

The Barnet Society

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Time running out to save No 33

Robin Bishop, Guy Braithwaite, Simon Kaufman and Susan Skedd write:

Following the dismissal of an appeal to demolish 33 Lyonsdown Road and replace it with 20 flats, we thought its future would be safe – but we were wrong. It’s scheduled for demolition on 1 October 2022. Since 2017, we’ve campaigned to save this beautiful Victorian villa, and in 2020 succeeded in getting it added to Barnet’s Local Heritage List.

Yet due to a bizarre loophole in planning law, Abbeytown, property development arm of Martyn Gerrard estate agents, was able to apply to demolish the building without any proposal to replace it.

As reported at our AGM, we sought urgent advice from a solicitor specialising in historic buildings to help formulate a detailed objection. Sadly, the planners took a different view of the case and on 22 June approved the applications.

How could this demolition be allowed?

At present, No.33 is on Barnet’s Local List, which is the lowest tier of designation for historic buildings. We’ve twice applied to Historic England for it to be added to the National List, without success.

Unless locally listed buildings are in conservation areas, unfortunately, they’re not immune to Permitted Development Rights, which have been greatly expanded by the government in recent years and do not require full planning applications. The shocking decision to allow the demolition of 33 Lyonsdown Road was made, Barnet Council has admitted, ‘by default’. It was not taken on the merits of the case, nor was it referred to the Planning Committee; nor were Councillors informed.

Local residents and national conservation bodies including The Victorian Society and SAVE Britain’s Heritage are horrified that the Council is allowing demolition of one of the finest buildings in New Barnet. The case has featured twice in *Private Eye*.

The situation is also an embarrassment to Barnet’s new Labour Council. For it to lose a building on the Local List, with the needless release of embodied carbon, soon after it declared a climate emergency is not the start it would have wanted.

Events since planning permission

We took legal advice on the available options but concluded that we did not have sufficient funds for judicial review.

On 11 August, several of us met two senior planners and all three Barnet Vale ward Councillors to express our concerns



Theresa Villiers MP attended a demonstration outside No 33 in August. She has also written asking the developers for a meeting

about the way demolition had been approved. We explained why we considered the decision to be unsound. The councillors were also upset that they hadn’t been notified.

We reminded the planners that we had urged them to give protection for 33 Lyonsdown Road by means of an Article 4 Direction as long ago as February 2021, when the last planning application was refused. This would have closed off the Permitted Development route and is used routinely in conservation areas. Councils around the country have imposed, or were in the process of imposing, Article 4 Directions to prevent demolition. The planners and Councillors agreed to consider similar action in Barnet.

We’ve written an open letter to Abbeytown to ask them to consider the scope for a conversion scheme. Theresa Villiers MP has also stepped in. In August she attended a protest outside No.33 and wrote asking for a meeting with the developers. As we go to press, there has been no response to her or our approaches. **More reports on Page 2**



Queen Elizabeth II
1926-2022

QE Girls’ memories from the day the Queen visited
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Alternative scheme

The Society has argued all along that this striking landmark building with its elegant interiors and rich history should not be demolished but repaired and converted to flats. We, local residents and the property guardians who lived there until last year are convinced that such a well-built house could be repaired. There's scope for a sympathetic new-build element in the garden among the splendid trees. All agree that another block of flats is not what we want to see.

Simon Kaufman, who is an architect as well as Committee Member of the Society, generously offered his services – at short notice and pro bono – to sketch a scheme along these lines. His bird's-eye view is illustrated below.

In a 16-page report, Simon analyses the existing building and its potential for conversion, showing that it could accommodate 6-8 flats while retaining most of its impressive interiors.

He also demonstrates that a further 7-9 flats could be built in a new building in the garden – a potential total of 17 flats. That's almost the same quantity that Abbeytown proposed in their last (unsuccessful) planning application, but with the bonus that the proportion of high-end 'period' refurbished flats would fetch a premium.

Simon's indicative appraisal shows that, when taking into account demolition costs and additional sales value of homes in the historic building, the overall financial margin for his scheme is very similar to – if not better than – the 2020 proposal.

Moreover, by setting the new-build to the side of, and behind, the existing building and at a lower height, the quality and character of the original villa would be unimpaired. The new building would be sympathetic to its venerable neighbour in both materials and details.

Although building in the garden would entail the loss of a few trees, the damage to the neighbourhood would be substantially less than Abbeytown propose and far more likely to receive community support.

Copies of Simon's report have been sent to Theresa Villiers, local Councillors and Abbeytown.



The importance of this case

Conserving our architectural and natural heritage is a core Society priority. We're proud of having nominated many architecturally and historically significant buildings for the Local List. When demolition of No.33 was approved, we realised the same could happen to many others on the List.

At the end of our last financial year, the Society had reserves of over £7,300. If ever there was a case to spend some of them, No.33 was surely one. In view of its urgency, the Society's Executive Committee therefore authorised payment of solicitor's fees to oppose the planning applications. Local residents speedily and generously donated £496 to the Society. The net cost after donations was £814. An additional payment of £3,000 was subsequently approved for advice on judicial review. Though a large amount for a voluntary organisation like ours, it's modest by legal standards and leaves sufficient reserves to fund other work.

