

The Barnet Society

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Alarm bells over Spires proposals



(Below) An aerial view of the development plans and (below, left) Stapylton Road, opposite the library



Grave concern was expressed at the Barnet Society's housing debate about the scale of the damage that might be inflicted on the appearance and character of the town centre if The Spires shopping centre is redeveloped to include as many as 280 flats, writes Nick Jones.

Property developers BYM, who purchased The Spires in May 2021, began consultations with Barnet Council and local organisations last December on plans to redevelop the centre to include five blocks of flats of between five and six storeys in height.

The existing shopping mall, which is currently closed at night, would be replaced with a new pedestrian street from

Barnet High Street to Stapylton Road.

Blocks of flats would be built on either side of this new thoroughfare with shops and cafes on the ground floor, together with another new block of flats on the adjoining vacant Barnet Market site.

BYM says that it is currently reviewing its initial plans and hopes to be ready by March to discuss revised proposals.

The initial response of those who have been consulted in recent weeks is that BYM's plan for as many as 280 flats might overload the site.

A narrow pedestrian street through the centre would be overshadowed by blocks as high as five to six storeys and would not be attractive to cafes and restaurants offering outside seating.

In his first public comments on BYM's application, Ross Houston, chair of Barnet's housing and growth committee, accepted that concerns about the height of blocks and the density of the flats were of overriding importance.

"But I do think The Spires looks tired. If the issue of height and density could be addressed, and if the design is right, it could be improved as a place to shop."

Theresa Villiers, the Chipping Barnet MP, also acknowledged that some change was inevitable and that The Spires had suffered because of the shift to online shopping.

If The Spires had a residential component this could be consistent with the conservation area and the character of Chipping Barnet, but she was worried about the impact of some of the proposals which BYM had floated.

Nonetheless this was an opportunity to provide affordable homes and if there was the right retail solution, this could result in a more positive shopping experience.

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Two key requirements would be to ensure the safeguarding of the twice-weekly stalls market and provision of adequate car parking.

Simon Kaufman, one of the two local architects who contributed to the debate, thought any redevelopment of The Spires had to respect the character of an historic town centre and its “higgledy-piggledy” old streets which came together around the High Street.

“The Spires sits in the middle of two conservation areas. It fills that gap, but the proposed redevelopment does not relate to the historic roofscape and character of the surrounding streets.”

Dave McCormick of Barnet Friends of the Earth said BYM, and their planners should address the sustainability of any redevelopment of the shopping centre. “Will the new layout include a community garden? Will the new development be water neutral. This is the stage when environmental issues should be at the forefront.”

If planning permission is given for the redevelopment of The Spires,

“The proposed redevelopment does not relate to the historic roofscape and character of the surrounding streets”

BYM have said they intend to start construction in 2024 and continue work through to completion in 2030.

As regards the issue of the height of the blocks, BYM’s planning appraisal said the scale of development is “unlikely to be perceptible” from sensitive areas such as the neighbouring Monken Hadley Conservation Area and Wood Street Conservation Area.

“At a local level, the site is located in an established urban area and the provision of marginally taller buildings would not be incongruent to the character and appearance of the wider area.

“The architectural approach, including orientation and skyline profile will be important to mitigate potentially harmful impacts.”

The majority of the new buildings

A drawing of the proposed new Spires courtyard area, with on either side

are expected to comprise red brick facades in keeping with the surrounding area.

Under the plan, both the Waitrose supermarket and multistorey car park would be retained as well as space for the twice weekly Barnet Market.

Fruit and vegetable stall holders Tyler Bone and Andy Gardiner, joint proprietors of Barnet Market Ltd, have met representatives of BYM and said they were impressed by the steps that were being proposed to safeguard and enhance the market.

Mr Gardiner said he was reassured that the developers recognised the importance of the market and were ready to discuss whether the market area could be expanded.

“We walked round the site with their representatives, and they talked about the possibility of moving the bandstand, re-using the grassy knoll on the other side of the service road, and providing storage space for the stallholders.

“So yes, we were impressed. BYM does seem very keen to work with us”.



Frances Wilson,
chair Barnet
Society, welcomes
guests to the
housing meeting
at the Bull Theatre

United against the tower blocks

Action to thwart the onward advance of tower blocks around High Barnet and close to the Green Belt was a shared objective of a panel of politicians and architects at a Barnet Society discussion on Better Housing for Barnet, writes Nick Jones.

Barnet Council, now under Labour control, was praised by the Chipping Barnet Conservative MP Theresa Villiers for the robust stance it was taking in opposing high-rise developments in suburban settings.

Ross Houston, chair of the housing and growth committee, told the meeting at the Bull Theatre (21/2/23) that the council would stand up to developers seeking to build tower blocks in the townships and villages in and around High Barnet.

These communities wanted more family and affordable homes rather than high-rise and the council had already given developers a “red card” in rejecting massive over development at the New Barnet gas works site and the North London Business Park.

Ms Villiers welcomed the council’s “continued scepticism” towards the construction of tall blocks of flats in the surrounding locality.

Mr Houston explained why he believed that the council had gone “badly wrong” in recent years in not being pro-active at the start of the planning process in steering developers away from high-rise developments.

This would be addressed in future by a design review panel that would be established once planning was back under the council’s control in April.

