

The Barnet Society

AUTUMN 2024 | £2 (WHEN SOLD)

New MP's difficult agenda

Dan Tomlinson, the first Labour MP to represent Chipping Barnet for over 70 years, will find himself on the front line when it comes to delivering Labour's pledge to build many more new homes, writes Nick Jones.

Keir Starmer's policy priority of boosting house building, even if it means sacrificing some of the Green Belt, will pose a challenge for outer London boroughs like Barnet.

Much of High Barnet is surrounded by Green Belt land and there has been increasing pressure for new residential development, especially where farmland has been run down or neglected.

During the general election campaign both Mr Tomlinson and the defeated former MP Theresa Villiers promised they would do all they could to preserve the surrounding countryside.

Fresh targets for housebuilding within the London boroughs have already been set by the new government and in Mr Tomlinson's opinion they represent a reasonable approach for communities in outer London.

Labour's proposal for the Borough of Barnet is to build 3,700 new homes a year which is down on the figure set by the previous Conservative government of 5,200 a year.

Mr Tomlinson says this has been achieved by "scrapping the

"Rather than play politics with this important issue, [housebuilding targets] Labour is proposing a reasonable approach for communities in outer London."

Dan Tomlinson

additional political target" which the Conservatives had imposed on the Mayor of London, just to "play politics with Sadiq Khan".

The previous target had been so high as to be almost impossible to meet.

"Rather than play politics with this important issue, Labour is proposing a reasonable approach for communities in outer London.

"We will also reform planning so new homes come with the infrastructure that we desperately need."

When out touring the constituency canvassing for support ahead of polling day, Mr Tomlinson had been struck by the number of

Continued on Page 2



New Chipping Barnet MP Dan Tomlinson gives his victory speech at the election count as his glum-faced predecessor Theresa Villiers looks on



Continued from Page 1

people in their fifties and sixties whose children were living with them because they could not afford to buy their own homes.

In giving his pre-election pledge to do all he could to preserve the Green Belt, he insisted that residential development should take place first on brownfield sites.

But in line with Labour Party policy, Mr Tomlinson acknowledged that there was a case for considering whether new homes might be built on low-quality or neglected “grey belt” land in the borough.

During her 19 years as the Chipping Barnet MP, Ms Villiers championed defence of the Green Belt.

Her fear was that under pressure from a newly elected Labour administration, Green Belt land which surrounds much of High Barnet could be threatened if the council was required to meet a government-imposed target for housebuilding.

Chipping Barnet’s new Labour MP follows in the steps of a Labour politician who was a post-war health service pioneer

In seizing Chipping Barnet for Labour Dan Tomlinson, at 31, has broken the Conservative Party’s hold on what in the past was one of their safest seats, writes Nick Jones.

Mr Tomlinson is only the second Labour MP to be elected for Barnet. He overturned a record of Conservative victories which had been unbroken for well over 70 years.

His illustrious Labour predecessor was Stephen Taylor (right) who won the newly created constituency of Barnet for the first time in the 1945 post-war Labour landslide.

In his five years as Barnet’s Labour MP, Mr Taylor became an influential policy advisor to the Attlee government on the creation of the National Health Service and the development of general practice.

Mr Taylor – who later went to the House of Lords – was heavily defeated in the 1950 general election.

He lost to Conservative candidate Reginald Maudling who served as Chancellor of the Exchequer and who continued as the town’s MP until 1979

Barnet became a much-prized Tory stronghold: Mr Maudling was followed by two equally long-serving Conservative stalwarts – the late Sir Sydney Chapman (MP from 1979-2005) and latterly by former cabinet minister Theresa Villiers (2005-2024).

Mr Tomlinson has been a policy adviser for anti-poverty charities. He trained as an economist and after working for the Treasury and the Resolution Foundation, he was appointed a principal policy adviser at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation leading their research and advice on aspects of economic insecurity.

He hopes to use his expertise to work with Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves to tackle the cost-of-living crisis.

For four years Mr Tomlinson was a Labour councillor in Tower Hamlets. He was a member of the strategic development committee which dealt with major planning applications.

Mr Tomlinson moved to London a decade ago and he and

his wife purchased a house in Whetstone last year after having lived in Friern Barnet for a year and a half. They have a three-month-old baby son.

His first campaign on becoming the prospective Labour candidate was organising a petition last September as part of the nationwide protest over the plan to close railway station ticket offices, including at New Barnet and Oakleigh Park – a proposal later abandoned by the Rail Delivery Group.

When he spoke last month at an election hustling for Chipping Barnet candidates, he said one his priorities if elected would be to help secure the construction of more new homes.

While out campaigning, he had met so many people in their fifties and sixties whose sons and daughters were living with them because they could not afford their own homes.

He assured his future constituents he would work to protect “our beautiful green belt” by favouring brownfield sites of vacant industrial and commercial land, and that he would seek to preserve the suburban nature of the locality.

However, he made it clear he supported Labour’s policy of house building in the “grey belt” – on degraded sites within the green belt such as car parks, former waste tips and scrubland.

Another pre-election commitment was to make sure that Chipping Barnet received its fair share of the 1,300 new police officers that Labour had promised for London.

On being selected Labour’s candidate, he spent his first few months’ meeting residents to get to know the issues that affected the area, especially as there have been changes to the constituency.

The 2024 general election was fought on new Parliamentary boundaries. The current Chipping Barnet constituency, created in 1974, was re-drawn, losing Friern Barnet and instead taking in Edgwarebury.