When the outcome of our campaign is known, the Committee will review the lessons learned for our planning work, especially on major cases like this which set a precedent. We will also look at how best we use the Society's financial resources both for individual major cases and for strategic work.

What next?

The Society waits with interest to see Abbeytown's or Martyn Gerrard's reaction to our alternative scheme. We stand ready to help take this to the next stage. Planning officers told us they would welcome a pre-application discussion of an alternative scheme.

We are also continuing to press the Council to impose an Article 4 Direction protecting buildings outside conservation areas, but on the Local List, from demolition.



Find out more about Simon and his work at
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PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT

We hope Truss will pick up on the agenda that Gove left behind when he was sacked

Robin Bishop writes:

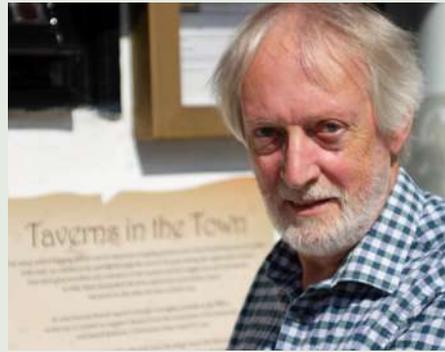
Since Michael Gove was sacked, the steam has gone out of the government's planning reforms. Its Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill is in the parliamentary pipeline and we and our MP, Theresa Villiers, are concerned about aspects of it. But new Prime Minister Liz Truss may have more urgent priorities this autumn.

I'll be participating in the public examination of Barnet's draft Local Plan from 20 September until it ends in November. We're concerned about certain proposals, for example, that it still earmarks High Barnet Station for 292 homes and Whalebones for 149 homes, and that its policies on green space are based partly on the flawed 'value' and 'quality' assessments in Barnet's Parks & Open Spaces Strategy. To challenge these, we may need to pay for legal advice.

Appeals

As well as Fairview's proposal for Victoria Quarter (see P6) an appeal to add two storeys to 33 Park Road has been dismissed. But the appeal to enlarge and build next to Barnet House in Whetstone has been upheld.

New appeals are in for an electric battery on Green Belt land in Mill Hill, for extra floors at 1-9 Richard Court in Alston Road, and for 47 High Street (the Crown & Anchor). We regret that the owner hasn't taken our advice about restoring the ground floor windows.



"There's a spate of inappropriate shopfronts in the High Street"

We still await remedial work at 1 Sunset View and 70 High Street (fka After Office Hours).

Shopfronts

There's a spate of inappropriate shopfronts in the High Street, despite Council design guidance. Garish examples have been proposed at 60 High Street (Balady, see below) – thankfully refused – and 150 High Street (Gaziantep Pastanesi). Particularly objectionable is an application to black out the fascia of 118 High Street (fka TSB bank & Barnet Press) – the best traditional shopfront in the street and rightly listed Grade II. We objected to them all.



Balady shopfront thankfully refused

A welcome exception is the gentle adaptation of the locally listed 140 High Street (fka HSBC bank) by Gail's the bakers, which we supported and has been approved.

Approved

Arkley Riding Stables, Hedgerow Lane – We don't mind this second, more modest, application for a Green Belt site.

Refused

1 Church Passage – Two flats with a zig-zag

roof above L'Antica Pizzeria. We don't always oppose roof extensions, but this one was weird, so we did.

Decision awaited

98-100 High Street – The Society is neutral about the scheme by Simon Kaufman Architects: we welcome restoration of the Victorian shopfront and conversion of the building to a mix of employment and flats (and the new pop-up workspace on the ground floor), but some Committee Members have reservations about the addition of two storeys.

Internet café on site of former public WCs, junction of Great North & Station Roads – We didn't object to re-using this unloved site, but questioned some design decisions and asked for a guarantee that it would not be in effect a big billboard opposite the Odeon.

Tudor Park – We objected to the Council's proposal to spend £150,000 on replacing the existing playground because it would be better spent on upgrading other parts of the park. We didn't object to rebuilding the Footgolf pavilion following subsidence, but hope it won't compete with the cricket pavilion, which local campaigners are pressing to be refurbished for community use. Could there please be some joined-up thinking about investment in this popular park?

Withdrawn

40 Barnet Lane (former cricket pavilion) – We had supported the application to rehouse the Rainbow Centre here.

On the radar

49 Moxon Street – We have serious reservations about the 7-storey height of this proposed workspace and 92 flats at the edge of the Green Belt. Though partly disguised by trees and the steep gradient, it would set a very dangerous precedent for other developments in Chipping Barnet.

Byng Road playing fields – A replacement rugby clubhouse and other improvements are proposed.

And finally...

About a third of the 300+ hawthorns we've planted on Barnet Hillside died during the summer drought, but the rest have survived and some are even flourishing.

