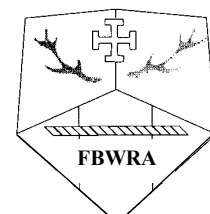


newsletter

Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association

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Council has plans for North Finchley - Part 3

Proposals require substantial changes to be acceptable and are a threat to War Memorial. Following articles in our previous two editions we continue with our review of the Council's plans

In the November 2017 Edition we reported on the Council's development proposals for North Finchley Town Centre, set out in the "North Finchley Town Centre Framework draft Supplementary Planning Document (or "SPD")", on which the Council was then consulting. In relation to this, FBWRA and the Finchley Society held a joint members' meeting on 23 November, when representatives of the Council's consultants (BDP) and the Council (RE) explained the SPD proposals to an audience of more than 100 (thank you to all who came to this).

During the public consultation period on the SPD, as well as holding the meeting, FBWRA and the Finchley Society worked together to review the draft SPD, and we submitted a lengthy set of representations to the Council.

FBWRA and the Society give the SPD a cautious welcome. Both recognise the need for an appropriate town planning environment to help revitalise the North Finchley Town Centre, but consider that the existing proposals require substantial changes to be acceptable. The current draft SPD is inadequate in many respects and should be seen as a starting point, not as a destination.

Residents' Associations concerns

A summary of our comments on the



The Council plans to allow more very tall buildings, that look like this, on the North Finchley landscape.

proposals for new development:

- 1. Market:** The proposed new courtyard space for the market is too small to be an adequate replacement.
- 2. Bus station:** Further detail is required to demonstrate that the policy of closing the bus station is realistic. The lack of detail undermines the credibility and validity of the SPD proposals.

3. Traffic Management: As an over-riding priority, no road space reallocation or other proposal impacting on traffic flows through North Finchley should be put into effect if it would reduce the volume of through traffic that the High Road / Ballards Lane are able to accommodate.

4. Cycling: The SPD contains no specific proposals for cyclists. It should provide a realistic

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Friern Barnet and Whetstone Residents' Association

- We are non-political
- We work for all residents in the area
- We discuss issues with Local Councillors and Council Officials
- Associated with the following bodies
- The Federation of Residents' Associations of Barnet
- The Finchley Society
- Friends of Friary Park
- Open Spaces Society
- The Friern Barnet & District Local History Society
- Coppetts Wood Conservationists
- The London Green Belt Council
- Love Whetstone

. . . (continued) Council has plans for North Finchley - Part 3

evaluation of whether the provision of features such as cycle lanes is desirable and practicable in the context of the crowded space comprising the town centre.

5. Parking supply during redevelopment: The SPD does not discuss measures to offset the loss of more than 45% of the total off-street car park capacity in the town centre while the Lodge Lane car park is redeveloped. The SPD must be revised to include a clear policy statement to reassure local residents, drivers, and businesses that the town centre will not be strangled by a major loss of car parking capacity during redevelopment.

6. Parking supply- general: The lack of available car parking in North Finchley was a major concern expressed at the 23 November meeting. There is a widespread perception that lack of easily available parking is a major cause of the decline of the town centre and that immediate action should be taken by the Council to deal with this. Whilst the proposals for encouraging more efficient use of existing car parking spaces are welcome, the opportunity should be



taken to significantly increase the number of public parking spaces. Finchley.

7. Height of buildings: The proposals for tall buildings are inappropriate: overbearing by virtue of their height and bulk, out of keeping with the typology of neighbouring buildings and likely to introduce unacceptable levels of shading to neighbouring roads and buildings. Tall buildings should be limited to no more than 6 or 7 storeys (and less in certain parts of the sites concerned).

8. Wind tunnel effects: The SPD recognises new developments may create additional wind tunnels, but is weak in the proposed handling of the issue. It should be made clear that wind tunnel effects arising from development proposals must, as far as possible, be eliminated, not merely mitigated. This issue was frequently and forcefully raised by speakers from the floor at our members' meeting.

