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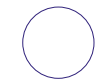


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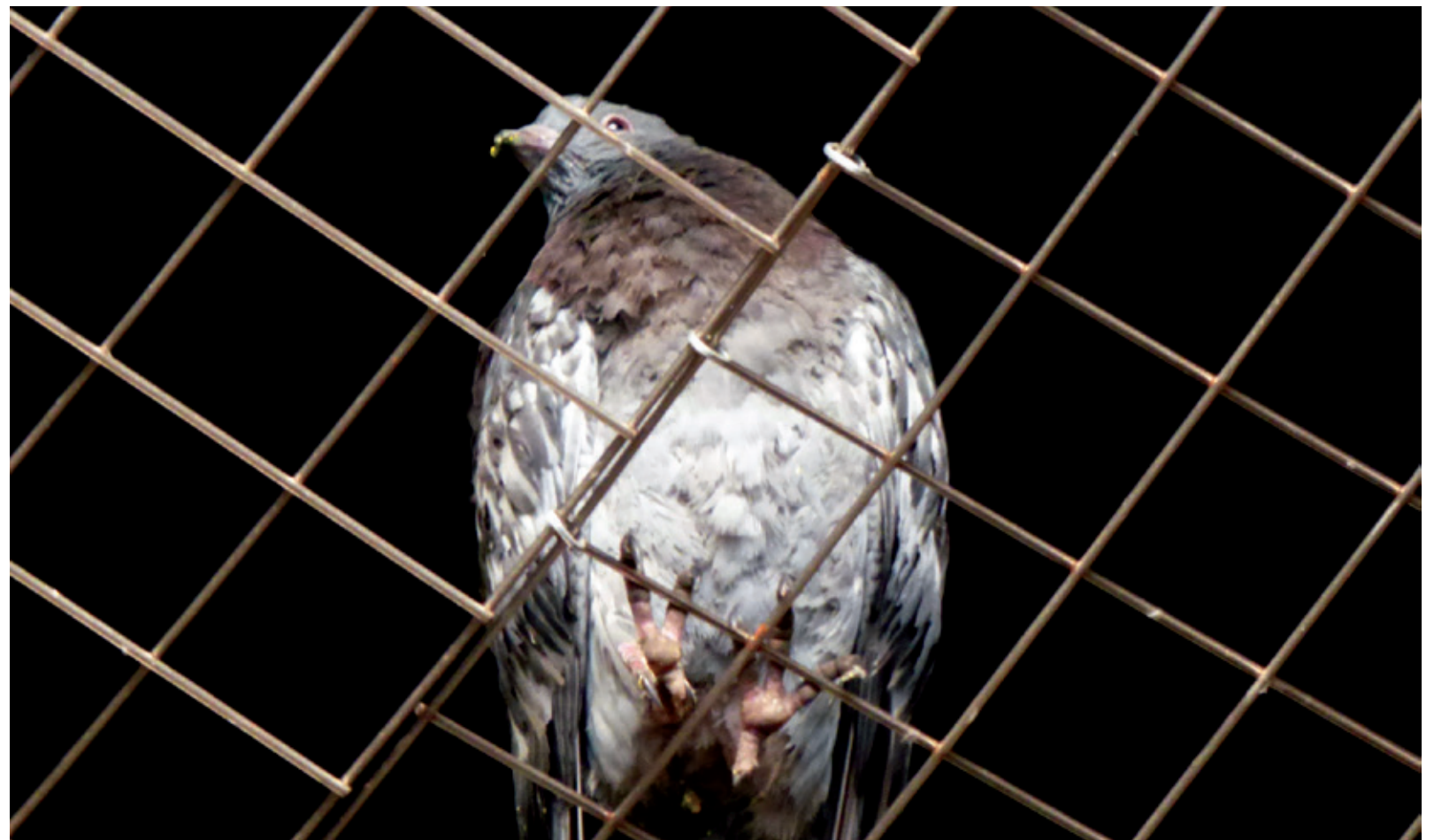
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Scores of nesting pigeons were trapped after Network Rail botched the installation of meshing under a New Southgate railway bridge last month

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Grenfell council housing boss now responsible for fire safety at Barnet Homes

BY DAVID FLOYD

The director of housing at Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea at the time of the Grenfell tragedy is now responsible for fire safety at Barnet Homes.

Laura Johnson was the housing boss at the central London council in June 2017 when 72 people died in the fire at the tower block in North Kensington. She had served in the role since 2009.

The public inquiry into the fire heard that Johnson intervened to demand that works carried out on the tower were retendered due to their high cost.

