

The **Barnet** Society

SUMMER 2024 | £2 (WHEN SOLD)

**AS WE NEAR OUR 80TH BIRTHDAY,
YOUR BARNET SOCIETY NEEDS**

YOU

We are constantly reading about the crises that are affecting all our public services – well now the **Barnet Society is in a similar position.**

We are desperately looking for more volunteers to join our Committee, which has lost a lot of members over the past few years.

Current members have been running the Society for years and are getting old and burnt out. Understandably, many of us would like to retire or step back a bit, so we desperately need new blood .

And that's where **YOU** can help!

Put simply, we need more people to join the committee and give us a hand.

The work is not arduous or time-consuming, but it is very rewarding.

We are a strong, campaigning voice for the people of Barnet, and, as we approach our 80th anniversary, we would like to look forward to the next 80, confident that the Society is in good hands.

Ideally, we would like to have members shadowing the various Officers, so they would be in a position to step into the breach.

We need help from anyone with a particular interest or skill such as



lawyers who could provide advice, people with planning or architectural experience, people with accountancy, IT, networking, catering, PR, fundraising or social media skills You do not even need to join the Committee but just be on call to help out when necessary.

The Barnet Society was formed in 1945 to protect the Green Belt and open spaces; we have been fighting the same cause for all these years but it is likely to get tougher because the Labour Party wants to build on the so-called Grey Belt which is Green Belt that is not particularly spectacular like golf courses and car parks. Therefore,

we will need your help more than ever.

The theme of the AGM on 11th July '24 will be **'What do you want the Barnet Society to do?'**

We will divide into working groups and have a brainstorming session to see if we can resolve some of our issues and hopefully gain more volunteers.

Frances Wilson, Chair

STOP PRESS

MEDIEVAL FESTIVAL POSTPONED, PAGE 3



AGM, Thursday, 11th of July, 7.30pm, Pennefather Hall, St Albans Road, Barnet EN5 4LA



ORGAN REPAIR HELP

URGENTLY needed repairs to the historic 140-year-old organ at Barnet parish church are due to start later this year following Barnet Council's decision to make a grant of £83,000 to meet half the cost of the work.

Once the restoration has been completed, St John the Baptist Church hopes to extend its programme of musical education at local schools and host a wider range of concerts and musical events.

St John's team vicar Father Sam Rossiter-Peters was supported by High Barnet Councillors Emma Whysall and Paul Edwards when he presented the application for a grant to a council committee which makes awards from the proceeds of Barnet's community infrastructure levy.

Installed in 1884 by the famous 19th century organ builders William Hill and Son, the organ has not been refurbished for nearly 40 years and numerous pieces need replacing.

Some of the organ's pipes are broken, resonators have collapsed, and for the organ to reach its full potential buttons and pistons need repairing.

A fund-raising appeal to meet the other half of the £160,000 restoration cost was launched by the Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Nagus Narenthira.

She said she was delighted to have been asked to give her support towards ensuring that the organ is fully functioning once again.

"We need to restore the parish church organ because we must preserve it for use by future generations."

Father Sam thanked the council for stepping in to assist with the renovation of what he said was the "beating heart of the parish church and the beating heart of our town".



Dougie Shrubbs was praised for continuing to work during the Covid pandemic

CLEAN SWEEP FOR DOUGIE AT AWARDS

THAT well-known character around the town, Dougie Shrubbs is one of the winners of the Borough of Barnet's 2024 civic awards for community service.

A certificate of a scroll for outstanding service went to the former road sweeper who won plaudits over the years for his dedication in keeping Barnet High Street spick and span.

Dougie retired in December last year after finally calling it a day at the age of 71, long after the official retirement age.

Fond farewells were the order of the day along the High Street as he emptied bins and cleared up litter for one last time. News of his retirement led to scores of online goodwill messages on local websites.

Dougie joined the staff of Barnet Council 44 years ago as a gardener in East Barnet, then switched to road sweeping in 1987, and spent the last 25 years in High Barnet.

Another winner was Victoria Miller, manager of Chipping Barnet Food Bank.

People who are referred to the food bank – held on Tuesdays and Saturdays at St Peter's Roman Catholic Church, Somerset Road, New Barnet – first check in at the church hall and are offered a wide range of advice and assistance to help sort out any difficulties in their lives.

Figures for the first 12 months are showing that more families who have been helped in the past are now managing without having to request food parcels.

"We are passionate about the long-term aim to reduce dependency on

food banks," said Victoria, who was appointed food bank manager two years ago.

"Our ability with the backing of other voluntary groups to offer wrap-around help and advice is leading to a definite increase in the number of clients who don't have to return to us for direct help.

"Overall demand for food parcels is still high because of the cost-of-living crisis but the success of this extension in the support we offer is so encouraging."

Close by, Wendy Alcock, founder of the Barnet's Incredible Edible campaign, won recognition for her outstanding service which includes the creation of a community garden outside St John's United Reform Church.

Wendy was delighted with her award for outstanding service to the community in recognition of her "inspiration, passion and innovation" for promoting local food growing".

Bob Burstow, who retired recently from the role of secretary of Chipping Barnet Town Team, was awarded his Barnet Civic Award for Lifetime Achievement in recognition of the support and guidance he has given over many years to successful community projects.

He led the initiative to organise a 12-month trial of Barnet's first Teenage Market in 2018 when 12 stalls filled the entrance to The Spires shopping centre. Theresa Villiers, local MP, was one of a number of people praising his efforts.

Bob was also one of the volunteers who helped to set up the successful Barnet Medieval Festival.

