

Planning & Environment – Robin’s update for Committee, 14 September 2023

PLANNING ISSUES

Government

The Society ought to respond to the public consultation on *The future of plans and plan-making*. Gove wants some changes that we should welcome, e.g. plans to be:

- simpler to understand and use, and positively shaped by the views of communities;
- shorter, more visual and interactive map-based;
- quicker to produce; and
- development to be beautiful and well-designed, accompanied by the right infrastructure, approved democratically, protecting and enhancing the environment and creating proper neighbourhoods.

But other changes he proposes are more contentious such as:

- ‘national development management policies’ to replace local ‘general’ policies;
- ‘Community Land Auctions’;
- a new Infrastructure Levy; and
- new ‘Environmental Outcomes Reports’.

As usual, many devils lurk in the details.

- *Could you please volunteer to help me draft BSoc’s comments?*

Barnet Council

The Council is considering **Community Review Panels** for major developments. These would provide feedback to be considered by the **Design Review Panels** being set up to raise architectural standards in Barnet.

Progress on the **Local Plan** remains sluggish. Public consultation is likely this autumn and adoption in spring 2024.

Monken Hadley Common

We reviewed the Trust’s consultation paper and **draft regulations**. It agrees with us that cycling should, in principle, be encouraged, but it will be for the Board to decide whether a right to cycle should be extended beyond the existing bridleway.

Hertsmere

Credit to Hertsmere Council for funding the **84B bus** link between Barnet and Potters Bar.

CPRE – Green Belt

CPRE’s new report *State of the Green Belt 2023* shows that councils currently plan to build over 200,000 homes on GB. It also finds that, on GB land, less affordable housing is being provided than called for by local plans, and only 5% is social housing. To make matters worse the government continues to allow planning appeals based upon its current, but discredited, method for calculating housing need and supply.

CPRE London – M25 for Nature

CPRE has launched a Tree Ring Community Forest project to extend wooded areas in Green Belt and neighbouring areas, and to create continuous green routes from central London to the Green Belt.



Jenny Remfry is acting as our link person with help from Holly Kal-Weiss. They're collecting news of local schools, community groups and other volunteers who are planting trees or orchards or are making requests to Barnet for planting on Council-owned land, so that we can pass information on to CPRE.

L – Holly & Jenny at the Whittings Hill plantation

Barnet United for Warm Homes

Earlier this year BSoc endorsed this Friends of the Earth campaign. They're now promoting a [petition](#) to Members of Parliament to support for people dealing with sky-high energy bills, initiate a new emergency programme to insulate our homes, and power an energy system by cheap, green renewables.

- *Are you happy for me to include this petition link in my next email to members?*

RECENT CASEWORK (SELECTION)

Consultations

The Spires

BYM promised a revised scheme 'by the end of Summer', and to meet the Society again 'shortly' prior to wider consultation, but as I write we've seen no further designs, nor has any date been offered.

After our AGM, Cllr Paul Edwards 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'. Sadly, that bold suggestion has been swatted away by Council Officers.

At our AGM in July, however, members agreed to collaborate with BRA to campaign more proactively for a better design solution and clearer benefits for shoppers, traders and residents.



We've since been exchanging thoughts informally, for example:

- The advantages of moving Waitrose to the south side of the site, thereby not overshadowing the pedestrian precinct unduly (idea © G Massey).
- Allowing taller buildings of up to 6 storeys in the least visually damaging locations.
- Organising a joint meeting to debate the next designs.

L – Demonstrators outside The Spires last weekend

- *Do you agree with Simon Watson's email comments on how BSoc should campaign?*

Whalebones – We’ve known since late last year that, despite planning refusal in 2020 and dismissal of their appeal in 2021, a new application for the Whalebones estate was on its way. A proposal for 120 homes had even been written into Barnet Council’s draft Local Plan.

In August Nick Saul and I were invited to meet the developer’s team to see how they’d responded to public comments on their scheme exhibited in March. The quantity of homes was down to 114 and some design tweaks had been made, but the scheme was still far bigger than we believe is acceptable for the Wood Street Conservation Area.

We were told that an application was likely in early September but we’re still waiting. When it arrives we’ll draft comments and consult all our members before finalising our submission.

Victoria Quarter – Some developers just never give up! In 2017, you may recall, after years of negotiation with local residents, a scheme for 371 homes next to Victoria Recreation Ground was agreed and given planning permission.

In 2020 Fairview applied for permission for 652 units. Following local outcry and planning refusal, they returned in 2021 asking for 554 units. Last year, that proposal was rejected too. Fairview appealed, but lost. We thought they’d revert to the 2017 scheme. We were wrong.