London faces the loss of '60 Hampstead Heaths' of Green Belt

Robin Bishop writes:

Local councils in London and the Home Counties are currently planning to allow building on more than 48,000 acres of the Green Belt, according to a major new report by the London Green Belt Council (LGBC). That's the equivalent of 60 Hampstead Heaths.

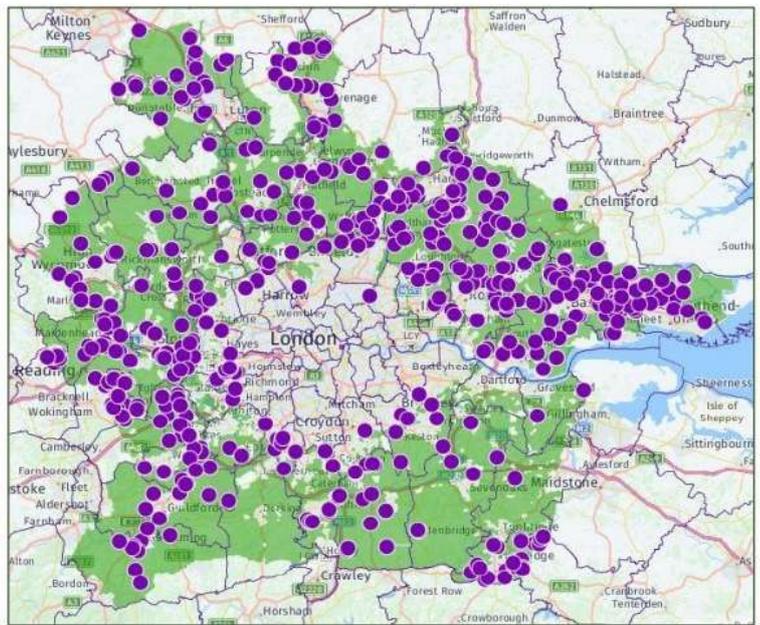
It's a shocking statistic, especially when the government claims to be committed to protecting the Green Belt. Our own MP, Theresa Villiers, has called the situation 'very worrying'.

The LGBC report 'Safe Under Us? The continued shrinking of London's Local Countryside', shows that altogether the amount of Green Belt land offered up for development has increased by a massive 127% since 2016, when the LGBC first started tracking threats to London's local countryside. Since the 2020 map [see right] – where each purple blob represents a threat – the number of threats has substantially increased.

Land around London began to be safeguarded from the interwar sprawl of London's suburbs in the 1930s, and in his 1944 Greater London Plan, Patrick Abercrombie proposed a ring of greenery around the capital. In 1955 the Green Belt was enshrined in planning law, leaving Chipping Barnet surrounded on three sides by greenery.

Since then, the Green Belt has been a vital 'green lung' for Londoners seeking respite from their urban habitat. More recently,

The purple dots on the map show the threats to the Green Belt from development since 2020



the vital role that open countryside plays in biodiversity, flood prevention and climate change mitigation has become obvious. 'Safe Under Us?' details the extent of Green Belt loss under the Local Plans currently being drafted by every Council.

It points out how the region's housing needs could easily be met by building on brownfield (previously developed) urban sites instead.

The report highlights the fact that many councils are still using housing figures based on out-of-date (2014) population and household projections from the Office for National Statistics, when more recent and accurate Census figures show a marked slowing-down of population increase. Far fewer houses are actually needed than are currently being planned for.

Furthermore, adds LGBC Chairman Richard Knox-Johnston, "It is a fallacy that building in the Green Belt will provide affordable homes. New development in the Green Belt is mainly 4 or 5-bedroom homes built at very low densities since those are the most profitable for developers to build, so not providing affordable homes for young people."

The counties of Hertfordshire, Essex and Surrey account for

two-thirds of all the current development threats. Barnet is one of the least offending planning authorities, planning to build 576 homes on a mere 133 acres of the Green Belt. Fortunately, most of these are previously-developed land in Mill Hill (the former National Institute of Medical Research and Jehovah's Witness sites).

Despite Barnet's policies on protecting the Green Belt and environment, however, over the last five years around 40 planning applications have been made to build on Green Belt in or near Chipping Barnet. Most are to replace existing buildings with modest residential developments, but some cause us considerable concern. They include substantial gas and electricity plants off Partingdale Lane. The former was withdrawn and the latter refused permission – but Harbour Energy has just appealed against the latter decision, so that threat remains.

And Barnet's draft Local Plan includes a proposal for a large leisure hub in the middle of Barnet Playing Fields – which are designated Green Belt – despite similar facilities being available for community use in two nearby schools.

www.londongreenbeltcouncil.org.uk/news

"It's a fallacy that building in the Green Belt will provide affordable homes"



There's still a lot of
**green and
pleasant land**

Robin Bishop writes:

As my article [opposite page] highlights, these are critical times for London's Green Belt. Thanks in good measure to our Society's efforts over decades, Barnet still possesses many open places where the illusion of countryside is remarkably unspoiled.