Stephen Taylor

Theresa Villiers: widely respected constituency MP for Chipping Barnet whose determined effort to win re-election for a sixth time failed

Unlike other senior Conservative MPs and former ministers who opted to stand down, Theresa Villiers had no wish to join the Tory exodus from the House of Commons but like so many of her colleagues she was swept aside in a Labour landslide, writes Nick Jones.

Against the odds, she made a determined, often passionate attempt to persuade voters in Chipping Barnet to re-elect her for a sixth time, to give her the opportunity to continue her two-decade long career at Westminster.

There was almost a hint of desperation in her plea to the electorate when she appeared at a constituency husting at Barnet parish church.

She was braced for the Conservative Party's defeat and the election of a Labour government.

Therefore, she said, it was all the more important why Chipping Barnet needed to return a Conservative MP to the House of Commons to fulfill the task of holding a new Labour government to account.

Rather than highlighting her ministerial roles during 14 years of Conservative government, her pitch was that since first being elected in 2005 she had demonstrated time and again her dedication to the interests of her constituents.

Theresa Villiers concedes defeat at the Chipping Barnet election count



She lived in the constituency; cared about the issues that mattered locally; and, echoing the line being pushed by the Tory leadership, said she was ready to be a strong voice standing up against both Keir Starmer, if he became Labour Prime Minister, and Sadiq Khan, the Labour Mayor of London.

Her defeat by Labour candidate Dan Tomlinson was widely predicted. Chipping Barnet attracted few mentions in pre-election national news coverage because political commentators judged the result an almost foregone conclusion.

Politically Ms Villiers had been living on borrowed time. Chipping Barnet, for so long a Conservative stronghold, had become increasingly marginal in recent general elections with a wafer-thin Conservative majority of 353 in 2017 and an equally shaky majority of 1,212 in 2019.

Finally losing Chipping Barnet to Labour marked the end of an era, the loss of a true-blue Tory seat which, had been held by the Conservatives since 1950 and which, perhaps remarkably, has been served by only three Conservative MPs for a period of well over seven decades.

Ms Villiers' longevity in the constituency was well below that of her two predecessors: her 19 years were easily surpassed by the late Sir Sydney Chapman's 26 years' service as Chipping Barnet MP and the 29-years clocked up by the former Chancellor of the Exchequer Reginald Maudling.

During her two decades at Westminster – after previously serving for six years as a Member of the European Parliament – Ms Villiers was frequently in the national news, in her roles as a cabinet minister, including nearly four years as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; as a leading and much-quoted supporter of Brexit; and latterly, amid constant infighting, as one of those senior Conservatives whose voices were canvassed on the future direction and leadership of their party.

Whatever was happening at



Westminster – and despite the London Borough of Barnet having voted heavily in favour of Remain in the 2016 EU Referendum – she was proud of her record as a committed constituency MP.

She was assiduous in attending local events and civic occasions and appeared frequently at meetings and discussions organised by community groups and societies.

With a parliamentary staff at Westminster and a constituency office in Barnet High Street, she dealt with numerous requests for advice and assistance from residents and businesses.

She was aided by Claire Chapman, her senior parliamentary assistant, who had been secretary to her late husband Sydney Chapman when he was the MP.

Their combined knowledge of the constituency, and their expertise over many years in dealing with council departments, agencies and authorities, was frequently of great value to organisations and voluntary groups who found themselves struggling with officialdom.

Ms Villiers' weekend diary was usually packed with appointments, running through from meetings in her constituency office on Fridays to a wide array of engagements on Saturdays and Sundays.

A regular outing was to deliver a speech when she joined the Mayor of Barnet at the annual opening of Barnet Christmas Fayre.



PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT

GOVERNMENT

The new government has made **housing and planning reform** a top priority. I cover this in a separate article on Page 5.

We look forward to working with our new **MP Dan Tomlinson**, and hope he'll be as staunch in advocating appropriate new development and defending our green environment as his predecessor, Theresa Villiers.

BARNET COUNCIL

A new **online planning tool** tells you whether you need planning permission for your building project. Go to www.barnet.gov.uk/find-out

ANTICIPATED

The **Whalebones** development, approved by the Council six months ago, has yet to be signed off by the Mayor of London.

Barnet FC – We've met a representative of the Supporters Club, which hopes the club will return to Underhill (though other sites could be considered). To achieve wide community support, we believe it must offer more than just football. As well as economic benefits to the town, it could offer multi-sports and social facilities. It must be ecologically friendly and enhance biodiversity, on the lines of the Eco Park proposed by their National League rivals, Forest Green Rovers. (below)



See Page 8, Campaign grows

Still no word on the future of **The Spires**.

We hope a **David Lee memorial tree** will be planted, but the Council hasn't set a date.

Selected cases

APPROVED

2 Clyde Villas, Hadley Green Road –

Application for 12 adults recovering from mental illness. We were neutral but submitted comments.

Brookfields Garage, Victoria Lane –

Three modern but inconspicuous houses and workspace on backland. We had no comments.

Wetland scheme, Hadley Wood (GB)

Following Enfield's supply of more environmental and organisational information, we supported their nature-based drainage scheme.

Monopole behind Barnet & Southgate

College – We objected to this 17.5m-high telecoms mast on the grounds of harm to the Wood Street Conservation Area.

REFUSED

Monopole by New Barnet Leisure Centre.

We didn't comment on this 22m-high mast.

Arkeley Manor Farm, Rowley Lane (GB)

Retrospective application for two large scaffolding storage racks built in a scruffy yard. We objected.