9. Residential units: The SPD is silent as to the numbers of new residential units that are expected to arise from the developments contemplated in the document. Residents need to know this number in order to appreciate the scale of change that may come to North

10. Social infrastructure: In a town planning context it is the Council, not the NHS, that is responsible for new health or educational facilities. The SPD should make specific provision for a new health centre on a specific site.

11. War Memorial: The War Memorial stands in front of "St Kilda's", the United Services Club building. This is a 19th century house acquired by the USC in 1921; the proposals call for its demolition along with the offices to the north of the Memorial. We strongly object to the demolition, for two reasons.

The current proposal would mean the Memorial would have a large and alien new building of up to 12 storeys as its "backdrop": this would be insensitive to the Memorial. In addition the original War Memorial is in fact "St Kilda's". The house was purchased in 1921 as a war memorial by the USC, to be used as an institute or club for the use of servicemen, ex-servicemen and others. St Kilda's is thus an important monument to the sacrifice of the men of Finchley in the Great War, and so should be retained as part of the collective memory and social history of the people of Finchley.



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. . . (continued . . . again) Council has plans for North Finchley - Part 3

St Kilda's could be excluded from the redevelopment site without impairing the integrity of the remainder of the site. FBWRA and the Society believe that the

house should be excluded from compulsory purchase, and any new building constructed on the remainder of the site should not be overbearing in

relation to either the Memorial or to "St Kilda's".

Our comments on the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) process:

1. Traffic Study: The lack of a technical traffic study and the lack of a demonstrably workable traffic scheme undermine the credibility of the SPD proposals. The SPD must contain a clear and short timetable – driven by the Council, not developers – for the completion of a full traffic study and the subsequent formulation (including public consultation) of a highway plan.

2. Phasing: The SPD deliberately contains no specific phasing strategy. This is a mistake: the nature of the SPD proposals requires that at least some elements of phasing should be set out as

mandatory requirements. For example, before the Lodge Lane site is redeveloped the existing market must be established at its new location and adequate temporary public parking provided to replace the spaces in Lodge Lane car park until the replacement car park on that site is open for public use.

3. Blight: The adoption of the SPD will create planning blight, particularly because of the proposal for use of a CPO "especially but not exclusively in the Key Opportunity Sites". This creates unacceptable uncertainty throughout the whole of the SPD area. The SPD should identify those parts of the SPD area where CPO powers will be exercised,

ideally only for Key Opportunity Sites and highways works, and powers should contain a "sunset provision", so that blight in these areas is time-limited.

4. Masterplan: It is unacceptable to impose a requirement that proposals must be "accompanied by an overall masterplan". This is likely to operate unfairly as only a party which secures control of key sites will be able to provide such a "masterplan". It must be open to anyone to submit planning applications in conformity with the SPD.

David Thompson

The End of North Finchley as we know it - a personal view



For years residents and local traders pleaded with the Council to allow 1-hour free parking at the Lodge Lane Car Park. The Councillors refused to listen to reason. 1-hour free parking would be convenient for the residents and would enhance business.

The Council's refusal (at those times) made no sense, especially as they

allow 1-hour free parking at the Moxon Street Car Park in Chipping Barnet. Now the Council's intransigence makes sense. They had a long term plan for Lodge Lane. As one of the few assets remaining it is theirs to do what they want with. All they needed was a plan to go along with it.

Once development of the Lodge Lane Car Park begins, where will be the parking for local traders (who don't live locally and walk to work) and users of the High Street? The simple answer is that the High Road will suffer planning blight and rapidly run-down.

Harry Gluck

Council has plans for North Finchley - Part 4

War memorial saved; New tall buildings must tackle wind tunnel effect

The revised draft of the Council's proposed "North Finchley Town Centre Framework Supplementary Planning Document" (or "SPD") was published on 5 February, and was discussed and approved at the meeting of the Council's Policy & Resources Committee held on 13 February.

The new document is a considerable improvement on the previous version, as many of the "gaps" identified during the consultation on the original have been dealt with, at least to some extent. The view of members of the FBWRA working group who reviewed and commented on the draft is that, even if some parts of it are disappointing, overall the SPD is to be welcomed as it will support the much-needed revitalisation of North Finchley town centre, and, it is to be hoped, will bring a degree of coherence to the process which would be lacking with piecemeal redevelopment.

