

The BARNET SOCIETY

Campaigning for a Better Barnet

Concerns over gated development

16 businesses will be forced to move out of the site behind the High Street to allow for 43 new homes

Plans for a five-storey block of flats and a three-storey office block are the main features of an extensive residential and commercial redevelopment that will reshape the townscape behind shops in Barnet High Street.

The Brake Shear House redevelopment, on the other side of the High Street to the Spires Shopping Centre, will be accessed via a new approach road opposite the junction with the St Albans Road.

Cakez Cafe, a recently refurbished coffee shop, will be demolished to allow wider

Developers Wrenbridge say their aim is to provide imaginative, well-designed homes and are confident of delivering 'excellent' housing

access to what will become a gated community of 43 homes made up of eight semi-detached houses and a block of 35 one- and two-bedroom flats.

The new block of flats will be on land to the rear of the Misty Moon public house, and the new 7,000 square foot commercial block, offering space for up to 57 employees, will be built at the rear of Ladbrokes and the Tanning Shop.

Clearing the land ready for building will involve demolishing not only Brake Shear

Brake Shear House will be one of several buildings to be demolished under the plans



House but also several other workshops and light-industrial premises.

Among the 16 businesses that will have to move out if the developers Wrenbridge secure planning approval are two printers, a sheet-metal works, two recording studios, a garage and other small concerns.

According to figures obtained by Wrenbridge, a total of 32 employees will be displaced. This is fewer than the figure estimated by the 16 businesses involved, which claimed over 100 people were either directly employed on the site or made occasional use of stores and workshops.

Plans and drawings showing the

redevelopment were on public exhibition on Saturday 21 November at the Barnet College Tudor Hall in Wood Street (10 a.m. to 1 p.m.), where representatives of Wrenbridge explained the proposals and answered questions.

Jeff Wilson, a director of Wrenbridge, told the Barnet Society that the company's aim was to provide imaginative and well-designed homes. High-quality materials would be used, and Wrenbridge was confident it could deliver "an excellent piece of new-build housing". Within the site, which would have an automatic gate at the entrance, would be parking spaces for

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Page 3 - Parking review

Council finally agrees to look at parking charges along the High Street following a long-fought campaign by Barnet Society

Page 5 - Back in business

The delightful 89 shop which brightened up the High Street has moved to Union Street, but has lost none of its charm

Page 12 - Dr Gillian Gear

Stalwart of the Barnet Museum has sadly passed away after illness, but her legacy will live on for generations to come

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36 cars, and also storage for cycles.

Because there would no longer be heavy goods vehicles regularly using the three existing approaches to the Brake Shear House site, Wrenbridge believes the redevelopment will reduce traffic in the High Street at peak times.

"We hope to have submitted our detailed plans by the end of the year, and if approval and other clearances are obtained by the spring, we would hope to start work in the late summer or early autumn of 2016," said Mr Wilson.

J-J Lorraine, architect for the project, said there would be "high-quality" space between the row of semi-detached houses and the block of flats. "We want it to be an active space, not just a car park. There will be life there, people arriving on bicycles, a place to sit out, and the area will be properly landscaped and planted with trees."

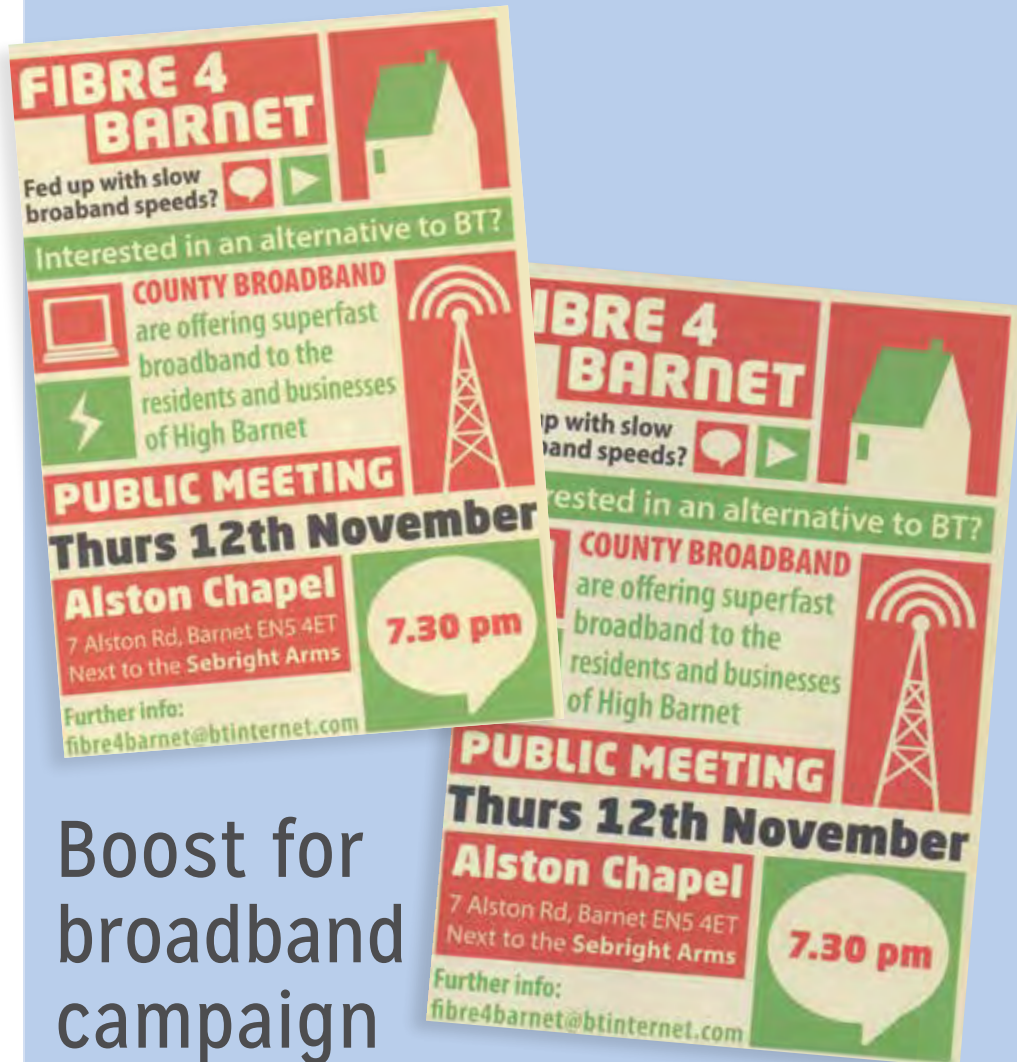
The demolition of Brake Shear House and the loss of affordable workspace for light industry and smaller firms involved in activities like metalworking and printing, and also new businesses such as recording studios, is one of the issues, that the Barnet Society intends to address.