Two architects who live in Barnet – Simon Kaufman and Russell Curtis – gave a presentation to illustrate the kind of housing projects that delivered good quality design.

Mr Curtis said that Barnet, along with Bromley, were the only two London boroughs currently without a design review panel. If one was established as promised by the council, he believed it would improve the quality of housing developments.

Without a “decent, well-funded panel” which had a grasp on issues like quality, high density and character, Barnet would continue to lack the means to make sure that developers were going in the right direction from the start of the planning process.

Ms Villiers agreed with the importance of good design, and she thanked the two architects for a presentation that had only served to underline her belief that a significant density of housing could be achieved in sensitive settings.

A failure to come up with proposals that were in tune with their neighbourhoods had been all too evident in New Barnet where there had now been a 14-year wait for an acceptable scheme for the Victoria Quarter development.

The failed attempt to get approval for the over-development of the gas works site

reflected the pressure on local authorities to meet the excessively high housing targets that were being set by central government against which she had been campaigning at Westminster.

Building sustainable new homes and retrofitting older houses were two of the greatest challenges when it came to creating a healthier environment in Barnet.

Dave McCormick of the Barnet Friends of the Earth outlined the steps that would need to be taken to reduce emissions.

The majority of High Barnet’s housing stock was pre-war and the cost of retrofitting these properties was huge: 78 per cent had gas heating and housing was responsible for 48 per cent of Barnet’s emissions.

Each community should consider what steps could be taken to improve sustainability – and there were myriad unexpected opportunities.

For example, High Barnet’s annual Christmas fayre could examine the possibility of using renewable energy to cut down on the number of diesel generators that are used to provide power for the fun fair, stalls, and caterers that line Barnet High Street on the first Sunday in December.

Mr McCormick said the organisers of this year’s East Finchley Festival in Cherry Tree Wood in June were hoping to use sustainable power sources such as batteries to reduce the pollution caused by diesel generators.

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT

GOVERNMENT

The Society is responding to a public consultation on the Levelling-Up & Regeneration Bill, which will reform aspects of planning law and abandon centrally-imposed housing targets.

I wrote to Theresa Villiers MP expressing the Society's concern about aspects of the Retained EU Law Bill going through Parliament, especially the possible relaxation of environmental standards and protection of the countryside. She replied that she's raised these issues in Parliament and spoken to Ministers. They've promised that there'll be no period when environmental, construction, health & safety regulations will be removed without an appropriate replacement in force.

LONDON FESTIVAL OF ARCHITECTURE

For the first time, we'll participate in this annual Festival in June. **Details, Page 5**

BARNET LOCAL PLAN

The final draft of the LP will be revealed soon. Our objections to excessive housing at High Barnet Station and Whalebones have had little effect: the former is still designated for 292 flats, but the number of homes at the latter has been reduced from 152 to 110.

CONSULTATIONS

After an initial meeting with The Spires developer before Christmas, we're waiting to see how they've responded to our comments. **See Pages 1&2.**

Barnet Homes have consulted us over proposals for a mix of market and affordable homes at Moxon Street (**See Page 5**) and Whitings Road. Our comments were generally very favourable.

Tudor Park – The proposed £150,000-worth of new equipment has been modified to take account of some of our criticisms.

APPROVED

150 High Street (Gaziantep Pastanesi) – A more restrained design than the one to which we had objected.

49 Moxon Street – We objected strongly to this attempt to squeeze 92 flats and several



Robin Bishop

businesses into a 7-storey building next to King George's Fields (which is in the Green Belt). Neighbours are considering whether to seek a judicial review of the decision.

52-54 High Street – We objected to the shopfront and inadequate heritage statement. The applicant seemed unaware that the building may share probably London's oldest timber frame with No.54A.

Land behind 36 Park Road – 6 new houses on vacant backland. We supported them.

Land off Mays Lane, Greengate Stables – Temporary classrooms have been approved with our support. We look forward to seeing a masterplan for the site.

Internet café (site of former public WCs), Great North & Station Roads – We were neutral about this. We don't object to a café, but are glad that the Planning Committee has imposed a condition tightly restricting its use for advertising.

1 & 7 Raydean Road – Extensions and minor alterations to Locally Listed interwar houses. We had no objections.

REFUSED

47 High Street (Crown & Anchor) – We objected to an application for a pergola beside, and a new building behind, the pub (Locally Listed and in the Wood Street Conservation Area).

The Mitre, 58 High Street – The planners refused permission on the grounds that 'The submitted proposals are inaccurate, lack recognition of the building's historic significance and in their present form would be harmful to its special significance as a statutory listed building'. We agreed.

DECISION AWAITED

70 High Street (fka After Office Hours) – Yet another application in the owner's attempt to avoid having to demolish his new building. Yet again we objected.

98-100 High Street – We were neutral.

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

202 High Street (fka Bentleys) – Back again with fewer units but the same roofline. We objected again.

2 Clyde Villas, Hadley Green Road – This application for adults recovering from mental

illness involves less damage to house and garden than the previous scheme. We're neutral but submitted some comments.

63A Union Street – Another application for this site by Coe's Alley. We were neutral again.

Gaelic football pavilion, King George's playing field – We were neutral.

