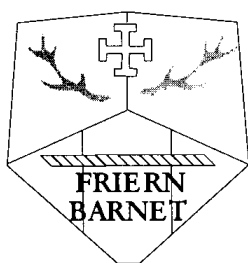


# Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association



June 2007

## 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 Association of Barnet
  - The Post Office Advisory Panel
  - The Finchley Society
  - Friends of Friary Park
  - The Friern Barnet & District Local History Society
  - Coppetts Wood Conservationists
  - The London Green Belt Council
  - North Finchley Local Agenda 21

## Residents Association brings action over Beaconsfield Road sewage leak

Residents in the Oakleigh Road North end of Beaconsfield Road have complained about raw sewage leaking onto their footpath. In desperation they contacted your residents' association for help.

In fact these residents have been complaining for years about problems with water disposal in their street. We highlighted the "Beaconsfield pond" problem caused by poor drainage in our March 2007 newsletter.

Earlier in the year we had received a complaint about evil-looking seepage emanating from the wall in the railway foot tunnel between Beaconsfield Road and Oakleigh Road South. We looked at the brown muck running down the wall and though it looked disgusting it didn't smell of anything nasty. It looked bad enough to contact Thames Water who inspected the site, took samples and reported back that it wasn't sewage. We contacted Barnet Council's "Priority Intervention Team Community Protection Group" (yes, that what Street Enforcement are called these days), who arranged to sweep the tunnel and clear the suspect manhole cover of mud, grass and debris.

Over the May bank holiday, we heard again from the Beaconsfield residents. Up to their ankles in sewage they were desperate. We contacted Thames Water, whose first response was that they couldn't find the tunnel. We then arranged to meet them and show them the offending area. Thames Water agreed that the mess was "foul water", and within two days cleared the blockage and cleaned the path. Thames Water also promised to "de-grease" the local sewage channels. One local resident said she was "delighted" that action had been taken.

However, there was heavy rainfall at the end of May and the sewage again overflowed. The path leading to the foot tunnel was strewn with shredded toilet paper, sanitary towels and disintegrating human excrement. Again we contacted



*Following heavy rain, the path in front of Chaville Court, Beaconsfield Road, was covered in human waste, near the foot tunnel*

the Council's "Environmental Health" section, again their staff were not interested. In our opinion, as the affected area is where children play, it should have been immediately fenced off.

Your Association wrote to Thames Water demanding that they attend to the matter urgently. We have been told that their engineering department will be carrying out a full inspection of the drains in the area to get to the root of the problem and resolve it.

We have to give credit to Thames Water for being prompt, fully co-operative and for keeping their promises.

While we were looking at the sorry state of the foot tunnel we couldn't help noticing that a lot of rubbish (stuff like old sofas, beds, fridges and microwave ovens) had been thrown over the railings. We contacted Network Rail and they have cleared some of it — but not to the Association's satisfaction. We have arranged a site visit to point out what iron railings need to be repaired, where the barbed should be removed, and what rubbish will be cleared. We need to find who owns the land around the railings, in order to find out who is responsible for clearing all of the rubbish.

## Unsuitable development for the Turrets rejected a second time

The building known as "The Turrets", at the intersection of Friern Barnet Road and Station Road (near New Southgate station) looks like an ancient castle and is certainly being fought over with medieval zest. Of course, eventually it will obviously have to be replaced by something different. But it is a prime site for a landmark building, which presents special problems, as it sits at a busy, and slow-moving traffic junction.

Two plans have so far been submitted to Barnet Council, which take account of neither the dominant position in that part of Friern Barnet Road, nor the potentially disastrous traffic problems. Both have been recommended by the Council's planning officers, both were opposed by us and both were turned down by the Council's planning committee, the last one unanimously.

The applicant has made two proposals for development of this site, for mixed residential and commercial use, in the last two years, and is obviously trying to milk the site for considerably more than it is worth. In both cases the applicant fails to appreciate that a bulky edifice on the edge of the rail-



*Impression of proposed development overwhelms the landscape*

way embankment would create an extra hazard and, above all, that the creation of substantial additional traffic entering Friern Barnet Road at this point cannot be acceptable.

Furthermore the plans submitted so far provide no information about the proposed commercial use of the ground floor, the way in which refuse will be disposed of, or the number of vehicles and day-time workers expected to be deployed.

Nor do the applicants do themselves any favours by submitting apparently misleading drawings, such as the one showing the neighbouring modest three storey houses towering over the five floors building which is supposed to replace the handsome Turrets, in the text of the application reference is

made to "emphasizing the need to harmonize with the surroundings" and that the "new building ought to present a familiar, well-loved face", but the actual proposal flies in the face of such honeyed description.

The total accommodation envisaged for the upper four floors includes 21 one bedroom flats, 12 two bedroom flats and 7 three bedroom flats, and it is anyone's guess just how many cars these will produce which would have to enter the already stagnant traffic in Friern Barnet Road.