DECISIONS AWAITED

Intec House, 49 Moxon Street. After getting approval in 2022 for workspace and 92 flats (35% affordable) in a 7-storey block, the developer claimed they're no longer viable and submitted a new application for more workspace and 96 flats (none affordable). Before that's even been decided, he's put in a 3rd application for half the workspace, an extra storey and 113 flats (again, none affordable). We've objected again.

98-100 High Street (fka Foxtons) –

Workspace plus 12 flats above. We were neutral but made some comments.

118 High Street (the Grade II-listed former Barnet Press). Conversion of flats over Costas. Neutral.

Off Langley Row, Hadley Highstone (GB)

Rebuilding of former stables. Neutral.

Centre for Islamic Enlightenment, Mays

Lane (GB) Alterations and additional floor to former Brethren Meeting Hall. We were neutral: their effect on the Green Belt is insignificant and would improve a dull building externally. But we asked for conditions to be set regarding frequency

and timing of events, amplified music, vehicle movements and outdoor activities, particularly important since some neighbours are concerned about noise and nuisance.

GONE TO APPEAL

Intec House, 49 Moxon Street (2nd application).

Mays Lane between Chesterfield Farm and Brethren Meeting Hall (GB) We were among 1,304 objectors to two travellers' pitches.

Abbey Arts Centre, East Barnet – We objected to replacement and new buildings on this site with an extraordinary history.

APPEAL ALLOWED

63A Union Street New single-storey house by Coe's Alley. Neutral. **See Page 12**

FARTHER AFIELD

Hasmonean High School, Cophthall (GB)

Amended plans for new boys' and girls' school. The original planning application was approved by Barnet Council in 2017, but refused by the Mayor of London due to concerns about transport and loss of public access to Green Belt land. The latest scheme would be contained within the existing school boundary, but supplemented by using upgraded Cophthall sports provision.

Edgware Town Centre. Outline planning application for redevelopment of shopping centre, including new bus station, garage and 3,365 homes in 20 blocks up to 29 storeys high.

Land north of Barnet Lane, Borehamwood

(GB) Taylor Wimpey wants to build 220 houses on the Village Green and adjacent Horses Field. We objected.

Land south of Potters Bar (GB)

Developers have consulted locals on a proposal to build about 900 new homes on fields north of the M25. (Below) This site was specifically excluded from development in the latest draft of Hertsmere Council's Local Plan following 18,000 local objections, including one from our Society. We've expressed our concern to the developers.



Labour's planning ambitions fine but grey areas are in the detail

The Society is pleased that Labour is prioritising new housing. But homes must be the right kind and in the right place. And quantity is one thing; attractive and sustainable communities quite another, writes Robin Bishop

GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS

The government wants to revive strategic planning – co-operation between local authorities – something almost forgotten in the UK since 2010.

It's set itself the ambitious target of 370,000 new homes per year, and imposed mandatory targets on planning authorities. In its new Local Plan, Barnet's is unchanged at 2,364 homes per year, almost none of which will be in the Green Belt. But our neighbours Enfield and Hertsmerer plan to build thousands close to our borders.

It has also launched a taskforce to find sites for new towns of 10,000+ homes. Many will be urban extensions of existing settlements, some perhaps not far from us.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

An update to the legal framework for development is out for public consultation until 24 September. The Society will respond to it.

DELIVERY CHALLENGES

These are formidable. Has the Chancellor enough funds to design and construct homes to meet net zero carbon emission standards, together with the transport, schools, surgeries and other infrastructure necessary for liveable (and lovable) neighbourhoods?

And does the UK have the capacity to build them? Can we manufacture enough materials and equipment – and train enough builders to install them competently – without inflation and increasing immigration?

We need not just flats for first-time buyers, but homes of all sizes and types of tenure. A substantial proportion must be genuinely affordable.

It must also include social housing.

“We need not just flats for first-time buyers, but homes of all sizes and types of tenure”



Several plots of land off Rowley Lane have been sold for speculative purposes

Since the 2nd World War, private house-builders have never, on their own, met the target that Labour is setting. Councils, housing associations and/or other kinds of developer must also be encouraged to build.

GREEN AND GREY BELT

CPRE research shows that there's space for at least 1.2m homes on previously developed land, and that 0.5m already have planning permission but aren't being built. Notwithstanding those statistics, the government thinks that some parts of the Green Belt could be built on subject to three 'Golden Rules':

1. At least 50% of the homes must be affordable.
2. They must be supported by transport and other infrastructure.
3. They must have access to green space.

Not all the Green Belt is actually green. For years farming has been a financial struggle, and farm buildings and land have been abandoned. Chipping Barnet constituency is dotted with Green Belt sites that have been neglected for years, whether deliberately or not. Other uses such as gravel extraction and power generation are often unsightly. As we know from Green Belt developments elsewhere, they certainly won't be affordable, let alone social housing.

Another result of allowing development of Grey land would be that it will pay

landowners to deliberately neglect or abuse their sites. That's already happening. There's also a worrying trend for Green Belt sites to be sold for speculative purposes.

Several plots of land off Rowley Lane went last year to buyers who probably gambled that housing would one day be permitted, recouping their outlay many times over. More sinister still has been retention of 'overage' rights by the previous owners, entitling them to a share of the profits should future development be permitted.

Sites designated Grey could overnight become highly profitable for housing. That cannot be right. The government must restrict the price of Grey land to existing use value, or find other ways of capturing the profits of its development.

If we're to have a chance of reaching net zero and restoring natural biodiversity, nurturing of the Green Belt will be vital. Development of Grey land will only be acceptable if it meets a full range of community needs with the highest standards of planning and design.

