

Planning & Environment – Robin’s update for Committee, 27 July 2023

PLANNING ISSUES

Government

Michael Gove has announced several **planning and housing** initiatives. Ones that could especially affect us are:

- Commitment to build 1 million new homes between 2019 & 2024. (Around 700k have already been built, so this would be a continuation of the present rate.)
- More homes to be built on brownfield sites.
- Review of Permitted Development Rights (PDR) to relax rules on home extensions, reuse of retail space, barn conversions and repurposing of agricultural buildings.
- All new development must be ‘beautiful’.
- Launch of the new Office for Place to promote design codes and quality.
- £24m planning fund to help councils ‘clear backlogs and get the right skills in place’.

Several of these have been promised before (without being delivered). He said little about social housing or how new development would address the climate crisis.

Labour Party

In May, Keir Starmer vowed to make Labour the party of housebuilding by relaxing planning restrictions and allowing more homes to be built on the **Green Belt**. But scrutiny of his speech revealed a more nuanced approach than the media proclaimed. He supports the idea of development corporations, for example, to ensure properly planned infrastructure.

London Festival of Architecture

Our four **LFA walks, *Barnet commons – old and new*** went well, making a net profit of £295. Fine weather showed our buildings, gardens and countryside at their best. I’m particularly grateful for the help given by Frances, Jenny Remfry and Gordon Kerr.



A high point was an inspiring visit to New Ground, the remarkable older women’s cohousing project in Union Street. We’re invited to bring a few people for another visit – a rare honour!

- *Anyone interested? Please contact me.*

Barnet Council

The **Citizen's and Young People's Assemblies** have reported to the Council on how Barnet can become more sustainable. Their 16 recommendations cover waste and sustainable consumption; learning, communications and partnerships; nature and biodiversity; transport; and housing, buildings and energy. These have informed the Council's new vision *Caring for People, our Places and the Planet*.

We responded to the Council's ***Air Quality Action Plan 2023-28***, and asked for actions to be added to monitor and mitigate pollution generated by the A1000.

- *Would anyone be willing to work with Breathe London to install, monitor and raise awareness of air quality?*

Sadly we had no time to respond to several draft strategies and policies relating to **housing**.

Hertsmere

In May, Frances and I spoke at the AGM of the **Elstree & Borehamwood Green Belt Society**. The meeting was attended by several Councillors in Hertsmere's new Labour/Lib Dem administration, who spoke well about their planning priorities which include commitment to the Green Belt and public transport.

Credit to them for attempting to reinstate the **84 bus** link between Barnet and Potters Bar. However, they've yet to get a bus operator to agree to operate their proposed alternative Barnet section of the route.

There's good and bad news about land north of Barnet Lane (aka **Woodcock Hill Village Green & Horses Field**), the Green Belt land between Stirling Corner and Aldenham.



The bad news is that Wimpey have submitted an application to build up to 220 homes on the land. We'll submit an objection.

The good is that Woodcock Hill Village Green Committee has been granted permission for a 1-day hearing in the Court of Appeal to try to overturn the decision to deregister the Village Green. They need to raise £7,500 to proceed. Please consider contributing [here](#).

Enfield

Gove has decided not to call in four towers on **Cockfosters Station** car park at the edge of the Green Belt. Enfield Council had already given them permission.

CPRE – M25 for Nature

The countryside charity (fka Council for the Preservation of Rural England) has asked for BSoc help to create a continuous belt of trees around London. Chipping Barnet is already well-endowed with trees from Arkley to Hadley Wood, but we should support this initiative. Jenny Remfry is acting as our link person.

- *Would anyone be willing to help Jenny?*

London Green Belt Council

...seeks to spread news and details of its events through **local Facebook groups**, particularly those that cover sustainability/environmental issues or where concerns are often expressed about the loss of Green Belt.

- *Can you suggest any relevant Facebook groups serving our area?*

North London Waste Authority (NLWA)

The NLWA and its seven north London borough partners (which include Barnet) are developing a new **joint strategy to reduce waste** up to 2040 and consulting the public.

- *Would anyone be willing to lead on this please?*

Environmentally upgrading existing homes

I get asked to recommend local designers and builders with expertise in **upgrading existing houses** to reduce energy consumption, improve air quality and generate power on-site.

- *Should BSoc offer advice of this kind – and if so how best to do so?*

Offer of voluntary help

An Azerbaijani **asylum seeker** who is an architect interested in heritage and lives in Colindale is **seeking work experience**.

- *Would BSoc be interested – and able – to help him/her, or others in future?*

RECENT CASEWORK (SELECTION)

Consultations

The Spires – Following a lively discussion at our AGM, we're collaborating with BRA on a campaign against the latest proposals. Cllr Paul Edwards has asked Council officers to 'engage with you and see how we as a Council can attempt to arrive at a proposal that would bring local residents and the developers together in the hope of arriving at a mutual consensus of the way forward'. We look forward to that, but have no more news to date.