DOG SHOW LIVENS UP BARKLEY

HIGHLIGHT of a revived Arkley community fair was an all-comers dog show which resulted in two surprise winners -- a blind dog and a rescue dog took the rosettes for best in show.

Lottie, a nine-year-old Jack Russell terrier, which lost her sight after developing cataracts was judged best in show to the delight of her owner Matilda (left) when the result was announced by judge Raj Mukherjee.

Reserve best in show was Chess, a border collie, which her owner Tamara Simellonovic, rescued with the help of the Dogs Trust.



Arkley village field was packed with stalls and attractions and there was no shortage of visitors for the first community fair since the covid shutdown.

Residents were determined the revive the event with all the proceeds being split between charities serving the Arkley community.

Host of the fun dog show, Rachel Burke of dog groomers Beauty Barks of Borehamwood, said the event had proved extremely popular attracting a large entry of family pets.

Winners Lottie (left) and Chess with their owners

BATTLE BOOKS



ONCE again competing for attention well above the hustle and bustle of the High Street are the heraldic banners and coats of armes of the royalty and noblemen whose troops fought at the 1471 Battle of Barnet.

After being restored during the winter months, the banners have pride of place at the top of the 76 lamp posts all the way from High Barnet tube station to Hadley Green.

Two new publications coincide with the re-appearance of the banners.

The first is an I-Spy style guide and quiz booklet by Gwyneth Hibbett (above) which is available from Barnet Museum. Her aim in writing the guide is to encourage children to walk the length of the High Street, look up at the banners, and work out the meaning of the various symbols and emblems.

Scott Harrison has researched and written a new history identifying the 104 noblemen who took part – Behind the Battle of Barnet Banners – Stories of the Wars of the Roses.

They have both been enthused and encouraged by the continuing upsurge in interest about the battle and those who took part.

WATERLOGGED GROUND FORCES BARNET MEDIEVAL FESTIVAL TO BE POSTPONED

BARNET Medieval Festival, which was due to take place over the weekend of Saturday and Sunday June 8 and 9, has had to be postponed because the Byng Road playing fields have become too waterlogged due to recent heavy rains.

Key access points – where there has been standing water – are considered unusable for the many vehicles that would have to enter the site.

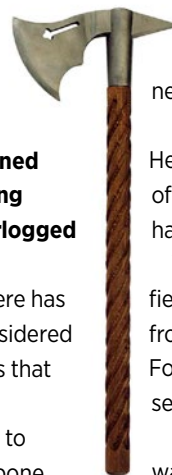
“We have had no choice but to take the hard decision to postpone the date of the festival because of the completely sodden ground conditions,” said festival director, Dr Susan Skedd.

“However, we are looking to reschedule the festival for later in the summer. We are now looking to see if we can arrange another date.”

The organisers were hoping this year’s festival would surpass last year’s event with up to seven mounted knights in armour and men at arms and a spectacular display by a battery of cannon.

Last year over 70 medieval tents were erected on the site and record crowds watched the re-enactments of the 1461 Battle of St Albans and 1471 Battle of Barnet.

Re-enactors, traders, stall holders and community groups have all had to be notified on the festival’s postponement



and have been re-assured every effort will be made to arrange a new date.

Recently over just two days much of Hertfordshire has had the equivalent of a month’s rain – and High Barnet has been no exception.

When the main Byng Road playing fields were inspected by groundmen from the Barnet Elizabethans Rugby Football Club they said they had never seen so much standing water.

The water table was so high there was nowhere for this to go, and they considered that even if there was consistently dry weather in the lead-up to the festival, there was no guarantee that the ground would dry sufficiently to take vehicles.

Dr Skedd said that further rain over the next few days would render the playing fields – and especially the vehicle access choke points – entirely unusable.

“We cannot take the risk of damaging the grounds which we are generously allowed to use for the festival by Barnet Elizabethans RFC, Barnet Council and Christ Church Primary School.

“It is quite a blow to the festival team after so much planning, but we are not giving up.

“The weather gods have been unkind to us, but with luck we can still move forward once a new date is confirmed.”



Not since the 1950s have planning, architecture and the environment been such salient issues as they'll be in the general election on 4 July. This issue of the Barnet Society Newsletter is the second focusing on major themes of our work. Our last was on housing; this is on the Green Belt and other open spaces. Underlying both is our concern for the environment.

We hope this will enable both electoral candidates and voters to understand clearly what we stand for, and to make better decisions for our community.

Reports by Robin Bishop, Planning & Environment Lead, Barnet Society

The greying of The Green Belt



Map & 56 Hendon Wood Lane

Whichever party forms the new government, the Green Belt (GB) that currently surrounds our neighbourhood on three sides could be in big trouble. The main threats are shown on the map above.

Labour say that 'Grey' parts of it should be built on. In April, Sir Keir Starmer promised to release 'grey belt' land – low-quality or neglected GB land – for housebuilding.

Sounds sensible? Think again: from Arkley to Hadley, our local GB is studded with sites that have been deliberately neglected, making them prime – and highly profitable – development land.

As the London Green Belt Council has pointed out, most such sites aren't served by public transport and certainly won't be developed for affordable (let alone social) housing.

Potential Grey Belt sites

Chipping Barnet already has a dozen or more GB sites that have been neglected for years, whether deliberately or not. Often this is because under present planning law, development is permitted only under 'very special circumstances'. Examples of these include agricultural buildings (and their conversion to residential use), appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries and limited infilling.

Where GB land is used for illegal storage or dumping, the law can be enforced, but the process is drawn out and costly. Barnet

has attempted to apply it to a site next to 56 Hendon Wood Lane for nearly 10 years, (below) so far without success.