Fairview came back in August, this time wanting 486 units. They claim to be generally following the 2017 scheme, but replacing the terraced housing with taller blocks to provide 76 more social and affordable homes.

We accept that since 2017 planning and building regulations have become more stringent and that the economic climate has worsened, necessitating some adjustments to the original design. However, this proposal is far bigger than that previously approved. Furthermore, since the last application the Council has declared a climate and biodiversity emergency and set the ambition of Barnet becoming Net Zero by 2042.

We submitted a range of comments on the public exhibition. Their latest planning application is expected soon.



Fairview’s latest Victoria Quarter exhibition designs

To their credit, Fairview responded in some detail, making the following points:

- They do not consider that there is sufficient market demand for the private sale of 4-bed dwellings on this site (surprisingly, in our view).
- The majority of new homes will be for the affordable tenures, with only 39 (34%) of the additional 115 homes proposed in our application being for private sale.
- One Housing Group will provide estate and block management services to all the homes on the site, so there will be parity of service regardless of tenure. All homes will have access to the landscaped areas, parking, and other services.
- They expect to achieve over 60% improvement over Building Regulations Part L. A financial contribution is proposed to address remaining emissions to ensure the development satisfies the ‘net zero carbon’ requirement for major development.
- They would achieve a substantial biodiversity net gain.
- They want Victoria Quarter to be their most sustainable development to date.

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 – 10 plots of GB land have been sold, trees felled and building materials stored on some of it, and a public footpath has been fenced off. The Council Enforcement Team is on the case.



L – Land W of Rowley Lane prior to tree felling and clearance



R – Byng Road Playing Fields in use for Battle of Barnet re-enactment

Barnet Elizabethans Rugby Football Club, Byng Road Playing Fields – We were neutral about a replacement clubhouse and pitch improvements: we have reservations, especially about the landscaping which could threaten the future of the Medieval Festival, but it does offer an opportunity to increase community use of this Green Belt site. The Strategic Planning Committee has unanimously approved the application against officer's advice, albeit with numerous conditions including requirements for full landscaping details.

Land off Langley Row, Hadley Highstone – Construction of new stables was started without permission. A retrospective application has now been made. Since they replace existing derelict structures we haven't objected, but we've made some comments.

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.

Lower Kitts End Farm – Application to convert most of the agricultural buildings – which are unsuited for modern equipment – to industrial and warehouse. We didn't comment.

Conservation Areas & Listed Buildings

98-100 High Street (fka Foxtons) – Workspace plus 12 flats above. We were neutral. Decision still awaited.

118 High Street (the Grade II-listed former TSB & Barnet Press) – Costa Coffee on the ground floor, flats above. We were neutral: at least the application is better than Merkur Slots' gaming proposal. Decision awaited.

4 Hadley Parade, High Street – Proposal to convert Julian's hardware grotto into a 'mathnasium'. We didn't object. Decision awaited.

Moxon Mews, Moxon & Tapster Streets – Barnet Homes propose 21 new homes and commercial premises no more than two storeys high. Tightly planned but with every dwelling having individuality and its own garden, Peter Barber Architects' design is unobtrusive, has an attractive human scale, retains the existing building on Moxon Street and we believe will enhance the Wood Street Conservation Area.



Peter Barber Architects: sketch view and plan of Moxon Mews

Tudor Park pavilion (LL) – Meetings of the Friends are re-starting on 19 September.

- *John Hay/Simon Kaufman – any further news?*

33 Lyonsdown Road (LL) – As I write, demolition of this villa on the Local List has begun.



33 Lyonsdown Road – RIP the main entrance conservatory

Planning decisions awaited

130-132 High Street – No comments.

