

Planning & Environment – Robin’s update for Committee, 11 January 2024

PLANNING ISSUES

Government

Not since the 1950s have planning, architecture and the environment been such salient issues as they will be in the **general election** that must be called this year. I propose that each of the next four Society **Newsletters** focuses on one of four key themes of our work, identifying the main issues and comparing – without obviously taking sides – the approaches of the main parties:

1. Housing
 2. The environment
 3. Town centres
 4. Transport
- Do you agree?
 - If so, given that the election may be called for May, what order do you prefer?

Michael Gove’s department has published revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (**NPPF**). Probably the most important one from our perspective is that housing need figures are no longer a mandatory target but “an advisory starting point”, which will relieve pressure on the Green Belt.

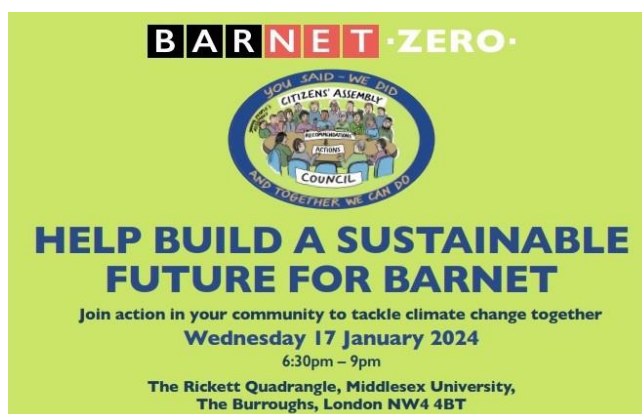
Barnet Council

The final draft of the **new Local Plan** is likely to be published for consultation in May.

The Council has simplified access to **online planning data** on its website. It is also leading work by London boroughs on **renewable power**.

Barnet is inviting local groups to **help build a sustainable future for Barnet** at an evening event on 17 January at Middlesex University, Hendon. It’s likely to feature issues such as renewable energy/retrofit of housing and buildings, food, waste, air quality, active travel and healthy nature. Dave McCormick and possibly Katy Staton from our P&E Committee are going.

- Would anyone else like to go?



The Council is also inviting bids for five grants worth £10,000 each to fund business-building activities such as events, training sessions, internships, mentoring programmes and discount vouchers linked to Barnet’s main town centres. These include Chipping Barnet, East Barnet and New Barnet.

Green initiatives

Barnet Friends of the Earth have been campaigning for *United for Warm Homes*. Their recent petition called for urgent action to insulate homes and for cheaper, greener power. It was sent to all Barnet's existing and prospective MPs, but none turned up for its Day of Action last month.

CPRE London has published a useful *Manifesto for the next government* and *Think again* (about London's Green Belt).

Penny Baxter and volunteers from Barnet's U3A have obtained Environment Agency support for **planting additional trees along the Dollis Valley Greenwalk**. Our VP Jenny Remfry attended a meeting of the Dollis Valley Partnership Board to find out if residents of Brook Valley Gardens would like to participate. There was some interest, and Jenny has been invited to their AGM in February.

RECENT CASEWORK (SELECTION)

Consultations

The Spires – We were assured before Christmas that the bankruptcy of BYM will not affect plans to redevelop the site for commercial and residential use, but have heard nothing since.

Green Belt cases

Intec House, 49 Moxon Street – The developer claims that the scheme approved last year, which proposed 35% affordable housing, is no longer viable, and a new application has been made for 96 flats and more workspace. The 7-storey high external envelope remains almost the same as previously. We'll object again, but with little chance of success.

Arkley Manor Farm, Rowley Lane – Two large scaffolding storage racks (approx. 500 square metres in area and up to 5 metres high) have been built in a scruffy yard – what Labour might deem 'grey belt' and therefore suitable for housing. A retrospective application for permission has been made; we've objected strongly.

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

Woodcock Hill Village Green & Horses Field, near Stirling Corner, Borehamwood – Taylor Wimpey got 7 acres of the Village Green deregistered and have applied to build 100 houses on it. It's part of a scheme to build up to 220 homes on WHVG and neighbouring Green Belt land. Locals are raising funds to challenge the legality of the deregistration. We submitted an objection to the wider scheme, and a decision is expected next week.



Stirling Corner - >

Hertsmere's Local Plan – Following some 18,000 objections the Council's 2022 draft Plan withdrawn, and last May the Conservative administration was replaced by a Labour-Liberal administration much more favourably disposed towards the Green Belt. A new draft Plan is expected to be published for public consultation in April. We await it with great interest.

Land off Langley Row, Hadley Highstone – Rebuilding of former stables in Green Belt. We didn't object.