In conclusion, my thanks to members who've reported mini land grabs and abuse of Green Belt land. Because of their sensitivity I won't identify any here, but we're investigating them.

If you see examples of land grabs or neglect, notify us at info@barnetsociety.org.uk.

Transport

This year's Society newsletters each focus on a key theme of our work: housing, green issues, transport and town centres. This one looks at transport, particularly the main opportunities and threats we face as London expands into the Green Belt.

Reports by Robin Bishop

Society member Peter Bradburn is a former transport planning professional who has advised us from time to time on local transport issues for 35 years. Here are some of his insights:

- Since Chipping (or High) Barnet acquired a charter in 1199, roads and transport connections have been key to its historical significance, whether for driving livestock to market or commuting to work in and around London.
- Although it has benefited from good north/south rail links since Victorian times, in the 20th century it was also an important stop on a growing range of local and long-distance bus routes.
- Despite this, since the 1960s most residents have depended on private cars.
- In the build-up to the climate change 2050 deadline, it is vital that all public authorities co-operate to provide or secure a co-ordinated solution to this multi-disciplinary project.
- Although thousands of new homes are proposed in North Barnet and adjacent parts of Hertfordshire, it's unlikely that there will be any new rail stations or extensions. There will, however, be a need for new or rationalised bus routes.

Peter's posted a detailed analysis of Barnet's transport history and prospects on our website. Read it here: <https://www.barnetsociety.org.uk/>

Bus threats

Reliable bus services are very important to Barnet residents, since almost a third of households don't have a car. They must become even more so if we're to achieve net zero carbon emissions. It's worrying, therefore, that the services we have are deteriorating.

In the last four years, we've campaigned against cuts to the 84 (Barnet Hospital – Potters Bar) and 384 (Edgware – Cockfosters) routes. The new 84B is a poor substitute for the former, with only an hourly service until early evening and none on Sundays. The re-routed 384 is not so bad, but has caused disruption and road damage in Salisbury Road. These and other routes, notably the 184 (Chesterfield Road – Turnpike Lane), have frequently been subject to sudden, unadvertised and frustrating, curtailment or diversion.

We were also concerned about the suspension of the 389 (Spire – Western Way) & 399 (Spire – Hadley Wood Station) when their operator, Sullivan Buses, abruptly ceased trading in



Peter Bradburn shares some travel insights

July. Fortunately, a new operator has been found.

On a more optimistic note, we'd benefit from the Mayor of London's proposed Superloop 2, new express routes between Harrow, Barnet & Enfield. But while faster orbital buses are welcome, they won't address Outer London's need for more frequent stops and shorter intervals between buses.

High Street bus lanes

The Council has held a public consultation on new bus lanes along the High Street between Meadway and Park Road.

We've no objection to bus lanes where the net benefits to all street users – whether pedestrians, wheelchair users, buggies, cyclists, motorists or bus riders – would demonstrably outweigh the disadvantages. But the consultation documents didn't provide enough evidence to prove their value.

The new lanes would be short and the main beneficiaries would be northbound cyclists and buses (though not if a cyclist is in front of one!). Overall, we felt they wouldn't enhance pedestrian experience or economic benefits to local business. We'd prefer them to be considered as part of broader improvements to the High Street area. These would include the positioning and number of bus stops, the 34 bus stand and the various (and confusing) pedestrian crossings.

We've submitted these and some more detailed comments to the consultation.

ULEZ and air quality

We've been neutral about the Mayor of London's expansion of the ULEZ. It may not be perfect and does not address all pollution (which is also caused by vehicle tyres, construction and agriculture), but we see no reason to oppose it. Our lack of member feedback indicates that they agree.

The air quality improvements in Outer London after six months of ULEZ may not be dramatic, but they're significant:

- Nitrogen Oxide (NOx) emissions from cars and vans respectively 13% & 7% lower than would have been expected without the expansion.
- Particulate matter (PM2.5) exhaust emissions estimated to be 20% lower than they would have been.
- Roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations up to 4.4% lower than would have been expected.

Furthermore, Clean Air Barnet (a citizen science project monitoring air quality between January & June 2024) has found that Barnet exceeded the World Health Organisation annual targets for breaches of daily average concentrations, and is worse than many other locations across London. We've nothing to be complacent about.



Jolt EV chargers come with the downside of digital ad screens

Electric vehicles (EVs)

The previous Council administration let a contract with Jolt Charge Ltd to install 120 EV charging points across Barnet. Although in principle a useful contribution to reducing carbon emissions and raising Council revenue, their downside is large digital advertising screens that increase street clutter.

A particularly egregious case was the charger proposed in front of the Everyman. It was as if the mysterious tablet in 2001 A Space Odyssey had landed on the Grade II-listed cinema's front doorstep – with added illumination and animated displays. Following objections by us and others, the planning application was withdrawn.



TfL's proposals for 294 flats have been shelved after a public outcry

a proposal for 20 towers up to 29 storeys high at Edgware has brought protesters onto the street.

At High Barnet Station, TfL's proposals for 294 flats in 6 & 7-storey slabs on the car park were shelved in 2021. Their drastic visual impact coupled with few compensatory improvements to transport interchange caused public outcry.

