk



Hands up all those in favour at the Stanley Field meeting... Photo by Colin Rogers

How Stanley Field could be saved

By Daphne Chamberlain

The National Playing Fields Association is a charity which has overseen the protection of about 2,000 sites nationwide. It responds to requests to protect playing fields (i.e. any open space which can be used for recreation) from building development. “Protecting” means that by law the space cannot be developed for non-recreational purposes.

How it is done

There are two ways to do this. Either the NPFA can buy the freehold and then lease back to a local management group, or it can arrange a deed of dedication with the owner. No money is exchanged, but the field becomes a charity, with the owner as the trustee. The owner has the right to maintain and operate the space, but can delegate to an interested group. Under both schemes, the land is protected for recreational use.

Conditions

The field must be available to the public, but not necessarily open to all and sundry all the time. Renting out is encouraged, but revenue can only be spent on the field. The exact recreational use is decided by the needs of the community. The NPFA can give technical and legal support, but is not involved in management.

The NPFA has put a proposal to Barnet, which the council is considering.

How does this relate to Stanley Field?

The NPFA is interested in buying the freehold of the field, based on its recreational space value per acre. The field would then be leased to the East Finchley Development Trust to manage.

Paul Allen from the NPFA told the Stanley Field public meeting at Holy Trinity School that, where quality of life is an issue, a local authority has an obligation to consider selling at recreational space value rather than at commercial market value.

Phone mast schemes cut off

By John Lawrence and Daphne Chamberlain
Campaigners have won the first round of their battle to prevent three mobile phone masts being installed in Holy Trinity Church in East Finchley.

Barnet Council considered the proposal but turned it down on the basis that there had not been adequate consideration of alternative sites.

We reported last June that people living close to the church in Church Lane objected to the phone masts being positioned in the bell spire, principally on health grounds. They argued that the risk from the electromagnetic radiation emitted by phone masts was not fully understood.

The Parochial Church Council and Revd Laurence Hill, of Holy Trinity Church, were supporting the installation. It had the potential to allow the church to charge an annual fee, said to be less than £10,000, for hosting the masts.

However, protesters are not yet celebrating victory. The company that would install the masts, QS4, has the right to appeal against the refusal of planning permission.

Meanwhile, mobile phone companies have reportedly asked East Finchley allotment

holders whether they would agree to masts being put up on their plots.

One allotment secretary told us she had received a phone call explaining the companies thought this would be a good way to get round public hostility to these masts. Vale Farm secretary Stella Burnett said she told the caller that she didn’t “go to all this trouble growing organic crops to have them irradiated”.

Ted Green, Secretary of the Federation of Barnet Allotments, says he has been e-mailed by a mobile phone company with the same request.

When *THE ARCHER* reported this to Barnet, a spokesperson said that the council had decided not to allow any new phone masts to be put up on Barnet land.

All allotments in Barnet are owned by the Council, except for the Fuel Lands at East Finchley. Mr Green told us that all the allotments in the borough had voted against the installation of masts.

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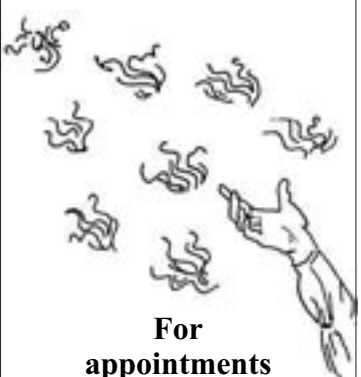
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