

newsletter

Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association



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IT ALL SEEMS TO BE HAPPENING IN OUR NECK OF THE WOODS...

20 MPH SPEED LIMITS LOOM FOR KEY ROADS IN WHETSTONE AND OAKLEIGH PARK

Barnet Council plan imposing 20 mph speed limits on some key roads in Whetstone and Oakleigh Park. In January they wrote to residents of the affected roads and surrounding area giving just 3 weeks to respond to its "Queenswell Federation consultation" on plans the Council had been working on since early 2023 (or before).

The restrictions would apply to Friern Barnet Lane (the northern section only), Myddelton Park, Oakleigh Avenue, Oakleigh Park North, Oakleigh Park South, Oakleigh Road North and Queens Avenue.



The restrictions are part of a range of safety measures the Council plan. Others include junction alterations (Oakleigh Park North/Friern Barnet Lane), extended double yellow lines on Oakleigh Avenue and its junction with Oakleigh Road

North, footway widening, up grading uncontrolled pedestrian crossings to meet Department for Transport mobility guidance (131 pages of it!) to increase "safety, level of comfort and inclusivity" (!) and new pedestrian crossings elsewhere.

Strangely the proposals omit extending double yellow lines in "upper" Friern Barnet Lane to reduce the chronic and dangerous congestion there- even though we know the Council has plans to do so.

FBWRA alerted members by email soon after hearing of

the consultation. We didn't make recommendations but suggested looking at the consultation website and sending comments to the Council. We mentioned deficiencies in the consultation arrangements, about which we emailed the Council. The Council responded 11 days later, shortly before the consultation closed - "Your comments have been recorded as part of the consultation process; this feedback will be considered as part of our decision-making process." None of the extra information we had requested was added to the website and we doubt our email had actually been read when it was acknowledged. A FBWRA Committee colleague observed - "Classic example of how not to answer questions!"

FBWRA responded to the consultation – saying running the proposed 20 mph restriction on Friern Barnet Lane down to near St James' Avenue was inappropriate and that it is very important that Oakleigh Road North retains at least two full-width traffic lanes (one in each direction) with adequate width on each lane to safely accommodate a bus or HGV passing alongside a cyclist and a parked vehicle, and permitting continuous movement of traffic in both directions along the whole of its length (but see below). We also commented the consultation process was not fit for purpose, explaining why.

We are not alone in this- our local M.P. Theresa Villiers has emailed the Council, expressing her "very serious concerns about the decision-making process in relation to this scheme" continuing "I do not support this scheme. Such an extensive 20mph zone is not justified. The council have not provided convincing evidence that these changes are needed," concluding "A better road safety scheme should be brought forward for the area, one which is the result of much more effective and far-reaching local engagement."

Annual General Meeting 18th April at 7.30pm
in St John's Church Hall, Friern Barnet Road, N11

.....BUS AND CYCLE LANES TOO



Bus lanes in Oakleigh Road North won't leave much room for other traffic

Some of the information that the Council did provide for its flawed "Queenswell Federation consultation" (above) was unclear, particularly in relation to Oakleigh Road North.

Notes on some drawings relating to Oakleigh Road

North that the Council provided on its website state "Coordination is required with the TfL Oakleigh Road North Bus Priority Scheme to tie into Queenswell School design proposal", but the consultation didn't explain what the TfL scheme was or what its effects might be. We asked the Council for an explanation but they didn't provide one.

We now hear that TfL (and presumably Barnet Council) have plans to install "bus and cycle priority measures" in this part of Oakleigh Road North "to support TfL's ambitions for promoting active travel" and that some of the features on the Queenswell drawings may be proposed bus lanes- although they are not labelled as such. Why might that be?

Is the Queenswell consultation not just flawed but also dishonest? - "The bus lanes were shown on the consultation drawings and yet no-one objected to them so we will go ahead and install them"

.....AND ON WHETSTONE HIGH ROAD

As is widely known, the Council is also planning on introducing bus and/or cycle lanes on the A1000 (the High Road) from North Finchley up to High Barnet. We sent a Freedom of Information request to the Council and got the response in late January.

