



THE BARNET SOCIETY

Parking mad!

It's time for action by the council to stem the haemorrhaging of shoppers in High Barnet, writes **Nick Jones**

The Barnet Society is launching a Save Our High Street appeal: our town centre desperately needs more shoppers and we hope that local businesses, other organisations, and residents will join our campaign.

Barnet Council have to be made to realise that their expensive, extensive and inordinately complicated parking regime requiring motorists to pay by telephone and/or credit card is driving away visitors and potential shoppers.

Unless the council can be persuaded to take drastic action to ease parking controls along the High Street and all its car parks in the area, yet more shops and businesses will go under in the tsunami of closures that is sweeping across the shopping centres of Britain.

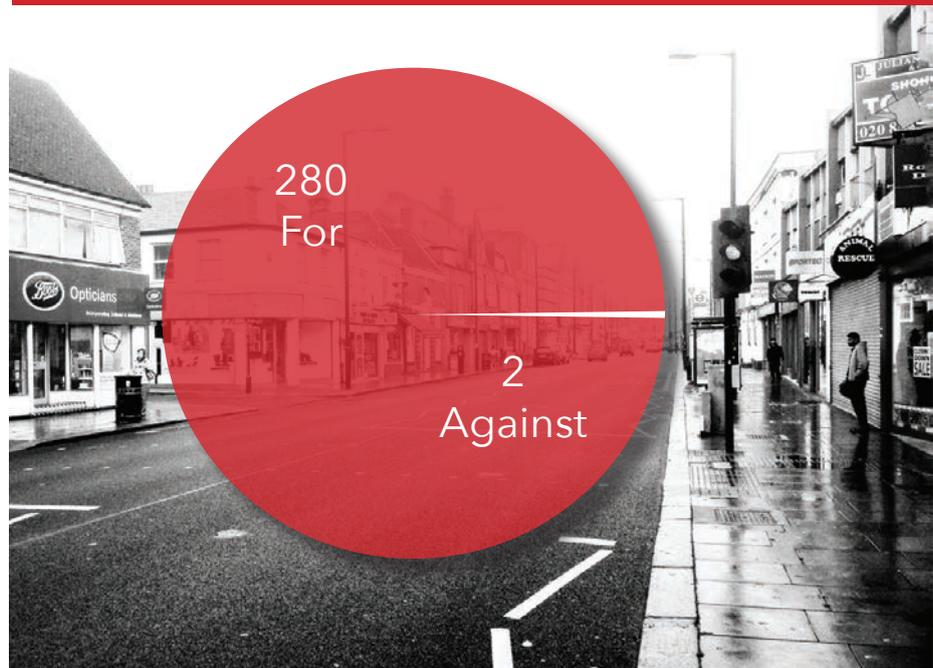
We believe that the time has come for the council to recognise the plight of traders and to make a dramatic and constructive gesture on their behalf.

In order to compete on a level playing field with other nearby shopping centres that have few if any parking restrictions, the High Street and Barnet Council's car parks in High Barnet should offer an hour's free parking every weekday and Saturday.

An hour's free parking is the very least that Barnet Council can offer our beleaguered town centre – and it could easily be in operation in time for pre-Christmas shopping.

The hour's free parking could be

Overwhelming support for our petition so far



introduced with minimal disruption: all that would be required is a clear sign on lampposts along the High Street notifying motorists of the free parking period, and that where meters operate they will issue a ticket for a free 60-minute period and that where there is only parking by phone there is no need to register for the free hour.

There are over 60 parking spaces along the entire length of the High Street, from High Barnet tube station to the start of Hadley Green, and a considerable number of spaces in the council's Stapylton Road, Moxon Street and Fitzjohn Avenue car parks.

If they offered free parking for an hour, as does the High Road at Whetstone for example, our shopping centre might have a chance and start to win back lost customers.

Barnet Council's two concessions in response to the groundswell

of anger over the imposition of parking by phone or credit card parking have had little or no effect on the rapid fall-off in High Street shoppers.

Free parking for an hour in the Moxon Street car park is welcome but Moxon Street is the least accessible of the council's three town centre car parks.