You can now view video clips of eight of these lovely Green Belt locations, all in Totteridge or Mill Hill, on YouTube at <https://londongreenbeltcouncil.org.uk/why-londons-green-belt-is-so-important/> without needing to leave your house – though do make the effort, if you can, to walk the real places!

In 1945 our Society was founded to protect the fields around Chipping Barnet from being built over for 40,000 houses. We're longstanding members of the London Green Belt Council which helps us fight inappropriate developments. The LGBC has around 100 member organisations, but needs more members and a higher profile to get its messages across to the public and policy-makers. This is especially

“In 1945, the Society was founded to protect the fields around Chipping Barnet from being built over by 40,000 houses”

urgent today, when councils across the country are drafting plans to build on the Green Belt, and when the government's Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill is working its way through Parliament. There are frustrating inconsistencies between government and council policies and decisions made by the Planning Inspectorate. The Bill is our best hope for bringing coherence to the planning system and reinforcing protection of the Green Belt – but it contains some worrying flaws.

In the videos, LGBC Chair Richard Knox-Johnston explains why retaining the Metropolitan Green Belt is so vital now for the health of both the environment and each of us. He speaks with enthusiasm and authority reminiscent of David Attenborough.

LGBC chair Richard Knox-Johnston says his passion for the Green Belt was ignited more than 50 years ago when he was a councillor

In Richard's introductory clip, he says that his passion for the subject was ignited half a century ago when, as a young Bromley councillor, he represented a ward that was largely Green Belt. In the subsequent clips, he identifies key reasons for its protection:

- Safeguarding our mental health
- Stopping urban sprawl
- Securing food supply
- Providing opportunities for leisure, recreation and sports
- Enhancing biodiversity

He concludes by demolishing the fallacy that new housing in the Green Belt is affordable.

The filming itself went like a midsummer dream. On a perfect day (before the worst of the heatwave) I drove our small crew around the locations. Richard spoke unscripted and needed few retakes.

The videos were shot, recorded and edited most professionally by Jayd Kent of Simply Graphics. And we found time for a nice lunch at Finchley Nurseries – in Barnet's Green Belt, naturally!

Victoria Quarter planning victory a marker for other developments

Robin Bishop writes:

A Planning Inspector has dismissed Citystyle Fairview's appeal against Barnet Council's refusal of 539 flats on the former gasworks site, Victoria Quarter. It's a considerable achievement for New Barnet Community Association and its supporters, with important implications for other big developments in our neighbourhood.

John Dix of NBCA commented: "We are pleased with the Planning Inspector's sensible and considered decision and hope that the developers will now actively engage with the community to develop a scheme which in more in keeping with the area and exemplifies good design. It should not be forgotten that if the developer had progressed the scheme approved in 2017, 371 homes would now be providing good quality accommodation for local families."

In 2020 Fairview applied for permission for 652 units in blocks up to 10 storeys high. Following local outcry and planning refusal, they returned with a reduced scheme for 539 units in 13 blocks. There were 800 objections from members of the public.

In March, the Council rejected that proposal by 9 votes to 1 (with 1 abstention), chiefly on the grounds that it would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area including the adjoining Victoria Recreation Ground.

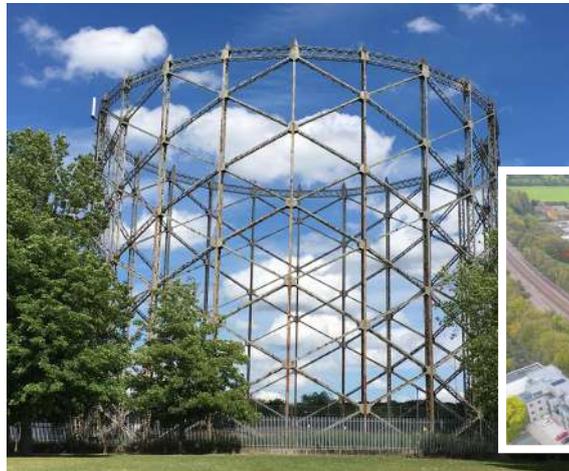
The Barnet Society objected to both applications. Although we've long supported housing on the site, we argued (among other points) that the mix should include many more family homes, preferably with gardens.

The two weeks of the Public Inquiry were intense and demanding for NBCA, who had opted to be a 'Rule 6 party'. That required John Dix, Fiona Henderson and Karen Miller not only to do a huge amount of preparation, but on almost every day of the Inquiry they had to make detailed statements about social and technical aspects of the proposals, grill Fairview's expert consultants and endure hours of torrid cross-examination by Fairview's QC.

On Day 3, the Inspector invited comments from other interested parties. Powerful statements were made by Councillors Phillip Cohen, Edith David and Simon Radford plus Colin Bull of Cockfosters Local Area Residents Association (CLARA) – which has successfully resisted high-rise development of their tube station car park. And on Day 6, Theresa Villiers MP also spoke passionately against the proposal.

The Barnet Society had already submitted a detailed representation, but I took the opportunity to emphasize a couple of key points.