An appeal by the developers against the first Council refusal has failed. Watch this space for future developments.

KR

## Pavements pose particularly painful problems

We all need to walk on safe pavements in Barnet. Unfortunately many of ours aren't, some are among the worst in London. Ours cause so many trips that Barnet Council had to pay over one million pounds in compensation claims over a five year period. Now asphalt-covered pavements with surface-rolled white grit are an attractive and safer alternative to paving-slabs that can lift and trip you up.

A lifted paving slab can trip you up, dislocate or fracture shoulders, hips and wrists. Our appalling record, suggests that Barnet Council seems to care little for your pavement safety.

In fact it would seem that Barnet Council doesn't realise that it has 3,000 residents with poor eyesight, and is spending too little on pavement maintenance.

Little is done about pavement obstructions such as wheelie-bins, despite repeated letters. Nor is anything done to clear pavements cluttered with recy-

cling boxes or bollards (some are camouflaged).

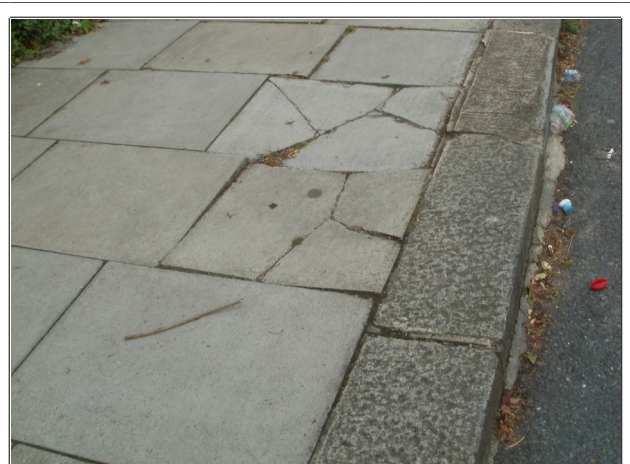
Barnet Council allows anyone to clutter pavements causing difficulties for elderly and blind people. Often the poorly sighted have to walk in the road to avoid obstructions on pavements.

For example, why does Barnet Council allow pavement obstructions: such as advertising

boards, merchandise, bushes in pots, builders rubble and construction materials, cars for sale, cars parked with all four wheels on the pavement?

Why are tables and chairs parked outside cafés, even in rain?

Barnet Council as well as local residents have a duty to prevent their trees



*A not untypical Barnet pavement scene*

and hedges poking pedestrians. Many people don't see well at night and suffer a brush with a bush or a faceful of brambly branches.

In fact, it can be said that Barnet Council and its residents turn a blind eye to those of us that have blind eyes!

ON



## Once a week or once a fortnight?

There has been much discussion in the national press over the last few months about councils changing their rate of refuse collection from once a week to once a fortnight. The councils have tried to justify this change by having the recycled waste collected on alternate weeks. It is our understanding that Barnet Council has resisted such a change for the time being at least. Where the refuse is being collected fortnightly local residents are up in arms. The change has brought about rat infestation as well as maggots and bad smells from the rotting material.

Central Government has a problem with meeting its European targets, for recycling waste material. To meet these targets, local councils have to arrange to collect more materials for recycling. Different councils will go about collecting more recyclable material in different ways. Although our Council has improved on the amount of recyclable material it collects, it is obvious that more could be collected. Items such as cardboard, plastic milk bottles and packaging from supermarket should be next in line for the Council to collect for recycling.

We hope the Council resist the change to fortnightly refuse collection. There is no doubt that our Council leaders and Council officers will talk to

leaders and officers of other councils who have made the change. We can guess that our Council leaders might be told how wonderful the change to fortnightly collection is, how it has saved millions and that there has been no unwanted side effects. Our television screens have shown the rats in Oxford where fortnightly refuse collection has been imposed. Our Council leaders must not be influenced by what other councils have done and must resist any pressure from central government.

Our council should take into account what happened in Teignbridge Devon. Two years ago they imposed fortnightly refuse collections but after pressure from local residents about smells, rats and maggots they have introduced a weekly collection for food waste.

### Rat problem

There is already a problem with rats in Barnet that our Council refuses to face up to. If there is a rat in my house and I don't deal with it promptly, it will soon become my neighbour's problem. If I have a rat that passes across my garden, it will certainly pass across my neighbour's garden. Who should deal with the rat problem and pay for it? The Council should undertake a borough wide survey to deter-



*Refuse collection once every two weeks makes no sense if the wheelie bins are*

mine the extent of rat infestation; they should set targets for the reduction of rats and implement a rolling programme to rid the borough of rats. We will not be able to eliminate the rat completely but their sighting should be a rare rather than a common occurrence.

