

The BARNET SOCIETY

Campaigning for a Better Barnet

Serious doubts over suitability of new proposed Ark academy



Artist's drawing of the only dedicated playground for 600 primary pupils at the proposed new Academy at the former Barnet football club site in Underhill
Copyright Pick Everard Architects

ark
SCHOOLS

Planners and consultants representing the proposed Ark Pioneer Academy to be built on the site of the former stadium of Barnet Football Club insist that a new school for almost 2,000 pupils is needed for the northern part of the Borough of Barnet, write Nick Jones and Robin Bishop

At present many children from the Barnet area opt for schools in Hertfordshire and other nearby London boroughs, and the aim of the academy is to meet this demand, and the future forecast growth in the number of school-age children.

Richard Cornelius, leader of Barnet Council, supports the plan, but has told the Barnet Society (*see report of Q&A pages 6 & 12*) that he accepts that its size and scale will have to be examined with care in view of the likely impact on Underhill, and increased traffic on local roads.

An application for planning permission to build the school was due to have been submitted by mid-September,

and if approval is given, construction work would start early in 2017.

In June, the Barnet Society was shown the latest designs for a new all-age Academy on the former Barnet Football Club and cricket grounds. While we welcome educational use of the sites, particularly if coupled with community access to the Academy's indoor and outdoor sports and other facilities, in our view the current proposal for 1,890 pupils plus 150 or so staff would be an overdevelopment.

We have pressed both Ark and Barnet Council to reconsider both its size and design before a planning application is made later this summer. Here is a summary of the letter we sent to Ark:

- So many pupils and staff, plus parents/carers, would put excessive pressure on surrounding roads and pavements.

We acknowledge efforts to mitigate this through negotiations with the Council, TfL and the Everyman cinema, and would welcome a new cycle path from the south. However, we have

considerable doubt whether these would suffice given present traffic congestion at peak times – which will only get worse as planned housing developments are completed in the locality.

- There is insufficient recreation area, especially for primary pupils.

The total site is less than half the size recommended by the DfE's Building Bulletin 103, and the designated primary outdoor play area is less than half that recommended in BB 99 for a confined site. Nursery children are even worse off: the plan provides about a third of DfE & CABA guidance of at least 500m² for 60 pupils;

Such a drastic reduction would be unworkable.

The proposed staggering of pupil play times would impact on teaching and learning in classes overlooking the play court, even if the classrooms were mechanically ventilated. Ball games in the courtyard would be especially disruptive (and potentially damaging).

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LEADER QUIZZED Richard Cornelius faces hard questions at our AGM **Pages 6 & 12**

PARKING WARS The saga continues as TV's Dom on the Spot joins in **Pages 4 & 5**

EYESORE 141 High St is a good example of ineffective planning controls **Page 10**

From From Page 1

At the very least, a 3-form entry primary school would require a multi-use games court for PE and recreation. Providing just one for the whole Academy means that KS2, 3 & 4 pupils would be lucky to have one timetabled session per week – inadequate for a balanced curriculum, let alone a healthy lifestyle.

- This weakness is compounded by landscape design that lacks a clear rationale or understanding of pupils' educational and recreational needs.
- There is a notable lack, outside and inside the building, of smaller or calmer spaces for shy or vulnerable children and those with special needs to resort to.
- The building design is based largely on DfE standard plans that may work on more expansive sites with choice of access points but do not suit this heavily constrained site.
- An unfortunate result is that the most prominent (north-east) corner of the building is dominated by the kitchen and plant area, whereas the main visitor entrance to the Academy is nearly 100m away - and barely visible - from the street.
- Although distributing pupil entrances around the perimeter is sensible, the lobbies and stairways most of them enter are minimal and not conducive to good behaviour.
- The elevations are disappointing, but at least most of them would be out of view from the street (though not from neighbouring houses).
- Ark's commitment to community access to its facilities is as yet unclear.
- Insufficient information is provided so far about work to, and use of, the former cricket field and pavilion. Restoration of a publicly-accessible cricket ground would be welcome, though not necessarily at the expense of other track and field sports.
- Insufficient priority appears to be given to sustainable design or environmental education. Greater commitment to these would help offset the Academy's impact on the Green Belt.

To sum up, the combined effect of such tight planning, both inside and out – coupled with the difficulty of managing pedestrian and vehicle movement around the site – would stress both Academy and neighbourhood unacceptably, and jeopardise the success and reputation of Ark Pioneer Academy.

A scaled-down proposal could be acceptable, however, and we have offered to discuss this further with Ark. So far they have said merely that they "will endeavour to respond as the plans progress".