The response from the Council was disappointing – they confirmed they were working on such proposals and that the Council officer responsible for them was the Director of Highways and told us – " We are currently conducting traffic modelling for the designs. Once this is complete we can understand queuing and saturation at junctions. We will then require edits of the design, statutory engagement and a road safety audit stage 1 to be completed. Currently we predict we will be able to share suitable designs in May 2024."

They withheld all other information saying it was work in progress, and that "the public interest in withholding outweighs the public interest in disclosing at this current time". Largely we had

wanted to know what information they had collected to assist in assessing their proposals – in other words, were they doing their job properly and some basics like the extent of the proposed lanes and their hours of operation. Pretty routine one might think.

Given the widespread public interest in these particular proposals we question that decision and will be appealing it. The issues with the Queenswell consultation, in particular inadequate disclosure of information and the short duration of the consultation are very relevant and reinforce our case.

Meanwhile , the Council has already made provision to spend £500,000 on detailed project design work (see the Council's Annual Procurement Forward Plan (APFP) 2024-25, line 97 – available on the Council's "democracy" website <https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk>), work programmed to start 01 June 2024 – surely rather soon after the proposed consultation in May. What does that suggest?

DT

IN THE MEANTIME.....

NORTH FINCHLEY TOWN CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT

1. “CHALLENGES”

Most readers will know we cancelled our January Members’ Meeting because our guests, Regal London, told us they would not be able to speak about their “masterplan” for North Finchley as it wouldn’t be ready in time. They told us they were working with the Council and TfL “to understand and unlock some of the ongoing challenges to the masterplan”. So we asked the Council about these “challenges”. They told us (we have slightly edited the following) -

“The central issue is the need to allocate a relatively limited amount of highway space to a wide range of interrelated objectives. The objectives and the challenges can be summarised as:

Improving public space and the pedestrian environment. As well improving the general pedestrian environment and accessibility in North Finchley, the ambition is to pedestrianise (or part pedestrianise) Ballards Lane [the section north of Kingsway], to make commercial, cultural and community activities, as well as supporting green infrastructure (trees and rain gardens), safety, a sense of identity and wellbeing.

Ensuring the planning and accommodation of buses. The challenge posed by buses is that North Finchley is a key node in the bus network, with a large number services, many of which stop and start there. This means finding space for bus stops and bus stands, effective interchanges, the facilities TfL and bus operators need, and avoiding buses having to travel further. This needs to be balanced with the delivery of the other priorities and objectives, such as reallocating space and priority on Ballards Lane.

Parking provision - The challenge here is striking the right balance between good car parking provision, for the shops and services in North Finchley and delivering other town centre objectives such as: –

- releasing land for development and regeneration of the high street, and
- reprioritising kerbside space for improvements to the pedestrian environment, public transport, enabling two-



way traffic on the High Road to enable re-prioritisation of highway on Ballards Lane towards pedestrians (for these see above) ,green infrastructure (trees and raingardens, to reduce the impact of wind and climate change – urban heating and flash flooding),cycling, deliveries, servicing etc. and micro-mobility

Supporting cycling and the plans for the A1000. The challenge with cycling is to find a way to accommodate the council’s “ exciting and ambitious” A1000 cycle and bus lane, which will strengthen the town centre’s connection with local amenities, East Finchley (and later to Whetstone), whilst balancing this with the competing spatial needs for public transport, pedestrian space, other kerbside priorities and parking (as above).” Putting the above into a timeframe- the town planning brief (SPD) was finalised in February 2018, in that year the Council signed an agreement with a developer for the regeneration of North Finchley, then the original developer dropped out and Regal came on board, entering into new legal agreements

with the Council in 2021 which include provision for “selling” (by long lease) Council property in North Finchley including the Lodge Lane, Woodhouse Road and some other car parks. The deadline for Regal to submit a planning application (with masterplan) had to be extended and this is now due to be done by a date later this year.

Unfortunately we don't have space to comment on the “challenges” in any detail. However –

- In relation to car parking, perhaps it is unwise to close/sell/build on car parks if kerbside parking may be reduced because of the creation of bus/cycle lanes – so sort out the lanes issue first;

- There are clearly many competing issues. Given how long the process has been going on (see above), why doesn't there seem to be an established hierarchy of priorities that has been worked through, curtailing lower priority aspirations that conflict with higher priority items?