First, back in 2010 we'd been impressed by the Council's exemplary New Barnet Town Centre Framework, which was based



The landmark gasometer in New Barnet, which, separately, owner National Grid wants to develop. (Below) an aerial view of the site



on local consultation and set out a clear direction for development of the former gasworks site. Out of that had grown the mixed housing proposal that was granted planning approval in 2017, in which NBCA had been proactive.

I also made the point that, as a former architect and RIBA Client Design Adviser, I acknowledged that what was acceptable in 2017 might need updating in the light of technical and other developments. However, the latest scheme was a generic international modernist solution that had nothing in common with New Barnet's character. It was a design approach that had been discredited when I was an architectural student over half a century ago, and New Barnet deserved better.

The Inspector's verdict was clear: "Overall, I consider that the sheer scale of the proposed development would cause a dislocation within the area, inserting an alien typology of larger mass and scale and disrupting any sense of continuity between the areas to the west and east of the site.

"To my mind the existence of the taller buildings in the town centre cannot be seen as a compelling precedent for such an intrusion. These latter buildings are only on one side of the road and there is a considerably greater distance between them and the four storey buildings opposite."

He also considered aspects of living conditions such as sunlight, daylight, noise, overheating, playspace, parking and refuse, and concluded, "Whilst none of the above issues are necessarily fatal to the scheme in isolation, taken together they do not indicate to me that the scheme can be considered to be of good design."

East Barnet ward Councillor Simon Radford said: "I am delighted that the Fairview appeal has been rejected. This is vindication for our campaign against tower block blight and overdevelopment. The Save New Barnet campaign have been steadfast in pointing out the various flaws of the scheme, and I was delighted to join them, along with my colleagues Cllr Cohen and Cllr David, in sharing our thoughts with the Planning Inspector about the potential for flats to overheat, the poor design of the development more generally, and concerns about how affordable these flats would really be. Today is a good day for East Barnet!"

QE Girls' memories of day the Queen came

Former pupils' fond memories of curtsying to the "young Queen Elizabeth" on her 1957 visit to QE Girls' School Barnet, writes Nick Jones.

There could hardly have been a more poignant moment at Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School, Barnet. Within less than half an hour of the official announcement of the Queen's death, headteacher Violet Walker had to preside at the annual prize giving at a school which had an especially close association with her reign.

QE Girls – or Queen Elizabeth's Girls' Grammar School as it was known in 1957 – was the first state school to be visited by Queen Elizabeth II after she ascended to the throne.

She spent three hours touring the school and two former pupils, who were guests at the annual prize giving, recalled how they had spent weeks learning how to curtsy, ready to welcome the monarch as she called in at each classroom.

Mrs Walker (centre) – seen above under an official portrait commemorating the visit – is with Gill Williams who was 11 at the time, and Vivienne Bell, who was 17, and one of the school's subprefects who lined up in a guard of honour.

The portrait of the Queen is a replacement, and her signature is dated 1991, which was the year when QE Girls' school hall was destroyed in a fire along with the original portrait and other memorabilia.

Three photographs of the 1957 visit did survive. One shows the head girl and games captains presenting the Queen with a gift for Prince Charles and two dolls for Princess Anne.

Another photograph – which is reproduced on the school's website – is of the Queen in the school's physics laboratory.

An account of the visit in November 1957 said, "this was the young Queen's first visit to a state school and was a very significant event for all pupils and staff at the time."

The presentation of gifts for the young prince and princess was "followed by a few words from the Queen – her first unscripted speech!"

Vivienne Bell said the day of the Queen's visit was her birthday and it was an unforgettable moment being in the guard of honour welcoming the queen. "I was a subprefect and we were on one side, and the prefects were on the other side."

Gill Williams was in the first year and remembered how all the girls had spent weeks practising how to curtsy.

"First, we had to curtsy in the school hall and then curtsy again when she came to our classroom. The Queen looked lovely, in a cherry red coat, with a tight waist. Altogether she spent three hours at the school. It was a wonderful occasion."

The badge on the girls' school blazers said "QEGGS" reflecting its then status as a grammar school. QE Girls, which was established in 1888, became a comprehensive school in 1977.

In welcoming pupils, parents, and guests at the school's



(Top) Gill Williams, (left) and Vivienne Bell (right), both of whom were present for the Queen's visit in 1957. Head teacher Violet Walker with a picture of the day, and (left) the Queen visiting the school's physics lab

"celebration of excellence" prize giving, Mrs Walker said her first duty was to acknowledge the news of the Queen's death and reflect on the importance of QE Girls' special relationship through the foundation connecting them with Queen Elizabeth's Boys' School and its historic link to Queen Elizabeth I.

Her great pleasure was in being able to welcome Vivienne and Gill, the two guests who were pupils at the time of the visit, and she emphasised how the thoughts of everyone present at the prize giving that evening were the King and the Royal Family.

Mrs Walker introduced as guest speaker an aspirational former pupil, Hilda Wiredu, a trainee solicitor in the City of London, who graduated with distinction from law school, and who presented the prizes.

