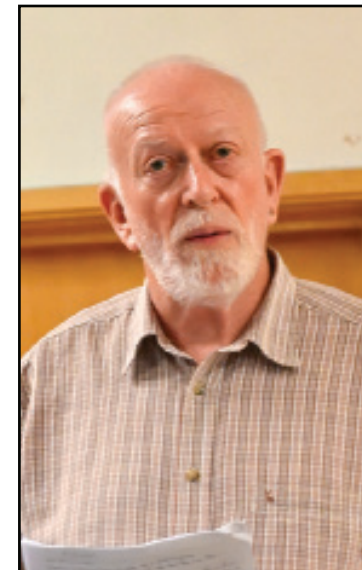




Hundreds call for trees to be saved

By Geoffrey Davies



Public voice: The crowded meeting at All Saints Church, Durham Road, N2, with Roger Chapman, of the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood, top right, making the case for saving the Park House trees, bottom right. The QR code for the trees petition is in the story below. Photos Mike Coles and Geoffrey Davies

Campaigners are stepping up their efforts to save a group of mature trees threatened by the proposed development of private housing on the Park House site, opposite East Finchley station. In a letter to Barnet Council, they have called for “an urgent meeting... for a constructive discussion” before the land is sold.

The ‘Save Our Trees’ campaign is focussing on seven trees at the front of the site that are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). More than 70 people attended a public meeting on Monday 14 September organised by the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood (FoCTW) and The Finchley Society. A petition has already attracted more than 1,800 signatures.

“There is a lot of talent in the area: planners, architects, media people,” Kate Brown of FoCTW told the meeting. “If everyone here encourages three people, we can influence how the site is developed.”

The site is currently fronted by five mature yew trees, each estimated to be more than 70 years old, and a birch. A seventh tree, a crab apple, was planted in memory of Sonny Parma, who was killed aged three in a road accident in East End Road in 2019. He was a pupil at the Monkey Puzzle Nursery which was on the site until May this year. Two plans for concentrated housing to replace Park House have been proposed by

developer London Placemaking in conjunction with Barnet Council, as Places for Barnet. As we reported in April, the council is winding up the partnership and selling the site to the developer with no conditions.

In architect’s images shown at the public meeting for up to 75 dwellings in eight storeys, the trees had disappeared and the development extended to the edge of the public footway. Oliver Kuropatwa, of London Placemaking, has already told residents at a previous meeting that he intends to remove the trees.

Roger Chapman, of FoCTW, himself a former town planner, said that the size of the proposed housing development was very dense and in excess of 50 units. “For any application above 50 units, the Mayor of London can call the application in and approve it,” he warned. “At that stage the developers could also ask for the TPOs to be removed.” Writing to the Leader of the Council, Barry Rawlings, FoCTW has asked that the council “convene a

meeting between London Placemaking and community representatives to explore a redesigned scheme” that will keep the trees. The Friends suggest that completion of the sale of the council land be delayed “before an important public asset finally leaves Council ownership.” It adds that the campaign wants to see homes and a nursery on the site but in a way that “respects the adopted Local Plan.”

One voice was raised at the public meeting against the campaign to save the trees stating the trees were out of scale and that new housing could be erected behind smaller trees. Separately, Paula Murphy, the owner of Monkey Puzzle Nursery, was at the meeting and said she understood that a new nursery building would be included in the redevelopment and that she would have first refusal to move back there. The nursery currently caters for around 100 children aged between three months and five years at its new base in Park Road, N2. Concluding the meeting

Roger Chapman said he has been involved with the site for eight or nine years and warned that the fight could go on for another six or seven. “This is not about stopping housing being built but getting what we want. The site is important to all of us,” he said. A spokesperson for Barnet Council told The Archer that it recognised the interest of local groups but that it cannot prejudge the outcome of future planning applications. “Any application would be assessed

independently by the Local Planning Authority against the adopted development plan and all other material planning considerations,” they added. Specifically mentioning the protected trees, the council say they would expect “robust supported evidence from the applicant” before reaching any decision.



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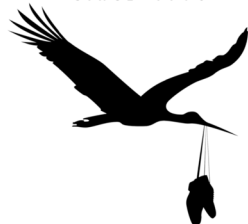
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