Buzz no more: the old Barnet ground in happier days



Virgin Media hopes to be able to offer its ultrafast broadband network to 40,000 homes and businesses across the Borough of Barnet by the end of 2018.

Theresa Villiers, MP for Chipping Barnet, told the Barnet Society that a connection to the network should become available to several thousand properties within her constituency in streets in High Barnet, East Barnet and Friern Barnet.

"This news will be much appreciated by the many households that have complained for so long about slow broadband speeds.

"Virgin Media's network can provide far faster speeds than British Telecom, and the fact that Virgin Media can offer an alternative might put even more pressure on BT to update those telephone cabinets that cannot supply fibre connections."

A recent survey showed that there are 2,649 homes in Mrs Villiers' constituency that do not have a superfast internet speed of more than 24 megabits per second.

Virgin Media announced in July that it is to invest a further £3 billion in extending its ultrafast network.

Work has already started in London: 90,000 premises have been covered so far; a further 38,000 will have access by early 2017; and this will have risen to a total of 400,000 homes and businesses by the end of 2018, including 40,000 in the Borough of Barnet.

Virgin Media claims to offer the fastest widely available speeds in the UK of up to 200 megabits per second for consumers and 300 megabits per second for businesses.

Currently the Virgin Media network covers 2.8 million premises in London and householders wishing to register their interest in a connection should visit www.virginmedia.com/cablemystreet

H&M finally signs up for the Spires



The empty Clinton Cards shop, plus three other units alongside it, are to be replaced with a two-storey H&M fashion store due to open in spring 2017.

After mounting concern about the recent loss of leading retailers, High Barnet's shopping centre has received a shot in the arm: H&M, the leading Swedish fashion chain, has finally signed up to take the lease of a brand new store in the Spires shopping centre.

Four existing retail outlets in the courtyard nearest the High Street are to be replaced with a new two-storey unit that should be ready for opening in the spring to early summer of next year.

Confirmation that H&M is coming to the Spires is a major boost for Hunter Real Estate Investment which manages the shopping mall on behalf a Canadian pension fund, Alberta Investment Management Corporation.

"The news that a major aspirational fashion chain like H&M are opening up in the Spires should send out a message of confidence to other leading retailers about the attractiveness of High Barnet as a shopping destination," said a spokesman for Hunter Real Estate.

"We are already in discussion with other potential clients, and with Waitrose and now together with

H&M as another anchor store, the Spires is a much more attractive draw for shoppers."

Gail Laser, chair of Love Barnet, said she was thrilled with the news. "H&M is one of the most successful international brands offering baby wear up to adult fashion, and hopefully this will be a real draw for other multiples and independents thinking of opening up in High Barnet."

The new 24,000 square foot H&M store will replace the four units that run from Clinton cards to the Card Factory. Contractors have already

been appointed by Hunter Real Estate, and are due to start work at the end of August.

The new store is part of a £7 million upgrade for the Spires that also includes three new restaurants, new paving and courtyard seating areas.

Hunter Real Estate say they are already in discussion with future potential tenants for the new restaurants that are due to be constructed early next year and will be sited at the Waitrose end of the shopping centre.

Other future developments include the possible re-siting of Barnet Market to the paved area beside the Spires' bandstand.

"We are looking at several possibilities regarding the future of both the market and the bandstand area. One idea is whether we could do more to encourage a farmers' market.

"We are also in discussion with Legion car parking about the future operation of the Spires car park which currently closes at 8pm, but might open later once we have built the new restaurants."

Now for the High Street

Chipping Barnet Town Team is a voluntary organisation made up of representatives from local community groups. It aims to regenerate the High Street and will be speaking to local businesses throughout September to see how they can help. The first two main projects for discussion are the pavement 'build out' project and a proposed annual 'Barnet Shopfront Award'.

Motorists are still parking mad in High Barnet

THE AREA'S NOTORIETY AS A HOT SPOT FOR PARKING FINES IS TO BE FEATURED YET AGAIN ON NATIONAL TELEVISION. FOOTAGE FOR A NEW SERIES OF *DOM ON THE SPOT* WAS FILMED IN THE HIGH STREET HIGHLIGHTING BARNET COUNCIL'S REFUSAL TO EVEN CONSIDER A SHORT PERIOD OF FREE PARKING IN ORDER TO HELP LOCAL TRADERS. *NICK JONES REPORTS*



Dominic Littlewood, presenter of the BBC 1 series, was keen to assess the impact of the Barnet Society's long-running campaign for up to an hour's free parking in the 63 spaces along the High Street.

