



No timeline for work to start on former Esso garage site



Untouched: The former Esso filling station site on the corner of the High Road and Church Lane still awaits development six years after planning permission was granted. Photo Mike Coles

By Matteo Lanzini

About six years have passed since Barnet Council granted planning permission for the development of a new housing block on the former Esso petrol station site at the junction between the High Road and Church Lane, N2. Yet there are still no signs of building works commencing any time soon.

Despite its prominent location, the desolate plot of land has been fenced off and left untouched for some time, with weeds growing wild and an advertising board for the new development falling apart.

The only visible change since *The Archer* last reported on the site in July 2024 has been the fixing of private security yellow notices to the perimeter fence, advising that the site is protected by SQR Security. One of its personnel has been spotted inspecting the site recently, seemingly due to reports of intruders at night.

Project on hold

It is unclear what enforcement powers Barnet Council has at his disposal to ensure the housing plans are implemented. They were only approved after an extended planning application process, which involved an appeal to the Secretary of State and the submission of revisions which substantially increased the number of residential units.

The Archer however understands that the planning and building control department inquired recently with the site owners, Leopold Properties Limited, who reiterated that the project is on hold due to

“adverse market conditions”, without providing a new timeline.

Additionally, in relation to reports of the current untidy state of the site, the latest council inspection has deemed it not in breach of current planning regulations to justify any follow-up action and has put the case on file.

So for local residents and the hundreds of parents and children who daily attend Martin Primary School just opposite the site, the uncertainty around what will happen behind those metal fences remains. *The Archer* will continue to monitor the situation.

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Stand sentinel: Volunteers plant the silver birch in honour of their friend Wayne Armsby, with his wife Elsie second from the right. Photo John Lawrence

Wayne's tree will welcome everyone

By John Lawrence

Volunteers at Long Lane Pasture have planted a tree in memory of their long-time friend and pasture stalwart Wayne Armsby, who died in 2024. The striking silver birch stands near the entrance to the nature reserve, welcoming visitors as they come through the gates.

Wayne was instrumental in saving the rough pasture from development more than 25 years ago and went on to become the group's treasurer as well as working on the land to transform it into the beautiful wildlife haven that it is today.

His friends and fellow volunteers gathered on Saturday 12 April to place the tall sapling in the ground with forget-me-nots

around its base. Pasture volunteer Donald Lyven paid tribute saying: “Wayne was a man who believed in planting trees and he planted many here.”

Wayne's wife Elsie Price-Armsby said: “When we knew he was dying, Wayne chose a silver birch. It was one of his favourite trees, a very resilient ancient native species. I'm glad we've got such a lovely spot for it to welcome people into the pasture.”

Long Lane Pasture is now open every day from 9am to 7pm or dusk. Volunteers meet every Saturday from 10am to noon to keep the site looking good. They thanked readers of *The Archer* and everyone who contributed to a recent fundraising drive, helping them to buy essential new gardening equipment and secure units to store it on site.

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