During the consultation a large number of public comments were submitted, particularly on the plan to demolish St Kilda's. It is most encouraging that many people cared enough to find out about the proposals and then to submit comments to the Council.

In relation to the main points raised in the FBWRA/Finchley Society joint submissions on the SPD, the changes in the new draft SPD can be summarised as follows:

1. Market: Revised Council Position: the proposal to relocate the market to a new courtyard on Key Opportunity Site1, (referred to as KOS1), the Tally Ho Triangle/Arts Depot, is replaced by a clearer commitment to a new location along Ballards Lane, near the Tally Ho pub; continuity of the market appears to be assured by a commitment that "The SPD development strategy will ensure that the market retains a functional operation and important contribution while North Finchley undergoes change."

2. Bus station: Revised Council Position: the proposal to close the bus

station has been abandoned unless TfL agree - which they have not (although we understand it is closed at present, we believe for reasons of safety !). The Council now accepts TfL would only consider relocating the bus station if there was clear operational and passenger benefit. A newly-prepared Council "High Level Transport Review" of North Finchley, intended to support the SPD, suggests reducing the number of bus stands and improving the flow of buses through the town centre.

3. Traffic Management: Revised Council Position: the re-routing of Ballards Lane northbound through traffic onto Kingsway and the High Road, which would be converted to 2-way operation, will require a detailed technical study and public and technical consultations.

4. Cycling: Revised Council Position: no real change: The SPD contains no specific proposals for cyclists- this will need to be dealt with later.

5. Parking supply during redevelopment: Revised Council Position: the previous draft did not cover how to offset the loss of more than 45% of off-street town centre car parking while Lodge Lane car park is redeveloped. The new draft recognises that "a clear strategy will be required to ensure minimum disruption to town centre parking during the redevelopment of the [Lodge Lane] car park."

6. Parking supply- general: Revised Council Position: the proposals in the SPD will maintain or increase the overall existing number of available public car parking spaces within the town centre and provide additional residential spaces for new development in line with existing policies.

7. Height of buildings: Revised Council Position: A new section in the revised SPD, containing "Tall building guidance", applying to buildings of 8

storeys or more, provides that their height, form and proportions, and the base of the building, should "respect and respond" to the height, scale and built character of the existing surrounding context, and that where this is of a lower scale and not anticipated to change, proposals should provide a transition in the base building height down to lower scale neighbours, to help retain the streetscape character.

8. Wind tunnel effects: Revised Council Position: future design of new buildings and public space around the Arts Depot must seek to address existing adverse micro-climate conditions and provide appropriate mitigation measures. The cumulative visual and environmental impacts of proposed and planned tall buildings must be considered when developing plans for North Finchley.

9. Residential units: Revised Council Position : No change

10. Social infrastructure: Revised Council Position : No change.

11. War Memorial: Revised Council Position: St Kilda's (the USC building, the original Finchley war memorial) is excluded from the Ballards Lane/ Nether Street "Key Opportunity Site" (KOS2), and to protect it the proposed new building of up to 8 storeys on the remaining KOS2 will need to decrease in height down to "respond to" the USC.

The SPD process (refer to "Council has plans for North Finchley Part 3" on pages 1, 2 & 3) -

1. Traffic Study: Revised Council Position: see 3 above.

2. Phasing: Revised Council Position : Although "it is expected market forces will influence how sites come forward for redevelopment", there is now a "preferred sequencing" for redeveloping the Key Opportunity Sites:

continued from page 4 . . . Council has plans for North Finchley - Part 4

KOS1- Tally Ho has the largest regeneration benefits for the town centre and is a priority for an early phase, as it could take a number of years to deliver;

KOS2- Ballards Lane and KOS4 "East Wing" (to the east of the High Road near Argos) - should also come forward as an early part of the regeneration, including change to the traffic layout of the area;

KOS3 Finchley House- less reliant on other

development activity and so can progress as the market dictates.