Littlewood, and a crew from the production company Two Four, interviewed a motorist who had just received an on the spot fine for an infraction; talked to a traffic enforcement officer about the difficulties of his job; and met traders who feared that High Barnet was becoming a no-go area for short-stay shopping because of the current difficulties over parking.

Different offences that people can be fined for are all being discussed in the new series, but a visit to High Barnet topped the list when it came to examining the plight of motorists who end up being fined on the spot.

Gail Laser of Love Barnet, and vice-chair of the Barnet Society, told Mr Littlewood of the growing sense of despair among local people and shopkeepers at Barnet Council's continued refusal to consider any relaxation of the parking regime which was introduced four years ago, when cash meters were replaced with a system that relies on pay-by-phone or credit card payments.

The previous evening at a question-and-answer session,

Councillor Richard Cornelius, the council leader, told the Society that an hour's free parking in High Streets across the borough would cost the authority £3 million a year in lost revenue, and a change of policy would mean increasing the bill for council taxpayers.

Among the traders filmed for Dom on the Spot was Mirror Mad in St Albans Road, where the proprietor Steve Broughton has provided space for Ken Rowland's vinyl record business, Slim's Records.

Mr Rowland opened his business last November and is finding potential customers are being frightened off by an incomprehensible parking system and the threat of on-the-spot fines.

Mr Broughton, who established Mirrormad 20 years ago, estimated that his trade had dropped by 40% because of difficulties over parking.

Mr Littlewood and his crew soon had first-hand experience. Outside the Victoria Bakery he met Dave Williams, who had just returned to his car and had received a £55 parking fine for stopping for ten minutes to buy a £1 record in a nearby charity shop.

Mr Williams had stopped on a bay that does permit 15

(Left to right) Dominic Littlewood, presenter of *Dom on the Spot*, interviews motorist Dave Williams who had been fined £55 for overstaying.

A sympathetic ear for once as a traffic enforcement officer describes to Dominic the abuse he has to endure after issuing on-the-spot fines.

Gail Laser giving Dominic the rundown on local traders' frustration over the difficulties shoppers face trying to park in the High Street



minutes' free parking between 10am and 4pm, but his stay was over the 4pm time limit. Outside the British Heart Foundation shop, a traffic enforcement officer had just issued a ticket to another motorist who had not paid to park.

He said he had grown used to being shouted at by angry motorists, but didn't like it when the abuse was extended to his wife and family.

"Motorists don't understand I'm doing a job for the community. I enjoy helping people who might need assistance with parking, or advice on how to pay, but I don't enjoy the swearing.

The enforcement officer denied being under pressure from the parking enforcement company to impose as many fines as possible. "No, I don't have to reach a target for fines...I don't get more money depending on how many fines I issue." *Dom on the Spot is due to be shown in September*

Hospital congestion spurs calls for huge CPZ extension

A residents' survey has indicated that a majority would like to see action taken by Barnet Council to restrict uncontrolled parking and traffic congestion caused by the recent expansion of services at Barnet Hospital.

Roads in a wide area around the hospital are increasingly being filled by the vehicles of staff, outpatients and visitors who wish to avoid paying the charges imposed in the hospital's own car parks.

Local householders were asked in May and June for their views on proposals for a possible massive extension to High Barnet's controlled parking zone.

The area covered by the parking review extends from the existing town centre CPZ all the way westwards, on both sides of Wood Street and Barnet Road, to Quinta Drive.

A new zone - double the size of the existing Chipping Barnet CPZ -- would include roads to the north as far as Old Fold View and Galley Lane; roads to the south as far as Whitings Road; and roads to the east to Leecroft Road.

Letters were hand delivered to approximately 2,000 homes in the area, and the Chipping Barnet Area Committee was told that a majority of those who responded were not happy with the current parking situation.

A total of 423 questionnaires were returned (a response rate of 21%).

The key findings were:

54% were not happy with the parking situation.

43% find it difficult to park.

60% would like parking issues to be further investigated.

Council officials have been asked to do further analysis of the responses and comments, to see whether there is consistent demand for action across the

area or whether concern is concentrated in certain areas.

There will be a report back to the committee in October when further consideration will be given to the possibility of extending the CPZ.

If roads were included in a new CPZ, resident parking bays and yellow line waiting restrictions would be marked on the street, and residents wishing to park in the residents' bays would need to purchase a valid permit.