1 & 1A Raydean Road – Amendments proposed to recently approved plans for this Locally Listed house and its new near-replica. We had no objections.

Western half of Meadow Works site, Pricklers Hill – We supported these 8 new houses.

1 Albert Road, New Barnet – We objected to the overdevelopment and poor environment of this 5-storey block.

Sky Studios North, Rowley Lane – Application for 10 more sound stages on the Green Belt.

APPEALS

A judicial ruling has confirmed dismissal of Fairview's appeal to build 554 flats at the **Victoria Quarter**. Fairview will now build the 371 homes approved in 2017, with some amendments.

Appeals for a flat in the roofspace of **159 High Street**, and for new rooftop flats at **1-15 Richard Court** in Alston Road, have been dismissed. We had objected to both.

An appeal has been lodged against the Council's refusal of **electric battery storage** off Partingdale Lane in the Green Belt.

HAPPY ENDING IN SIGHT?

1 Sunset View – Nearly a year after a Planning Inspector upheld the Council's enforcement proceedings, remedial work seems to have started.

STILL STANDING

33 Lyonsdown Road – Martyn Gerrard have rejected our offer to discuss Simon Kaufman's alternative scheme converting and extending this Locally-Listed Victorian villa.

FARTHER AFIELD

North London Business Park – Not satisfied with the permission they already had for 1,350 units, Comer Homes re-applied last year for 2,419 units in towers up to 13 stories high. Theresa Villiers and hundreds of locals campaigned against the scheme and the Council has refused it.

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT

We're taking part in month-long London Festival of Architecture

Robin Bishop writes

The London Festival of Architecture is a month-long celebration of architecture and the spaces in between. It's been held annually for nearly 20 years, but until now few events have taken place in Barnet. This June, for the first time, we'll participate with the aid, we hope, of funding from the Council as part of its developing Culture Strategy.



This year's theme is 'In Common', and the Society will lead walks around our old commons, almshouses and – we hope – newer co-housing and other shared spaces in and around High Barnet. We'll also look at current proposals to redevelop the former Barnet Market site and The Spires shopping precinct. The walks build on the success of our walking guides Rambles Round Barnet (copies still available!), combining architectural interest with rural rambling.

We need some help with organisation, ticketing and shepherding of the walks. It would involve an hour or two per week initially, and more nearer the walk dates. Would you – or someone you know – be interested? If so, please contact me to find out more on robin.bishop@gmx.co.uk or 020 8449 0088 / 07913 107046.

New life on Barnet Hill for donated trees



Barbara, David and Craig, planting contractor

Robin Bishop writes

This planting season nine more trees have been planted on Barnet Hill as part of the masterplan drawn up by Barnet Society Vice President, David Lee. They included three donations: a Walnut from Barbara Burrill and two Irish Yews from Doreen Martin. All three were getting too big for the pots they'd been growing in.

Barbara's father found the original

walnut, and she grew it in a pot outside her flat. After more than 10 years, she was keen to find a permanent home for it. The Council arranged for it to be collected on 26 January, and she and husband David were there to see it planted.

Many thanks to Barbara and Doreen for their donations, and to Andy Tipping and Katerina Hadincova of the

Council's Greenspaces Team for their co-operation.

The Council has also introduced a scheme for residents to sponsor new trees in Barnet streets and parks. Details can be found at <https://sponsor.treesforstreets.org/provider/barnet-council> – but it's important that the trees are of a suitable species and planted only in approved locations.



MOXON STREET MEWS DEVELOPMENT SHOWS RIVAL BUILDERS HOW GOOD DESIGN CAN WORK

Two utterly contrasting designs have been proposed for Moxon Street.

Near the top, Moxon Mews will provide 21 homes and commercial premises no more than two storeys high. Tightly planned but with every dwelling having individuality and its own garden, Peter Barber Architects' design is unobtrusive, has an attractive human scale and will enhance the Wood Street Conservation Area.

At the bottom, permission has been given for 92 flats and several businesses in a 7-storey building by Claridge Architects. Packed into a boxy building looming over neighbouring streets and the Green Belt of King George's Fields, it will provide a dangerous precedent for developments in the town centre.



Striking contrast between the two QE schools

On the 450th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's Boys, Nick Jones looks at its controversial history

In its 450-year history, the last half century has been by far the most controversial for Queen Elizabeth's Boys' School as it struggled to come to terms with a dynamic and highly politicised era for schools in England and Wales.

From 1971 to 1994, QE was an all-ability comprehensive, under the control of Barnet Council, open to boys within its High Barnet catchment area.

But after being threatened with closure, QE Boys restored selection and reverted to grammar school status.

Through the reintroduction of an entrance test at 11, High Barnet lost what for 23 years had been a neighbourhood school for local boys and become a centre of excellence, attracting pupils from across London and surrounding counties.

In recent years, QE has dominated the Sunday Times Parent Power School Guide: it was rated top state secondary school in December 2021 and was second to Henrietta Barnet School in 2022.

Since the restoration of selection, demand has doubled and doubled again. Over 3,500 boys sat the exam over a two-day period in September 2022.

QE Boys' counterpart in Barnet, Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School, which was established in 1888 and has a shared foundation, was also a grammar

school until it too became a comprehensive in 1977.