- *The kind of campaign and its timeline needs to be agreed. Any suggestions?*

Whalebones – We'd hoped the Planning Inspector's dismissal of an application for 152 homes in the Wood Street Conservation Area would prompt a rethink. No such luck: another application is expected soon. The number of homes has been reduced to about 120, but other changes are minimal. Nick Saul & I will meet the developer's team on 2 August.

Victoria Quarter – Yet another scheme is proposed, this time for 486 homes rather than the 371 approved in 2017. In view of changes in the regulatory and economic situation since then, some increase may be acceptable. The BSoc P&E Committee will submit a strong response objecting to such an increase without commensurate community and environmental benefits.

Green Belt cases

Intec House, 49 Moxon Street – No further news about neighbours' pursuit of a judicial review of the Council's decision to approve this.

Land west of Rowley Lane – Several plots of GB land have been sold at auction, and Hayley Lehman reports that the owner is storing building materials on it. She's alerted the Council Enforcement Team, who have contacted the owner.

Barnet Elizabethans Rugby Football Club, Byng Road Playing Fields – We support replacement of the clubhouse and improvements to the three main pitches but have reservations, especially about the landscaping which could threaten the future of the Medieval Festival. At our suggestion, Cllrs Edwards & Whysall chaired a round-table discussion between BERFC, Festival trustees, BSoc and others, and some concessions were offered, but not confirmed in writing so our stance remains neutral. The Strategic Planning Committee approved the plans on 19 July subject to conditions (not yet known).

Gaelic football pavilion, King George's playing field – Decision still awaited on this replacement for a previous pavilion. We were neutral.

Sky Studios North, Rowley Lane – Decision awaited on 10 more sound stages.

Conservation Areas & Listed Buildings

70 High Street – A mixed outcome. The developer has been given permission to retain part of his new building, but a drastic reduction of its overall height is required.

98-100 High Street (fka Foxtons) – We were neutral. Decision still awaited.

118 High Street (Grade II; fka TSB & Barnet Press) – Costa Coffee have submitted a planning application. It's better than Merkur Slots' gaming proposal, and there's a rumour that Costa might make the Barnet Press the theme of the interior graphics. Is that good news or the sound of Gwyneth Cowing turning in her grave?

202 High Street (fka Bentleys) – Despite our objection, this will be demolished in favour of a 3-storey row that will push up the roofline of the Monken Hadley Conservation Area.

4 Hadley Parade, High Street – Proposal to convert Julian's hardware grotto to 'educational centre use' [*This is not a joke. Ed*] named the Sunak Mathnasium. [*This is half a joke. Ed*]

63A Union Street – Another application for this site by Coe's Alley has been refused. We were neutral again.

81 advertising banners on lamp-posts, High Street/Barnet Hill – Still no decision.

33 Lyonsdown Road (LL) – The Victorian Society is so concerned about the demolition of this and other Locally-Listed buildings across the country that it has had the matter raised in the House of Lords. There's long way to go – and too late for No.33 – but a new Government may rectify the inconsistencies Permitted Development has created in current planning law.

Tudor Park pavilion (LL) – Focus of a highly successful Barnet Vale Festival on 25 June.

Planning application refused

Lightfield, 164 High Street – Shanly Homes proposed to replace the approved workspace (for which we fought several years ago) with 9 flats. We objected.

Planning decisions awaited

130-132 High Street – No comments.

152 High Street – Extension up to the roofline of neighbouring buildings. We objected.

Bartletts Yard, St Albans Road – Just in, a repeat application for a lapsed permission granted on appeal in 2005.

Fortune House, 49 Moxon Street – The developers who got permission for a 7-storey building next door consulted us on a similar (but only 6-storey) building for 41 flats and 2 workspace units. It's not as bad as its neighbour and won't harm the Green Belt, so we're neutral but will suggest some design improvements.

Western half of Meadow Works site, Pricklers Hill (8 x 3-storey houses) – We supported these new family homes and gardens.

Planning appeal dismissed

1 Church Passage – This proposed roof extension above L'Antica Pizzeria was bizarre. The Inspector agreed with us:

'[The] incongruity of the roof form, its design and detailing would distract attention away from and visually compete with the listed and locally listed buildings [on both sides] and...be harmful to the character and appearance of the CA.'



Further afield

Brookhill Court, Cat Hill – Revival of a 2019 proposal to add two storeys to this prominent building, again under PDR.

Hendon Library & neighbouring buildings – Following strong objections in 2021 by BSoc and many local residents, the existing Central Library – one of a trio of magnificent civic buildings in Hendon – is to be retained for its original purpose. Unfortunately its proposed rear extension and new neighbouring buildings for Middlesex University look unchanged from the previous scheme, so we will probably object to them.