Pressure for the CPZ to be extended has come from residents in the roads closest to the hospital, and especially in streets to the north of Wood Street and Barnet Road where there is additional uncontrolled parking caused by the vehicles of pupils and parents at Queen Elizabeth's Boys School.

At the busiest times of the day there is considerable congestion when coaches and mini-buses are dropping off and collecting pupils.

To the south of Wood Street and Barnet Road, ambulances and the fast response cars of para-medics approaching and leaving Barnet Hospital have to cope with congested roads such as Wellhouse Lane and Elmbank Avenue.

Parked vehicles restrict the flow of traffic and anger residents who struggle to gain access to their properties because of the cars parked by outpatients rushing to appointments or parents waiting for their children.

Residents fear there will be further pressure on parking spaces in and around Galley Lane and Elmbank Avenue once Linden Homes has completed the construction of 114 new homes on the site of the former nurses' homes at Elmbank.

When Linden Homes obtained planning permission, the developers promised to contribute to a traffic survey in the area.

Nick Jones

Council leader under the spotlight



A hard-hitting question and answer session with the leader of Barnet Council, Richard Cornelius (pictured left), was a chance for Barnet Society members to air their grievances.

His responses did include several undertakings and assurances on key issues of local concern.

Councillor Cornelius insisted that the council shared the fears of local residents about the size and impact of the large new school proposed for the site of Barnet Football Club's former stadium at Underhill. He also gave an undertaking to support the bid to obtain financial assistance from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help meet the cost of Barnet Museum's project to investigate and promote the site of the 1471 Battle of Barnet. But there was no good news on other long-standing complaints:



Barnet Council has no intention of allowing a short period of free parking in High Streets across the borough, nor does it intend to intervene over the urgent need for more parking spaces at Barnet Hospital.

Nicholas Jones, chair of Barnet Society, hosted the Q&A and grouped together members' questions to ensure sufficient time for each subject. This report of the proceedings is by the Society's minutes secretary, Frances Wilson.

NJ stressed that the Society was a non-political organisation that campaigned for a better Barnet and the protection of the Green Belt. He said that although Barnet was the second-largest London borough, residents felt the town was neglected by the council.

RC thanked the Society for the invitation and insisted that Chipping Barnet was definitely not neglected. The town had a feisty MP fighting its causes and local councillors did reflect residents' views. The council listened and responded, and did want Barnet's shopping centre to succeed. The main problems were the high rents for retail premises and changing shopping practices, with more people going online.

Barnet Museum and Battle of Barnet

NJ asked why Barnet Council had thwarted every effort to expand the museum, and had even refused permission for a disabled access.

RC said the lease for the Wood Street building had only just been agreed after years of negotiation and he was sure things would now move forward.

NJ asked why the council had made no effort to support the Battle of Barnet project and the current investigation to determine the site of such an important event in the town's history. Other Wars of the Roses' battlefields such as Tewkesbury had become tourist destinations. Barnet Museum was finalising an application for £100,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. In response to an appeal for match funding, Barnet Society had donated £250 and Love Barnet £100. **Why had Barnet Council shown no interest whatsoever in this local initiative? Would Councillor Cornelius give a personal pledge of support as leader of the Council?**

RC said he was pleased to give that undertaking. If he was contacted by Barnet Museum, he would write a letter of support (a promise that the Museum said was honoured within days).

Parking

NJ said the Society had been campaigning for the last three years for half an hour of free parking in the High Street in order to encourage trade. **Why did Barnet Council fail to understand the plight of small, independent retailers in High Streets across the borough and refuse to make any concession?**

RC said that a free parking concession would cost the council £3 million a year in lost revenue and that would have to be found from council tax income. The council could not treat High Streets in the borough differently and the evidence suggested targets for the use of High Street parking spaces were being met.

Gail Laser of Love Barnet said Whetstone had both on-street and off-street free parking which encouraged visitors.

RC did not deny this, and acknowledged that spaces were always occupied. He said the council tried to ensure that paid-for street parking spaces were 80% full, and this target was being met.

NJ said that 18 months ago the Society asked for a print-out of the figures to prove this was so, but was still waiting for them.

RC said he would investigate to see what had happened.

Question from the floor: Harrow has introduced 20 minutes' free parking. Why cannot Barnet make a similar gesture?

RC repeated the point that any concession would have to be financed from council tax, a step the council was not prepared to take.

Question: As meters do not accept cash, why can't the council accept that people don't like paying by phone or credit card?

RC appreciated that point, but said scratch cards could be purchased at the library. When members insisted no-one was aware of that, he said that perhaps the council could put up stickers to that effect on meters and lamp posts.