However, we contend that this concession strengthens the Barnet Society's campaign: if the credit card machine can issue a ticket for an hour's free parking in Moxon Street, there is no reason why this relaxation should not be extended to the entire length of the High Street, and the rest of the council's own car parks.

The same argument applies with regard to the council's second concession of up to two hours' free parking along the main road beside Hadley Green where motorists are *continued on Page 2*



Parking story, continued from Page 1

told that there is no need to register by phone for the free period. Again if parking enforcement officers are capable of monitoring limited free parking beside Hadley Green, it could easily apply to other parking bays where motorists have no other option but to register by phone.

It is little wonder that so few motorists are aware of the Hadley Green free parking. Signs have been fixed seven feet high and to add insult to injury face towards the pavement rather than the road and are in very small lettering, making it virtually impossible for motorists to spot them, let alone read.

For many Barnet residents and visitors, attempting to park in the Moxon Street car park is not for the faint-hearted.

Motorists turning right into Moxon Street or Park Road have to turn across the flow of traffic in the High Street.

Motorists seeking to re-enter the High Street usually face considerable traffic congestion; buses are often queuing at the bus stops near the Park Road junction and cars trying to turn out of Moxon Street often find the High Street blocked by cars tailing back from the traffic lights at the Wood Street junction, and if turning right face the hazard of a blind corner to the left.

New signs would need to be at eye level, facing both the road and the pavement, and in much larger print so as to reassure motorists they could obtain a ticket for a free period or alternatively would not need to register by phone.

The sad state of the High Street only serves to underline the Barnet Society's SOS and the need for dramatic action: a growing number of vacant premises and yet more charity shops.



Attempting to park in Moxon Street car park is not for the faint-hearted

Nightmare on High Street

Another two independent traders are being forced out of the High Street by high rents and the chronic difficulties faced by shoppers confronted by High Barnet's expensive and inordinately complicated parking regime.

Barnet's annual Christmas fair on Sunday 7 December will start the next phase of the campaign behind the Barnet Society's petition for an hour's free parking.

Already nearly 300 people have given their support on line and the society is hoping that many more will sign up in person when visiting our stall in the High Street.

So far, only one High Barnet resident has criticised the petition on the grounds that the parking controls are "actually functioning well" and that an "unreasonable campaign" in support of an hour's free parking might prejudice Barnet Council's willingness to engage on other issues affecting the High Street.

Chipping Barnet MP Mrs Theresa Villiers also seeks to defend the council's charging system and points out that an hour's free parking is allowed in the Moxon Street car park and up to two hours along Hadley Green.

"I feel that it is important

that we give the current arrangements a chance to work before further changes are considered," says Mrs Villiers.

But at its most recent meeting, the society's committee decided to step up its campaign and seek the support of the local community at the Christmas fair.

The unanimous view was that time is running out for traders in the High Street and that Mrs Villiers' argument that the council should be given more time to prove the effectiveness of its charging regime for its 300 parking places has entirely missed the point.

The committee said that the real priority was to find ways to make High Barnet more attractive to shoppers and to win back the custom of local residents who take advantage of free parking in other nearby shopping centres.

Instead of sitting on their hands while the High Street lost shop after shop, Barnet's councillors should recognise that shoppers were put off by the prospect of having to pay parking charges by phone and credit card instead of cash.

High Barnet's three councillors, David Longstaff, Wendy Prentice and Bridget Perry, have all failed so far to respond in time for going to press.



Tributes as Sir Sydney laid to rest

Nick Jones remembers the MP for Chipping Barnet, who served the constituency for 26 years

Family, friends and constituents have been paying tribute to Sir Sydney Chapman, the former Conservative MP for Chipping Barnet for just over a quarter of a century, who died in early October.

Sir Sydney, who was MP for the constituency from 1979 until 2005, was a former President of the Barnet Society and a strong supporter of many groups and organisations within the constituency.

Sir Sydney was first elected as an MP for Birmingham Handsworth in 1970 but lost his seat in the 1974 general election. He was elected MP for Chipping Barnet on the retirement of the former Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, Reginald Maudling, who had been the constituency MP for almost 30 years.

An architect by profession, Sir Sydney became a member of the Council of the Royal Institute of British Architects and received widespread acclaim for his "Plant a Tree in '73" initiative, which became a ground-breaking campaign in popularising environmentalism.

