



Let's talk about death: Facilitator Stephen Weaver leads a meeting at the Old White Lion pub. Photo Mike Coles.

A lively afternoon at the Death Café

By Diana Cormack

"We shroud death in silence," said Grayson Perry in his recent Channel 4 programme *Rites of Passage*. However those attending a meeting of Death Café could challenge that statement.

The Old White Lion was the venue for the meeting run by East Finchley resident Stephen Weaver, who organises north London sessions where "people, often strangers, gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss death".

Unfortunately there was no tea and cake this time, but the small group of interested and interesting participants provided plenty of food for thought. Nor was there a mood of doom and gloom, for much laughter was heard during the two-hour afternoon discussion along with a lot of intriguing suggestions and alternative ideas.

Making the most of life

Death is our last task in life and a Death Café offers an opportunity to explore and discuss issues, attitudes to and expectations of the process of dying and death. The group has no agenda, objectives or themes and is not for grief support or counselling. The objective is "to increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their (finite) lives".

It began in Hackney in 2011 when Jon Underwood and his mother developed the ideas of Swiss sociologist Bernard Crettaz and has since spread to 56 countries in Europe, North America and

Australia. They have happened in a range of places including people's houses, funky cafes, cemeteries, a yurt and the Royal Festival Hall.

It is well worth looking into and the stimulating meeting we attended can lead you to thinking that death and its ramifications does not need be a wholly grim experience.

For details of future meetings visit www.meetup.com/North-London-Death-Cafe and for general information visit deathcafe.com.

Distress at plans to double the height of maisonettes

By Daphne Chamberlain

Wellington Place consists of 16 maisonettes in four two-storey blocks, situated on the Great North Road, N2, close to the junction with The Bishops Avenue. In August, residents and neighbours were distressed to hear of an application to build two extra storeys on top of each block.

They say they had no prior consultation from the freeholder, Safeland plc, who have submitted the application to Barnet Council. In addition, several people are saying they didn't receive the customary letter from Barnet inviting their comments.

All features of scheme raise concerns

The proposal would add seven two-bedroom duplexes, a roof terrace, dedicated off-street parking and cycle and bin stores. All these proposals are being questioned.

The residents are concerned about security and safety when their roofs are removed to build the extra storeys, worried about whether the foundations can support them, and threatened by external metal stairs giving access to the new maisonettes, too close to their bathroom windows.

The added height of the buildings is concerning neighbours, including allotment holders at the back.

All the buildings would be covered in cladding, though some properties were bought because of their attractive brick exteriors.

Residents and neighbours



Doubling in size: The homes in Wellington Place. Photo Mike Coles.

say they have been refused visitors' parking permits, and the new development would make the parking situation even worse. Some proposed bays would block access to existing garages, with no turning space into driveways.

New bin storage would remove disabled access to one of the existing maisonettes, block gas and electricity meters, and mean a difficult uphill walk for the elderly.

One resident described Wellington Place as "an established community with a village feel". Now they feel threatened by this major disruption. Another remarked

that redevelopment might take years, and would make it difficult to sell their properties.

Council and architect respond

Barnet Council told *The Archer* that they sent out 66 letters and that all comments would be considered before making a decision. They are also passing on information to Haringey Council, because its boundary is so close. The architect of the scheme told us that he held a presentation in the Old White Lion in late July, but apparently not everyone was aware of this, and Safeland had not carried out a prior consultation.

Corner shop has licence revoked

By David Melsome

An East Finchley convenience store has had its licence to sell alcohol revoked for repeatedly selling alcohol and tobacco to under-age customers.

Barnet Council's licensing sub-committee heard evidence against Crazy Corner Shop, on the corner of the High Road and Baronsmere Road, N2, from police and trading standards officers in August.

Committee members heard

that the shop had been the subject of three separate undercover shopping operations in response to concerns raised by members of the public and each time it had failed.

During the operations, police cadets aged under 18 were able

to purchase either alcohol or cigarettes from the shop without being asked to provide any form of identification.

Persistent problem

Sergeant Jane Tuffin, from the Barnet Police licensing team, said: "Crazy Corner has been coming to the attention of police and the community for a number of years for the sale of alcohol to minors.

"We have made every effort to support, educate and to bring about change. However, as this problem persisted we had no alternative but to review their licence. The licensee repeatedly failed to meet the licensing objectives to protect children. I would like to thank the community for engaging with us and bringing their concerns to our attention so that we could act upon them."

Councillor John Marshall, Chairman of the Barnet Council Licensing Committee, said: "I hope this also sends a strong message to other businesses of the importance of taking very seriously their licensing responsibilities."

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