Another reason for abandonment, however, was the developer's realisation that the entire station complex is built on artificial earthworks. This abuts Telford & McAdam's great ramp at Barnet

Tube stations

Apart from The Spires, the biggest developments on our horizon are likely to be at tube stations. To the east, Enfield has approved four towers up to 14 storeys high on Cockfosters Station car park. To the west,

Hill, which is subsiding conspicuously. Built two centuries ago on deep clay and earlier earthworks, the present road coped with horse-drawn and early motor transport. However today, after often undocumented alterations and with heavier vehicles and climate change, it requires time-consuming and hugely expensive engineering work. This must be a higher priority than any proposed redevelopment.

We recently asked the Council for an update. They tell us they're well aware of the risks, have taken all necessary precautions and that the situation is being closely monitored. We'll continue to watch closely.

Cycling

Barnet's hilliness has historically discouraged cycling, and until recently the Council did nothing to counteract that. Its new Local Plan may change things. It contains over 100 references to provision for cycling, which it sees correctly as contributing to net zero, healthy living and reducing traffic congestion. It even includes a Policy on Sustainable and Active Travel.

Covid brought increasing numbers of cyclists onto Barnet roads, and weekends regularly see pelotons zooming up the Côte de Barnet. The growth in e-cycling will bring yet more.

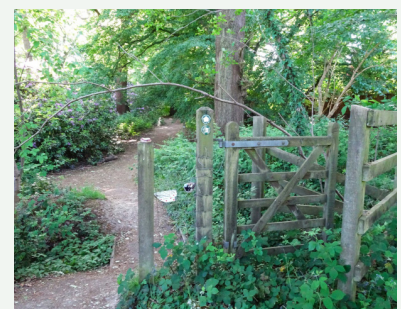
Luckily most roads in our area don't lend themselves to speeding and serious accidents involving cycles are rare. But the A1000/Underhill junction can be lethal (I speak from near-death experience) and Barnet Hill should be a priority. Let's re-route the pavement to the west of Lee's Trees, and create a cycle lane in its place with a northbound bus/cycle lane through the Meadway bottleneck. Cyclists, buses and pedestrians will all win. *Allons-y!*

Walking

We've supported the Council's proposal for a Barnet Loop – a 17-mile circular walk around our borough, mainly through greenery. The section through Chipping Barnet already exists as the London Loop and Dollis Valley Greenwalk.

In principle, we'd like as much of the Barnet Loop accessible for disabled users, buggy-pushers, cyclists and children on scooters as reasonably possible. This is already so between Barnet Playing Fields and Whetstone, where there are segregated but parallel paths.

In more countrified stretches this would be physically difficult to achieve due, for example, to the need to widen the pathway, adapt to the hilly terrain and adjust field boundaries. That's the case between Hendon Wood Lane and Mill Hill, which has a remarkably unspoiled rural character. In places of such visual, environmental and historical quality, it would be detrimental to the beauty and character of the landscape to remove or radically alter features such as ancient hedges



Traditional gate should be restored and kept

'Underhill's our spiritual home'

The BringBarnetBack campaign say they have been amazed by the enthusiasm for a return of the club to a new stadium at Underhill, writes Nick Jones.

Club owner Tony Kleanthous is prepared to meet the cost of moving from the current base at The Hive Football Centre, between Edgware and Stanmore.

Keith Doe, a founder member of the group, says they want to get the views of residents and community groups on how best to build a united campaign for the club's return.

"Underhill is our spiritual home. We have had tremendous feedback. It is all very encouraging," said Mr Doe.

"Right across the town there is a recognition that we have missed out so much since we lost Barnet Football Club a decade ago."

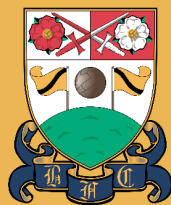
Planning consultancy WSP has been commissioned to prepare an application to build a stadium for 8,000 spectators on the sports field of the Ark Pioneer Academy, which was built at Underhill on the site of Barnet FC's former stadium, vacated in 2013.

Mr Kleanthous is offering to share use of a new stadium complex and car park with the Ark Academy which he says would be provided with sports areas for pupils and assistance in easing week-day traffic congestion generated by the school.

BringBarnetBack acknowledge the challenges ahead.

Barnet Council has already indicated that approval for a new stadium at Underhill within the Green Belt is "highly unlikely". Mr Doe, who as a child watched his first match at Underhill in 1988, says he would love to

"Tony Kleanthous recognises this is what the supporters want. He also accepts that this would build the kind of attendances that Barnet FC really needs if the club is to prosper."
Keith Doe, founder member of campaign group



be able to take his two boys to see Barnet FC playing again where the club belongs – he is standing beside what the campaign hopes might become the site of a new stadium.

"I do take them with me to The Hive, but it is not the same as a stadium here at Underhill where we could recreate the family atmosphere so many of the fans remember and cherish.

"Tony Kleanthous recognises this is what the supporters want. He also accepts that this would build the kind of attendances that Barnet FC really needs if the club is to prosper."

As a group of loyal supporters, BringBarnetBack accepts there will have to be some flexibility about the site for a new stadium.

"We realise it might not be possible to use the Ark Academy's sports field but there is plenty of space within the whole area of Barnet Playing Fields (off Barnet Lane) and as a group we want to look at all the possibilities and work with the community.

"Our job is to speak to the community and then be a conduit between the town and the club. We want local football back at Underhill, not somewhere like

Copthall, and we realise that might mean a compromise," said Mr Doe.

When discussing their plans with the Barnet Society, Robin Bishop, who leads on planning and the environment, said he knew many residents would like to see the return of the Bees to Underhill. He thought a possible key to making progress would be for the club to offer the local community more than just a new stadium.

"There will need to be a positive contribution to the town.