It led to the creation of the Tree Council and he is credited with pioneering a movement that has helped to plant 26 million trees in the United Kingdom.

Sir Sydney was a great defender of the Green Belt around Barnet, Totteridge, Arkley and Hadley and he took a keen interest in the work of the Barnet Society in promoting and defending local conservation areas and woodland.

An amusing legacy from one of his most successful initiatives is a good question for a local quip



Sir Sydney Chapman

night: which London Borough has the highest horse population? The answer: Barnet.

I acquired this useful statistic when he began his campaign in the 1980s for a footbridge over the Barnet by-pass beside its junction with Galley Lane.

After a run of accidents involving horse riders trying to cross what was then a three-lane road, Sir Sydney demanded that once the A1 became a dual carriageway south of Junction 23 on the M25 there should be a bridge not just for pedestrians but also one large enough to accommodate horses and cyclists.

His persistence paid off and the footbridge and bridleway over the A1 gives riders from the stables in Galley Lane, Arkley Lane and elsewhere access to the countryside around Ridge and South Mimms.

The former Mayor of Barnet, Brian Coleman, who shared many election night dramas with the former MP, said it was no secret that Sir Sydney enjoyed a drink and convivial meal.

At his retirement dinner in 2005, the guest speaker William Hague remarked that he was so well regarded in Chipping Barnet that the council had named a road in his honour, Sydney Chapman Way, "presumably the way to the pub".

Hague's quip apparently brought the house down with the butt of the joke leading the laughter.

My fondest memory, as a former BBC political correspondent at Westminster, is from the years

he served diligently in the whips' office of John Major's government and had the unenviable task of keeping troublesome Conservative Euro-sceptic MPs in line and trying to persuade them against staging yet another rebellion against their embattled Prime Minister.

His reward was to be appointed Vice-chamberlain in the whips' office and to take on the task of writing a note to the Queen each evening to report on the day's proceedings in Parliament. He took great delight in including amusing snippets of information, which only served to underline his wry sense of humour.

Sir Sydney was no rent-a-quote MP and disliked the grandstanding of some of his parliamentary colleagues. He much preferred briefing local newspapers on his activities as a constituency MP supporting local groups and initiatives.

Sir Sydney's refusal to get drawn into political dog-fights paid off in the 1997 general election, when Tony Blair's landslide victory unseated Conservative MPs from a large swath of north London and south Hertfordshire.

Other local Conservative MPs, such as Michael Portillo in Enfield Southgate, had been targeted by the left and Sir Sydney's low profile probably helped him save his seat.

As a newly appointed government whip, he was the victim of an unauthorised tip-off in August 1992. He was stopped by the police in Wood Street and breathalysed; the Sun had the story next day. A blood test subsequently proved negative, but that was no longer news.

The chief superintendent at High Barnet Police Station traced the tip-off to an unidentified source at the traffic police depot in North Finchley.

Sir Sydney hated the publicity and asked for my advice: should he complain to the Sun? I advised against it, warning that reporters on the tabloid newspapers might cause him further discomfort if he tried to make a fuss.

His family asked for donations instead of flowers to go to either Cherry Lodge Cancer Care in Union Street, Barnet, or to Cancer Research UK.



Open and shut cases - th

The much-frequented Oasis cafe in the Spires is the seventh business to close in the shopping centre in recent months, writes **Nick Jones**

Shoppers queued up in disbelief to read a bailiff's notice posted on the front door of the Oasis coffee shop in the Spires shopping centre – the seventh business to have closed within the complex in recent months.

Oasis was one of the first tenants of the Spires redevelopment when it opened in 1989, and over the last two decades the cafe established a regular clientele, becoming especially popular with pensioners, the disabled and the handicapped.

“Open” said the sign in the front window; sauce bottles, salt and pepper pots were still on the tables; but the darkened interior and the notice on the firmly closed front door left no room for doubt.

It had been posted by Parkinson Bailiff Services Ltd on behalf of the landlords, The Spires (Barnet) Ltd, and said that under the terms and conditions of the lease bailiffs had entered the premises on Tuesday the 14th of October.