KOS6 Lodge Lane-as this requires a new location for the market before its delivery, it may therefore come later in the sequence;

KOS5 Friern Park/High Road- may be later in the process as redevelopment may rely on a new parking strategy for North Finchley to ensure loss of parking spaces [on

existing car parks] does not lead to a net loss in the town centre as a whole;

3. Blight: Revised Council Position : No change.

4. Masterplan: Revised Council Position: No change

Just do your bit! Join us in helping to keep our streets clean

In response to comments from many residents, FBWRA together



with Love Whetstone are putting together a campaign to raise awareness of our litter problem and ask residents to "**just do your bit**". If everyone just picked up the litter outside their own home, collectively it would make a big difference.

Our lovely local streets are sadly all too often blighted in this way. While windy weather and, at times, careless bin collections play a part, the largest culprit is casual littering.



Barnet Council employs staff to clean up the High Road but it is impossible for them to

sweep all our streets as often as needed.

It is surprising when walking our local streets, that empty cans, crisp packets and such can lie against front walls or in kerbs for days. It is so common, we hardly see them. If we don't take

personal responsibility for our streets, they will continue to go down hill.

Apart from initiating an anti-litter publicity campaign, specific litter-picking of really bad spots is also planned. We will enlist the help of Barnet Council who despite not having any specific anti-litter programmes, do appear to be willing to support local



residents wanting to do something about the rubbish around them. We will work with them to promote and publicise this initiative locally.

However, the most important initiative is the small thing we can each do for ourselves by just doing the bit in front of our home. Let's spring clean our streets!

If you are interested in working with us on this project please email:

fbwra@btinternet.com or info@lovewhetstone.co.uk

Maria Jordan

Forthcoming Events

Incognito Theatre, Holly Park Road The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde 18th March - 24th March
Performances are Sunday at 6pm, Monday - Friday at 8pm, Saturday at 3pm and 8pm.

FRIERN BARNET & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY
start 7:30 p.m. February 28th **The History of Almshouses** (Simon Smith)
North Middlesex Golf Club, Friern Barnet Lane, N20 0NL

FBWRA proposal to ease congestion in Friern Barnet Lane

Parking at the Whetstone end of the road needs improving

Many readers will be familiar with the traffic congestion that is a frequent problem in the upper section of Friern Barnet Lane, and which arises because in this section of the lane, with vehicles parked on both sides (as currently permitted) the carriageway width is insufficient to allow buses and other larger vehicles travelling in opposite directions to pass one another.

The FBWRA Committee borrowed a laser measurement device to

measure the effective carriageway width between the vehicles parked on both sides of the road one weekday morning. We found that throughout the section from 279 Friern Barnet Lane to Academy4 Kids the effective carriageway width was less than 6m. At its narrowest the effective width was 5.36 m.

From information that we have obtained from the Council (the Barnet Parking Policy), it is clear that the situation as recorded in our survey is less than the required minimum carriageway width of 6 or 6.2 metres (depending on how the road is classified), so we are now looking to the Council to take appropriate action.

However, further parking restrictions are not what is required- the road is an important resource in terms of on-street parking and this should be preserved. Instead, we have suggested to the Council that the appropriate course



No room to drive at the Whetstone end of Friern Barnet Lane

of action is to relocate sections of the kerb on the western side of the carriageway along this section of the road and to set out half width parking bays between the trees that stand along the roadside.

FBWRA Treasurer, David Thompson, raised the matter at a meeting last month with the three Councillors representing Totteridge Ward, in

which much of the relevant section of Friern Barnet Lane lies, and one of the Councillors representing Oakleigh Ward- in which the remaining section lies.

We are pleased to report that FBWRA's suggestion was supported and Totteridge Councillor Richard Cornelius (who is also Leader of the Council) agreed to progress the scheme with the "appropriate people".

This should result in a quicker outcome, compared with the alternative of FBWRA raising it with the Council- run Chipping Barnet Residents' Forum, after which if accepted by the Forum the proposal would then go to the Chipping Barnet Area Committee for further consideration by councillors.