For farms with declining profitability, new equine stables and manèges can also be acceptable uses of buildings or fields, for example Strength & Learning Through Horses in Mays Lane, which we supported. We've also accepted conversion of redundant buildings to commercial use, for example at Kitts End Farm.

But where buildings have been converted or added without permission in a way that affects the openness of the GB, we've opposed them. This is the case at Arkley Manor Farm where a scaffolding business has operated illegally for years. We opposed their recent application for retrospective permission, and we're pleased that the planners have rejected it.

A recent worrying trend has been for GB sites to be sold for speculative purposes.

Several plots of land off Rowley Lane went last year to buyers who may have calculated that housing might one day be permitted.

A more sinister aspect of such transactions

has been retention of 'overage' rights by the previous owner, entitling them to a share of the profits should future development be permitted. This was the case for a site in Arkley Lane, where an application was made for new stables. We opposed it, and it has fortunately been refused.

Unless Labour's plans for releasing Grey Belt land for development include robust safeguards, the owners of these and other GB sites stand to reap massive profits. That cannot be right.

Mini land grabs

We've also been concerned lately by encroachment by householders onto adjacent public land without planning permission. They usually erect fences or plant hedges and use the enclosed area for their own benefit. If unchallenged, they can be permanently annexed by the householder, either to build on or to enhance the value of the property.

To date the land grabs have been too small for the Society to get involved. But clearly we cannot condone them, especially where the land is Council-owned and/or part of the GB.

If you see local examples of mini land grabs, please notify us at: info@barnetsociety.org.uk and we can investigate.



Our Green Belt neighbours' plans

Below are the main changes that could affect Barnet since the 2021 versions of their Local Plans. The Society has submitted comments to both Hertsmere & Enfield Councils.

Hertsmere

At **Potters Bar**, only 180 new homes would be built on Green Belt land south of the town – far fewer than the 1,170 proposed in 2021. A further 265 are proposed on the Canada Life site and 500 on golf course north of the town.

At **Borehamwood**, 325 homes are still proposed on two sites north of Barnet Lane (A411), and a new 8-form entry secondary school to the south of it close

to Stirling Corner. But the only addition to the Sky film studios west of the A1 is a small infill site.

Just north of the M25 J23 junction the Council still proposes a new settlement of 5,000 homes at **Bowmans Cross**.

The result of these and other amendments would be approximately 2,800 fewer new homes but a net loss of only 5% of the GB compared to about 9% in the previous Plan.

Enfield

Enfield was considering building 6,430 homes on 330 hectares (ha) of the GB. Their latest Plan is even more drastic,

9,651 homes on some 450ha of GB – a net loss of about 13% of Enfield's GB.

Proposals for **Cockfosters Station car park** (160 homes in tower blocks of up to 14 storeys overlooking Trent Park) and **land east of M25 Junction 24** (at least 30,550m² of floorspace for logistics) are little changed.

At **Chase Park** (N & S of the A110/Enfield Road), 3,755 homes are proposed.

Around **Crews Hill Station** would be a new settlement of 5,500 homes.

Near **Hadley Wood Station** 160 homes are proposed.



The new townships What they need to make them work

The settlements proposed at Bowmans Cross & Crews Hill would be big. Both would have populations of around 20,000 – almost the size of the present Potters Bar. But compactly and sensitively designed, they could be our best hope for saving much of the rest of our local countryside.

It's plainly better to concentrate homes in a few places, large enough to support a decent range of services such as schools, clinics, retail and social facilities, than to sprinkle them across our countryside where few services will be viable, and residents will be dependent on cars. As well as offering economies of scale, sustainably planned communities can also provide great opportunities for recycling and energy generation.

Proper planning is fundamental, starting with transport. Both

townships adjoin the M25, but that's already unacceptably congested at peak times. At least Crews Hill has a railway station. But neither is well served by buses, nor are there any plans to improve them – and Hertfordshire's proposed A414 Mass Rapid Transit would bypass Bowman's Cross altogether!

In short, neither proposal shows a fraction of the imagination of, for example, similarly-sized new Swedish communities. The whole town of Hammarby, near Stockholm, is built around integrated energy, water and waste systems. And Malmö's Western Harbour redevelopment is designed to be carbon-neutral.

The last comparable British planning projects were New Labour's eco-towns, stymied by the 2007 Global Recession (amongst other things). Time to revive their ambition?

The Green Scene

Barnet's Labour Council got off to a flying start by declaring a climate and biodiversity emergency. But residents might be wondering when deeds will match words. The result of the next Council elections, only two years away, may hang on whether Labour's green promises are being fulfilled. **Reports by Robin Bishop**

Within and around Chipping Barnet, we support inspiring practice in all areas of green design – but we call out poor examples. On the following pages we highlight key cases where we've made a difference, or tried to – and where we're still trying. 79 years on, our need for your support is as great as ever.

And just beyond our borough boundary (see Page 5) Hertsmere and Enfield are both planning substantial new developments, many on the Green Belt (GB).

They're likely to be supported by whichever party forms the new government. Both Conservatives and Labour have long proclaimed their commitment to protecting the GB. But the Conservatives haven't halted plans for nearly a quarter of a million new homes on it. And Labour now say that 'Grey' parts of it should be built on (see Page 4).

Meeting the climate and biodiversity challenge

Since the Council's declaration I've been Co-Chairing its voluntary Housing & Energy Action Group, one of several set up to advise on turning words into actions.

Since more than half of Barnet's carbon emissions are from existing housing, ensuring that homeowners, landlords and tenants have access to the information they need to make sustainable choices about their homes and energy would be a major step towards net zero emissions by 2042.