Several days later the proprietors Feza and Julie Djevat put up their own notice to explain what had happened: “Apologies for the lack of goodbyes. Arrived on 14th October to find the locks had been changed. Keep in touch. Search for us on Facebook.”

The absence of such a welcoming coffee shop created a real sense of loss among shoppers and passers-by who could not help but be struck by the suddenness of the closure.

Often several wheelchairs and buggies could be seen parked outside as their owners enjoyed breakfast, lunch or perhaps just a cup of tea and a sandwich.

In a statement on the shopping



centre's website, the Spires management regretted the closure: they had “spent many months trying to work with the owners” to find a solution to the cafe's financial difficulties.

Mrs Theresa Villiers, MP for Chipping Barnet, sympathised with Mr and Mrs Djevat's struggle to keep the business going. She told a question and answer session held by Barnet Residents Asso-

ciation (7.11.2014) that the Spires had tried to help. “The Oasis was on a reduced rent but it could not operate successfully even on that lower rent.”

Another of High Barnet's independently run cafes, Kaffecinos, at 162 High Street, closed in late August after finding that the level of rent and rates meant that it was no longer possible to run at a profit.

Oasis established itself long be-

A glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel

Love Barnet has been thrilled by the response to Number 89, *pictured right*, the community run 'pop up' shop that opened in September to showcase local arts and crafts and draw on the vibrant heritage of Chipping Barnet.

Drawing on this success, we have news about two more ventures to share with you.

In early November, Billy and Betty opened in The Spires selling stylish

and affordable gifts and its own exclusive range of scented candles and toiletries.

What's more, in time for the busy Christmas shopping season, Love Barnet will be opening an adorable new tea shop a few doors along. Family friendly 'Tea Station' will have a specially equipped children's zone to keep them amused while parents and carers can relax with Ottolenghi-style salads and baked goods, top quality teas and filter coffees, made possible by staff and students of Barnet College.

Love Barnet is delighted to be



Our successes and failures



Oasis cafe was shut down by bailiffs in October, despite being one of the first businesses to move in to the Spires when it opened in 1989. Kaffeccinos, right, shut in August, blaming the level of rent and rates



tenants when the shopping centre opened in 1989. So many of our customers have said how sorry they are to see that the Oasis has been forced to close.

The loss of Oasis came as a shock to members and supporters of the Chipping Barnet Day Centre for the Elderly, which arranges activities for local pensioners and the housebound. Maura Howells, one of the helpers at the centre, said many pensioners were among the cafe's customers.

"What was so special about the Oasis was that the couple who ran it were so welcoming to disabled and handicapped people. They would be there regularly, often in small groups, all having breakfast or lunch along with volunteer escorts.. It was such a friendly atmosphere."

Customers who turned up immediately after it closed stood there dumbfounded.

Two pensioners from Boreham-

fore the arrival in the High Street and the Spires of outlets of chains such as Starbucks, Costa Coffee and Harris & Hoole, which have all added to the competition.

The plight of small traders fighting against high rent and rates – and the reluctance of their customers to pay High Barnet's complicated and punitive parking charges – is well understood by Vince Gadhavi, proprietor of The

Paper Shop, which is two doors away from the now closed Kaffeccinos. "It has been really hard for the local cafes, especially with the increased competition from big-chain coffee shops and the terrible difficulty customers have in parking.

"We took over Smokers' Paradise – now The Paper Shop – in 1987, just when the Spires was being built. Oasis was one of the first

'The couple who ran [the Oasis] were so welcoming to disabled and handicapped people'

wood, who had lunch at the Oasis every Saturday, could hardly take in what had happened. "We were here a week ago and it was packed. Now it's closed. We can't believe it," they said.

Another disappointed customer was Keith Abbott. "It was open as usual on the Monday and then on the Tuesday my daughter said the bailiffs had closed it down."

Equally disappointed were pensioners Liam Kinsella and Bunty Flynn.

"What a shame it had to close. The cafe was such a haven for the disabled and handicapped everyone was so free and easy there, such a welcoming place," they said.

expanding in this way, all with the support of the local community.

Boasting other independent specialist shops like The Present, Wanders Shoes, Cover Outdoor Wear and The Sound Garden music shop, award-winning Victoria Bakery and traditional butcher John Bye's Butchers Hook, Chipping Barnet is becoming a significant boutique-shopping destination.