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

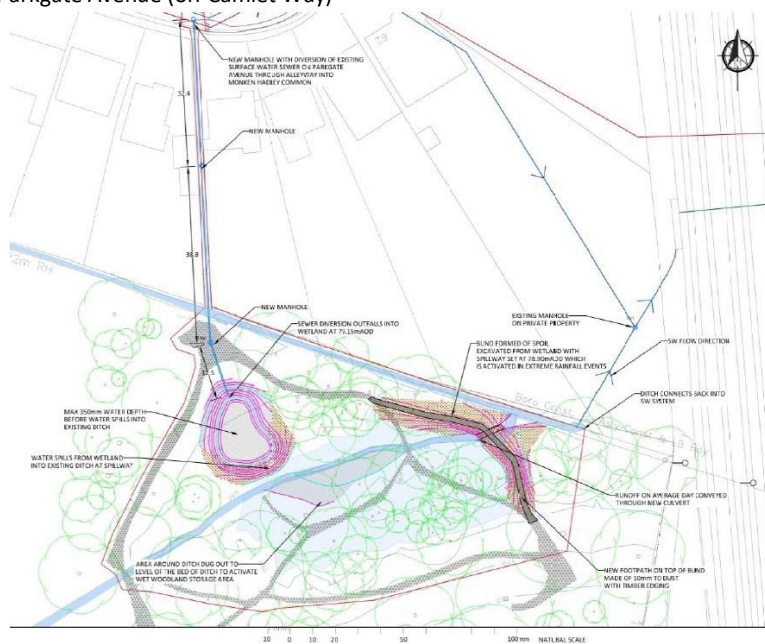
Greengate Stables, Mays Lane – We support plans for a new equine yard. Decision awaited.

Wetland scheme, Hadley Wood – We generally supports the principle of nature-based drainage. However the information provided with this application does not provide us with sufficient comfort regarding key environmental and organisational factors, in particular:

1. The true extend of the site, including the site access that will have an impact on a greater area of woodland.
2. Water quality and capturing pollutants before they enter Hadley Wood and Green Brook.
3. Timing.

As the proposal currently stands, we cannot support it.

Parkgate Avenue (off Camlet Way)



< - New Barnet Station MAIN LINE Hadley Wood Station - >

Lower Kitts End Farm – Decision awaited on application to convert most of the agricultural buildings to industrial and warehouse use. We didn't comment.

Mays Lane, land between Chesterfield Farm and the former – An application for two travellers' pitches has been refused. We were among 1,304 objectors.

Elm Farm, 2 Galley Lane – Conversion of four barns to residential use has been approved. We didn't object.

Conservation Areas & Listed Buildings

Whalebones – Before submitting our comments on the latest planning application we consulted all 508 of our membership addresses, by email and post. We received 89 responses (17.5%). 78 (87.6%) supported our proposed objection and only 6 (6.7%) opposed it – a majority of 13 to 1: a clear mandate, so we objected. On the planning portal the weight of opposition was even more decisive: 353 objectors and only 19 supporters – a ratio of nearly 19 to 1. Decision expected soon.

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) – An application for conversion of the flats above Costas. We were neutral.

2 Clyde Villas, Hadley Green Road – This application for 12 adults recovering from mental illness involves less damage to the Locally-Listed house and garden than previous schemes. We were neutral but submitted some comments.

Moxon Mews, Moxon & Tapster Streets – We supported this proposal for 21 new homes and commercial premises, and it has been approved.

Everyman Cinema, Great North Road – We strongly objected to an electric vehicle charger in front of the main entrance of this listed building. The application has been withdrawn.

Approved

Land adjacent to Whitings Hill Primary School, Whitings Road – We supported this proposal for 35 houses with gardens clustered around a shared green.

Decisions awaited

Victoria Quarter – We generally supported the objections of Save New Barnet relating to overheating, railway noise and inadequate daylight to a significant proportion of units, and particularly to the housing mix and the poor environmental performance of many of the units. Decision expected soon.

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

130-132 High Street – 5 flats behind and above 2-storey building. No comments.

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

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

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. It's not as bad as its neighbour and won't harm the Green Belt, so we're neutral.

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

Appeals

Thurleston, 45 Barnet Road – The owner has appealed against refusal of alterations to the main house and the construction of a large outbuilding.

111 Hadley Road – The owner has appealed against refusal of its conversion into four flats.

Further afield

Abbey Arts Centre, 87 Park Road, East Barnet – We objected to the proposed replacement and new buildings. The application has been refused.

Former B&Q site, Cricklewood – Plans for 1,049 homes have been approved after having been called in by Michael Gove. Comprising blocks up to 18 storeys high, it continues recent Manhattanising of the west side of the borough.



Brent Cross West Station, Midland main line – Better news for Cricklewood and Hendon, this is the first rail station to open in London for over 10 years. Vital to the success of Barnet Council's 6,700-home Brent Cross Town, currently under construction, it is only 12 minutes from Kings Cross St Pancras.