Wrenbridge says there will be negotiations with Barnet Council over the level of either "affordable housing or affordable workspace". In this case, providing space for new start-up companies might be seen by the Society as having priority in view of the difficulties existing businesses are facing as more offices and workshops are converted into flats and houses.

Robin Bishop, chair of the Society's planning and environment group, says "Much more detail and tuning of the concept design will be needed before we can support the proposal, but it is encouraging that the developer seems keen to consult us."

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Boost for broadband campaign

A possible scheme to deliver superfast broadband to High Barnet via a wireless network was greeted enthusiastically at a meeting of local residents, many of whom offered immediate pledges towards raising the £16,000 needed to fund the installation.

County Broadband, of Aldham, Essex, has 10 years' experience in supplying superfast broadband to rural communities, often via masts on church towers or steeples, or other high buildings.

James Salmon, one of the company's project engineers, told a packed meeting at Alston Chapel, in Alston Road (12.11.2015), that a survey of the area had shown that for an initial start-up investment of £16,000 it could supply superfast broadband to 360 homes and businesses in High Barnet.

Depending on demand, the infrastructure supporting the service could easily be extended, and Mr Salmon believes that a wireless network would not only meet the needs of the 3,000 properties in High Barnet that do not currently have a superfast connection, but also provide far faster speeds than are being provided at present by British Telecom and other service providers.

Ken Rowland, co-ordinator of the Fibre4Barnet campaign (fibre4barnet@btinternet.com), who organised the meeting, said he was overwhelmed by the response. "I expected a dozen or so people, and we had over 40. It was standing room only."

He was also delighted by the response towards raising the £16,000 start-up cost, a sum that County Broadband would repay once the scheme was up and running and householders had signed up.

Within a few minutes a total of £1,000 had been pledged, including one promise of £500, and that was in addition to an earlier pledge of a loan of £2,500.

Mr Rowland said the aim now would be raise the full amount by crowd source funding.

"We know there are countless householders and businesses in the area around the High Street, St Albans Road, Stapyilton Road and Alston Road, to name but a few, who are desperate for a superfast connection, so I am sure we can raise the money."



Barnet Society wins High Street parking review

BARNET COUNCIL HAS FINALLY AGREED TO REVIEW ITS PARKING CHARGES ALONG BARNET HIGH STREET FOLLOWING A CAMPAIGN BY THE BARNET SOCIETY ON BEHALF OF LOCAL RESIDENTS, SHOPPERS AND TRADERS, WRITES NICK JONES

For months on end, the council has refused to take any notice of the Society's plea for a short period of free parking - from 30 minutes to an hour - in order to help the High Street compete with nearby shopping centres, where there are no parking restrictions.

However, a review of parking charges has now been agreed by the council's environment committee.

Previously the committee's chairman, Councillor Dean Cohen, had insisted that the new charging system was working smoothly:

- + Motorists were happy to pay by phone or use credit cards in parking meters that once took cash.
- + Most of the High Street's parking spaces were well used.
- + Therefore there was no justification for a short period of free parking.

High Barnet's complaint that its town centre is being penalised by a repressive parking regime achieved national prominence in September in the latest series of ITV's *Parking Wars*.

The programme followed the progress of the Society's campaign to force the council to change its mind. A petition backed by 2,104 signatures was handed to the environment committee at its March meeting by the Society's honorary secretary, Jonathan Supran.