Whether you need a refreshing pick-me-up, tasty snack or hand-crafted gift, we look forward to seeing you during the festive season.





Environment and Planning

Move to improve dangerous junction

A mini-roundabout and an additional zebra crossing are being proposed by Barnet Council to improve road safety for motorists and pedestrians at the junction of Wood Street and Wellhouse Lane.

A £232,000 road improvement scheme prepared by the Council's in-house consultancy Capita is now out for consultation.

An assessment of the scheme has been prepared for the Barnet Society by Peter Bradburn, who is generally supportive of the proposed improvement but is seeking reassurance on several issues.

Capita proposed as an alternative the installation of traffic lights at the Wood Street/Wellhouse Lane junction, but that would have cost an additional £105,000, and the council's recommended proposal is for a mini-roundabout, a new zebra crossing across Wellhouse Lane to provide safer access to Barnet Hospital, and improvements to the Wood Street bus stops.

In recent years, following construction of a bus terminus outside Barnet Hospital for the 263 and 307 routes, the junction has become increasingly hazardous for motorists

and pedestrians and especially for hospital outpatients and pupils at Queen Elizabeth's Boys' School.

There were eight personal-injury road accidents at or around the junction in the two years up to December 2012, and an earlier report prepared for the council said visibility needs to be improved, not least because Wellhouse Lane is a "high-frequency" route for buses (routes 263, 307 and 384), ambulances and other emergency services, and speeding could pose a concern. **Barnet Society member and transport specialist Peter Bradburn writes:**

Barnet Council are recommending proposals for changes at the junction of Wellhouse Lane with Wood Street. These are intended to improve pedestrian safety and ease traffic movements to and from Barnet Hospital and local bus stops. In doing so the green space at the top of Wellhouse Lane would be enhanced and upgraded.

The main features would include:
a mini-roundabout at the Wood Street/Wellhouse Lane junction;
a new zebra crossing in Wellhouse Lane, linked with a direct pathway



Up the junction: exit from Barnet Hospital to V

across the green space to the existing zebra on Wood Street;

enhancement of the green space adjacent to the junction, with landscaping upgrades and revisions to the pathways to discourage inappropriate pedestrian movements across Wellhouse Lane;

improvements to the bus stops in Wood Street to make them more disabled user-friendly.

The need for improvements in this area is driven by two main factors. First is the increasing role of Barnet Hospital in its partnership with Chase Farm Hospital in Enfield. Secondly, there is a heavy movement of school pupils be-



Damaged tree on High Street

Trees are for life, not just Christmas

The Society is concerned that trees in the area are not getting the protection and care that they deserve. We are also keen to see more trees around the High Street, to help its revival. In the New Year we intend to campaign for a co-ordinated planting strategy and better Council maintenance. But first we need to map the opportunities and threats that exist. If you know of any trees in danger, or

places to plant new ones, please contact me at robin.bishop@gmx.co.uk or David Lee on 020 8364 9161.

David, is well known to members as the force behind 'Lee's Trees' on Barnet Hill and the new wood at Whitings Hill. He qualified as both an architect and landscape architect, and continues to bring his expertise and commitment to green matters in Barnet.



to Wood Street, busy and dangerous

tween the Queen Elizabeth's Boys School in Queens Road and the bus stops in Wood Street and at the hospital bus terminus.

This has been made more acute since the 307 bus was diverted to the hospital from its turnaround at The Arkley.

The next stage is the Council's consultation with stakeholders, utilities and statutory bodies. The Barnet Society has submitted supportive comments on the Council recommendations, which were accompanied by an assessment of a number of options by Capita, the in-house consultancy employed by Barnet.

However The Society has expressed some concerns about the deviation effect on westbound motorists on Wood Street at the mini roundabout and the sightlines for traffic emerging from Wellhouse Lane towards Barnet, and seeks reassurance on this matter.

The estimated costs (at 2014 prices) of the recommended package (mini roundabout £121k, bus stops £13k, green space upgrade £55k and design costs £43k) total £232k. Capita also investigated a traffic signal option as an alternative to the mini roundabout. This was estimated to cost £226k, an increase of £105k over the recommended package, if other costs remained the same.