The company which subsequently won the contract on a “value for money” basis replaced metal cladding with the combustible plastic panels that fuelled the fire.

Johnson had also slowed down the installation of self-closing fire

doors recommended by London Fire Brigade (LFB). The inquiry report said that “her decision failed to give sufficient weight to the advice of the LFB and the nature of the risk that self-closing devices were intended to mitigate”.

Johnson was appointed by Barnet Homes as interim group director of property and development in June 2024.

On her LinkedIn profile, she explains that her current role at Barnet Homes includes “delivering H&S compliance for the big six including fire and building safety”.

Speaking to *The Guardian* in the run up to the eighth anniversary of the fire last month, a spokesperson for survivors and bereaved families group Grenfell United slammed the fact that officials criticised in the inquiry continue to work in the housing sector.

They said: “The fact that some of

the people involved are still working in housing is a slap in the face to every survivor and bereaved family.

“If there are no consequences for decisions that cost lives, what does that say about this country’s values? Justice delayed is justice denied – and we will not stop until those responsible are held to account.”

The *Post* put a series of questions about the appointment to both Barnet Homes, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Barnet Council responsible for the borough’s 13,000 council homes, and the council’s cabinet member for housing Ross Houston.

In response to questions on whether it was aware of Johnson’s previous role at Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea before she was appointed last year and (if so) why it felt that someone with her track record was an appropriate appointment to a major housing

role, particularly one that includes fire safety, a Barnet Homes spokesperson said: “Barnet Homes and Barnet Council will not discuss events relating to members of staff which took place during previous employment.

“Barnet Homes made the appointment to fill a role on an interim basis and the permanent role will be recruited to as soon as possible. This interim role was a Barnet Homes officer appointment.”

In response to the question of what it would say to tenants who are concerned about fire safety as a result of discovering that Johnson is currently in post, the spokesperson said: “The safety and wellbeing of our residents is our top priority.

“Straight after the Grenfell fire in 2017, Barnet Council started a

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ABOUT

Barnet Post is the borough’s free community newspaper: written by and for local people, giving you the chance to learn more about what is going on in your area and to read (and write) stories about what matters to you.

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Council vows to boost recycling after recent big drop



Wheelie bins in Friern Barnet

BY GRACE HOWARTH, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Barnet Council has vowed to increase its recycling rate to 50% – despite overseeing a big drop in recent years. Senior Labour councillors have admitted the council “needs to go further” with its recycling rate and will be introducing food waste collections to help meet the 50% target. The overall household recycling rate for 2023/24 in Barnet was just 28.7%, lower than the average rate across London of 32.7%. It comes

after the borough recycling rate decreased from a high of 37.4% in 2016/17. Under the previous Conservative administration, the council scrapped separate food waste collections in 2018, claiming the move would save £300,000 a year. The Labour group, which now controls the council, pledged in its 2022 local election manifesto to reintroduce food recycling. Although collecting food waste has a cost, the cabinet member for environment and climate, Alan Schneiderman, claimed it would ultimately save money because it

was “cheaper to dispose of”. The move will help the council meet the Labour government’s timeline to implement food waste recycling collections by March 2026, as well as meeting the aims of the North London Joint Waste Strategy (JWS). The new strategy, which came into effect in May, aims to provide the framework for waste management in North London up to 2040 and was developed by the

boroughs of Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Waltham Forest, which are all part of North London Waste Authority (NLWA). The strategy sets out how the North London boroughs will reduce waste, encourage residents to reuse and repair, as well as increase recycling rates. While reviewing the JWS at a cabinet meeting last month, Cllr Schneiderman said: “The overview and scrutiny committee were clear that we need to increase our recycling rates to reach our 50% target. “We need to do this at the same time as making it easier for residents to recycle more. “There are lots of questions about the difficulties faced by people living in flats, flats above shops, which have the most difficulty recycling and getting those residents to recycle.” Council leader Barry Rawlings added: “I think it’s important that officers consider all the options to get up to that 50%. “There’s the introduction of weekly food waste collections, there’s thoughts about what sort of vehicles we use, [and] what we can do in partnership with the waste authority.”

“Recycling decreased from a high of 37.4% in 2016/17”

Continued from Page-1

remediation programme to remove and replace ACM cladding on three high-rise blocks and develop a comprehensive programme of safety improvements across its stock. Barnet is one of the few London local authorities to have retrofitted integrated alarm and sprinkler systems in its most at-risk properties. “Barnet Council has invested over £75m in its building safety programme to ensure its homes in Barnet are safe and Barnet Homes has a dedicated fire and building safety team which continues to deliver a comprehensive fire safety programme.” In response to the statement by Grenfell United, the spokesperson said: “Our thoughts remain with the survivors and family and friends of all those affected by the tragic Grenfell Tower fire.”