Both schools now have academy status, but QE Girls has remained a non-selective school and continues to offer places to girls within a three-mile catchment area.

An extremely high proportion of pupils at QE Girls' walk from home or are a short bus ride away. By contrast most Queen Elizabeth's boys travel far greater distances.

Queen Elizabeth's current headmaster, Neil Enright, who was appointed in 2011, is proud of an intake of boys from in and around London – “from Greenford, Ealing, Hayes, and towards Heathrow...some travelling the length of the Northern line or from Essex or Hertfordshire.”

In an interview with The Independent in 2015, he defended an entrance test and admissions policy that no longer drew pupils solely from what he described as the “immediate affluent area” of the original catchment area around High Barnet.

Ninety per cent of its 1,200 pupils were from ethnic minority groups, including many from Asian, Chinese, or Afro-Caribbean origins, and he considered this was “a reflection of the make-up of the north-west London community”.

Mr Enright's predecessor, Dr John Marincowitz acknowledged the challenge that he had

faced in his book to mark the 450th anniversary in writing objectively about what was a turbulent time for the school, parents, and local community after it went comprehensive in 1971 and doubled the size of its intake of pupils.

Dr Marincowitz's immediate predecessor was the late Eamonn Harris, who when appointed head in 1984 faced a bleak prospect: QE was floundering after just 13 years as a comprehensive; it was the least preferred of the borough's secondaries; and the school's future was said to have been in doubt.

“On being appointed headmaster, Eamonn was told by Barnet Council that the intention was close the school within two years. Parental confidence had crashed and for the previous three years there had not been enough boys taking up places.

“Eamonn's predecessor Tim Edwards had a vision for the school which he had achieved, but parental attitudes and government policy towards comprehensives had changed around him.

“Eamonn's immediate priorities in turning round the school were to sort out misbehaviour, end mixed ability teaching and re-introduce setting.”

Mr Harris was a traditionalist and made clear his disdain for progressive, child-centred teaching methods. “His leadership style was authoritative and at times authoritarian.”

QE was one of the first schools to take advantage of grant-maintained status which was being offered by the Conservative government and which introduced self-governing and provided



Dr John Marincowitz



funding directly from Whitehall.

After taking back control of funding from Barnet Council in 1989 – and benefiting from a more generous grant maintained settlement -- QE won the right in 1994 to apply a selective admissions policy and reverted to grammar school entrance.

On succeeding Mr Harris in 1999, Dr Marinowitz faced another potential upheaval when the Labour government offered local communities a parental vote on whether to abolish grammar schools.

Parents at the three grammars within the Borough of Barnet failed to reach the 20 per cent threshold to trigger a ballot.

At QE, support was limited to a “small number” of parents whose sons would have qualified for admission if the school had reverted to a neighbourhood comprehensive.

But the make-up of the school was changing. By 2007, QE was ranked among the top 20 per cent of schools with the highest proportion of ethnic minority pupils and of pupils who spoke English as a second language.

Dr Marinowitz said his personal challenge was to take the school from “excellence to eminence”.

He strengthened its reputation, achieving by 2011 a fifth “outstanding” rating from Ofsted and topping national league tables for achievement.

“The QE of today is not a school for every child. Local parents should definitely apply and we welcome local boys, but the school’s philosophy is that it can’t move away from selective admissions criteria.

“The growing consensus is that selection improves standards, just as happens with streaming and setting, and standards have been transformed. London’s schools demonstrate how effective this has been.”

Apologia for selective education

Barnet’s success in Tudor times as a bustling market town on the outskirts of London caught the attention of Queen Elizabeth 1 during the early years of her reign.

In 1573, she issued a charter establishing in Barnet a “free grammar school of Queen Elizabeth for the education, bringing up and instruction of boys and youth”, one of over 100 she founded during 45 years on the throne.

Barnet had become prosperous, the home of shopkeepers and tradesmen from the “middling sorts”, the middle classes of today, who appreciated the value of education.

Their sons were the first pupils at Queen Elizabeth’s School, or QE Boys as it is still affectionately known, and which is now one of the highest performing state schools in the country.

Unlike many of the early grammars, QE Boys can look back on unbroken record of education, an achievement explored in fascinating detail by former headmaster Dr John Marinowitz in a new history of the school celebrating its 450th anniversary.

His book draws on previously unexplored historical documents and archives which have now been digitised for ease of access and which give a remarkable insight into school life in Tudor England.

Dr Marinowitz’s objective was to bring a fresh perspective to the early history of a “small market town grammar” and to offer an analysis of its development and performance during the last 50 years, a half century of dramatic change, unequalled for its impact on both the school and the education system.

“Reflecting on my career at QE, I feel humbled by having had the privilege to serve as one of the 40 headmasters of who have secured this unbroken continuity of education in High Barnet for 450 years.”

He joined the staff of QE in 1985 as a history teacher, becoming head of sixth form, deputy head, and then head in 1999, a post he held until retiring in 2011.

His ten-year mission to research the school’s early years has been aided by rapid expansion in the availability of online archives which allowed him to update the school’s history for the period since the 1960s and look afresh at the development of schooling during the Tudor era.