We want the Council website to offer practical advice to on how best to retrofit houses and flats to save fuel bills and reduce emissions. Its sustainability pages already provide some useful tips, and will soon contain a digital tool to help you diagnose your home's environmental needs. But we'd like it to go further, with lists of designers, contractors and suppliers with suitable qualifications and experience, and case studies of local exemplars.

Community energy

One of the Housing & Energy group's first results is Community Energy Barnet – our borough's first community-controlled energy provider. It's being set up as a charitable organisation to support the development of equitable, low carbon and community-driven energy infrastructure in Barnet. It plans to install local renewable energy, mostly rooftop solar, and energy-saving schemes to reduce carbon emissions and provide financial savings to community building users. Community shareholders will earn interest on investments in the energy projects.

If you'd like to get involved, please contact info@barnetsociety.org.uk



Victoria Recreation Ground inclusive playground

Parks and open spaces

It's probably safe to say that all our members have at least some interest in Barnet's environment, and most use its parks and open spaces. So we made a point of responding to the recent Council consultation on a new Parks & Open Spaces Strategy.

We found the online questionnaire rather superficial, so submitted a 4-page response making a number of basic points, for example:

- The value of green spaces is threefold: to individuals' health, to the health of our communities and to the health of nature. It's vital to balance these across the borough.
- Council priorities must be based on proper community consultation. Options need to be identified and evaluated – but not using the discredited 'quality' and 'value' methodology of the previous Strategy.
- Architectural and landscape schemes must be to the highest design and environmental standards, with adequate compensatory planting, amenity space and provision for wildlife.
- A good Strategy will identify routes from volunteering to green training and jobs in what ought to be a growing sector of the economy.

The Council says the Strategy will be ready for final consultation towards the end of 2024.

Last hope for Whalebones

Hill's application for 115 homes on Chipping Barnet's last historic fields was approved by the Council Strategic Planning Committee in March, despite hundreds of public objections, including an overwhelming majority of Society members.

To be clear: the Barnet Society has never objected to some housing to fund reprovision for the artists, bee-keepers and the current tenant farmer, and for maintenance of the estate. On any other site than a Conservation Area, we'd be delighted by the



quality of what has been approved. But the Trustees want way more than that.

As I write, we have one last chance. Nick Saul, Guy Braithwaite and I have written a last-ditch submission to the Mayor of London, who has the final say on whether it can go ahead. We've focused on the gross breach of national, London and Barnet's own policies protecting green space and promoting urban farming and food production. If that isn't practicable at Whalebones, it's practicable nowhere in Barnet, except perhaps in a new regional park...

A new regional park for Barnet?

The fields and woods between Arkley and Mill Hill, with the sources of the Dollis Brook at their heart, are astonishingly intact and peaceful despite being close to the A1 and only 10 miles from Westminster. Barnet's draft Local Plan proposes creating a regional park here.

The thought of this lovely landscape being eroded and exploited for mass leisure would appal many of us. Regional park status, however, would bring better public awareness, protection from inappropriate development and funding to ensure high design standards and long-term management of the area.

An imaginative suggestion from Roger Chapman of Barnet Green Spaces Network is for a regional food and biodiversity park to encourage a wide range of food growing practices. Linked with primary, secondary and post-16 education institutions and forest schools, it would provide an inspiring setting for environmental education and pathways to vocational qualifications in horticulture, animal husbandry and other skills essential for future food security.

As Roger says, 'The park would build upon Barnet's extensive agricultural history and heritage, enabling old stories to be retold and new ones to be created.' That's surely an idea our Society would embrace.

The serious business of outdoor play

It's sad to see so few children or young people out on their own in our wilder green spaces. Society members who grew up in our area testify to joyful childhoods wandering places like the Dollis valley unsupervised.

No doubt modern fears about children's safety, addiction to the internet and Covid lockdowns have all contributed to this generational change.

Paradoxically, educational and health research and practice has shown the enormous value to children's development of

contact with the natural environment from the earliest years.

Under the circumstances, we should welcome the Council's recent investment of nearly £1m in outdoor playgrounds in Tudor Park, Victoria Recreation Ground and Barnet Playing Fields. But are we spending disproportionately on expensive artificial kit, fences and safety carpet? As we pointed out in our responses to consultation, aren't these KFC playgrounds the equivalent of fast food – appealing but lacking in the nutrition nature provides?

Exception can be made for the fully inclusive play equipment for special needs and disabilities at Victoria Rec, which obviously benefits children who would be vulnerable in other spaces. But if our children don't grow up interacting with the wonderful habitat on our doorstep, will they care when it is threatened by new housing or climate change?

Tree planting

We're very proud of our record of tree planting over the last 29 years at Whitings Hill, Barnet Hill and elsewhere, all led by the late David Lee. The Council is planting a commemorative Wild Cherry – David's favourite tree – plus the remainder of his masterplan for Barnet hillside this autumn. You'll be invited to the celebration as soon as we have a date.

Rambling on

Exploring on foot has been a Society passion since we published 'Rambles Round Barnet' in 1948. Last June Jenny Remfry, Frances Wilson and I led four well-attended walks through some of our most attractive commons and shared gardens, as part of the London Festival of Architecture.

We're therefore pleased to hear from Libby Martin, Ramblers Footpath Secretary for Barnet, that since the Council recruited a Rights of Way Officer in 2021, we've seen an improvement in the standard of maintenance of our rural footpath network, and that the latest modification of the Local Plan requires development sites to provide walking links to local parks, schools and the strategic walking network.

Work has also started on a Rights of Way Management Plan, which will set Barnet's approach to managing the Rights of Way network over the next ten years. The Plan will also outline opportunities for improvements to support the network. It will be available for public consultation over the summer and is scheduled for completion before the end of the year. Make sure you have your say!