Among the recipients was Grace Hanley who won the Freda Balaam bequest for head girl in 2022, and who was commended for her "enthusiastic and outstanding contribution".

Ms Wiredu said she wanted to share her experiences with the pupils of today in the hope it would inspire them.

She had learned five points which she had incorporated into her own life: find your niche in life and work at it; remember it is OK to fail; recognise when you have to change your attitude and adapt; persevere and invest in yourself; and finally, have fun in your life.

Let battle commence again..

St Albans' role in the Wars of the Roses is likely to attract even greater interest and support than usual at next year's Barnet Medieval Festival which is to be held over the weekend of June 10-11, writes Nick Jones.

The 2023 festival is likely to coincide with an exhibition at St Albans Museum and Gallery to commemorate the two Battles of St Albans of 1455 and 1461.

A re-enactment of the second Battle of St Albans has been a regular feature of the festival which was established in 2018 to commemorate the 1471 Battle of Barnet.

Festival organisers hope that renewed interest in St Albans' place in the 30-year struggle for control of the English throne will help in the promotion of next year's festival.

Another highlight will be a return appearance of the riders and horses who delighted festival crowds in June with displays by mounted knights in armour and men at arms.

Dr Susan Skedd, the festival's director, hopes that it might be possible to expand the equestrian displays next year with more riders and horses demonstrating training exercises for jousting, the throwing of javelins and mounted combat with swords and lances.

Barnet's annual festival has been growing in popularity with medieval re-enactors.

Its setting – the Byng Road playing fields – is considered an ideal location, backing on to the Green Belt, with trees all around creating the sort of countryside that would have confronted the Lancastrian and Yorkist armies.

Another factor that adds to the festival's appeal is that it celebrates local battles held at both St Albans and Barnet and the two distinct confrontations allow the re-enactors to present a wide range of imaginative displays.

Dr Skedd is anxious to work with the St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society and the Battlefields Trust in promoting the exhibition at St Albans, which is due to be held between March and July next year.

Peter Burley, a leading member of the society, visited this year's medieval festival and acknowledged that its popularity – and the continuing search for the precise site of the Battle of Barnet – has created greater interest in what happened at St Albans.

The opening battle of the Wars of Roses took place in the centre of St Albans in May 1455 when the Yorkists defeated King Henry VI's Lancastrian forces.

A second confrontation between the Lancastrians and Yorkists at St Albans took place in February 1461, a decade before the Battle of Barnet.

A re-enactment of the second battle was held at St Albans in 2014 and Mr Burley hopes next year's exhibition at St Albans Museum will help to widen understanding of the 30-dynastic struggle.

“The two battles of St Albans started off in the town and although the second battle did move to the outskirts at Sandridge, most of the action was within the urban area, unlike the Battle of Barnet which was fought out in open country.”

He agreed with Dr Skedd that the Byng Road playing fields were a great location for a medieval campsite and battle re-enactments – all thanks, said Dr Skedd, to the fantastic support they received from their hosts, the Barnet Elizabethans Rugby Football Club.

Kate Vigurs (centre), co-ordinator for equestrian displays and the team of riders and horses who demonstrated the weapons and armour of the 15th century





Thank you for the music..

Young professional musicians who performed in this summer's High Barnet Chamber Music Festival are planning to return during the autumn and winter months to give master classes for pupils, writes Nick Jones.

Queen Elizabeth's Boys School, which staged three of the festival's concerts, will host the first of these practice sessions.

Festival founder and artistic director Joshua Ballance is keen to involve other local schools.

"We want to extend our out-reach programme and offer master classes to schools in and around High Barnet.

"Our aim is to work in partnership with them as we build up support and interest in the festival."

A charity concert in July in aid of Ukraine, featuring Queen Elizabeth's jazz band and junior jazz group, was one of the three events held by the festival in the school's recently opened Friends' Recital Hall.

These concerts were the first opportunity for residents and music lovers to see the interior of a £4 million new building which includes

Jazz hands: QE Jazz band and Junior Jazz Group.

(Top right) Festival director Joshua Ballance with QE's director of music Ruth

a 230-seat recital hall, eight music practice rooms and three additional classrooms.

Officially opened in May, the new block was funded by a £1.2 million government grant with the remainder being raised by donations and support from the Friends of Queen Elizabeth's Charity.

On seeing inside the recital hall for the first time – and after admiring the school's new Yamaha CF6 grand piano – Joshua was almost lost for words in welcoming the opportunity to stage concerts in surroundings that equalled international standards.

"It is marvellous news for Barnet that musicians will be able to perform locally in a purpose-built concert hall offering such fantastic acoustics, and just the right atmosphere for intimate chamber music."

He said the link-up between the festival and Queen Elizabeth's demonstrated the kind of partnerships the festival had in mind, and he was confident there would be no shortage of young musicians keen to perform in the new recital hall.

"It was a real breakthrough for the festival to stage a showcase concert by a school orchestra and jazz band and we do hope other schools will join us next year."