QE was established a year after the founding of Harrow School. Although they were only 12 miles apart the two had an entirely different foundation. Harrow was endowed by a wealthy landowner and went on to become a popular school for the aristocracy, whereas Barnet’s grammar school had no single benefactor; had to sustain itself and was attended by the sons of local tradesmen.

Its charter stipulated that tuition was free, but the school could charge for books, paper, and food as well fees for boarders. Donations to build the schoolhouse, originally for up to 50 boys, and a boarding facility in the roof, were raised by collections at churches in the City of London.

Historic archive material drawn from over 6,500 historical sources is available to see on the QE Collections website: www.qecollections.co.uk

(Far left) QE Boys main building. (Below, left) pupils in 1901, (below, centre) coverage of the campaign to end selection in 1999 and (below, right) QE Girls’ School, off the High Street, which continues to be non-selective and draws its pupils mainly from the Barnet area





SHIRLEY MEREDEEM

Shirley Meredeem, feminist campaigner and co-founder of the New Ground community for older women just off Barnet High Street, has died at the age of 92.

She spent the final years of her life in one of the 25 flats which, when completed in 2016, were hailed as one of the country's pioneering cohousing projects for older women.

The flats, communal facilities, and gardens, which were constructed on the Union Street site of the former St Martha's Convent School, are owned, and run by the residents who are either divorced, widowed or single.

Ms Meredeem and her late friend Madeleine Levius were pioneers of elderly women combining to purchase, manage and maintain their own homes in one purpose-built development with shared facilities.

Well over 50 such cohousing schemes for women have now either been completed or are still being developed.

Most are inter-generational, unlike the Union Street community, commonly known as OWCH, which faced many obstacles and setbacks after the two founder members launched their plan in 1998.

FULL FLOW AGAIN

BBC Television were present on Hadley Green to record the final inspection and handover of a newly-restored pink granite water fountain which will once again offer the chance of a refreshing drink of water after being out of order for the last 50 years.

Stonemasons from London Stone Conservation dismantled the ornate structure, cleaned, and restored the sections of pink marble, and installed new pipework and push button taps before being re-assembled.

It stands just by the duck pond at the boundary of Hadley Green and Barnet High Street and was erected in 1885 by local benefactor, Miss Ann Paget.

Heritage of London Trust, which has a programme to repair abandoned water drinking fountains across London, gave a £15,000 grant towards the cost.

Dr Nicola Stacey, director of the trust, (above) said the restoration of Hadley Green's fabulous ornamental fountain would not have been possible without the inspiration, commitment, and enthusiasm of Peter Wanders (above) who had masterminded the £30,000 restoration.

Mr Wanders, proprietor of Wanders shoe shop in the High Street, started campaigning five years ago to get the fountain restored.

He secured a grant for half the cost from the trust; a £2,700 donation from Barnet Council; Affinity Water agreed to meet the £7,000 cost of reconnecting the fountain to the water supply; and a crowd-funding appeal raised over £2,000.

The fountain is due to be fully functioning – with the water supply reconnected – within the next few weeks. Once Barnet Council has renewed paths and grass around the fountain, Mr Wanders is planning an official opening ceremony sometime in April.

Hadley Green's drinking fountain is the ninth which the Heritage of London Trust has helped to restore, and work is underway repairing and reconnecting another six.

The trust thinks there are about 100 public water fountains across London that could be restored.



BUSY CENTENARIAN

A High Barnet centenarian who is often seen out and about on his mobility scooter shopping in the High Street is still receiving congratulations months after celebrating his birthday.

Depending on the weather, David John Hall, who was 100 last October, sets out regularly from his home in Meadway, complete with war-time medals on full display.

He made doubly sure he received a congratulatory card from King Charles by taking along his birth certificate to the constituency office of MP Theresa Villiers.

When setting out on his mobility scooter – which was a present from his son Dominic – Mr Hall either ventures uphill towards the town centre, and along the High Street as far as the Paper Shop to say hello to proprietor Vince Gadhavi or he heads towards New Barnet to visit his chemist and to shop at the



Sainsbury's superstore.

Mr Hall and his wife Lucreatia, who is 88, moved from Highgate to Meadway in 1998. He has great affection for the area.

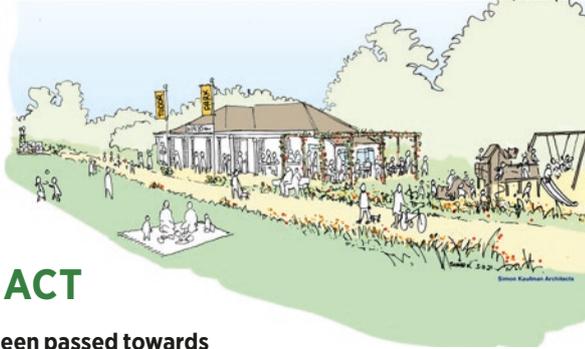
"As a boy we used to catch the tram from Highgate to Barnet Church and walk up towards the woods at Hadley.

I remember it all so well. We had such fun. And, then when I was older, I was always cycling all around the area."

"What we love so much about living in High Barnet is the open skyscape – just blue sky, with no massive blocks of flats in the way."

When he was visited by the Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Alison Moore, she stayed for two hours talking to him about his early life in Highgate and his military service.