2024 AGM - NOTICE

Pennefather Hall, St Albans Road, Barnet

11th July '24 at 7.30pm.

Starting with a discussion: 'What do you want the Barnet Society to do?' Formal AGM business 8.30pm.

1. Approval of Minutes of the 78th AGM 13th July '24 (Page 11)
2. Approval of 79th Annual Reports for 2023-24 (Pages 8-11)
3. Approval of Treasurer's Report and Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2024 (Page 10)
4. Election of Independent Examiner
5. Election of Officers and Committee Members
6. Any other business

Officers and Committee 2023-4

President Aubrey Rose, Vice President Jenny Remfrey
Independent Examiner Jim Nelhams

Committee Members 2023-24:

Chair Frances Wilson; Vice Chair and Newsletter Editor Eamonn Rafferty; Secretary John Hay; Treasurer Andreas Tjirkalli; Membership Secretary Kim Ambridge; Minutes Secretary Susan Skedd; Planning Lead Robin Bishop
Other Committee Members: Nick Jones (Reporter) Simon Watson (Website Officer) Nick Saul, Simon Radford, Mahender Khari, and Christine Klein
Marcos Scriven was co-opted during the year as a webmaster.

If you wish to stand for election to the Committee or need further information, contact info@barnetsociety.org.uk.

Doors open 7.0pm, drinks and nibbles available.

Membership Report

At 31st March 2024, there were 509 (2023: 506) memberships comprising 734 (2023: 735) members. The number of memberships has not significantly grown this year., which is disappointing as the aim had been to increase it by 50. There were 13 memberships cancelled due to the member passing away, moving away or resigning, and 22 memberships did not respond to emails or pay the fee.

The committee will consider opportunities to increase the membership during 2024-25 and suggestions from members are always welcome.

The Annual Membership fee remains unchanged for 2024-25 at £10/individual and £15/household.

Payment by PayPal or annual standing order is preferred.

Kim Ambridge - Membership Secretary

Chair's Annual Report

The years keep passing so quickly I cannot believe it is time to write another Annual Report. However the Committee members have been very active reacting to all the challenges that have provided threats to Barnet as we know it and the Green Belt.

The Planning & Environment Report (Page 9) highlight the many proposals we have objected to and some which we supported. At last year's AGM we outlined the proposals to redevelop The Spires and expected to be campaigning against this throughout the year. However, it has gone quiet since BYM was declared bankrupt but we expect the scheme will be reinstated sometime in the future. We also objected to the increased development proposals for Whalebones and The Victoria Quarter but unfortunately these schemes were approved.

One success we contributed to was the restoration of the 84B bus where we held demonstrations and lobbied local Councillors and MP Theresa Villiers and eventually Hertsmere agreed to provide the funding.

An area of concern for the future is the proposal of the Labour Party to build on Grey Belt (areas of low quality or neglected Green Belt) and could include golf courses, car parks or neglected sites. There is already a proposal by Hertsmere to build 5,000 homes at Bowmans Cross just north of M25 Junction 23 and major developments in Potters Bar. Enfield are proposing 160 homes near Hadley Wood Station and 5,500 homes around Crews Hill Station which will all have an impact on the Green Belt and Barnet and we have submitted our objections.

We have spent some time trying to improve our IT. The database was built many years ago and it has had so many additions it is no longer fit for purpose. Similarly the website on which Nick Jones provides so many articles is also creaking at the seams. Marcos Scriven, a webmaster, is working on the database, which holds all our membership information, sends out renewal letters, prints the labels for the newsletter and many other things. He and Simon Watson (Website Officer) are hoping to solve our website difficulties when he has sorted out the database.

We have not held many activities this year, partly because we thought we would be involved with The Spires and partly because of the shortage of Volunteers. However, we had a stall at the Medieval Festival, the Barnet Vale Festival and the Christmas Fayre, where we promoted the Barnet Society and enrolled some new members. Holly Kal-Weiss, a Committee member organised a fundraising dinner on 22nd May '24 at Le Rose which was well attended and thoroughly enjoyed.

It is with great sadness I have to report that David Lee one of our Vice Presidents died in January at the age of 93. As well as Chairing the Society's Planning & Environment Committee from 1996 to 2008, he was a tireless campaigner for a greener Barnet and persuaded the Society and Council to plant hundreds of trees over the last three decades. We are delighted that the Council have agreed to complete his planting masterplan for Barnet Hill and have offered to pay for a tree to commemorate him.

I would like to thank Derek Epstein who "retired" as Treasurer last year but because of difficulties replacing him and the problems with the database he continued for another year producing the Accounts for 2023/4. I am very pleased to say Andreas Tjirkalli has now become our new Treasurer. I must also thank the unsung heroes behind the scenes on the Planning & Environment sub-group who provide so much help and guidance to Robin Bishop and similarly to our 23 Deliverers who deliver the newsletters. We are very grateful and we would welcome any member who would like to stand for the Committee or offer any support possible.

Frances Wilson

Tudor Hall: Barnet Museum is looking at possible fund-raiser to buy the building

PLENTY OF ISSUES ON HOUSING ALONE TO KEEP US BUSY

Victoria Quarter, Whalebones and The Spires were just a few of the controversial plans to come our way



Robin Bishop writes:

Planning, architecture and the environment have been much in the news over the last year. Aware that a **general election** was in the offing we've published two Newsletters on themes that matter most to the Society: housing and green issues.

On **housing**, we've published two articles on retrofit of existing homes. The Society can't offer more detailed advice itself, but through the Council's voluntary Housing & Energy Action Group we're pressing the Council to do so.