- Is the multitude of competing objectives held by different interest groups within the Council/ Council administration blocking progress?

- Is there a risk this becomes Barnet's own version of HS2?

DT

2. NEW THREAT TO “ST. KILDA’S” WAR MEMORIAL

Last year we asked Regal's Chief Executive whether “St. Kilda's”, the United Services Club in North Finchley, was included in Regal's redevelopment plans for North Finchley.

“St Kilda's”, 307 Ballards Lane (almost opposite the arts depot/ 100 Kingsway) is the original War Memorial at this location. The USC purchased it in 1921 with funds from a public subscription, to be an institute or club as a war memorial for the use of servicemen, ex-servicemen and others. It predates the other memorial, a granite cross, now standing in front of St Kilda's, which was unveiled in 1925.

Regal responded “In relation to the United Services Club building and war memorial we are acutely aware of the sensitivity of these. There are currently no firm plans to either retain or reposition the club / war memorial but as masterplan proposals develop, we will ensure that there is the necessary consideration for the sensitivity related to any proposals. We can confirm that there are no ambitions to demolish or remove the war memorial.”

“...there are no ambitions to demolish or remove the war memorial” referred to the 1925 monument, not St. Kilda's, so the crucial words are “no firm plans to either retain or reposition the club / war memorial”, i.e. St. Kilda's.

“No firm plans to either retain or reposition” St. Kilda's must mean there may be plans to demolish it - and a plan on Regal's website for North Finchley shows the building as within the development site boundary.



Next, we contacted the Council. The response from the office of the “Director of Growth” was –

“Regarding your note about the War Memorial and St Kilda's, the council are aware of the need for enhancing the

quality of the southern gateway to the town centre, particularly in relation to the public space, celebrating the local identity and improving the wayfinding. We are considering the War Memorial in this context.

The focus at the present time is on the developing proposals for the highway and the public realm, the Lodge Lane carpark and the wider masterplan for North Finchley. We have not seen any proposals for the USC building and this site. At the point of advancing the proposals around the southern gateway, we would look to pick these conversations up and (as you have pointed out the memorial is Grade II listed and St Kilda's is on the local list) as part of the planning process, in consultation with the local community and interested parties, including Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association FBWRA.”

In their 2018 SPD planning policy document the Council, after representations from FBWRA, The Finchley Society and others, specifically excluded St Kilda's from the redevelopment zones and in 2020 it was added to the

Council's "Local Heritage List", which means there is a presumption it should not be redeveloped. We had hoped for a more vigorous statement of support for these policies from the Director of Growth.

As the original Finchley War Memorial St Kilda's is an important monument to the sacrifice of the men and women of Finchley in the Great War and it should be retained. It is a part of the collective memory and social history of the people of Finchley. Remembrance matters.

Councillor Ross Houston is the Council "Cabinet" member with responsibility for "Regeneration". Let's hope it isn't

going to be a case of "Houston, we have a problem" (Jim Lovell, mission commander, Apollo 13).

Here I must declare a personal interest- Finchley sent over 5,000 men to the forces in the Great War. One out of every five never returned. One of them was my wife's great uncle, John William Dawson, of Churchfield Avenue, North Finchley, killed at the Second Battle of Ypres in 1915. Apparently he was shot in a lung whilst charging an enemy position. He was just 19 years old.

DT

FRIENDS OF FRIARY PARK – SPRING 24 UPDATE



FRIENDS OF FRIARY PARK CAFÉ OPEN FOR BUSINESS!



This Valentine's Day saw the opening of the Friends of Friary Park café, serving delicious coffee, cakes and a variety of hot and cold snacks, to great applause. The café, run by local residents Katia, her sister Anna and friend Sultan, is operating from a trailer outside Friary House while the council continues to

monitor the subsidence of the Grade II listed building. Katia hopes to eventually move into the site of the old café and to host special events such as birthday parties, small gatherings and various celebrations.

The cafe opening hours are 9.30am-3pm Mon-Fri and 9.30am-4.30pm Sat-Sun and will extend once the daylight hours grow longer.

Katia said "We are so happy to be open at last!" We are too. Please come and show them your support.

COMMUNITY ORCHARD PLAN STARTS TO BEAR FRUIT

Members of the Friends of Friary Park came together one Saturday in January to plant fruit trees in a new community orchard in the park.