Another much appreciated gesture was a framed letter of congratulations from Arsenal football club, signed by the club's manager, Mikel Arteta.



CHARITABLE ACT

Another milestone has been passed towards refurbishing and re-opening the historic cricket pavilion in Tudor Park, New Barnet.

Countless hours spent on form filling have paid off and the Friends of Tudor Park and Pavilion have finally achieved charitable status.

Gaining the approval of the Charity Commission is a critical requirement in the Friends' drive to secure funding and to obtain a lease on the abandoned pavilion.

Bringing the dilapidated property back to life – as a focal point for the community – is a project that has strong support, and the Friends have already carried out surveys on what amenities people in Barnet Vale would most like to see provided.

Having gained charitable status, the friends have now submitted an expression of interest to the National Lottery Community Fund for a possible grant of up to £800,000.

Earlier this year Barnet Council awarded the friends £200,000 in funding for use within the next two years and that has necessitated action to get the project off the ground.

After the success of their big picnic last summer – to raise awareness and support – the friends are planning another community event in May to coincide with the Bank Holiday for the coronation of King Charles.

John Hay, trustee of the Friends, said the Charity Commission seemed to have little hesitation in approving their application.

Charitable status allows organisations and good causes to access public funding, provides tax relief on donations; and allows other tax reliefs and exemptions.

CHANGE OF USE

Barnet Vale residents are being consulted about possibilities for restoring long-abandoned changing rooms used by New Barnet Football Club and finding ways to bring the building back into community use.

Unless refurbished, the boarded-up single-storey structure – already badly vandalised – might end up being deemed unsafe and the opportunity for re-use could be lost.

It is situated just off Tudor Road at the corner of what was once a football field but is now a wild meadow that forms part of the King George's Field green space between Hadley Wood and Barnet.

Options for the future use of the near derelict building, which is owned by Barnet Council, are being canvassed by two nearby residents, Tanya Adams and Julie Cosgrove (above) who believe it could support a range of outdoor activities to encourage



fitness and wellbeing. They have already established a friends' group for residents who want to join them, and they have established a website www.greenwellnesspod.com/ to promote their vision of how the building could be transformed to support various outdoor exercise and fitness regimes.

The changing rooms have not been used for the last 15 or 20 years and as they are owned by the council – and as the wild meadow is held in trust for public use – they believe there is a chance of financial support given the importance of sustaining green spaces and encouraging health and well-being.



WAITING ON THE COUNCIL

Patience is the watchword among staff and volunteers at the Rainbow Centre on the Dollis Valley estate as they wait for Barnet Council to refurbish a dis-used sports pavilion to provide a new community hub.

Relocating the centre from the estate to nearby new premises was first proposed two years ago.

But the project has now been delayed still further by the council's decision to convert the pavilion into a carbon neutral building, which will require advanced wiring and electrical installations.

Steve Verrall, director of the charity Barnet Community Projects and Patricia Gay, a director of the Rainbow Centre (above) say they can't wait to move in.

The former cricket pavilion in Barnet Lane, Underhill, has been vacant since the departure of Barnet Football Club from its Underhill stadium and the construction of the new Ark Pioneer Academy School.

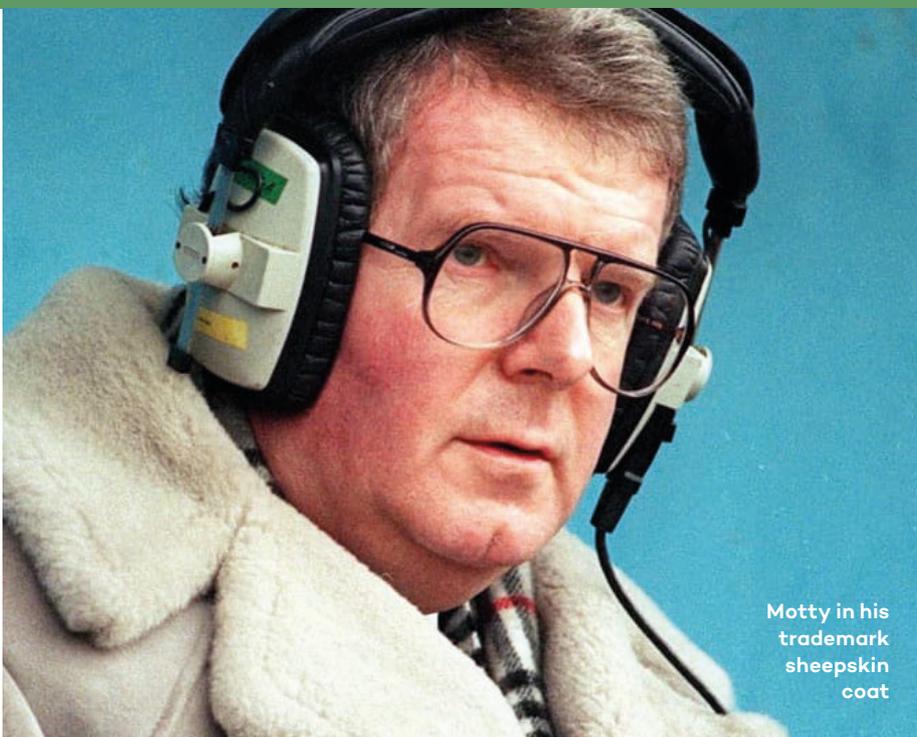
Once the building has been refurbished by the council it could provide space for a wider range of community services.