Green issues, including updates about the plans of Hertsmer & Enfield – and the Labour Party – to build on the Green Belt, are covered separately on *Pages 4-7*. **Barnet's Local Plan** is due for adoption by the end of this year. Another potentially important Council initiative has been the launch of an **independent design panel** (experts in planning and design) to 'help drive up quality of developments'. We very much support that aspiration.

Local work has kept us as busy as ever. Over the year we've reviewed **102 planning applications**, commenting on 26. We

supported 4 and objected to 13. In most cases the planners agreed with us.

As I write, only one of the three biggest development threats have been granted planning permission: **Victoria Quarter**, which we'd opposed on the grounds of poor design, particularly of many of the flats. **Whalebones** has been approved by the Council, but has yet to be signed off by the Mayor of London (*See Last hope for Whalebones, Page 6*). Proposals to redevelop **The Spires** and the former St Albans Road market site have gone quiet but not, we suspect, for long.

The best of the rest have been schemes for 56 houses and flats, most with gardens, for Barnet Homes at **Moxon Mews** and **Whitings Road**. We supported both for their sensitive design by Peter Barber Associates as well as their contribution to affordable and social housing.

The worst are probably the blocks of flats proposed at **49 Moxon Street**. **Intec House** with 35% affordable flats on 7-storeys was approved last year, but the developer now claims that they're no longer viable. A new application for 96 flats and more

workspace has been made; we've objected again. **Fortune House** next door, by the same developers, is only 6 storeys and not as harmful to the Green Belt, so we were neutral.

Our heritage assets have also had mixed fortunes. We successfully objected to a JOLT electric vehicle charger right in front of the main entrance of the Grade II **Everyman Cinema**. And we congratulate the Friends of **Tudor Park pavilion** (on the Local List) on being selected by the Council to procure the design, construction and operation of the building.

As with **Tudor Hall**, which Barnet Museum has succeeded in being registered as an Asset of Community Value, we wish them well with any fund-raising to buy the hall.

My thanks to our Planning & Environment Committee, Guy Braithwaite, Simon Kaufman, Dave McCormick, Nick Saul, Susan Skedd, Katy Staton and Simon Watson for their advice on many issues.

We also appreciate the support and information we've received from Councillor (and Society member) Simon Radford, especially over Victoria Quarter, the latter in collaboration with Cllrs Edith David and Phil Cohen.

Thanks also to Theresa Villiers MP, for her efforts to protect Chipping Barnet's Green Belt and heritage, and to fend off some of the worst over-development, have often reinforced those of the Society.

Barnet Society Accounts to 31 Mar 2024

OPERATING STATEMENT TO 31 MAR 2024

	1 Apr '23- 31 Mar '24	Apr '22 - Mar '23
INCOME		
Membership Fees: minimum	5,252.00	5,009.00
overpayments	1,336.21	1,307.81
On-line donations	25.00	34.50
Gifts & Donations: members	0.00	200.00
Gifts & Donations: non-members	7.55	496.00
Activities	893.90	529.83
Talks & fund-raising events	0.00	1,542.89
Newsletter sales	0.00	5.00
Books sales	75.83	105.00
Bank Interest Earned	59.42	13.81
TOTAL INCOME	7,649.91	9,243.84
EXPENSE		
Events		
AGM	183.27	200.00
Christmas Stall	52.50	45.00
Other Events	80.00	1,033.83
Insurance	87.00	87.00
Total Events	402.77	1,365.83
Newsletters		
Design	1,440.00	1,430.00
Printing	1,951.00	1,969.00
Postage & Stationery	252.96	199.84
Total Newsletter	3,643.96	3,598.84
Donations & Contributions		
Donations & Contributions	225.00	0.00
Total Donations & Contribs	225.00	0.00
Computers and Internet		
IT support/ software	347.85	347.49
Total Computers and Internet	347.85	347.49
Other Expenses		
Membership Expenses	180.38	0.00
Other printing	288.50	118.09
Dues & Subscriptions	175.00	175.00
Bank and Paypal Fees	174.28	211.70
Legal fees	0.00	3,792.00
Total Other Expenses	818.16	4,296.79
TOTAL EXPENSE	5,437.74	9,608.95
SURPLUS/ (SHORTFALL)	2,212.17	(365.11)

BALANCE SHEET 31 MARCH 2024

	31 Mar 2024	31 March 2023
CURRENT ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Pre-paid expenses	350.00	0.00
Cash at bank and in hand		
HSBC - Deposit Account	7,508.55	3,449.13
HSBC - Current Account	699.69	1,906.53
PayPal	711.73	1,582.64
Total Cash at bank and in hand	8,919.97	6,938.30
Total Current Assets	9,269.97	6,938.30
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Advance receipts	(119.50)	0.00
Total Current Liabilities	(119.50)	0.00
NET ASSETS	9,150.47	6,938.30
CAPITAL AND RESERVES		
Movement		
Opening balance	6,938.30	7,303.41
Surplus / (Shortfall) for the period	2,212.17	(365.11)
Closing balance	9,150.47	6,938.30
Comprising		
May Finnerty Memoriam Reserve	1,000.00	1,000.00
General Reserves	8,150.47	5,938.30
TOTAL Capital and Reserves	9,150.47	6,938.30

COMMENTARY

After the previous year's frantic activity, 2023/24 has been a very quiet year for the Society financially. The previous year, ended March 2023, saw over £3,000 spent on legal fees and some £1,200 raised by fund-raising walks and dinner.

This year, calm has descended. The only significant fund-raising was the London Festival of Architecture walks organised by Robin Bishop with Jenny Remfry and Frances Wilson. Ticket sales totalling £303 and a £481 grant from LBB funded £264 of printing costs and donations of £225 to local charities visited, leaving a close-to-£300 surplus for the Society.