The Friends group have worked with the council to identify a suitable plot for the orchard near to the bowling club which will encourage pollinators and biodiversity into the park. So far the Friends have planted 13 trees including apples, pears, cherries, damson, plum and quince. They have plans to plant more in the future as well as to raise funds to buy benches, bulbs and perennials for the orchard. If you are interested in planting a tree or getting involved in the upkeep of the orchard please email Friendsoffriarypark@gmail.com.

Friends of Friary Park is made up of a group of local people who want to benefit the local community and wildlife. To find out more about us, please visit <https://linktr.ee/friendsoffriarypark> where you'll find

links to our Facebook page, website and newsletters. For regular updates pls follow us X, Instagram and Facebook using the handle friendsoffriarypark.

Alternatively you can email us on Friendsoffriarypark@gmail.com



ANSWERS FROM BARNET HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT TO MEMBERS QUESTIONS

In October representatives of the FBWRA Committee met with an Officer from Barnet Council Highways Department to discuss issues raised by our members.

The Officer's responses are summarised below.

1. Proposed cycle lane on the High Road, Whetstone.

TfL and the Council are considering further bus & cycle lanes on the A1000 between North Finchley and High Barnet. There will be a formal consultation in due course. A request will be made for engagement with FBWRA by TfL and Barnet beforehand. St Margaret's Avenue will have parking controls and yellow lining but will not be made one-way.

2. Cycle lane cleaning & maintenance.

The main problem is loose tarmac and aggregate from potholes that is pushed into cycle lanes by motor vehicles, making them dangerous for cyclists. A request has been made for hand sweeping of the cycle lanes, particularly after nearby potholes have been repaired. The Council may use parking suspensions to allow mechanical sweeping.

3. Friern Barnet Lane N20; congestion due to parking.

This has been under review since the summer. Considerations include extending the TW CPZ, double yellow lines and passing spaces. Day & night parking stress surveys will be carried out and there will be a public consultation.

4. Disabled parking on double yellow lines in Whetstone.

Disabled parking is not permitted on those double yellow lines which have kerbside pips signifying "no unloading".

5. Oakleigh Road North, A1000 to Middleton Park; congestion.

The Council has not looked at this locality in relation to this issue although it has looked at the road outside

The Sacred Heart Primary School. A s.278 works [works to be carried out under a legal agreement with the Council, to make alterations and improvements to a public highway, as part of a planning application] might enable improvements to be made. The locality will be included in a parking review.

6. Junction of Friern Barnet Rd, Friern Barnet Lane and Colney Hatch Lane.

A box junction is being considered. Lane markings on the approaches & exits will be reviewed.

7. The footpath/cycleway in Bethune Park requires resurfacing.

This will be looked into. Footpaths have a 25mm trip hazard threshold.

8. Raleigh Drive between its junction with Manor Drive and Oakleigh Road North.

The Council is proposing to install double yellow lines with kerbside pips on this stretch of Raleigh Drive.

9. The Totteridge Lane/Whetstone junction currently makes no provision for cyclists.

The sweeping by turning vehicles makes provision for cyclists problematic. Road markings adjacent to the Waitrose entrance are raised to the maximum permitted height to give greater effect.

10. Improve the Dollis Way crossing near the tube station.

The Council is considering installing a pedestrian crossing with lights outside Totteridge & Whetstone Underground station.

11. Please explain the timescales for repairing potholes.

Two working days – Category 1 (20% of potholes), 7 working days Category 2 (50-60 %) and 28 working days. Potholes must be 40mm or more deep. Roads are regularly inspected by Street Works Inspectors

THE MYSTERIOUS CASE OF REQUEST 10777364 or WHY ARE THEY HIDING STUFF?

Like Scotland Yard, Holmes was baffled. "Watson, these FBWRA people- I just don't see why Barnet Council hasn't responded to this request of theirs. Let's review the facts. In 2023 they had to struggle to get information from the Council about some "Culture Strategy External Steering Group" the Council had set up. It took months to get information, and they wrote about it in their Autumn 2023 Newsletter. In view of those difficulties, in early October they sent a further request to the Council. They asked about other groups within specific service areas of the Council's administrative/ organisational structure where the membership of that group had not been publicised by the Council. Is that correct, Watson?"