The finale was a medley by the band, under their conductor Caroline Grint, which included *Rock Around the Clock*, *Georgia on My Mind*, and *Bandstand Boogie*.

There were five concerts in this year's festival – with two being held at the parish church of St John the Baptist – and each event provided a platform for young professional musicians with the aim of stimulating arts and music education in North London and Hertfordshire.

Joshua's ensemble *Mad Song*, which gave the penultimate concert, was highly praised in a review published by the website www.theartsdesk.com

Reviewer Bernard Hughes said the programme featured a wealth of new music and he congratulated composer and conductor Joshua for the care he had taken in crafting *Mad Song's* repertoire of 20th and 21st century music.

"It's marvellous that musicians will be able to perform locally in a purpose-built hall"



Leg-up for equine charity

An equine therapy charity which supports hundreds of vulnerable young people is moving to a 30-acre Green Belt site in Mays Lane, Barnet.

An artist's impression illustrates how vacant Dollis Valley farmland will be transformed by the creation of a new centre where challenged youngsters will be able to interact with specially trained horses.

Strength and Learning Through Horses, is having to leave its current base in Edgwarebury Lane, Edgware, after the expiry of its lease.

Barnet Council came to the rescue and granted the charity a 25-year lease of what was formerly Green Gate Stables and Reeds Farm.

SLTH's therapists and trainers work with a team of ten horses. Every year they assist over 500 challenged youngsters aged from 4 to 25 who are from across Barnet and other London boroughs.

SLTH has launched crowd funding appeal to raise £150,000 to pay for site clearance in Mays Lane and the installation of temporary cabins for a classroom and offices.

Work has already started on

Strength and Learning Through Therapy team, from left, Rosie Bensley, Laura Gill, Dr Jemma Hockley and Matt Bannon. (Inset) Artist's impression of the new centre

erecting replacement fencing and preparing connections to water and electricity. A temporary classroom is due to arrive in November ready for the charity to move in during December.

"We are still desperate for funding and do hope to attract more support for our crowd funding appeal," said equine education leader Rosie Bensley.

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/home-our-horses>

"We are also appealing for volunteers to help clear the site and help us move in - so if you have do-it-yourself skills please do get in touch."

Derelict stables need to be demolished and land cleared to create a safe arena for horses and youngsters.

SLTH says it has been inundated with referrals since the Covid pandemic as young people find themselves socially isolated, struggling in school and experiencing complex mental health difficulties.

"Our young people have experienced unimaginable hardship and life challenges and as a result feel unable to trust and engage

with traditional support services. We don't want to have to close our doors to the young people who need us."

A planning application is due to be submitted in September to get permission for the construction of a permanent classroom, barns for horses and an all-weather arena.

If approval is given for their long-term plans - and if SLTH can raise sufficient funds - the aim would be to start work on the new centre in the spring or summer of next year.

When completed it would become London's first purpose-built equine therapy centre and could eventually cater for 1,000 young people a year.

SLTH hopes its 30-acre site will create a community asset for Barnet which will be available to other community groups for woodland schools, rewilding, and other outdoor activities.

"Our vision is to create a community hub which allows access to the healing power of nature for as many local residents as possible."

For more information see www.strengthandlearningthroughhorses.org.



Windfall for the needy

Unwanted apples and pears from trees across Barnet are being harvested for needy families.

Food banks across the London Borough of Barnet are being supplied with surplus apples and pears which are being picked by the volunteer group Barnet Community Harvesters.

Fruit is ripening earlier than usual because of this summer's heatwave and drought and some fruits are smaller in size but there is a plentiful crop.

Trays of apples and pears are being delivered to the Barnet Food Bank hub in East Barnet ready for distribution across the borough – and already after a dozen fruit picking expeditions over 400 kilogrammes have been collected.

Daniella Levene, who established Community Harvesters in 2020 to pick unwanted fruit and vegetables, is delighted with the response from householders who are again letting them pick fruit that would otherwise go to waste.

“This does seem to be a bumper year despite the stress on the trees due to the extreme weather.”

A fruit picking visit to a house in Chandos Avenue is one of Daniella's favourite sorties because a massive Bramley apple tree almost fills the garden.

It was again heavily laden, and the volunteers filled four trays.

Wendy Alcock, who founded another local self-help group, Incredible Edible Barnet, hopes that some of the surplus fruit will be available during



Volunteer pickers gather surplus apples at a High Barnet garden, which will then be donated to the Barnet Food Bank hub

Great Green Week when she is organizing an apple pressing day in the garden of St John's United Reform Church in Mowbray Road, New Barnet, on Saturday 1 October (between 10 am and 12 noon).

Daniella said that were another 20 fruit trees waiting to be picked and she was busy arranging volunteer parties.

Produce collected this year has also included damsons and grapes.

Coxes and other desert apples and pears are among the fruit waiting to be picked. “Fruit trees are very resilient because they have deep roots but with climate warming perhaps, we will have to start growing different varieties that can cope with hotter and drier summers.”

barnetcommunityharvesters@gmail.com

SAFE AND WALKING FRIENDLY STREETS IN BARNET

Stephen Edwards and Jeremy Leach are the guest speakers for our first in a series of discussions about **“A Greener, Better Barnet”**.