The Rainbow Centre's existing premises in Dollis Valley Drive are the base for numerous activities including a weekly foodbank, regular martial arts classes, and a lunch club for needy children during school holidays.

Steve says the clock is ticking over the need for a new base.

The lease on their existing premises runs out in April as the building is due to be demolished to make way for the next phase of the Dollis Valley housing regeneration scheme.

If the restoration of the cricket pavilion is not completed in time, the centre might have to make a temporary move to a former Scout hut the other side of Ark Academy in Priory Grove, Underhill.



Motty in his trademark sheepskin coat

‘Motty’ was proud of his Barnet links

Tributes from former colleagues, fans and fellow sports journalists to the legendary BBC football commentator John Motson (Motty) have been reflecting on his fondness for Barnet Football Club where the young Motson cut his teeth as a cub reporter on the Barnet Press, writes Nick Jones.

Motson, who has died at the age of 77, began his journalistic career on Barnet's much-respected former weekly newspaper when he was 18, the start of a life-time association with the town.

A colleague at the time in display advertising was Denis Burnham, who lives in Potters Bar, and who was due to have had lunch with Motson the week before he died.

“We were friends for 60 years and met up several times a year. Back in the 1960s we had such a good time together at the Barnet Press and our office in the High Street.

“He was great friends with another Barnet Press sports reporter, Roger Jones, who became sports editor and who died a couple of years ago.

“Between them they founded their own team, the Roving Reporters Club.

“I remember one day Motty and another reporter Jonathan Long were on court reporting duty. But there was no sitting that afternoon, so they went down to the

Barnet Odeon to see Goal! – the newly-released film of England's victory in the 1966 World Cup.”

Mr Burnham was not all surprised that Motson, who left Barnet in 1967 to join the Sheffield Morning Telegraph, reached the top of his profession.

“He had a great talent for writing, and was incredibly personable and witty.

“After he got his break with the BBC with that brilliant commentary of the Hereford United v Newcastle FA Cup replay in 1972 -- when Hereford won 2-1 against all expectations – you could see he was going to make it.

“Just look at the statistics: he was commentator at 29 FA Cup Finals, 10 World Cups and 10 European Championships – that's 40 years at the top.”

So extensive was Motson's encyclopaedic knowledge of the back history of football, that he would often work in a mention of Barnet or an ex-Barnet player.

“Whenever he was commentating or being interviewed, we would always be listening out to see if Barnet popped up in some

“We were friends for 60 years. Back in the 1960s we had such a good time together at the Barnet Press”

way or other,” said long-standing Barnet supporter Tony Swingler who attended his first match at Underhill at the age of 14 in 1966.

Motson kept in regular contact with his former colleagues at the Barnet Press, one of the oldest weekly newspapers in the country until its closure in 2017 after publication for 158 years.

He was a regular attendee at staff reunions. Jenny Kobish, a telephonist in the 1960s until she left in the mid-1980s, has many happy memories.

“Over the years we could tell the great affection he had for his old colleagues and for Barnet.

“At the last re-union six or seven years ago, he was having a great chat with everyone but then moved into the corner of the room to watch a live match on the tv.

“So, I have that final memory of him, sitting there, absolutely absorbed in the match. That was Motty all over.”

In his obituary in The Guardian, Anthony Hayward described Motson's teenage passions. He not only played in the Barnet and District Sunday League but was also a Barnet and Potters Bar youth table-tennis champion.

In his tribute in the Daily Mail, columnist Richard Littlejohn said he had always admired Motson because they both had a similar early career path: “local rag, local radio, freelancing”.

“I've bumped into Motty at Barnet's old Underhill stadium where he cut his teeth as a cub reporter on the now defunct local paper.

“And there you have the essence of the man – Barnet, Hereford, Sutton United.

All a million miles from Barcelona, Highbury, and the San Siro, which Motson also graced with distinction over the years.”

**John Motson
1945-2023**



POSTER COMPETITION WINNERS

Ayushman Jindal (Cromer Road Primary School) and Maya Michaels (Underhill School) were joint winners of the Barnet Society poster competition for pupils aged between 7 and 11. They were asked to design a poster that illustrated the importance of trees, flowers, parks and fields



Ayushman and his rhododendron...and his parents



When Maya Michaels (8) was named joint winner of the poster competition, her class at Underhill School suggested she might choose a pine tree.

Her class is 4 Pine – and two other forms in year four are 4 Cherry and 4 Larch – so a conifer did seem a possibility. In the end Maya settled on a magnolia, which is now at Underhill and will be planted beside the school field.

“I like drawing pictures about nature and the environment, so it was fun having a chance to enter the competition,” said Maya. Like Ayushman, Maya emphasised how important plants and trees are in helping us breathe and their role in producing oxygen.

Her favourite local walk is in the Northaw Great Wood at Cuffley, but what she likes best of all are their family holidays in the Scottish islands surrounded by sea, mountains and lakes.

Maya, who enjoys playing football and hockey – and is an Arsenal supporter – thinks she might train to become a vet.