Barnet Hospital parking

Question: Was there a strategic plan for parking provision when Barnet Hospital took on the workload of Chase Farm's accident & emergency department?

(Continued Back Page)

From the House of Commons to the cabinet

After a career switch from his previous job as a political researcher, an aspiring High Barnet furniture and cabinet maker is gaining recognition at a series of craft and design shows.

Pieces produced by Richard Warmisham were on display at the recent Living Crafts Show at Hatfield House, and his hand-crafted bureau de l'agent console desk and an Origami-style coffee table and magazine rack were featured in August at the annual exhibition of the Society of Designer Craftsmen at the Mall Galleries.

Mr Warmisham, who lives at Ravenscroft Park, and has a workshop at Waltham Abbey, says he gave up a well-paid job in political research at the House of Commons in order to study fine furniture making and design.

In 2013 he began an 18-month course training with designer Marc Fish and returned to Barnet in the summer of 2015 to launch his business (www.madeby68.com)

He chose the name bureau de l'agent for his console desk - currently on sale for £6,000 - because it has hidden compartments that would have been used by a secret agent, but in a modern usage provide storage space for laptop computers and iPads.

"I describe it as a modern art deco inspired piece, and it is multi-purpose. It could be used as a desk, stand in the hall or sitting room, or perhaps find a place in the bedroom.

“My father was a baker, and I wanted to be more creative, and do something with my hands, so I decided to leave the rat race and change careers

Richard Warmisham with examples of some of his work, priced from £250 to £6,000

"Each surface of the desk has a story to tell: the carved legs, in art deco style, are in a fumed oak veneer; the desk surfaces are in full-grain leather; the front of the drawer is crafted from preserved English bog oak; and the sides of the drawer are made from rippled sycamore."

Mr Warmisham's Origami-style coffee table, which is available as a limited edition and costs £2,000, is made from English ash. "The table, with its surfaces and legs, looks like a folded piece of paper, and across the centre is what could be a magazine rack."

Another piece, his Vinci stool, costing £250, doubles up as a side table or magazine rack. It is made from oak from Witney in Oxfordshire and American black walnut.

Mr Warmisham recently sold one of his Origami-style tables to an architect in London, and as a result of the Hatfield House show, is preparing designs for a dining table with 12 chairs, and a sideboard, within a potential budget of £20,000.

"There is a very strong market for bespoke furniture. Viscount Linley is one of the UK's most prominent furniture designers, so it is an understatement to say that competition is fierce. My ambition is to come up with some spectacular pieces."



BRAKE SHEAR HOUSE
164 HIGH STREET,
BARNET, EN5 5XP

Planning Application Number: **16/2466/FUL**

Proposed view of central square from the High Street

Wrenbridge Land, applying as PCDFIII (Barnet) LLP, has applied for the redevelopment of Brake Shear House into a mixed-use scheme creating new affordable and flexible B1 employment space and 40 new residential units, including eight semi-detached homes and 32 apartments with car and cycle parking, landscaping and associated works.

The scheme has been designed to meet the objectives of the Council's Planning Brief, which was adopted by London Borough of Barnet in March 2016. The Planning Brief outlines the Council's aspirations for the Brake Shear House site and provides the vision for future transformation. The scheme fully meets the mixed-use objectives set out in the Brief as well as according with the policies of the London Borough of Barnet Core Strategy 2012 and the 2015 Borough of Barnet Development Management Policies 2012 and the 2015 London Plan with Minor Alterations 2016; Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London.

MORROW LORRAINE **WRENBRIDGE**

It all ends well for Brake Shear developers

Barnet Council's planning committee decided unanimously to approve the demolition of Brake Shear House, off Barnet High Street, and for the redevelopment of the site to provide 40 homes and new employment space.

All remaining tenants of the existing workshops are due to have moved out by January 2017 when the developers, Wrenbridge Land, expect to start clearing the site ready for construction.

The 40 homes will include eight semi-detached family houses and 32 apartments on three floors, together with 35 car parking spaces and 52 secure places for cycles.

As part of the development there will also be 656 square metres of floor space for workshops and other employment.

Wrenbridge say the workspace will be flexible to accommodate both light industry and offices, dependent on need, with sufficient room to employ at least 44 to 54 people.

Part of the workspace will be affordable and offered below market rates, marketed via local estate agents, with the hope of attracting start-ups or charities.

Keep the (old) motor runnin'...