The slide into indifference

Parking in Barnet has become such a contentious issue over the past few years, highlighting just how slovenly and indifferent the council has become on the matter. From broken promises, to ill-informed officials, we've had the lot. At least two of the councillors for the ward seem to do absolutely nothing, put in as place people, undermining the principle of representation, which our ancestors fought long and hard to have. But parking is just one of a plethora of issues that the council seems unable to comprehend. There was a time when these things mattered, but not anymore. We suppose we ought to be glad that they somehow manage to empty the bins - though don't count on it.



Nick Jones, Barnet Society chair, arguing the case for free parking on ITV's Parking Wars, shown recently

Anna Slater, chief reporter of the Barnet Times, presented a second petition, backed by 5,000 signatures, that called for an hour's free parking in high streets across the borough.

All told there are 63 parking spaces along the High Street between High Barnet tube station and Hadley Green, and the Society's argument in support of a free period of parking is that there are often empty spaces away from the centre of the High Street.

At the March committee meeting, Cllr Cohen claimed there was an 85 per cent usage of the High Street parking bays and the three council-owned car parks. After this was disputed by the Society, Cllr Cohen promised to supply the Society with a breakdown of car-parking transactions within two weeks.

Seven months have elapsed, yet the council has failed to supply any further information, and there has been no sign of a detailed breakdown.

The Society hopes the promised review of parking in the High Street might finally demonstrate that better use could be made of the 63 spaces.

The review promised by the environment committee into parking charges has raised uncertainty about the status of a separate feasibility study by the highways committee into plans (backed by the Society) for a series of build-outs aimed at creating extra pavement space along the High Street and improving its appearance.

Progress with this review appears to have stalled, and could conflict with the charging review as council officials have suggested that pavement build-outs along the High Street might mean the loss of up to nine parking spaces and loading bays.

Watch Barnet Society members arguing the case for free parking in the High Street in ITV's documentary Parking Wars: <http://www.barnetsociety.org.uk/component/k2/parking-wars>

It had to 'appen sometime - now you can ramble round Barnet with smartphone app

WALKERS WHO HAVE ENJOYED FOLLOWING THE POPULAR TRAILS FEATURED IN THE BARNET SOCIETY'S RAMBLES ROUND BARNET GUIDES ARE NOW BEING OFFERED STEP-BY-STEP OUTDOOR GUIDANCE AND NARRATION INSTRUCTIONS ON AN APP THAT IS AVAILABLE FREE ON SMARTPHONES.

Guidance about the footpaths to take on three of the most popular rambles can now be listened to while walking via the Geotourist app and website, www.geotourist.com, an educational social media platform for location-specific audio being developed by a newly-established Barnet company.

Geotourist is the brainchild of a Shaon Talukder, a Barnet resident, who is eager to ensure that his home town is one of the first to benefit from this technological breakthrough.

Well over a hundred tours, in locations across the UK and in the rest of the world are already on offer on the app and he believes Geotourist's help in promoting walks around Barnet is an ideal way to present and share local knowledge. Shaon, who has lived in Barnet since the early 1980s, went to school at Underhill and Christ's College, Finchley.

Installing this innovative free app takes only a few seconds, and once uploaded to a smartphone a walker's location is picked up and registered by GPS data and gives an instant link to the recordings and nearby descriptions.

Owen Jones, who was the inspiration behind the Society's two rambles booklets, has narrated a podcast for the three walks that are now being made available. As well as providing instructions, he gives the listener information about local landmarks and other points of interest along the way.

"Our aim is to provide a step-by-step guide on the best routes to follow while at the same time explaining the local topography and history.

"These footpaths were surveyed for the Barnet Society precisely seventy years ago by Mr E H Lucas and are all set out in the two editions of Rambles Round Barnet.

"Now we are hoping to encourage a new generation of walkers to experience the delights of the footpaths running through the Green Belt around Chipping Barnet.

"We know from the Paper Shop in the High Street that some local residents who buy Rambles Round Barnet do not actually go on the walks, but enjoy reading about the local countryside. Now they have the opportunity to hear a description of the walks via their smartphones, personal computer or laptop and they can see the wonderful pictures that have been loaded on to the Geotourist app and website."

Owen Jones has prepared a short guide to help walkers access the Geotourist app for the three walks for which recordings are available:

1. Hadley Green, Hadley Common and Hadley Woods (2 mile walk).

Each walk is described in detail in a booklet published by The Barnet Society, Rambles Round Barnet (volume 2).

Go to www.geotourist.com and register with the company. This will involve ticking the 'Accept terms and conditions' box. These are essentially the familiar statements produced by the company lawyer with no hidden traps for the unwary.

You will be asked to generate your own password below the space which probably has your email address already displayed.

Typing in any of the above three walks titles into the 'SEARCH' box will lead to the 'Introduction' page of that walk.

You will also see a sequence of small photos and brief descriptions of each of the 'Tour Points'. It is well worth while

2. Darlands Lake Nature Reserve, Totteridge.



looking at each one of these on your PC or laptop before setting out on the walk itself. The large and unobscured photos can be viewed at home while listening to the audio commentary about that particular area. The photos on your phone will obviously be a lot smaller and the 'Start/Pause' button and the progress ring will reduce the clear image area further.

