



Call for homes to be people-friendly after leisure park scheme is rejected

By John Lawrence

An architect has called for "houses that people want to live in" after a mammoth scheme for 1,470 homes on the Great North Leisure Park was overwhelmingly rejected by Barnet Council for being overdevelopment out of character with the area and with no good transport links.

The planning committee voted last month by eight votes to zero, with one abstention, against the application by developer Regal for 20 buildings of up to 25 storeys on the site where the Vue Cinema, Hollywood Bowl and restaurants now stand. The existing Finchley Lido pool and gym would have been replaced with a new leisure centre complex nearby.

East Finchley-based architect Mary Hogben, who addressed the committee on behalf of The Finchley Society, said she was surprised that councillors made such a clear decision,

against the recommendation of their planning officers. "I think they did it because the plans did not fit the Government or the Mayor of London's brief for putting the right buildings in the right place," Mary told The Archer. "They saw nearly 1,500 homes being built at least a 20-minute walk from the nearest tube station and with just the 263 bus route passing by. "The development was committing people to live in flats close together with limited daylight, which is not good for them. We do need homes but they need to be well-thought through and



High rise: A developer's image of how the Great North Leisure Park would have been transformed

homes that people actually want to live in with the associated amenities that all communities need."

At the time of going to press, the Great North Leisure Centre was still listed as an active project on Regal's website. Steve Harrington, planning director for Arada, which now owns Regal, said last year: "Currently, the area is dominated by cars, so it feels unwelcoming and inaccessible to pedestrians. Our proposals will create a new neighbourhood, delivering new homes,

a new leisure centre and new public spaces, truly putting this corner of Finchley on the map." The company may decide to refer their original plans directly to the Mayor of London who has the power to make a final decision. Barnet Council has indicated that it would be willing to consider "scaled back" plans for the site.

Meanwhile, Arada were already given permission last June to redevelop Lodge Lane Car Park in North Finchley into 98 apartments and amenities, including a cinema and a bowling alley.

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By Ruth Anders



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Always in their hearts: Michelle Collins, second left, with fellow guests at the Light Up a Life ceremony.

Photo North London Hospice

Memories of loved ones and their end-of-life care

EastEnders actress Michelle Collins welcomed more than 500 people to North London Hospice for their annual evening ceremony of remembrance, Light Up a Life. Taking place at the end of every November, it is a chance for people to come together in memory of someone they have loved.

Dedications are written and a short service of reflection is held with music and readings. A one-minute silence is observed as everyone holds their candle and the hospice's giant tree comes to life with hundreds of lights, each one dedicated to someone special.

Michelle said: "It was an honour to host Light Up A Life as an ambassador for the hospice this year. It is a deeply moving and special event that was as personal and meaningful to me as for the huge crowd who all came out to show their support. "We were all there for one another and for everyone at

the hospice who gave such tender care to our loved ones. Seeing the dedicated lights shining in memory is a beautiful way for both our love and hospice care to live on."

Guest speakers were Bal Sandhu, who bravely recalled her young son Jake's experience of the hospice, and Carmel Cully, who spoke movingly about the care of her brother Pat and his complex special needs.

Faith leaders Dilwar Hussain and Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg and the hospice's Spiritual Care Coordinator, Rev Simon Rowbory, gave words of solace,

and music was provided by the London Youth Concert Band and the Covenant City Church Choir.

Almost £30,000 has been raised by the Light Up a Life appeal and event to help deliver support to patients needing end-of-life care.

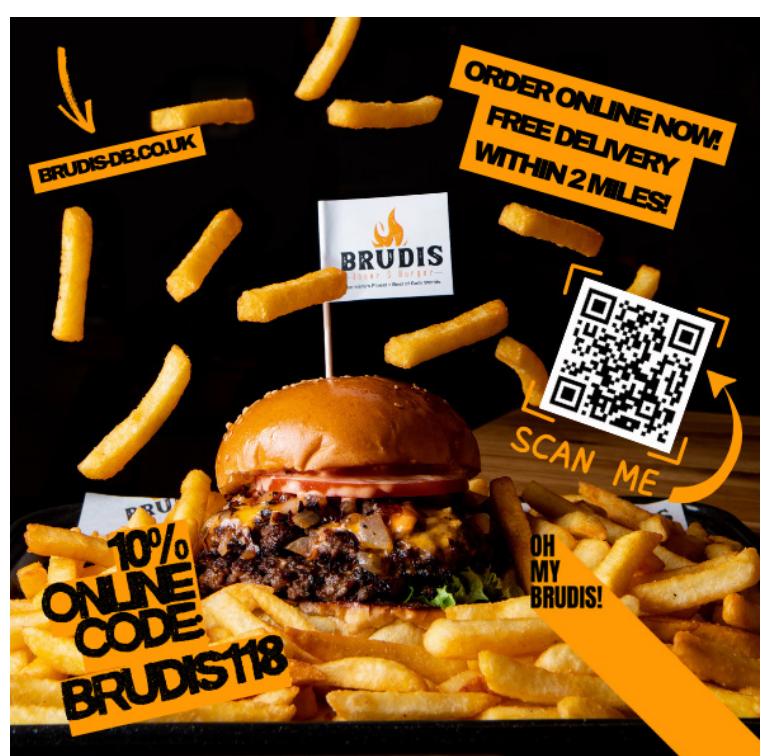
Hospice chief executive Declan Carroll said: "Our care is free of charge, but it does not come for free. It now costs over £16.3 million a year to run the hospice. Most of our funding comes from donations, this is something that we never take for granted."

Looking for volunteers?

Are you looking for volunteers to help in your community group or organisation? Our Be Part of It column is published on page 2 every month and gets results. Submissions are free and are included subject to available space. Please submit your listing up to a maximum of 80 words to news@the-archer.co.uk, marking your email 'Be Part of It'.

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