Jeremy Leach is Chair of London Living Streets which brings together the pro-walking Living Streets groups across the London boroughs. He also works to reduce road danger in London as the co-ordinator in the capital for 20's Plenty for Us and a founder of Action Vision Zero which campaigns to press the boroughs and TfL to achieve the Mayor of London's target of zero road deaths and serious injuries by 2041.

Stephen Edwards is Chief Executive of Living Streets, the UK charity for everyday walking. Living Streets was founded in 1929 to campaign for safer

streets for pedestrians. The charity continues these campaigns today, working with local communities, councils and national government to build a nation where walking is the natural choice for everyday local journeys. Its mission is to achieve a better walking environment and enable people of all ages and abilities to walk and wheel more. Stephen is also Chair of Governors at St Mary's Primary School in East Barnet, and a member of the Parochial Church Council of St Mary's Church, East Barnet.

The Bull Theatre is the home of the Susi Earnshaw Theatre School. The Barnet Society is grateful to Susi for opening her theatre to the residents of Barnet as a host for these series of discussions.



Tuesday 22 November at 7.30pm at The Bull Theatre, High Street
Barnet Society Members, **FREE** Non-members, £5 donation

Peter Willcocks, doughty green guardian

Peter Willcocks, a former chartered surveyor who had “a second career” caring for the conservation of High Barnet, has died at the age of 90.

After retiring from government service at the age of 60, Peter Willcocks devoted his time and energy to the work of the Barnet Society, Barnet Museum, and local history groups.

Family and friends celebrated his life at a service held at New Southgate Crematorium where his eldest son Roger gave the eulogy.

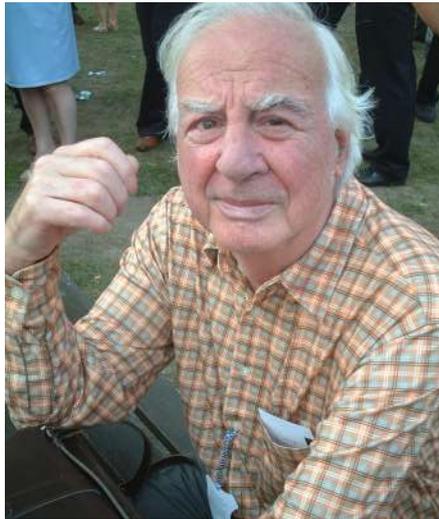
He described how his father had worked tirelessly with the local conservation area advisory committee to safeguard the architectural and historic character of Chipping Barnet, including the town centre, parish church, Hadley Green, and Monken Hadley. Under his chairmanship, the committee paid meticulous attention to planning applications being considered by Barnet Council, always anxious to protect the historic townscape and safeguard the Green Belt that borders the built-up areas.

Among the many paying tribute to his contribution to the community was Barnet Society vice-president Jenny Remfry who said it was partly thanks to Peter that the “character and sense of place” in High Barnet had been protected from unsuitable development.

“His greatest contribution was his chairmanship of the conservation area committee, and he also has an important place in the history of the Barnet Society.”

Peter was born in Camden Town, went to Martin Primary School in Finchley and then Christ’s College, leaving at the age of 16 to work at an estate agent and to start his training to become a chartered surveyor.

This was interrupted by National Service in Malaysia, but he qualified on his return, and after working first for London County



Peter’s many roles included chairing the Barnet Society, Barnet Museum and the Chipping Barnet Conservation Area Advisory Committee

Council, he joined the civil service. He was responsible for the preparation of numerous building regulations, ranging from drainage construction to the means of escape in case of fire.

He began his “second career caring for Barnet” after retiring from the civil service on his 60th birthday.

His many roles included chairmanship of the Barnet Society, Barnet Museum and the Chipping Barnet Conservation Area Advisory Committee, which monitors development in both the Wood Street and Monken Hadley conservation areas.

He was active in the Barnet and District Local History Society and a long-standing member of the Westminster and Middlesex Family History Society, which takes in the London Borough of Barnet.

In 2014, in an interview for the Barnet Society’s newsletter, which he had himself edited for many years, he acknowledged that he had become something of a father figure to those who had campaigned for so long to help preserve the rich heritage of High Barnet.

“Over the years we have managed to protect the townscape of High Barnet and the Green Belt, especially where it overlaps the built-up areas of Monken Hadley.”

Peter and his wife Doreen, who lived in Manor Road, had three sons, Roger, Graham and Philip, and a daughter, Diana.

Roger said cars always played a big part in his father’s life and he enjoyed driving his Triumph Spitfire around Barnet.

In his later years, Peter had “many lives”. After a cardiac arrest in 2006, he developed Parkinson’s, was affected by skin cancer, suffered a broken hip, and finally went down with Covid.19, but he had lived to “a grand old age” and celebrated his 90th birthday with a joyful family party in May.

Nick Jones

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.

Additional donations are greatly appreciated

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