A remarkable feature of the Geotourist software is that when you have their app on your phone and have selected a

3. Ridge village and 2 mile walk.

particular walk, your specific location as you walk along is registered by the software from the GPS data and will automatically play the relevant audio. SatNav users are familiar with this function built into these devices.

Registered users can also create and share their own interesting walks with others using the simple online website interface. This can be used to help increase local knowledge for the community and visitors to our town in a new immersive way.

Full instructions are available for various smart phones. For android devices click on the following link: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.mlsdev.geotourist>

For Apple devices click on the following link. <https://itunes.apple.com/u>

Showcase reopens for local businesses

NUMBER 89, THE COMMUNITY-RUN POP-UP SHOP SELLING LOCAL ARTS AND CRAFTS THAT WAS IN THE HIGH STREET UNTIL A FEW MONTHS AGO, HAS REOPENED ROUND THE CORNER AT 10 UNION STREET, AND NOW TRADES UNDER THE NAME ROOM 89.

Six of the women who established the original shop with the help of the Love Barnet project decided to get together again, and offer Barnet shoppers a range of "unique and stylish items", many of which are hand-crafted.

Number 89 High Street had to close in July at the end of its short-term tenancy, but the six small businesses that have regrouped to re-launch as room 89 are confident that their new shop will again prove a definitive destination for the "discerning shopper".

Terry Diab, one of the six proprietors, said their aim was to offer an oasis of calm with a range of products that attracted shoppers whether their taste was contemporary or vintage.

"We offer a room full of wonderful things, very different from everything else that the High Street has to offer. We can decorate your walls with original artwork, and your wrists with original beaded jewellery. We have a hand-made cushion that fits the bill, and an unusual card that will express everything you want to say."

The 'Sassy Six' behind Room 89

Giovanna of H2Oils

Organic skin and hair products.

Jane from Chalk & Stone

Furniture and household items, found, restored and reloved.

Laura from Laura Felicity Design

Romantic and eye-catching home accessories and wallpaper using hand-drawn patterns and professional screen print techniques.

Petra from Pemira

Bespoke colourful jewellery hand made from the highest-quality Czech glass beads and crystals.

Terry from the Dainty Dress Company

Unique hand crafted babies' dresses, cardigans, hats and booties

Tracie Murchison, applied artist

Unique artefacts created by combining materials such as wood, silk and paper in unexpected ways



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Real Ale campaigners fight to keep White Lion

Renewed uncertainty about the future of the White Lion on St Albans Road has led to a successful bid to persuade Barnet Council to declare that the pub is a community asset of value to local residents.

The Campaign for Real Ale stepped in and made a formal application because Fuller's Brewery is continuing to advertise the tenancy of the White Lion, which is currently under temporary management.

Community asset status gives interested groups a six-month opportunity to raise the money to purchase a building that is used by a local community should the owner wish to dispose of the property.

CAMRA tried unsuccessfully earlier this year to persuade Barnet Council to approve a community asset declaration for the Old Red Lion at the bottom of Barnet Hill after it was sold for housing redevelopment by the Hertford brewers McMullen and Sons Ltd.

David Fenton, pub protection officer for CAMRA's Enfield and Barnet branch, told the Barnet Society that it considered the White Lion was the pub most in need of protection because of the risk of closure and being sold for redevelopment.

"We lost our application to get community asset status for the Old Red Lion at Underhill on the grounds that when we applied it was no longer a pub. This was unfair because McMullen closed the pub within two weeks of it being sold to developers.

"As we fear we may lose other pubs in the Barnet area, we drew up a shortlist of pubs we thought were at risk, and the White Lion was top of our list. We intend to submit further applications when time allows."

Fuller's Brewery told the Barnet Society in February that it had no plans to dispose of the White Lion. The tenancy was being advertised

and the company believed the pub had a viable future.

The White Lion's temporary manager is employed by a company that currently has a six-month tenancy, and has first refusal for a new tenancy if the pub is judged to have a profitable long-term future.

"We'll decide after Christmas whether or not to sign a lease for perhaps three or four years, but that will probably depend on whether an agreement can be reached on refurbishing the pub's kitchen.

"It needs new ducting, and other improvements are necessary in order to bring it up to standard, but without a usable kitchen, and the chance to offer food, a pub stands little chance today of succeeding."

The temporary tenants say they understand why some customers are concerned, and why CAMRA had decided to step in. "Fuller's are continuing to advertise the tenancy, and the rent is quite high, which means the pub has to maximise sales, and that requires investment in a new kitchen.

"As far as we are concerned there is no uncertainty, and we would like to stay long-term, but nothing is definite."

Councillor David Longstaff told the Barnet Society that Barnet Council's community leadership committee had approved the application to list the White Lion as an asset of community value.

"Several buildings have been listed in the borough before, but this is the first in the High Barnet ward. Basically community asset status gives local groups six months to find the money, or a suitable organisation that could purchase the property at the market rate, should the owner wish to dispose of it."