"Barnet Playing Fields are in the Green Belt, so a new stadium would have to be ecologically friendly and enhance their biodiversity. The playing fields are an attractive but currently fragmented open space, so ideally any development would also offer a more joined-up use of local community facilities."

Keith Doe (left), a founder member of the group, discusses their plans with Robin Bishop of the Barnet Society.



Jenny Remfry's memories of Pam Edwards and The Old Bull

Pam Edwards, (right) who died on 26th July, was a remarkable woman. She was the driving force behind the Old Bull Arts Centre at 68 High Street that kept us entertained from the 1970s to the 1990s. She put the arts on the map of Barnet.

At the Old Bull in the mid-1970s there were jumble sales, book stalls and craft sales, all to raise funds to turn the rundown old coaching inn into a community centre for the arts.

Gradually an art gallery appeared, then workshops upstairs for craftspeople, then music, dance, talks, craft displays, and even a tiny theatre upstairs for fringe theatre.

By 1984 there was a dance studio, and then finally, in 1988, a proper theatre with seating for 180.

All this was orchestrated by the smiling and ever-optimistic Pam Edwards. She may have looked disorganised with her carrier bags stuffed full of different coloured papers annotated with green ink, but she knew exactly what she was doing, and gathered all sorts of people around her for help.

Pamela Winifred Skillan Edwards, née Budd was born on 18th September 1925. Her father was a writer, an uncle was a Shakespearean actor and from an early age she joined local operatic and dramatic societies.

In 1953, after training as a nurse at St Mary's, Paddington, she married Ted Edwards and they came to live in Barnet where they brought up their three children.

In 1965 the London Borough of Barnet had just been formed and the Arts Council expected it to have a body to advise them on how to promote the arts in their borough.

So the Barnet Borough Arts Council (BBAC) was formed and Pam became its Honorary Secretary. In 1967 Ted moved the family to Scotland and Pam spent three years as administrator of a new theatre in Cumbernauld. On their return in 1972 Pam resumed her position at the BBAC, and remained there for 40 years.



In 1982, the jazz musician Humphrey Lyttelton...supported the proposal to build a proper theatre at the back of the building

Up until the last few weeks of her life, at the age of 98, she was producing the quarterly newsletter of the BBAC – 'Barnet Arts'.

Pam organised Barnet's first Arts Festival in 1972. There she met Dennis O'Brien, a folk singer. He, like several other leaders of music and drama groups in Barnet, was finding it difficult to find suitable performance venues.

Together they set out to find one and in 1975 they were given the lease of the Old Bull. Dennis and his team did much of the renovation and building work themselves.

In 1982 the jazz musician Humphrey Lyttelton became President of the Barnet Centre Association and supported the proposal to build a proper theatre at the back of the building.

He gave concerts in aid of the funds and promised that if it were built, he and his band would appear on the opening night. The first plans for the proposed theatre with seating for 500 were turned down by LBB. The plan was scaled down to 180 but

this application was also rejected. Pam did not despair. She found a local architect, John Moore, who came to the rescue with an ingenious plan to do things in stages. This plan accepted in 1981 and over the next few years the transformation took place, with Dennis O'Brien as Building Co-ordinator.

Dennis put together a team to fit out the theatre. The technical equipment and electric wiring was installed by Fred Fuller and Alan Cook. Theatre seating was found second-hand, carpeting was donated by a local firm, curtains were hung at the back of the stage, and at last the theatre was ready for use.

After some try-outs in 1987, preparations were made for a Gala Opening on 28th February 1988. It was a glittering evening. Humphrey Lyttelton played his trumpet, some Spitting Image puppets, in the hands of Nigel Plaskitt and friends, had us crying with laughter, The Mayor and Councillors had turned out in numbers and they went away smiling.

Pam's vision for Barnet included an arts centre with a larger auditorium. This was achieved with the opening of Artsdepot in North Finchley in 2004.

The design of the building was based on the Old Bull with its two performance spaces, galleries and studios. In 2004 The Old Bull Arts Association was wound up and the Bull was vacated. In 2005 the Borough Council surprised and shocked the people of Barnet by announcing that it intended to sell the Bull so that the site could be redeveloped. But it was saved by Pam and Susi Earnshaw, with the support of local people including the Barnet Society, and it is now the Susi Earnshaw Theatre School and open to use by local societies. The Bull is now the mailing address for the Barnet Borough Arts Council.

In 2015, Pam's commitment to the arts was recognised by the award of the British Empire Medal.

Jenny Remfry was Chair of the Barnet Centre Association 1984-1986)



Local landmark buildings reimagined in art class

High Barnet's iconic landmark buildings were given an imaginative makeover at London Festival of Architecture workshop

A challenge to re-imagine the appearance of familiar buildings in the town centre produced some dramatic results.

London Festival of Architecture sponsored the event which was organised by New Barnet art teacher Heather Ellis (above) who was delighted by the attempts to transform well known views in the High Street.

The theme of the festival was to ask Londoners to re-imagine their urban environment and buildings.

All comers were welcome. Those joining the workshop were asked to set work to use their imagination to transform a photographic image through collage, drawing or painting.

Heather wanted those taking part to take risks in giving a makeover to a familiar building.

She thought the transformation of the entrance to The Spires shopping centre by deploying the twin towers to create a valley at the seaside was the very leap of imagination that the festival of architecture was encouraging.

The workshop was held at The Stable community cafe in Salisbury Road where Heather holds monthly Wednesday sessions of the Lootheloo Art Club.