Costs (and some receipts) relating to the upcoming fundraising dinner have been carried forward into the 2024/5 accounts.

The bottom line is a surplus for the year of around £2,200, raising the Society's reserves to £9,150.

You will not be hearing from me again as Hon Treasurer since committee member Andreas Tjirkalli has very kindly taken over the role as from 1 April.

Derek Epstein, acting Hon Treasurer

Minutes of the 78th Annual General Meeting

Pennefather Hall, St Albans Road, Barnet, 13 July 2023

1. Welcome and Introduction

Frances Wilson (Chair) thanked everyone for coming and said it seemed strange to think people had been meeting to protect the Green Belt and Conservation Areas for 78 years just as we are today. She then introduced the Committee Members pointing out how few and over-stretched they were and asked for volunteers.

2.0 Apologies

Aubrey Rose (President), David Lee (Vice President), John Hay (Hon Sec), Nick Jones, Kit Carstairs, Holly Kal-Weiss, Andreas Tjirkalli, Alison Lakin, Margaret & Ivor Williams, Dan Tomlinson, Jim Nelhams. There were 48 members present.

3.0 Minutes of 77th AGM (23rd June '22)

Frances Wilson said the Minutes had been published in the Summer '23 Newsletter (Page 11) . – Approved unanimously.

4.0 Approval of 78th Annual Reports

Frances Wilson said the Chair's, Planning & Environment, Membership Reports and Annual Accounts are all published in the Summer Newsletter (Pages 8-11). Everyone has been given the opportunity to raise questions before the meeting and the purpose of the AGM is to ask the members to approve the actions we have taken over the past year.

4.1 Chair's Report

Frances Wilson said it had been a busy year with many new development proposals, details of which are provided in the Planning & Environment Report. She highlighted we had spent £3,800 of our reserves in trying to prevent the demolition of 33 Lyonsdown Road. A Victorian Villa on Barnet's Local Heritage List. We engaged a solicitor & Queen's Counsel to see if it was worth asking for a Judicial Review. They thought our chance of success was low, so we decided not to pursue the case. However, the matter has now been raised in the House of Lords which may table a bill to ensure this cannot happen again. The redevelopment of The Spires is the other major issue and we will continue to oppose the current proposals.

After the pandemic, we held several Social Events to enable members to meet each other, including a talk by Living Streets, a Quiz and Housing Forum and a fund raising dinner at Menage. Susan Skedd again organised 3 walks identifying 'Incredible Women' who lived in Barnet. All these events raised over £2,000 helping to offset the £3,800 paid in legal fees.

Barnet participated in the London Festival of Architecture whose theme was 'in common' We arranged 4 circular walks through the town centre and adjoining countryside, showing off our common spaces, allotments and alms-houses. All proved popular. We also met our counterparts in Enfield Society and Elstree & Borehamwood Green Belt Society as we will have to work together to preserve the Green Belt which we all share and is likely to come under pressure with the demand for more housing.

The Chair's Report was agreed with no objections.

4.2 Planning & Environment Report

Robin Bishop, The Society's Planning & Environment Lead said we had another successful year but wanted Members to note developments since he had written the report:

- Byng Road playing fields – We have decided to be neutral. We support replacing the Rugby Club House and the improvement to the three main pitches but have raised concerns about the creeping urbanisation of the Green Belt and the landscape design, which could threaten the future of the Medieval Festival. The Planning Officer has recommended refusal on the grounds of harm to the Green Belt, trees and bats. It will go to the Strategic Planning Committee on 19th July '23.

- Moxon Street (Fortune House). Application for 41 flats. We previously reported that 49 Moxon Street (Intec House), a 7 storey block of 92 flats, which has been approved despite strong objections by the Society and many neighbours. We objected to the poor design and its location on the edge of the Green Belt, which will be visible from King George's Fields; this sets a poor precedent for tall buildings in and around the Town Centre. There is now an application for another block next to it, 6 storeys high and 41 flats. Although we dislike this proposal we are unlikely to object because the above precedent has been set, but if members wish to object the deadline is 9th August '23.

- Victoria Quarter. – In 2017, after years of negotiation with local residents, a scheme for 371 homes was given Planning Permission. In 202, Developer

applied to build 652 units which, following local objections, was reduced to 554. The Council rejected this proposal and the developer appealed but lost. Another Planning Application is now expected for 486 units, which replaces the terraced housing with tall blocks to provide 76 more social and affordable housing. We will study the designs before commenting but they are currently on Public Exhibition on 14th July '23 from 4.0pm – 7.30pm at Mary Immaculate & St Peter Church, 63 Somerset Road New Barnet and details will be on line.

- Whalebones - Another proposal to redevelop this scheme is expected to be presented to the Planning Committee. The number of homes is reduced from 151 to 120 and the buildings along Wood Street have been set back a bit. We need to find out what our members think of the proposals so we intend sending an email plus a letter to those without email addresses, because proof of the strength of our members' opinion was important evidence at the last public inquiry.

The Planning & Environment Report was approved with no objections.

4.3 Membership Report

Kim Ambridge, Membership Secretary said at 31st March '23 there were 506 households comprising of 735 members representing an almost 5% increase in households and members; 50 new households joined but 26 did not renew either because they had moved away, passed away or were experiencing financial difficulties. Kim has a personal target to increase membership by 50 and is doing this by meeting new members in person, talking to friends and neighbours. We will continue attending local events promoting the Society and its newsletter.