HG

## Protect your parish patch — or watch it perish

The rural parish of Friern Barnet established perhaps a 1,000 years ago evolved into the Friern Barnet Urban District Council and its Town Hall still proclaims its motto "Ruris amator" — a lover of the countryside.

We still have countryside relics — ancient trees and hedge boundaries that retain associated small animals hanging on by a whisker.

We have rare insects, lizards and bats, some so precious they are protected by law against deliberate destruction, even their empty hiding-holes are protected.

"Aha" you say, "my neighbour has a magnificent garden oak tree in his

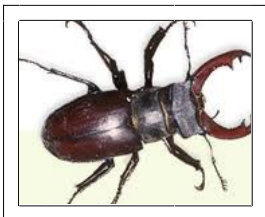
garden with lots of holes and crevices — any use for bats?" Indeed yes — and with a bat-detector you can establish whether bats roost there.

Anyone intentionally destroying this tree or its resident bats can face a hefty fine of £5,000 for every bat killed and also six months imprisonment if a roost is destroyed.

Partly because we failed to conduct wildlife surveys first, developers felled large numbers of trees at Friern Hospital, Hemington Avenue, Northumberland Road and countless other places. The lesson is that you must survey well before trees are felled to delay or prevent development.

For further information, local environmentalist, Dr Natelson (020 8361 2496) will be happy to assist and advise.

Rare wildlife will be registered with



a database. Then you can warn land-owners and any potential developer of the risk of being fined or imprisoned if they upset those bats or lizards.

Failure to protect may cause your parish patch to perish. So show that you are a "Ruris amator" and get those trees surveyed now.

ON

## Planning applications — who do Council officers work for?

A second planning application for development of the back gardens of 1-11, Hemington Avenue (a road off Friern Barnet Lane near to the old Town Hall), was refused, in May of this year, by all members of the Barnet Council Planning Committee as being a totally unsuitable proposal.

It is hard to understand that a second proposal, for Hemington Avenue, was "prepared following extensive consultations with the Council's officers". Either this statement by the applicant is a fabrication or some of the planning officers are unaware of the views of the elected members on this issue.

While the first planning application's refusal is subject to an appeal which has yet to be heard and decided, the second plan is almost identical with it, except that four, even larger, dwellings are to take the place of the five which the Councillors had turned down.

The reasons listed by the Borough to the applicant for refusing the first proposal are we believe all fully applicable to the second version.

It, therefore, is hard to comprehend why the applicant was, as he suggests, encouraged to repeat the performance. Also, it is inconceivable that the Councillors can entertain the idea of acceptance, unless they can see grounds for a complete U-turn which have escaped the

numerous local residents and this Association who objected unanimously to the first proposal and who will, of course do so again, should the application be allowed to reach the Planning Committee for its decision.

These actions by officials are surprising, because the Council is reported to be petitioning the Government to rescind the absurd definition of back gardens as "brownfield sites", which unfortunately has been encouraging developers to lodge unacceptable applications.

Barnet Council has expressed its concern "that classing gardens as brownfield entices developers to build on these small sites, eroding the suburban character". And, Cllr. Melvin Cohen, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Environmental Protection, has asked for the specific exclusion of suburban gardens in a letter to the Minister of Housing & Planning.

The Council and its Planning Committee, having thus demonstrated a firm stand against such plans, (in which attitude the local authority is fully supported by the Member of Parliament for Barnet, Mrs.. Theresa Villiers).

In a world where local government should mean local democracy, the Council planning officers' first duties should be to implement Council policy. KR

## Banksy comes to North Finchley



Street artist Banksy has added the above art work to the North Finchley Lodge Lane car park

## Friern Barnet Library — Illustrated Talk

Wednesday 18th July

An talk with demonstration by Roger Swynnerton of the Finchley Art Society  
10.30 - 11.30 am., Friern Barnet Library, Friern Barnet Road

### FORTHCOMING MEETINGS OF FRIERN BARNET AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Wed 27 June

The Shocking History of Advertising  
by David Beuger

Wed 26 September

To be announced  
By Hugh Petrie

All meetings take place at St John's Church  
Hall, next to Whetstone Police Station,  
Friern Barnet Lane. Starts 7:45 p.m.;  
cost £2 to non-members.

### Contacts

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## 2007 AGM

The 2007 Annual General Meeting of the Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents Association took place on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April in the Jubilee Room at St. James' church in Friern Barnet Lane.

Harry Gluck, our new Chairman, thanked Richard Smith who had been chairman for fifteen years, but has now left the area to start a new life in Yorkshire.

More than 50 members, including a number of local councillors from both the main political parties, attended the meeting. Members were provided with light refreshments before listening to a very full report on life in and around our area over the last twelve months.

After questions and answers, our audience were entertained with a talk and slide show on 'Wonderful Whetstone' given by local historian John Heathfield.

HH