CAMRA was set up in 1971 to protect traditional beers and pubs. Today it has more than 160,000 members

Hadley Green oak tree for former MP



Sydney Chapman tree-planting, from left to right: Christine Bateson (sister), Jenny Chapman, David Chapman (son), Laura Woods (daughter), Andy Woods and Claire Chapman

AN OAK TREE IN MEMORY OF THE FORMER CHIPPING BARNET MP SIR SYDNEY CHAPMAN HAS BEEN PLANTED ON HADLEY GREEN, BESIDE THE ROAD THAT BEARS HIS NAME.

Sydney Chapman Way bisects the green from the Great North Road to Monken Hadley, and was named in his honour after he stood down in 2005 after serving for just over a quarter of a century as the local MP.

Sir Sydney died in October 2014, and the planting took place on what would have been his 80th birthday (17.10.2015), and was attended by family and friends, and his successor Mrs Theresa Villiers, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Claire Chapman, his first wife, who is senior parliamentary assistant to Mrs Villiers at Westminster, said she hoped an oak in his name would be seen as a fitting tribute to all his work in support of tree-planting.

An architect by profession, Sir Sydney led a ground-breaking campaign in popularising environmentalism. He received widespread acclaim for his "Plant a Tree in '73" initiative, and the follow-up campaign "Plant Some More in '74".

Sir Sydney was educated at Rugby School and Manchester University, where he studied architecture, gaining his Diploma in 1958 and ARIBA in 1960. He was Chairman of the Young Conservatives from 1964 to 1966. He was first elected to Parliament in 1970 as MP for Birmingham Handsworth, but lost his seat when Labour returned to power. At the 1979 election, he was returned as MP for Chipping Barnet. He married his first wife, Claire in 1976, had three children. In 2005, he married his second wife, Teresa at Chelsea Town Hall. After his retirement from politics, he moved from Barnet to Oxfordshire. He was a vice-chairman of the Council of Christians and Jews and on the Council of the Royal Institute of British Architects for 2009-2012.. Sir Sydney died on 9 October 2014 in Oxfordshire.

His son-in-law, Andy Woods, a qualified tree surgeon, supervised the planting of an eight-year-old oak sapling that had been chosen to blend in with other native species nearby such as horse chestnut, poplar and alder.

A sealed jar was buried beside the tree containing a letter from Laura Woods (Sir Sydney's daughter) and the couple's daughter Isabella. Friends of Sir Sydney, who enjoyed sharing a pint with him, were sure he would have been amused to have had an oak planted in his memory on Hadley Green, especially as the road named after him had been a source of much amusement.

At a dinner in 2005 marking his retirement from the House of Commons, the guest speaker William Hague remarked that the MP had been so well regarded that Barnet Council had named a road in his honour, Sydney Chapman Way, "presumably the way to the pub".

Mr Hague's quip apparently brought the house down with the butt of the joke leading the laughter.

Sir Sydney was none too pleased in later years when local wags occasionally amended the sign to read, "Sydney Chapman No Way" – a prank that required a rapid response from the council.

Close eye on High Street development

Planning and Environment Report Robin Bishop on the issues that concern the Society



New cases The Society is taking a close interest in the biggest building project in our town centre since Barnet College, nearly a decade ago. The developer, Wrenbridge, proposes to redevelop backlands behind the east side of the High Street (164 High Street, better known as Brake Shear House) for a mix of housing and commercial use. While we welcome good quality - and affordable - housing, we are concerned about the possible loss of business premises on the site.

At a recent meeting with the developers and their architects, we were assured that they are proposing replacement workspace (as offices) that will have the potential to employ more people than are currently on the site, as well as 43 new family homes and flats. Much more detail and tuning of the concept design will be needed before we can support the proposal, but it is encouraging that the developer seems keen to consult us at this stage.

Nick Jones describes the proposals in more detail on Page 1.

The Council has also consulted over a draft scheme to replace Checkalows' building in Moxon Street, and build nine new homes in Tapster Street. It looks generally acceptable.

We also supported an application for four

new houses and offices on the site of Brookfields Garage, 1 Victoria Lane, but have commented on some poor design features.

However, we objected to the replacement of Applegarth, Manor Road, with six flats, which would damage the domestic scale of the lower part of that street. Planning permission has since been refused.

At Ravenscroft Cottages, Potters Lane (pictured below) seven more cottages have been proposed. The existing close is a neat example of the almshouses that contribute to Chipping Barnet's special identity. The architecture is unexceptional, but its U-shaped composition and mix of formal and informal planting add up to more than the sum of the parts. We do not object on principle to new cottages, but suggested redistributing them on the site to lessen their impact. To our pleasant surprise, the Jesus Hospital Charity withdrew their application and consulted us on alternative layouts. We await a fresh application with interest.

Previous cases Planning applications approved:

Conversion of 85 High Street (formerly Lloyds Bank) to retail and flats. We had objected.

Six new houses on the Old Red Lion site, despite our reservations about traffic congestion.

Applications rejected Forty-three flats on

Holden Road in Finchley. We had objected both to the design and the Council's proposal to grant the developer a 150-year lease for the adjoining Brookdene Nature Reserve. However the lease has been confirmed, setting a dangerous precedent for similar wild habitats in Chipping Barnet.