Annual Spring Festival

AT: Coppetts Wood
ON: Sunday 20 May 1 - 4 pm

Everyone welcome, free entry
Enjoy lunch, snacks, music, friends

web: www.coppettswood.org

Study shows the number of trees in Barnet is declining

Why does Barnet Council fail to plant more roadside trees ?

Trees in streets are felled when they start dying, and can become dangerous and need to be felled and totally removed. Generally, Barnet's tree officers have been rather keen to fell hazardous trees but how keen are they to replace trees they fell ?

We examined Barnet Council's survey of street trees

Recorded in 1996 and in about 2015. We compared the numbers of trees for each street where information was available for both years. We looked at reports in Coppetts and in Woodhouse Wards.

So, armed with Barnet Council's records of street trees in 1996 and 2015 we found and examined all streets whose tree positions appeared to be comparable. Data was available for only 49 streets.

What we found In these 49 streets

In 1996 a total of 994 trees were recorded by Barnet Council. In 2015 a total of 889 trees were recorded. That is, a net deficit of 105 trees, being a decrease of over 10%.

What might be the situation across the entire borough? We don't know – but assuming that these 49 streets in two wards are representative of all streets in this borough of 21 wards, then there would appear to be in the borough of Barnet a **deficit** of about **two thousand** street trees.

What are the benefits of street trees?

1. Crime

Research in several countries demonstrate that street trees reduce crime rates in streets where trees are present. Especially with large trees

<http://www.deeproot.com/blog/blog-entries/trees-for-public-safety-reducing-crime-rates>

<https://www.citylab.com/equity/2012/05/can-trees-actually-deter-crime/2107/>

<https://www.opb.org/news/blog/ecotrope/study-finds-less-shady-behavior-around-big-trees/>

2. Property values

See reports in the following web sites:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/plants/trees/11092440/How-much-is-a-tree-worth.html>

also

www.greenblue.com/gb/how-trees-increase-property-values/

3. Trees may reduce risk of flooding which may lower your insurance premiums,

3. Trees do reduce the noise of vehicles

4. Trees soak up air pollution.

5. Trees increase the biodiversity in your area – delight in bird song, trees in full bloom or bearing clusters of berries – wonderful for wildlife.

Detail of the Tree survey of the 49 streets

31 streets show a reduction in numbers of trees; the numbers in brackets are the net loss in tree numbers for that street between 1996 and 2015:



Trees enhance the urban landscape - firs outside Christ Church in Friern Barnet Road

Addington Drive (-4); Albion Ave (-3); Alma Rd (-6); Ashurst Rd (-13); Bramber Rd (-3); Crown Rd (-6); Ferncroft Ave (-2); Friern Park (-9); George Crescent (-2); Glenhurst Rd (-1); Halliwick Rd (-12); Hillside Ave (-2); Hilton Ave (-5); Hollickwood Avenue (-8); Kenver Ave (-3); Lewes Rd (-8); Lyndhurst Ave (-1); Newton Ave (-4); Pembroke Rd (-3); Petworth Rd (-5); Roman Rd (-3); St Johns Ave (-2); Sandringham Gardens (-7); Sutton Rd (-2); Sydney Rd (-10); Thurstlestone Ave (-7); Torrington Ave (-7); Torrington Grove (-5); Wetherill Rd (7); Woodgrange Ave (-6); Woodhouse Rd (-34)

Five streets had the same number of trees in 2015 as in 1996 Churchfield Ave, Cromwell Rd, Stanhope Rd, The Vale, Wilton Rd

Only 13 streets had an increased number of trees in 2015 compared to 1996:

Beechvale Close, Buxted Rd, selected parts of Colney Hatch Lane, Fenstanton Ave, Hollyfield Ave, Horsham Ave, Ingleway, Lambert Rd, Summers Lane, Torrington Park, Valley Ave.

But the combined (net) figures for ALL the trees in our streets where information was available showed an overall decrease in number by 105 trees in 49 of your streets.

The future:

Will this reduced number of trees lead to more air pollution in your street, more noise, increased risk of flooding, less biodiversity as well as increased risk of crime and loss in value of your property? The answer depends on the response from Barnet Council's commitment to plant trees in your streets.