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

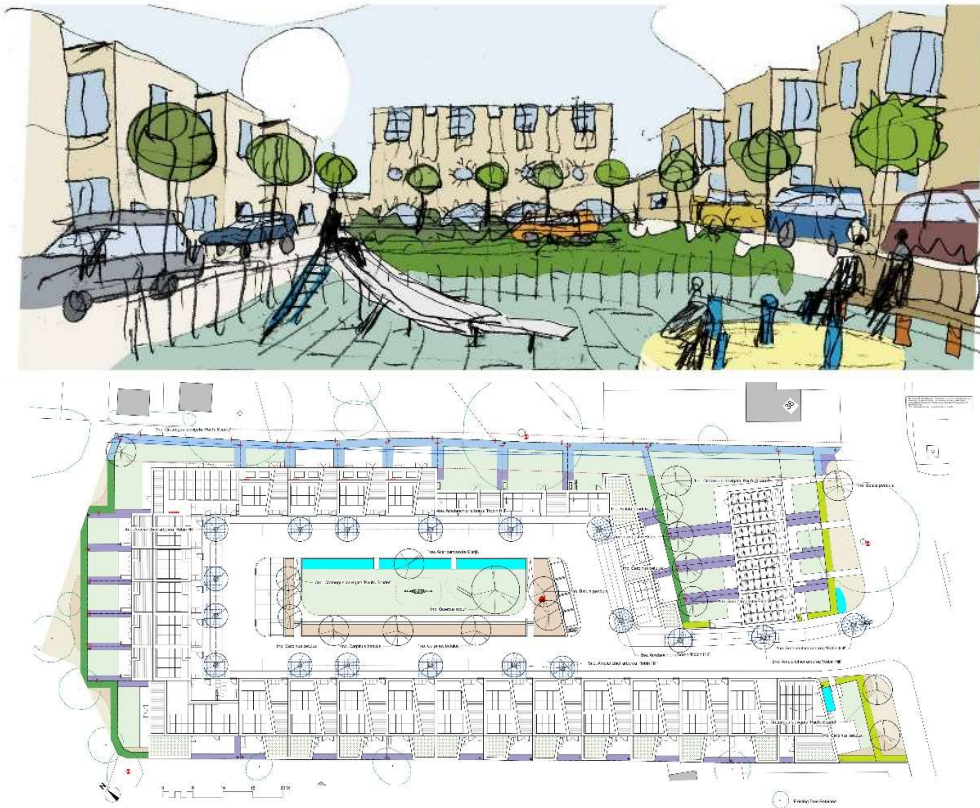
Bartletts Yard, St Albans Road – A new house on a tiny backland plot. Not bad externally so we were neutral, but warned about the impact of its big basement and construction on existing neighbours. Only after complaints by Nick Saul and others did the planners notify all the neighbours.

Fortune House, Moxon Street – The developers building a 7-storey building next door propose a similar, but only 6-storey, building for 41 flats and 2 workspace units. Not as bad as its neighbour and it won't harm the Green Belt, so we're neutral but have suggested design improvements.

Brookfields Garage, Victoria Lane – Three unashamedly modern but inconspicuous houses and workspace on a backland site. We had no comments

Western half of Meadow Works site, Pricklers Hill – We supported these 8 new family homes and gardens.

Land adjacent to Whitings Hill Primary School, Whitings Road – Barnet Homes propose 35 houses of 1, 2 & 3 storeys with gardens clustered around a shared green. It offers an exceptionally high proportion (57%) of affordable units, and we strongly support it.



Peter Barber Architects: sketch view and plan of Whitings Road

Further afield

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

Hendon Central Library, The Burroughs – Following strong objections in 2021 by us and many residents, the existing Central Library – one of a trio of magnificent civic buildings – is to be retained for its original purpose. Unfortunately its proposed rear extension and new neighbouring buildings for Middlesex University are little changed from the previous scheme, so we've objected to them.

Edgware town centre – In Edgware last month, residents took to the streets to protest against the ‘monstrous’ development being planned. With over 3,000 homes proposed in towers up to 29 storeys high, they have rather more to complain about than we do.

Alexander House, Finchley – A minor classic of 1950s ‘Festival’ style commissioned by Kurt Weinberg, a Jewish former ‘kindertransport’ refugee, and containing a remarkable mural by the pioneering Indian artist, Avinash Chandra. We were alerted after the deadline for comments, but if Barnet is serious about its bid to become London Borough of Culture in 2027, this is exactly the sort of local landmark that should be rescued and celebrated.



Office block’s Jewish link

Society plans to save site from demolition by applying for local heritage status

By Emma Kelly

PROPERTY OWNERS in Finchley are looking for ways to save a landmark office block from demolition. The Alexander House, built in 1955, is a prime example of post-war modernist architecture. It was designed by architect Sir John Madge and is a Grade II listed building. The building is a mix of brick and concrete, with a prominent yellow facade and a blue balcony. It is a landmark building in the area and is a key part of the local heritage.



The mural by Avinash Chandra

The mural by Avinash Chandra is a masterpiece of modernist art. It features a complex composition of abstract shapes, including circles, triangles, and rectangles, in a vibrant palette of red, yellow, blue, and green. The figures are stylized and appear to be in motion, creating a sense of dynamic energy. The mural is a key feature of the Alexander House and is a testament to the artist's skill and vision.

The Alexander House is a landmark building in Finchley, London. It was built in 1955 and is a prime example of post-war modernist architecture. The building is a mix of brick and concrete, with a prominent yellow facade and a blue balcony. It is a landmark building in the area and is a key part of the local heritage. The building is a mix of brick and concrete, with a prominent yellow facade and a blue balcony. It is a landmark building in the area and is a key part of the local heritage.