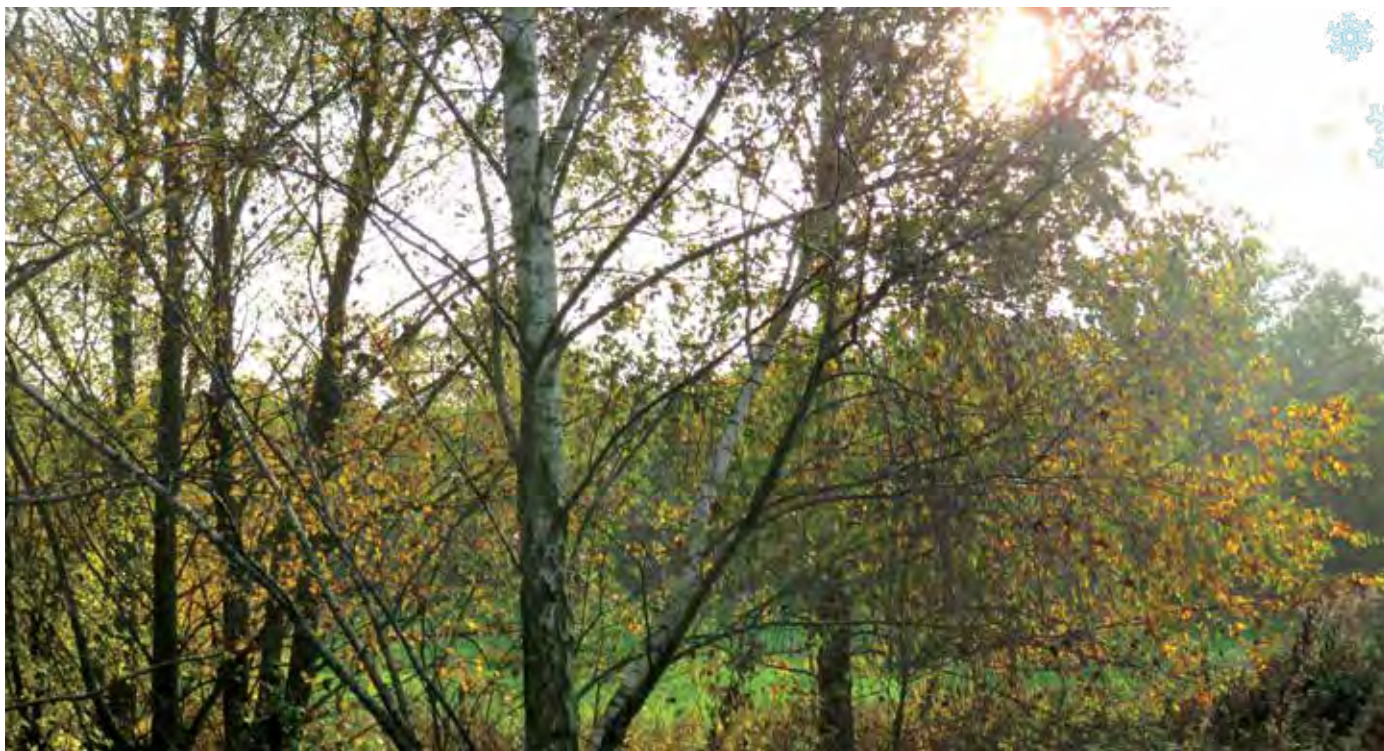
Ongoing cases Planning decisions still awaited on...

- Barnet Museum extension, approved by our Area Committee but due to be considered by the full Committee this month.
- Thirty-six new homes on Whittings Road. Following our and other local objections, the landmark Oak has been saved.
- The former Elmbank hostel site - 114 new dwellings.
- Old Fold Manor Golf Club re-landscaping. English Heritage have raised concern about potential damage to the Battlefield of Barnet.
- Rebuilding of 70 High Street (After Office Hours) next to The Bull.
- Planning breaches still to be enforced by the planners...
- Guns & Smoke shopfront.
- 29 Union Street (the former Town Hall, being converted to housing).
- 56 Hendon Wood Lane - infringement of Green Belt. The owner has withdrawn a threat to go to appeal.

One to watch A proposed 1,890-place all-age academy on the old Barnet Football Club ground and adjoining cricket and hockey field. Much will depend on its design and access for so many pupils and adults. There must be full consultation with the local community - not just parents - before the scheme is finalised.

And finally Many thanks to our Vice President, David Lee, for responding on behalf of the Society to the draft North London Waste Plan - a mucky but vital matter. His overall conclusion is that the Plan is worth support, but its next stage must be scrutinised closely. His full comments can be found on our website.





Silver celebration for Whittings Hill trees

Twenty years ago this December, the first of two tree plantations was inaugurated at Whittings Hill to commemorate the Barnet Society's 50th anniversary; the second followed in January 1996. To celebrate the woods' 20th - and the Society's 70th - birthdays our Vice Presidents, Jenny Remfrey and David Lee, relate how the project came about.

Jenny Remfrey remembers: I was Chairman of the Barnet Society in 1995, when the question arose as to how to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Society. Tree planting emerged as the most appropriate: our President, Sir Sydney Chapman MP had set up the organisation "Plant a Tree in '73" and was keen to plant more. There was currently a national plan to plant trees to re-generate the countryside in and around urban areas; the area between Watling Street and Enfield Chase had been designated Watling Chase and the Borough of Barnet's Countryside Management Officer, Catharine Cairns, was keen to include the Whittings Hill Open Space within this area. Best of all, a new member of the Society, David Lee, was an expert on trees.