Choosing a tree or shrub to buy with his prize money needed an hour’s serious thought when ten-year-old Ayushman Jindal went to a garden centre with his parents.

He was keen to find something that was low on pollen as some in the family are troubled by hay fever and he thought that a wise precaution.

His choice was a rhododendron with orange flowers, his favourite colour.

Ayushman, who is in his last year at Cromer Road Primary, starts at Latymer School in the autumn and wants to become an engineer.

He has always been interested in the environment and has studied the importance of trees and plants in producing and releasing oxygen. The importance of this was reflected in his winning poster.

Ayushman’s parents, Sanjeev, and Chitrakha Jindal, who are members of the Barnet Society, said the competition had been a great initiative and furthered their son’s interest in the environment.



Millie back in her old stomping ground

Millie the Waitrose cat has resumed her role as High Barnet's most popular feline character, checking out customers at The Spires shopping centre, writes Nick Jones.

Millie's owner, Paula Gabb joined local sculptor John Somerville for the official unveiling of a bronze statue to commemorate a cat that made a name for herself greeting shoppers outside Waitrose supermarket.

After months of negotiation and trial and error a site was finally agreed for a permanent memorial on the wall directly the opposite the main entrance.

After Millie's death in January 2019, her owner Paula was so overwhelmed with messages of sympathy that she launched an appeal for a statue and was astounded when well over 200 of Millie's admirers made donations.

She commissioned John, who is well known locally for his life-size bronze sculpture of Spike Milligan, which is on display in East End Road, Finchley.

His cold cast bronze statue of Millie, made from a clay model, has been lacquered and polished. John says his aim was to ensure that the process

of chemical patination created the closest possible representation of Millie's colouring.

A brass plaque reflects the affection with which Millie was held by shoppers: "In loving memory of Millie, the guardian of the Spires".

"It is wonderful to see Millie back in the Spires," said Paula. "This is where she belongs. She gave a lot of happiness to the lives of so many people, and she will do so again. I can't thank enough all those

who made donations so that Millie won't be forgotten."

John said that when he was commissioned by Paula, he had not realised that there aren't many statues of cats and that he found recreating Millie perhaps the second-most difficult commission he had ever undertaken.

"Time and again I tried modelling Millie sitting up with one paw extended. I did two or three life size models, but they didn't seem to work. I just could not get the angles right.

"Then I tried lying her down, with her head turned sideways and her paws crossed over the other. That was a real Millie pose, what made her very distinctive."

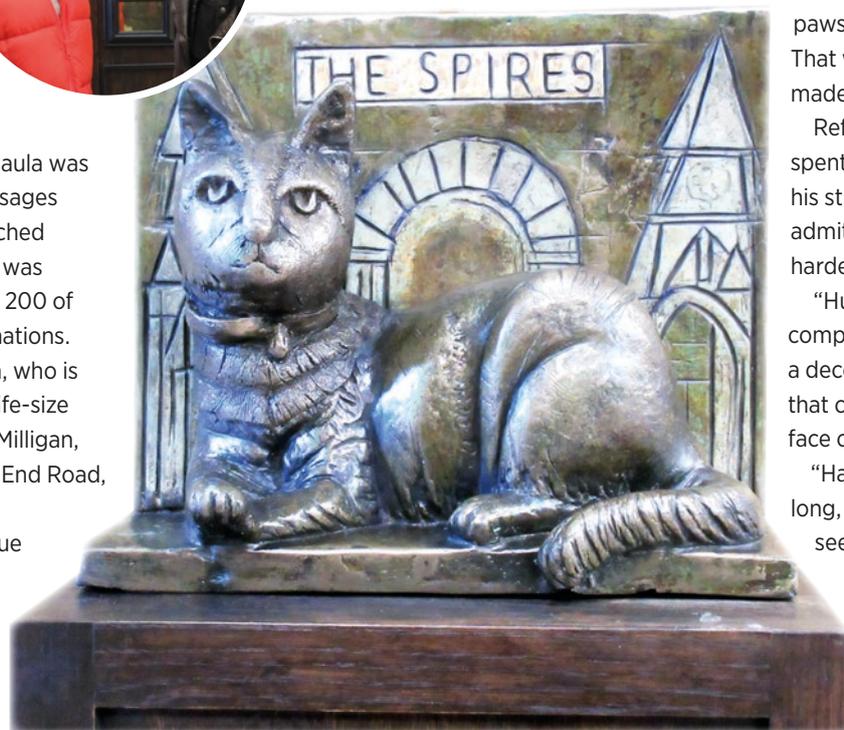
Reflecting on the hours he had spent working on the statue in his studio in Wood Street, John admitted that it was perhaps his hardest ever commission.

"Humans are easy by comparison but there just isn't a decent example of a sculpture that captures the anatomy of the face of a cat.

"Having worked on Millie for so long, I've come to respect her. I see her as the Guardian of the Gate, Millie the Waitrose cat, who liked to check people out when they arrived to shop at Waitrose."



Paula Gabb and sculptor John Somerville at the unveiling of the bronze statue memorial to Millie, the famous 'Spires Cat'



Join the Barnet Society and help carry on its work

Annual subscriptions for new joiners are £10 for an individual or £15 for a family.

Additional donations are greatly appreciated

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