Request and acknowledgements

We urge Barnet Council to plant more roadside trees.

We wish to thank Barnet Council's officers for providing evidence on street trees. We appreciate this co-operation and hope to work together to improve our streets with trees.

Alexander Sylvester and Oliver Natelson

Council and Capita - the Council's review highlights Capita's performance

Highways, town planning and planning applications could do with improving

It is now over four years since the Council's controversial outsourcing arrangements with Capita plc came into effect, on 1st October 2013. The Council and Capita set up a "joint venture" company (JV), "Regional Enterprise Limited" (RE), whose shares are 51% owned by Capita and 49% owned by the Council, and the Council then appointed RE as service provider, to provide "development and regulatory services" to the Council (previously the Council carried out these functions itself).

The Contract

The contract runs for 10 years and covers services such as town planning, building control, environmental health, trading standards and highways functions (*thus some key services, such as refuse collection, are not covered by the contract*).

The contract has a cost to the Council of approximately £154m over the 10 year term, but much of this is offset by the income generated by charges for the services, and RE guarantees a minimum level of income to the Council. The overall effect is to reduce the net cost of the services to the Council from £45m to £6m over the 10 year contract period.

The Review

The Council has recently completed a 4-year review of the arrangements with RE. The report on that review (which can be found on the Council's website

barnet.modern.gov.co.uk

in the Performance and Contract Management Committee pages) concluded that, in broad terms, the contract was delivering against its objectives, the key benefits that the council originally hoped to gain by entering into the arrangement, including the £39m savings over the 10 year contract, investment in IT, buildings and

training, improved development and regulatory services for residents, with the establishment of a dedicated customer services team to provide quicker access and information and investment to support borough-wide growth, enterprise and renewal.

The review focussed on what were considered the most significant services within the contract – highways, town planning, regeneration and key elements of regulatory services. Here the findings were less satisfactory: for example there had been significant issues on highways services delivery including speed of fixing problems. Town planning services were criticised for a lack of responsiveness on planning enforcement issues, problems with consultation letters for planning applications and a need to improve communication between planning team and the public. However, the regeneration and regulatory services were "mostly performing well".

Concerns

Several general points emerge from the report - a need for greater shared understanding of the contract provisions (unsurprising as the document, including schedules, runs to over 1000 pages), a need to update some performance requirements and standards to better reflect current priorities and issues, a need for more dialogue between council officers and RE colleagues.

More specifically, the report identifies Capita's internal organisational structure as a "layer of complexity" that potentially impacts of service delivery, because RE buys in some services from Capita and has, in effect to compete for these resources with Capita's other clients, which the Council considers may not always operate in the council's best interests.

The writer's own experiences in dealing with the council reflect some of the issues

mentioned above - unresponsiveness on the part of the highways department and, in the planning department, although here we believe that the main problem area lies in the teams handling planning applications, where we have seen repeated failures to reply to emails calling for responses. We also see inconsistencies in the way planning policies are applied (which we are currently investigating via the Freedom of Information Act). However, we have found the enforcement team demonstrate what we might term good communication skills.

We are also investigating how the arrangements in the RE contract impact on the accountability of the Council and the devolvement of important responsibilities to unelected parties.

One of the original key objectives behind establishing the RE arrangement was the hope of selling services to other councils (as a shareholder in RE, Barnet could hope to share any profits). The council report confirms that this aspect has had only limited success, "and has yet to result in any additional financial benefit to the council".

Bearing in mind that the report also found that the services provided to Barnet under the arrangement were low cost, when compared to the costs incurred by other councils and providing good value for money, we must ask what has deterred other councils from joining in the arrangement with RE.

We are keen to hear from you, our members, about how you have fared in dealing with RE - if you would be willing to share your experiences with us on any of the following areas within the RE contract- building control, planning department, land charges, environmental health, trading standards and licensing and highways- then please email us at fbwra@btinternet.com. None of your personal details will be passed to the council or published by FBWRA without your consent.