David Lee adds: February 23rd 1995 was the day the switch was turned ON. Innocently enough I attended my first Barnet Society meeting (a lecture in Church House). By the time I caught the homeward bus I had been introduced to Chairman Jenny Remfrey, agreed to 'help out' in planting 'some' trees on Whittings Hill, agreed to visit the site forthwith and advise on the planting areas and then 'You'd best come on the Committee'. I went home punch-drunk.

Nine months later, Sunday 3rd December, after a lot of hard work

and the determination to properly honour the wonderful conservation work of the Society's founders, the bulk of a thousand mixed native trees had been planted, and we were ready to welcome the Mayor of Barnet, Cllr Suzette Palmer and Sir Sydney Chapman to Whittings Hill where they both planted ceremonial trees. Sydney also unveiled a plaque that is still there although somewhat obscured.

The original thousand is a good deal less now. As planned, nature is running its course, nurturing its own and choosing the strongest and most adaptable to survive and grow to maturity.

Many were planted as 'whips' a few inches high; some were 'standards' at 8 or so feet; a very few were even larger. The little ones got established in their homes from the outset, while the larger ones gave shelter and architectural form during the early years. Well over a hundred trees had been donated by members of the Society, the rest were purchased, and Barnet Council did the planting.

The trees were laid out in two separate plantations on the south-west side of the hill. The larger one is to the south with a mown ride running between them. The following year we planted an oak tree in honour of the Society's Honorary Secretaries, between the two plantations.

The oak is still there, growing slowly. In the main planted areas there has been vigorous growth, reaching up to more than 30 feet, forming clumps and groves and nooks, and looking like natural woodland! Our benches nearby, from which one could gaze at the plantations, have unfortunately been vandalised and removed. So, what now? Should we extend? Plant more? Manicure what we have? Certainly there are some odd jobs to do.

Would you
like to become a
Friend of Whittings Hill
and join in the longer
term planning?

Contact Robin Bishop at
robin.bishop@gmx.co.uk
or phone David Lee on
8364 9161.

From pupil to head, Violet Walker knows QE Girls from both ends of the classroom

MRS WALKER, THE NEW HEAD TEACHER AT QUEEN ELIZABETH'S GIRLS' SCHOOL, HAS EVERY JUSTIFICATION FOR HER ASSERTION THAT SHE FELT INSTANTLY AT HOME ON TAKING UP THE HEAD-SHIP AT THE START OF THE NEW ACADEMIC YEAR IN SEPTEMBER, WRITES NICK JONES

Not only is Mrs Walker a former pupil at QEGS, but she later returned to the school to complete her post-graduate training as a mathematics teacher.

"I know it sounds cheesy, but I do think I've come home. I really enjoyed my own school-days, and it's an immense privilege to come back yet again, and this time to get the chance to take QE Girls' forward into another chapter in the school's life."

At the end of the last summer term, the school recorded its best-ever GCSE results - a high point in the career of the retiring head teacher Kate Webster.

Fifteen girls achieved ten or more A*/A grades. Many other girls achieved excellent results, with 36 per cent of the year group having five or more A*/A grades.

QE Girls' has continued to expand and flourish, and now admits 180 girls each year and has a large sixth form of over 250.

Mrs Walker is resolute in her conviction that QEGS' role is to continue to serve the area as a local community girls' comprehensive, committed to reflecting the school's history and traditions, while at the same embracing the latest technological advances in teaching and research.

"I want QE Girls' to be a centre of excellence, and at the same time retain its community status, to be a real neighbourhood school. We want to do everything we can to develop our links with the locality."

Her challenge as head teacher is to close the attainment gap between the girls of the highest and lowest ability.

"At present the gap between the educationally disadvantaged and advantaged is too large, and it was that gap that OFSTED was concerned about in March 2014 when the school was told it requires improvement.

"OFSTED are due to return in the spring of 2016, and we are all working hard to show that we are doing everything we can to ensure that all the girls achieve their highest potential."





The oldest surviving QEGS building, c.1890 by John Ladds



Mrs Walker's first year as head teacher is coinciding with a packed diary that reflects a momentous twelve months for the Royal Family – and is a reminder of the school's historic links with the first Queen Elizabeth, from whom QE Girls' took its name.

A special assembly was held in September to mark the day Queen Elizabeth II became the longest reigning British monarch. Girls in each year have been asked to help contribute to a poem which the school intends to send to the Queen.

To mark the celebrations for the Queen's 90th birthday in April 2016, QEGS is planning a summer picnic in the school grounds. "It will be our own garden party – indeed we hope

it will be Barnet's own Buckingham Palace garden party," said Mrs Walker.

QE Girls' was the first school visited by Queen Elizabeth after her coronation in 1953, and a signed portrait that she sent after her visit is on display in the school hall, and is among the school's most treasured possessions.