Once she had obtained sponsorship to take part in the London Festival of Architecture, she advertised the workshop emphasising that no experience was necessary – “just your imagination to enjoy an afternoon of creativity”.

“Everyone who took part worked from a colour photograph which they could then transform, perhaps with paint or by cutting it up and re-imagining how it might look.”

She advertised widely on social media including the Love Barnet website and at Chipping Barnet Library. Over 25 people attended ..

Teddy bears get in on the act at church

A zip wire for teddy bears was a highlight at the annual summer party of Barnet parish church.

Councillor Tony Vourou, Mayor of Barnet, joined in the fun when teddy bears were hauled on a zip wire to the top of the tower of St John the Baptist.

He hoped his visit would help to strengthen and enhance the role of the parish church as an asset to the local community, a place which was open to one and all. “This church has been here since 1420. We are all its custodians. We must do all we can to keep the church open for everyone in the community,” he said. Despite the weather, the church was packed inside, and Father Sam Rossiter-Peters was delighted that the Mayor and Mayoress had joined the celebration.

A heavy Saturday rainfall curtailed the enjoyment of outside activities – such as the bouncy castle – at what the organisers had hoped would be a well-attended party on the parish church green.



Lining up with the Mayor of Barnet before Nicholas – named after his childhood teddy bear – was hauled up the zip wire were (from left to right), Councillor David Longstaff, Father Sam Rossiter-Peters, Mayoress Mrs Caroline Vourou and Councillor Tony Vourou.

Residents ask to be kept in the Loop

Walkers and cyclists have been giving their views over the preparation of plans to strengthen and complete a 17-mile loop of footpaths and cycleways circling the Borough of Barnet.

Residents can already take advantage of the northern section of the route which is via the established Dollis Valley Green Walk and the London Loop. Much of the Dollis Valley Walk, where it leads south to Whetstone, is along surfaced paths, but the route west towards Moat Mount passes through fields and countryside.

Frances Wilson, footpaths officer for the Barnet Society, encouraged residents to register their opinions on Barnet Council's website before the consultation closed. Residents were asked to give their views on how best to connect a network of paths which can be used for walking, cycling, running and wheeling and how to improve each of the eight local sections of the circular route.

The aim of the loop is to connect the urban areas of Hendon, Colindale and Edgware with Barnet, Totteridge and Whetstone via existing paths.

This will link green spaces, town centres, schools, community amenities and

residential areas within the borough and help promote active travel.

By dividing the Barnet Loop into eight segments, the council hopes it will be able to engage effectively with residents and phase in how to deliver the loop when funding becomes available.

Design of the loop will start later this year and, after consultation, is due for completion in 2025-6.

According to Transport for London, there are almost half a million journeys per day in Barnet which could be made by walking, cycling and wheeling if a proper network existed.



Frances Wilson (left), footpaths officer for the Barnet Society, discusses possible improvements to the green walk with passing walker Caroline Eglinton.

Barnet's own 'swifties'

There are hopes of more swifts returning to the area next year after several reports of successful breeding during the summer months.

Several members of Barnet Swifts Group reported seeing swifts occupying nests in boxes and under the eaves – including one house off Wood Street where four pairs of swifts had their nests.

Swifts arrive in early May and as the summer progresses, they can often be seen circling above but by early August, apart from a few stragglers, they have bid farewell and set off on their long migration flight south to Africa via France and Portugal.

This summer there were several reports of groups of as many 15 or more flying around together towards sunset, swooping, swirling



and squealing high in the sky.

On one evening at least 30 were seen flying together off Wood Street and that has been the case in some previous summers with counts of 20 to 30 circling above Manor Road and Mays Lane.

Many sightings have been around local green spaces including Dollis Valley, Whitings Hill, Whalebones, Byng Road playing fields and allotments and Shire Golf Course.

Robin Bishop saw a group of around 15 above Fitzjohn Avenue. The owner of one nearby house is fairly sure that a pair nested again in the swift nesting box installed by her late husband.

By far the greatest success was reported by a houseowner off Wood Street, who saw two pairs nesting in swift boxes on the side of the house and another two pairs nesting in vent holes under the eaves.



Horses for all courses

A fund-raising campaign has been launched to prevent a repeat this winter and next spring of the muddy conditions which disrupted an equine therapy centre for challenged youngsters at Greengates Stables in Mays Lane, Barnet.

Such was the depth of the mud both inside and outside, that the centre had to cancel over 120 therapy sessions. Last winter was the first in Mays Lane for the charity Strength and Learning Through Horses.

Staff found the ground around the centre could not cope with the prevailing wet winter conditions and the aim is to mud-proof the stables and much of the site.

Since moving to Mays Lane last year from its previous base in Edgwarebury Lane, the charity has made significant progress helping over 400 young people aged from six to 25 at over 700 therapy sessions.

The fund-raising appeal was launched to help winter proof the stables and to ensure staff don't have to cancel much-needed therapy sessions.

The Mays Lane stables are the first purpose-built equine therapy centre in London.

Foodbanks hit by council cutback

Staff and volunteers at the Chipping Barnet and Dollis Valley foodbanks are being forced to start making arrangements for alternative supplies and deliveries after Barnet Council withdrew funding.

Based in what was formerly East Barnet Library, the Barnet Food Hub co-ordinates the collection and delivery of surplus food and helps with the purchase of essential items such as tins of tomatoes, beans and fish.

Given increasing demand for emergency food parcels at the 17 foodbanks across the borough, volunteers are warning there could be dire consequences because of the council's decision to close the hub at the end of September.