The annual show in the market has once again highlighted the enduring love affair people have with old vehicles and has become a showcase event for the increasingly popular Barnet Classic Car Club, *writes Nick Jones*

Thirty cars assemble each May beside the market, and around the Spires bandstand, providing an engrossing spectacle for classic car enthusiasts.

The club, now in its third year, has 45 members, a newsletter produced by the club's organiser Owen Jones, and a busy programme of events.

Because the show is restricted to the market and bandstand, there has to be a limit of 30 of the number that can be on display each year.

On the morning of the show cars assemble at the Barnet playing fields car park and then drive up Barnet Hill at 30-second intervals. Chris Nightingale, chairman of the Friends of Barnet Market, and other committee members guide the cars to their display positions.

Mr Jones says classic cars are much appreciated by younger drivers who like to see these vehicles out on the road, as most of them were built long before they were born.

"Lots of people are fascinated by these older cars, especially those who recall them as familiar sights on the roads in their earlier days.

"The annual display at the market is always great fun, and as you can imagine the owners love to talk about their precious vehicles to whoever is willing to listen.

"These classic cars do have a simple charm. They are so different in their engineering and workings from the breathtakingly efficient cars of today, with their on-board engine management systems.

"Another great attraction of the classic car is that a great deal of the maintenance can be carried out by the owner without recourse to a computer to interrogate the management software.

"Engines, gearboxes, suspension systems and so on are invariably simpler and much more accessible than with modern cars," said Mr Jones.

In addition to the classic car show at the market, the club has several meetings a year, at the Crooked Billet in the summer months and in the library of the Duke of York in the winter.

Such is the popularity of the club's meetings that there is often standing room only.

Mr Jones paid tribute to Chris and Diane Nightingale and other committee members of the Friends of Barnet Market who put so much effort into the annual show.



Three special cars sharing the spotlight at the third classic car show organised by Friends of Barnet Market: Jon and Janine Richard's Nash Metropolitan; Beverley Green's Morris Minor Convertible; and Lewis Green's V8 Daimler



Barnet Museum volunteers Margaret Luck (left) and Pat Alison examine pottery and masonry fragments from the site of what was once the hamlet of Kitts End

Insight into lost hamlet of Kitts End

Fragments of pottery and tiles found during an excavation of land within Wrotham Park has confirmed that the hamlet of Kitts End did exist during the 1471 Battle of Barnet – and that in fact there was probably habitation there as early as the 11th century.

Finds from eight test pits that were dug in May have now been washed and cleaned at Barnet Museum, and verified with the help of experts at the British Museum and the Museum of London.

The pieces of broken pottery, tiles and masonry seem to indicate that there was a settlement at Kitts End throughout the medieval period, from the 11th to the 15th century, and that therefore it might well have been the closest habitation to the Battle of Barnet.

Sam Wilson, a military archaeologist from Huddersfield University, who is leading the survey and excavation to locate the precise site of the battlefield, thinks that what became one of the grisliest confrontations of the Wars of the Roses might possibly have taken place in the rolling fields between Kitts End Lane and what is now the main road to St Albans.

With the help of a team of volunteers, he dug a series of test pits inside an ornamental plantation that stretches to the western boundary of Wrotham Park.

In the mid-1800s the Byng family expanded their estate, and the land that was cleared included the

remains of a cluster of hostelries, inns and houses at Kitts End, midway between Barnet and South Mymms, alongside what was then the original road to St Albans.

Maps from the 1750s show there were a dozen or more properties in the hamlet, but the land is now the Wrotham Park pinetum and includes cedars, sequoias and Scots pines, all said to be at least 150 years old.

For the volunteers assisting Mr Wilson, the chance to help with the Battle of Barnet project by digging test pits and searching for early building material was a chance not to be missed.

Despite having chosen a wet day, an all-women team tackled the dig with gusto. Susan Gough, almost up to her waist in one pit, said “We have been taking it in turns to dig and then sift the earth, and it’s great feeling to think I am part of this investigation. I have always wanted to go on an archaeological excavation.”

Kirsty Johnstone, a member of the Barnet Society, said it was so important to local people to get behind the Battle of Barnet project.

“If this archaeological project was taking place anywhere else but the London Borough of Barnet, it would be massive. But when we have a local council that won’t even offer any help whatsoever to Barnet Museum, we know that it’s up to us to show that the people Barnet do actually care about their history and heritage.”

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DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Barnet Society hosts a question and answer session with Theresa Villiers, MP for Chipping Barnet, at 3pm on Friday 20 January, 2017

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to Ms Harriman, Ms Davidson, Dr Koukoutas, Ms Treadwell, Mr Bridges, Mr and Mrs Kenny, Mrs Skiffington, Mr O’Connor, Mrs Dew, Mrs Cowley and Ms Lay.

