



Need for vigilance over High Road flat building

By Mary Hogben

In July last year, Barnet Council approved a controversial application for development of the former GLH minicab site opposite East Finchley Station. The application was to demolish historic Valona House and build two blocks accommodating 21 flats, office space and two car parking spaces.

Dumped rubbish

Fifteen months on, Valona House is still standing, and the land is being used to dump rubbish up to the garden walls of neighbouring Ingram Road. However, the developer, Safeland plc, recently put in an application to dig basements below both blocks, adding four subterranean dwellings and making numerous changes to the approved plans. This was submitted as a "non-material amendment".

When is a change 'material'?

An application for 'non-material amendment' does not statutorily require any public consultation. There is no definition of 'non-material change' in planning regulation guidance, and it is left up to the discretion of the local authority. Luckily for East Finchley the application was published on the council's planning website so that we could all see it.

Most people would agree that adding 20% more dwellings, creating basements, changing elevations and adding to the density on the site is 'material change'. Luckily the application has now been withdrawn so hopefully we can assume that

Barnet's planners agree.

Developers should observe rules

The original application was vigorously opposed by residents and The Finchley Society, and after

18 months of critical monitoring of documents and three appearances at committee, the number of dwellings was reduced and some changes made to the elevations, particularly those overlooking the houses behind. This became the scheme which was finally approved.

Approved documents include a set of drawings and descriptions by which the built product will need to be compared. If there is a significant difference then the council can use its powers of enforcement to request change, or even demolition.

Developers are required to work on their plans, and make a formal application to illustrate how they will be dealing with conditions attached when their schemes were approved. However, Safeland plc submitted a radically changed plan. We all need to keep vigilant, as this practice by developers to slip changes through is commonly exploited.



Early Sunday morning on the High Road Photo Mike Coles

A busy night for the rubbish raiders

Our photographer Mike Coles was out buying a newspaper early one morning when he spotted signs that foxes had been busy in the High Road overnight. Bags of recyclable rubbish left out by traders for their scheduled roadside collection had been raided, creating a fair old mess across the pavement.

We can't blame the foxes, who after all are scavengers, but perhaps incidents like this are a reason to rethink the way business waste is left out for collection.

Letters

Too few 263 buses

Dear Editor,

My husband and I have recently moved to St Pancras Court, just off the High Road. We are very happy with the neighbourhood, except for one thing: the very infrequent bus service.

The only bus which serves this part of the High Road is the 263 which only turns up every 7-15 minutes, but sometimes it is necessary to wait even longer. This is a densely inhabited area, and there are always people waiting at the bus stop.

In May I wrote to the Mayor of London to suggest that the number of buses should be doubled, or that there should be a shuttle bus running between North Finchley and Highgate. I received a reply saying that my suggestion had been passed on to Transport for London and that I should receive a response within ten working days. You won't be surprised to hear that I am still waiting.

In any case, I don't expect a single letter to get results. I'm sure that many dissatisfied users of the 263 bus must be readers of *The Archer*. I would like to suggest that if other people also wrote to TfL to complain about this infrequent service then perhaps TfL might consider putting more buses on this route.

**Yours faithfully,
Anna Lowenstein,
St Pancras Court,
High Road, N2.**

Library worse by the week

Dear Editor,

An article in September's *Archer* was headed 'Library turns into a palace'. We don't need a palace. What we desperately need is a proper working library. Under the control (?) of Capita, the library service becomes worse by the week.

Phoning to carry out basic transactions is completely unpredictable. Sometimes it is impossible to reach a person, but you can renew on the automated line; another time there is no automated renewal and your books are renewed by a human.

The latest is that my renewal was blocked. I have used East Finchley Library for decades and have no outstanding fines or blots on my record. No reason was given, but the supervisor graciously authorised the renewal.

I then attended the library and found - surprise, surprise - staff in attendance, but unable to issue books as the system was not operating properly. I am now waiting to be fined for books that are already returned!

It is difficult not to draw the conclusion that Barnet Council want to use the difficulty of borrowing books as an excuse to close the library. Need one look further for a suitable purpose for lottery funding?

**Yours faithfully,
Valerie Jablon,
Gurney Drive, N2.**

Send your correspondence to: "Letters Page" The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 2DE or e-mail the-archer@lineone.net.

Letters without verifiable contact addresses will not be printed. Contact details can be withheld on request at publication. We reserve the right to abridge letters for reasons of space.

Schooling and shopping

Dear Editor,

I was sorry to read David Smith has retired as governor of Holy Trinity School (*The Archer*, June 2018). I have such fond memories of his mother, who was our playground and welfare lady. My grandson Jake was the fifth generation in our family to attend Holy Trinity. I hope it keeps the high standard it always had.

Also, I was interested to read Andrew Bryson's comments about banks and shops in the High Road (*The Archer*, July 2018). Andrew and his big brother Gary would remember the lovely shops we had in the High Road were Sainsbury, W Brothers, Tesco, Corn Merchants, shoe shop, Glovers and the Co-op. We had everything. No need to go further. But East Finchley still has the friendly village atmosphere and is the best place to live.

**Yours faithfully,
Margaret Cartwright,
Leicester Road, N2.**

Parking time limit at leisure park

New parking restrictions have been introduced at the Great North Leisure Park in North Finchley. Free parking is now limited to four hours for visitors using the leisure centre, cinema or restaurants, with no option to pay to stay longer. Number plate cameras monitor your entrance and exit times and there is a £100 fine for those who exceed the time limit, £60 if paid within two weeks. Look out for the (small) signs that are positioned around the car park.

Follow us!



@TheArcherN2

Crash, bang, wallop, N2United is back!

By Charles Haydn

The September meeting of the N2United business networking group certainly started with a bang. Just before the start of the meeting at the Clissold Arms on Fortis Green, two cars collided right outside, stopping the traffic between East Finchley and Muswell Hill.

The collision was soon attended by not one but three fire engines and two police cars. With the assistance of Clissold manager Lee the fire and police officers quickly cleared the damaged vehicles to allow the traffic to flow again. A quick check by the N2United team to make sure no one was seriously injured, and the meeting commenced, albeit with a few frantic calls from members caught in traffic.

Down to business

Host for the evening Ruth Anders steered a lively discussion on a range of business topics which included a presentation from Sophie Fleming, North London Regional Director for The Athena Network, who gave valuable tips on networking. After this, Octavia Findlay, Project Manager for the City YMCA and lead community consultation for the Tarling Road Community Hub project, tempted everyone with the various business opportunities available when the new centre opens. There was an update by Joanne Westgate on the campaign to

rid East Finchley of single use plastics as well as a discussion on a Christmas campaign along the High Road.

Since 2016, N2United has been steadily building its membership with these monthly meetings to help grow N2 businesses and connect them to a dynamic, supportive local network. It meets on the second Thursday of each month and attendance costs £10 for non-members. For more details visit n2united.co.uk or search #n2united on Facebook or Instagram and come along to a meeting. You will be made most welcome!

East Finchley Baptist Church

Just off the High Road in Creighton Avenue N2

Sunday Mornings at 10.30 am

Crèche and Sunday School during service

Wheelchair access

For more information please contact the Church Office

Tel: 8883 1544 (Minister: John Lowrie)

www.eastfinchleybc.org.uk

Visitors always welcome