The Membership Report was approved with no objections

5.0 Treasurer's Report & Accounts for the year ended 31st March '23

Derek Epstein, Treasurer, produced the report published in the newsletter; it shows that £3,800 had been spent on legal fees to try to save 33 Lyonsdown Road as explained in the Chair's report. However, this has been largely mitigated by Susan Skedd's three walks raising £530, supplemented by a £200 match-funding donation and £550 raised at a dinner and raffle at Menage organised by Holly Kal-Weiss. This means that at the end of the year the deficit was limited to £365. The income was £9,243 mostly consisting of membership fees, donations and activities and the expenditure was the legal fees, plus cost of producing the Newsletters, paying bank and PayPal Fees totalling £9,608. The accounts show a surplus of £6,938. having increased subscriptions to £10 single and £15 family.. The accounts have been independently examined and passed by Jim Nelhams and were approved with no objections.

Derek Epstein said he was anxious to resign as he had been Treasurer for 4 years and he no longer lives in Barnet. He is prepared to continue until the Society find a replacement as he is aware it is a difficult position to fill.

6.0 Election of Independent Examiner 2023-24

Frances Wilson said Jim Nelhams had provided an excellent service over the past few years and although he is unable to be here tonight he is happy to continue and Frances asked for this to be approved.

Proposed by: Jenny Remfry and seconded by John McMinn.

7.0 Officers and Committee Members

Our President is Aubrey Rose and Vice Presidents David Lee and Jenny Remfry. Jenny said Aubrey was sorry he was unable to be with us but he wished the Society well and said the Barnet Society should continue to do what is best for the people of Barnet.

7.1 Election of Officers on the Committee

Derek Epstein, Holly Kal- Weiss and Simon Kaufman had all decided to step down from the Committee.

7.2 Election of Members on the Committee

Members standing down but willing to be re-elected:

Kim Ambridge Membership Secretary and Simon Watson who is responsible for the website.

Willing to stand for Election: Nick Saul who is currently on the Planning & Environment Committee Nominated by Mahender Khari and seconded by Frances Wilson.

The election of Committee Members was approved with no objections.

8.0 Any other Business There was none.

Think it's bad now, just wait till you get to 2047!

Rehearsals are underway for a challenging new drama at the Bull Theatre which explores how High Barnet might struggle to survive in 2047, writes Nick Jones.

In a futuristic world which has been depleted of natural resources and ravaged by brutal capitalism, High Barnet becomes a strategic focal point for a desperate struggle with big business as the town still has the cleanest air between London and York.

This is the setting for *Priceless*, a science fiction ecological drama which is to be staged at The Bull Theatre in July by Barnet's much acclaimed amateur dramatic group, the Blue Door Theatre Company.

This is the group's latest play to draw on High Barnet's rich history and strategic location and it follows last year's production of *The Boy I love*, based on Barnet Fair, and *The Fog of War*, which commemorated the 1471 Battle of Barnet.

Priceless is the second play to have been written for Blue Door by James P Godwin, son of the group's director Siobhan Dunne.

After creating a story line about life in Barnet during the Wars of Roses in *The Fog of War*, he predicts what might be happening in High Barnet in the disturbingly near future of 2047.

By this time much of London has been flooded due to climate change and the billionaires who have done so much to deplete the world's resources are met with

resistance in an unlikely location in North London as the local residents of tomorrow fight back.

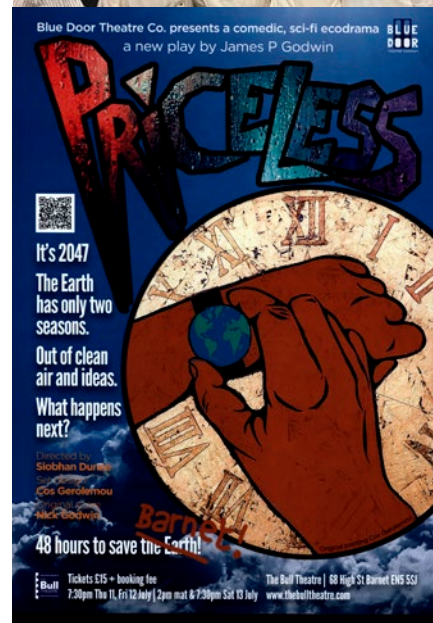
High Barnet's King George's Field becomes the battleground for their struggle as world conglomerate Kaos takes over this much-loved green space to build a factory to capture – and to tax -- what is said to be the cleanest and freshest air on the highest point between London and York.

In thinking through the story line for the drama, James was determined to have another go at exploring the culture and history of High Barnet – and, as he has found out, “not many theatrical lines have been written about Barnet”.

In his full-time job as an English teacher at Highlands School, Enfield, James has been struck by the genuine concern which 16- and 17-year-olds have about the future of the world, their questions and worries about the depletion of the earth's resources and their fears that there might be another world war.

“I think they sense we are in a recession and the frightening prospect that soon we might be entering a pre-war economy.

“What I have done in *Priceless* is to try to build on these thoughts and envisage how the oppressed people of a small town might respond when the conglomerates and those in power own all our natural resources and are out of control”



The repertoire for the chorus includes an original score written for the production by Nick Godwin. See above, top, from left to right: Simone Browning, Anne Moore, Teresa O'Sullivan, Brigid Hekster, and Wendy Solomons

Priceless is the second play to have been written for Blue Door by James P Godwin, son of the group's director Siobhan Dunne

Priceless at The Bull Theatre: Thursday and Friday, 11 and 12 July, 7.30pm; Saturday 13 July, matinee 2pm and 7.30pm. Tickets £15 plus booking fee.

Join the Barnet Society and help carry on its work

Annual subscriptions for new joiners are £10 for an individual or £15 for a family.

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