Thank you to those who have already paid your subscription for 2016. Others should have received renewal notices.

Membership applications can be made at: <http://barnetsociety.org.uk>

Teresa Kelly



Planning and Environment Report

Robin Bishop on the issues that concern the Society

The courtyard arrangement approved five years ago for Noah's Ark Children's Hospice has been superseded by an X-shape, with a communal hub and arms extending into the landscape. We support the concept, but it infringes the Green Belt and reduces parking and disabled access to the Barnet Environment Centre.

We have met Noah's Ark and suggested design improvements, but it's unclear how far these will be acted upon before the planning application goes in.

Another important case is Ravenscroft Cottages, Potters Lane - some of Barnet's delightful almshouses - where last year seven more cottages were proposed. We suggested redistributing them on the site to lessen their impact.

Now the Jesus Hospital Charity has submitted a new proposal with two more cottages than before. We will have to examine it closely: it may be acceptable, but only if enough of the landscape is retained.

Other recent residential proposals have been much less satisfactory.

The roof extension at 141 High Street

(on the High Street/St.Albans Road corner) is a salutary lesson in the value of technical homework before applying for planning permission.

A couple of years ago a proposal was approved to add flats on the roof, respecting the curvature, horizontality and window proportions of the existing building below. A crudely constructed and poorly proportioned appendage then appeared, quite unlike the approved design. The existing building couldn't carry the new load without unforeseen reinforcement and bracing, so the original design was unbuildable.

The developer has now applied for retrospective approval. The built extension is so conspicuous and alien to the original building and its surroundings that we have objected.

At 108-112A High Street, the 1950s zig-zag façade would be no great loss, and its proposed replacement is acceptable. But we have objected to the design of the flats above the shops.

33 Park Road is a block of three flats in a quiet suburban street. It's proposed to add three behind, a penthouse on top and two more above garages - tripling the number on the site. We have objected to this gross overdevelopment.



Sorry site: Crudely constructed

We have also objected to several developments within the Monken Hadley Conservation Area, including demolition of existing houses in favour of much bigger replacements and cramming new homes onto tiny sites.

However, two applications we opposed in Sunset View - the unique early 20th century street of Arts & Crafts houses by local architect, W.C.Waymouth - have been refused permission. One was for an oversized extension to No.7, the other for replacement of No.14 by a much larger house.

I'm also pleased that planning permission has been granted for 164 High Street (Brake Shear House - covered on Page 7).

A year on, we're still awaiting a decision on the Old Fold Manor Golf Club re-landscaping. But Historic England has withdrawn its objections following Battle of Barnet site investigations, and the controversial mounding along St.Albans Road is now to be one metre lower than originally proposed.

Among many ongoing enforcement sagas are 1 Church Passage (Guns'n'Smoke) and 156 Hendon Wood Lane (an illegal builders yard on the Green Belt).

Unexpectedly, Barnet Council has agreed funding for High Street pavement build-outs, and designs are being prepared for consultation.

Finally, a couple of significant changes have been made to the Council's Parks and Open Spaces Strategy - thanks partly to our critique of the draft last spring and subsequent lobbying of Richard Cornelius. Spaces deemed "low quality, low value" will no longer be considered for other purposes. And Area Action Plans have been abandoned in favour of more generic ones supporting such aims as regeneration, entrepreneurship, community safety, learning, health and community cohesion. The only specific action identified on our patch is to "complete the...Green Grid Dollis Valley project" by 2020, which we will watch closely.

DRAWING ON THEIR EXPERIENCES OF LIFE

Barnet Guild of Artists' 68th annual exhibition at Pennefather Hall

'Well over 300 people attended the preview of the Barnet Guild of Artists' 68th annual exhibition held for two weeks in late July and early August at Christ Church, St Albans Road.

Pennefather Hall was packed to hear the chair Nichola Peasnell open the show and thank members for having produced another magnificent display of paintings, pottery, sculpture, glass and textiles.

Guests included the Chipping Barnet MP Theresa Villiers who was among the admirers of Staithes Sunrise, an oil painting by Chris Baker, that had

been chosen for the poster promoting the exhibition.

Staithes harbour, in North Yorkshire, has long been a favourite with artists, having been the home of the group known as the 'Northern Impressionists', and is all the more popular because its most famous resident was Captain Cook.

Another harbour scene that captured attention was a watercolour of Mevagissey, Cornwall, by Barbara Gladding, a guild member for the last 12 years, who started painting at of 13.