"Yes, Holmes. They made a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The Council gave it a reference number -10777364 – and acknowledged that under the Act they had to respond promptly and in any event within 20 working days from the date they received the request. They said they would respond by 31 October 2023." "And?" "That's just it Holmes –they haven't responded. FBWRA have chased them repeatedly - five times in all. The only replies were excuses staff leave, some departments not responding to the FOI "team", but mostly the response was silence". "What did FBWRA do next, Watson?" "First they asked which service areas had provided the information to the FOI team and which had not. There was no reply. Then FBWRA wrote to a more senior member of the FOI team – this was four months after the original request- again, no response."

"Thank you, Watson. Now, the Council have not refused the request, which they can do in certain situations. I think we can assume they



Holmes was baffled

will have looked at this and could not find a good reason to refuse and from looking at the calendar it is clear the Council is in breach of its duty under the Act to respond to the request within the 20 working days period. FBWRA tell us they are receiving responses to other FOI requests, so we can rule out simple overwork on the part of Council staff and failure of their IT system. Given the various reminders that FBWRA sent we can rule out the request simply being overlooked. What does that leave? We have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be the truth. "

TO BE CONTINUED...

PLEASE RECYCLE THIS NEWSLETTER

Pass it to a friend or neighbour once you have read it instead of putting it in the bin.

If they like what they see they might become a Member too!

Membership is £5 a year per household.

Membership Forms can be downloaded from our website www.fbwra.org.

If that is too complicated, an email to fbwra@btinternet.com asking to join and giving a name and address will do the trick.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL 2024

Annual membership starts on 1st January each year and we ask you to pay by standing order, if possible. If you renewed your membership on the 1st January or soon afterwards, thank you.

Those that had not renewed by the 9th January will have received a renewal letter asking for payment by the 6th February. If you have received a renewal letter and not yet renewed, please do so without delay!! It simplifies our administration very much if we don't have to keep sending reminders.

If you have mislaid your renewal letter please email Tim at fbwra@BTinternet.com and he will confirm your membership number and the bank details.

2024 DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

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|--------------------|---|
| 18 April | Annual General Meeting
St John's Church Hall,
Friern Barnet Road N11 at 7.30pm |
| 18th August | Summer Splash
St Mary Magdalen's Church Hall
and Garden,
Athenaeum Road N20 at 3.30pm |

Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association.

- We are non-political
- We work for all residents in the area
- We discuss issues with Local Councillors and Council Officials
- We are associated with the following bodies:

PLANNING NEWS CARE HOME APPLICATION 1-3 OAKLEIGH PARK SOUTH

We reported on this application, for a 70-bedroom care home, which would involve demolishing a locally-listed building and blighting another, in our Autumn edition. We are pleased to report that the Council refused the application at the end of January.

The main reasons given for the decision were-

- The proposal would result in the loss of two family dwelling houses, for which there is known demand in the borough. Failure to provide convincing evidence that the proposed use of the property as a nursing home meets an identified need in this locality;
- The proposal would result in the loss of a local heritage asset, adversely impacts the setting of a neighbouring local heritage asset, and creates an incongruous and obtrusive form of development that would detract from the spacious character and appearance of the locality. It would harm the character and appearance of the area and conflict with planning policies intended to ensure new development respects surrounding buildings; and
- The replacement tree planting would not allow for the planting and long term well being of native herbs and woodland bulbs as appropriate for the soil type and has the potential to harm the long term needs of established trees within the ownership of neighbouring occupiers [This just exemplifies the very detailed nature of current planning controls]

THE GREEN MAN, WHETSTONE



Proposed design

In January readers who receive our "Mailchimp" emails were asked to consider commenting to the Council about the proposed redevelopment of this Whetstone landmark, to which FBWRA had objected primarily because "the

proposals for the ground floor frontage to the High Road are poor, mundane and fail to do justice to the unique nature of this particular location within the context of the High Road." There are now 52 public objections to the application and they include the names of many of our members – thank you.

- The Federation of Residents' Associations in Barnet
- The London Green Belt Council
- The Finchley Society
- Love Whetstone
- Friends of Friary Park
- Open Spaces Society
- The Friern Barnet & District Local History Society