Byng Road centre breaks new ground

Work is well underway preparing the ground for planting a wild-flower meadow, which will become a major new attraction at Barnet Countryside Centre in Byng Road.

The aim is to encourage the growth of rare species in the overgrown field in the middle of the eight-acre nature reserve, but first it has to be cleared of saplings, brambles and dead grass.

Two rare species of prairie grass are already found there, and if wild-flower seeds collected from Totteridge Fields germinate and take hold the Byng Road site might soon become the home for increasingly rare plants such as bird's foot trefoil, black knap-weed, tufted vetch and wood vetch.

Twenty-three volunteers spent the day helping to clear the field during the centre's latest Make a Difference Day, and their efforts were a great encouragement to the centre's former manager, Annabel Foskett, who personally collected the seeds in the Totteridge Fields nature reserve to ensure their local provenance.

"We have worked really hard preparing the field and it would be a tremendous achievement if we could encourage the growth of more wild-flowers. The two prairie grass species we have, oval sedge and sneezewort, are already rare and need protecting," she said

"Once there were natural wild-flower meadows in every parish in the country but only 2 per cent of the meadows that existed in the 1930s remain today. Real wild-flower meadows look

beautiful and attract wildlife, particularly threatened pollinators."

Barnet Countryside Centre is visited regularly by schoolchildren – well over 1,300 last year. Annabel, who has moved to a new post with the London Wildlife Trust, found the role of schools learning and engagement officer especially rewarding.

"The Barnet centre's work has been so well received. Every local school that has visited the site has provided 100 per cent positive feedback and it has been so enjoyable working with the local community."

Land near the entrance to the Byng Road reserve has been earmarked for new premises for the Noah's Ark Children's Hospice. Planning permission was granted by Barnet Council in 2012 for the construction of a £4.8 million hospice and also a new eco-friendly environment centre.

Noah's Ark has granted a sub lease to the Wildlife Trust which works in collaboration with the Friends of Barnet Countryside Centre (www.fobcc.org.uk)

Demolition of former school buildings on the Byng Road site will provide the space for the new environment centre and its construction has been made possible following a £750,000 donation to Noah's Ark (www.noahsark-hospice.org.uk) by the Hadley Trust.



Annabel Foskett, helping out at the centre



Time is running out for the High Street

The depth of local anger, and even despair at the damage being inflicted on Barnet's shopping centre is highlighted yet again in comments in support of the Barnet Society's petition calling on Council to allow an hour's free parking.

After its launch earlier this month, nearly 300 people have signed the petition.

So far there has been no meaningful response from Barnet Council or the three High Barnet councillors. The only acknowledgement received to date is a two-line email from Councillor Dean Cohen, the Barnet Council cabinet member responsible for car parking.

He indicated he had difficulty understanding the Society's argument for an hour's free parking along the entire length of the High Street and in the council's three car parks.

The Society suggested that

Councillor Cohen might agree to visit High Barnet along with committee representatives so that he could obtain correct figures for parking spaces and acquaint himself with the reasons why so many local residents have given up attempting to park and shop in High Barnet.

He has not responded to the Society's invitation and neither has there been any follow-up from High Barnet's three councillors, David Longstaff, Wendy Prentice and Bridget Perry, in time for press.

Comments from some of the people who have backed the petition are highly critical of Barnet Council failure to support Barnet's shopping centre and the inadequacies of its complicated system of charging solely by phone and credit card; they also explain why they believe other nearby shopping centre are benefiting at High Barnet's expense:

"I have never known a town that insists on making it so difficult to park."

"Stop this dreadful war on High Barnet's motorists."

"Help small businesses, stop hindering them."

"I never take my car to shop in High Barnet."

"The high cost and inconvenience of parking in Barnet is the major cause of the town's decline."

"The mobile phone system is rubbish, it always cuts me off."

"The pay by phone is a disaster for local shops and I will not use it."

"Barnet is nearly a ghost town."

"I used to visit frequently, now I'd rather drive to St Albans or Enfield."

"It's such a shame to see High Barnet High Street slip away."

www.barnetsociety.org.uk