After failing the 11-plus exam, Ms Gladding enrolled

at the former Willesden Technical College of Art where she studied technical art until she was 18.

"In those days Willesden Technical College offered a wonderful education. The girls mostly did technical art and drawing, and boys enrolled for either the building or engineering. We had a great time together."

Her painting of Mevagissey harbour was based on a photograph and took 40 hours to complete. "I even stayed up all night, from 1pm in the afternoon until 7am next morning to finish the painting in time for the exhibition."



Nichola Peasnell and Theresa Villiers (above). (Right) Barbara Gladding (in the centre), with her watercolour of Mevagissey, With her are friends, Elaine Padmore and Grant Shelley. (Top right) Chris Baker and his wife Jill

Council leader answers questions



Richard Cornelius. Full transcript on web

(Continued from Page) 6

RC said Barnet was powerless to intervene. The Royal Free Hospital Trust had resisted providing more parking at Barnet. People should write direct to the Royal Free Trust to take up their complaints. RC accepted that the proposed extension to the controlled parking zone to the north and south of Wood Street and Barnet Road was likely to exacerbate the problem, and the council was currently consulting local residents.

Ark Pioneer Academy, Underhill

NJ read out questions regarding the proposal to build a new academy school for 1,890 pupils on the site of Barnet Football Club's former stadium at Underhill. Members disputed the need for a massive new school because the nearby Totteridge Academy was undersubscribed. There was also concern about the resulting chaos from extra traffic in Barnet Lane, Mays Lane and at the junction with Barnet Hill.

RC was sympathetic to the argument that the proposed school was too big but if Barnet Council turned down the planning application, the likelihood was it would be approved by the Planning Inspectorate. Councillors would do their best to try to mitigate the problems that had been raised.

Public toilets

Question: Why was Barnet so poorly provided with public conveniences?

RC said ongoing maintenance was a problem. Some toilets had recently been refurbished and re-opened, but had then been vandalised shortly afterwards.

Libraries

NJ asked about the future of the libraries, and the proposal to reduce the level of service.

RC said that he personally would like to keep all the libraries open, but they were too costly. Some staff would be replaced by volunteers who would be offered training, and who were enthusiastic. He said he too had been sceptical but there were now two community libraries, in Hampstead Garden Suburb and Friern Barnet; they were proving successful; and this model would be used elsewhere. In response to a question about failure of the library computer service, which had been out of action for some months, he said the system was now fully operational.

Outsourcing services to Capita

NJ asked why there were so many complaints about Capita's performance.

RC said the outsourcing had saved the council £12m a year. Services provided by Capita included human resources, pay roll, accounts and planning. He said the planning department's website had improved and applications were being dealt with quicker than they used to be. Legal work had been outsourced to Harrow and again the service was better.

Question: Was there a conflict of interest bearing in mind that in some cases Capita was the developer, and was also responsible for running the planning department.

RC said there were Chinese walls to prevent a conflict of interest, but any examples of irregularity should be emailed to him with an explanation of the problems that had been encountered.

Election of London Mayor

NJ asked about the shambles over the mayoral election resulting from the wrong lists being sent polling stations, and people being unable to vote for the first few hours. Was Capita to blame for this error?

RC said the conduct of elections was too important to outsource and that the mistake had been made in house by Barnet Council. It had been an extremely poor show and the director responsible had resigned. RC was confident there would be no repeat in the European Referendum.

Council tax

NJ asked if there were plans to lift the freeze on council tax.

RC justified the policy: Barnet residents had

not faced an increase in council tax for the last six years, and he hoped the policy could continue at least in the short term

High Street

Question: As there were already 35 eateries along Barnet High Street, why were there proposals to build another three restaurants in the Spires shopping centre?

RC said habits were changing and people ate out more. The Council had no say over the type of shops and businesses in the town centre.

Cycling

Question: Why was the council failing to encourage cyclists?

RC acknowledged cyclists' frustration, but problems had been experienced with the London super highway, which had added to congestion, but cyclists were not using it.

Marie Foster Home, Wood Street

Question: Why was the council failing to take action over the derelict Marie Foster property?

RC agreed the building had now been empty for years, but the council could not serve a compulsory purchase order on another public service, in this case the National Health Service.

Broadband

Question: Why had Barnet Council failed to put pressure of British Telecom to deliver high-speed broadband.

RC agreed that broadband speeds were a problem, as he knew from personal experience in Totteridge. He had fully supported the campaign by Theresa Villiers to force BT to take action.