It is hoped that short-term funding towards the cost of continuing deliveries will help maintain a skeleton distribution network until the end of the year, to help ensure "adequate supplies over the Christmas period".

But there will no longer be a hub in the borough where surplus food can be delivered, sorted, stored and then sent out to the individual foodbanks.

Bob Bevil, who is the advocacy and campaigning lead at the Chipping Barnet Foodbank, said volunteers across the area had been shocked and dismayed by the council's decision to withdraw funding at such short notice.

His concern is shared by Sarah Snell,



Bob Bevil with volunteers Marion Wellsman (left) and Ella Wood at the Chipping Barnet Foodbank.

who is the manager of the foodbank at the Rainbow Centre in Dollis Valley.

The Chipping Barnet Foodbank, which is held on Tuesdays and Saturdays at St Peter's Roman Catholic Church, Somerset Road, New Barnet, is comparatively well resourced compared with some, but Mr Bevil fears the loss of supplies from the hub will be a devastating blow for some of the smaller foodbanks.

"We understand that the funding – amounting to several hundred thousand pounds a year – was withdrawn because the council overspent last year and is having to cut back.

"What has been so concerning is the lack of consultation.

"We are all trying desperately to see how we can find ways to replace the surplus food which the food hub currently supplies," said Mr Bevil.

Long, drawn-out drama over shop

A former corner shop close to the High Street which featured in scenes in the 1960s TV crime series Gideon's Way can now be demolished and replaced with a house, writes Nick Jones.

A planning inspector has finally ruled in favour of the demolition of the now boarded-up empty shop after a long, drawn-out dispute with Barnet Council's planning department.

Until its closure 20 years ago, the shop – at the corner of Union Street and Coe's Alley – had been a greengrocery and then a florist. Once vacant, it became an eyesore and was a blot on the landscape in the Wood Street conservation area.

The building at the junction of Union Street, Coe's Alley and Stapylton Road – as seen when filmed as a location in the crime series Gideon's Way – was then quite different.

In addition to the now to be demolished greengrocer's shop, there was a grocery shop Yadav's on the other side of the alleyway.

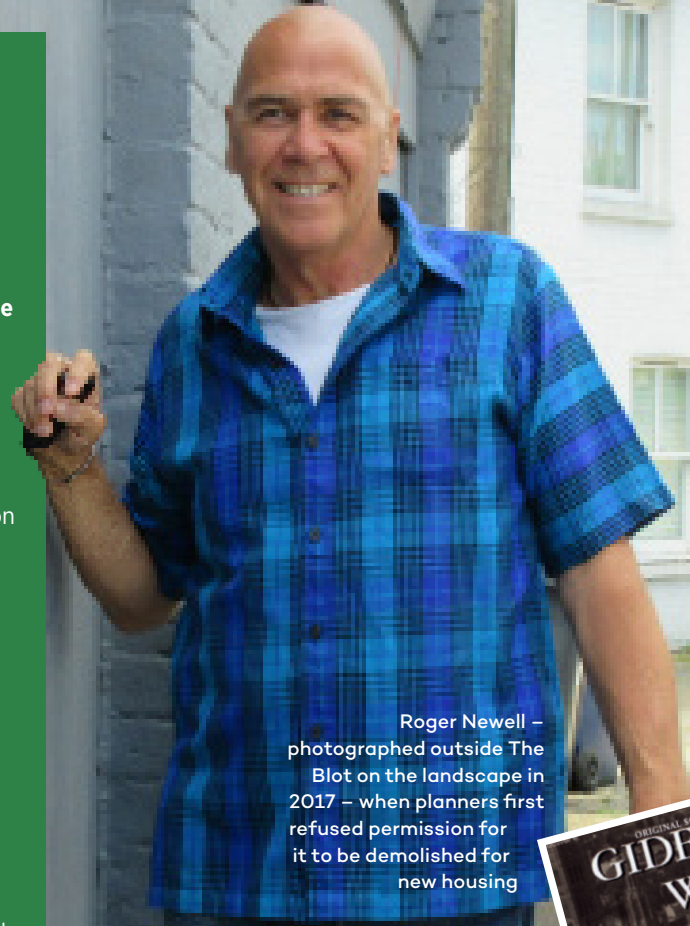
After two unsuccessful planning appeals, Mr Newell is delighted he has finally obtained the go ahead from a planning inspector who dismissed the objections raised by Barnet Council.

"This has been going on for years and I have been so frustrated.

"How could the council continue to refuse applications to remove an eyesore? Thankfully the inspector saw sense and decided that he could not support the council's objections."

The lock-up shop was built in the 1930s by Bunny Rees, who then lived next door at 63 Union Street, and who had an entrance in his hall to his greengrocer's business.

Gideon's Way was a British television crime series based on the novels by John Creasey. It was produced in Elstree Studios and several of the episodes were filmed in Barnet with locations in Ravenscroft Park and St Albans Road as well as Union Street and Coe's Alley.



Roger Newell – photographed outside The Blot on the landscape in 2017 – when planners first refused permission for it to be demolished for new housing



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.

- Chair** John Hay, chair@barnetsociety.org.uk
- Membership Secretary** Kim Ambridge, kimbarnet6@gmail.com, 07974 225 950, membership@barnetsociety.org.uk
- Website** barnetsociety.org.uk
- Correspondence**, The Chair, 4 Hillary Rise, Barnet EN5 5AZ
info@barnetsociety.org.uk
- Editor** Eamonn Rafferty, raffertye@gmail.com
- Designer** Richard Cooke, rtcooke74@gmail.com



ISSN 2755-2861