Mrs Walker (Violet Hamid) was a pupil at QEGS from 1969 to 1976, and has fond memories of the headmistress of her day, Miss Marjorie Payne, who was head teacher for 17 years, and was widely respected.

Mrs Walker returned to QEGS for six months in 2001 for the second placement of her PGCE training. She was appointed head teacher after previously being deputy head at Northolt High School, and before that assistant head teacher at Park High School, Harrow. She lives in Whetstone and is a long-time resident of the London Borough of Barnet.

"I know from my own school-days the importance of education, and the twin challenge I face is to ensure the school has the greatest possible impact on education and personal development of all its pupils, as well as doing all it can to develop the practice and professionalism of its staff.

"I do hope I can marry the sense of tradition and what might be thought are the old-fashioned values of my days at QE Girls' with the very best of the latest in education."

Mrs Walker is looking forward to the school's annual commemoration day in May 2016 because it will be 40 years since she left, and now, as head, she will become president of the QE Girls' School Guild, which was established in 1927 to represent former students and staff.

QE Girls', which was established in 1888, is one of the oldest state schools for girls in the country, and shares foundation trustees with QE Boys' School, Barnet, which was created in 1573 by an Elizabethan charter.

"I want QE Girls' to be a centre of excellence, and at the same time retain its community status, to be a real neighbourhood school. We want to do everything we can to develop our links with the locality."



Gillian Gear, a true friend of the museum

TRIBUTES TO LONG-SERVING BARNET CAMPAIGNER AND HISTORIAN WHO SADLY DIED LAST MONTH, AGED 72

Dr Gillian Gear, who fought a heroic battle to save and maintain Barnet Museum when Barnet Council withdrew its financial support, has died after undergoing treatment for some weeks at Watford General Hospital.

Her death at the age of 72 has robbed the town of a tireless campaigner who spent the last 40 years encouraging the community to understand and appreciate local history, and to recognise the need to preserve and exhibit the best of Chipping Barnet's historic legacy.

She was the inspiration behind the imaginative plans for the archaeological investigation to determine the precise site of the Battle of Barnet of 1471.

Gillian had been active in both the museum and local history societies since the 1970s. She was the voluntary archivist and de facto director of Barnet Museum; secretary to the Barnet Museum and Local History Society; secretary of the Hertfordshire Archive for Local History; a committee member of the Hertfordshire Association for Local History; and author of numerous books on local history, including works on Barnet Union Workhouse and East Barnet village.

Dr Gear was awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen's 2014 Birthday Honours in recognition of her work safeguarding the museum and her support for local history projects.

She is survived by her husband Michael and their three sons Nick, Tim and Chris. Her funeral was held at St Mary's Church, Redbourn, with a request that donations should go to the museum.

When Barnet Council withdrew its funding in 2010, it was her astute leadership and dogged determination that ensured the museum survived, and subsequently prospered despite a lack of council co-operation that she was continuing to fight until her death.

In the final months of her life, while undergoing hospital treatment, she was still battling to persuade the council to agree a long-term lease for the museum, and to approve a rear extension and disabled access, a plan the council is still opposing nine months after it was first submitted.

Mike Noronha, deputy archivist, paid tribute to her commitment and indomitable spirit in defending the museum and its work. "She was our friend, our inspiration, a talisman. We thought she was indestructible."

Her ability to enthuse the museum's volunteers and supporters came to the fore in 2010 when the council withdrew its annual grant of £3,044, and decided to close the council-owned Church Farm House Museum at Hendon, where the curator was made redundant.

She set to work to defend Barnet Museum, which was an established history society and charity, and had already ensured that all its exhibits were owned separately in a trust.

Tenancy of the museum building and garden in Wood Street, next to the former town hall, was granted originally by the former Barnet Urban District Council in 1937, but in 2013, without informing the museum's volunteers, ownership of the building was registered in the name of Barnet Council.

Chair's report

We are holding our annual question and answer session with the Chipping Barnet MP Theresa Villiers on Friday 29 January at the Pennefather Hall, Christ Church, St Albans Road.

The event opens at 2.30 p.m. with a progress report on the survey and investigation into the site of the Battle of Barnet. Mrs Villiers' session starts at 3 p.m. Tea and refreshments will follow at 4 p.m.

Questions can be sent by email to chair@barnetsociety.org.uk or by post to Nicholas Jones, 29 Granville Road, Barnet, EN5 4DS.

Over 100 stalls will line the High Street and outside Barnet College for the annual Barnet Christmas Fayre on Sunday 6 December.

A full afternoon of events has been arranged including folk and acrobatic dances, music from the Finchley Steel Band Orchestra, and piano and organ recitals in the parish church.

On offer will be tasty food, gifts and crafts, charity and community stalls, Manning's funfair and all-day entertainment from Barnet Community Radio.

Church House will have a craft fair and there will be a Punch and Judy show in the churchyard, together with jugglers and a magician.

Barnet Museum will be open until 6 p.m.

The Fayre has been organised by Barnet Borough Arts Council (www.barnetarts.org.uk) in partnership with the Bull Theatre (info@sets.org.uk)

Ros Staines, the stalls organiser (rosstaines@yahoo.co.uk), said the Fayre promised to be an extremely good event as there were so many attractions.