The *Post* asked Cllr Houston whether he was aware of the appointment at the time and whether he had raised any queries about it. He said: “We are aware of the interim appointment by Barnet Homes however we do not comment on individual staff matters.” In response to questions about whether it was appropriate for someone with Johnson’s track record to be appointed to a major housing role and what he would say to residents concerned about fire safety, Cllr Houston said: “The safety of Barnet’s residents is our highest priority, and we have a comprehensive and continuous fire and building safety programme across our housing stock which the council has invested in since 2017 and continues to invest in. “We are also taking action to ensure residents in private housing

blocks are safe and protected by issuing hundreds of enforcement notices, and we are working with homeowners on a programme of works to address cladding issues in nearly 600 low-rise private homes in the Borough. “We will continue to comply with the most up-to-date and best practice standards in building and fire safety regulation.” In response to the statement by Grenfell United, Cllr Houston said: “Our thoughts are with all those affected by the Grenfell Tower tragedy.” Responding to reports of Johnson’s role at Barnet Homes, Barnet Green Party drew attention to wider issues around local accountability. Charli Thompson, speaking for the party, told the *Post*: “The catastrophic failures at Grenfell were in part due to unaccountable decision makers sitting in ivory towers a long way from the residents affected by the tragic fires. “Directors and developers have

to be accountable for the real risks faced by people living in unsafe blocks as well as damp and mouldy homes.” “With massive tower blocks being built in Barnet at an incredibly fast pace, our residents need to know new homes will be safe and truly affordable. We are already seeing missed sewage connections and plans threatening greenbelt and floodplains. “We need Barnet Council and Barnet Homes to hold private developers to the highest standards, to give people the homes they want, in the right places and at the right prices. Private development is not the answer to Barnet’s needs.” Also reflecting on the reports, Conservative group leader Peter Zinkin told the *Post*: “We would expect that all employees and particularly those with significant management responsibilities would be fully aware of the lessons needed to be learnt from the Grenfell tragedy.”

“The safety of residents is our highest priority”

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NEWS

New cinema, bowling alley and 98 homes approved

The approval comes despite opposition from residents centred around the lack of affordable housing and impact on the local area

BY GRACE HOWARTH, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Divisive plans for a new bowling alley, cinema and nearly 100 flats in North Finchley have been given the green light by councillors.

The project will see 98 homes built across three blocks up to six storeys tall on a car park in Lodge Lane. Accompanying them will be a fourth building containing a bowling alley, cinema and a new car park.

However, none of the new homes will be designated affordable.

Residents had also raised concerns about the scale of the buildings, increased congestion and the design not being in keeping with local properties.

Tally Ho Corner, which is in line to be regenerated, is a five-minute walk from Lodge Lane and would be a more “appropriate” site for the cinema and bowling alley, according to residents.

However, Barnet Council’s strategic planning committee voted to back the Lodge Lane plans last month.

Lodge Lane Residents’ Association chair Daniela Boyce said: “The area is being treated as part of urban regeneration. Lodge Lane is not urban but a suburban historic, very narrow lane which the visuals [in the application] do not portray.

“The scale of the development is not suited to a

Plans for Lodge Lane
Credit: Regal JP North Finchley Ltd



historic lane.”

She noted the housing mix didn’t “fulfil housing targets” in the borough as there are few three-bedroom homes included.

The plan contains 55 one-bedroom homes, 35 two-bedroom homes, and eight three-bedroom homes.

Daniela called the project’s design “unimaginative” and said it did not “complement” residences in Lodge Lane, some of which are locally listed and date

back to the early 1800s.

Tim Stevenson, a member of The Finchley Society, also objected to the proposal, saying it was “fundamentally flawed” and would overshadow neighbouring properties.

Tim said supplementary planning documents (SPD), part of the Barnet Local Plan, identified a “culture and leisure zone” at Tally Ho Corner as “a far more suitable location for decent sized bowling, a cinema and a public square”.

The project will be served by

80 parking spaces including eight disabled spaces for customers and three more for residents.

Both Labour and Conservative committee members asked the objectors about the car park’s current level of use and traffic concerns. Currently, Lodge Lane Car Park has 232 spaces.

Daniela said other car parks in the area were “pretty much full” and added increasing the local population while reducing and taking away a car park wasn’t “going to work”.

She said the residents would be “lucky” if users of the cinema and bowling alley used public transport or walked.

However, Labour committee member Humayune Khalick said the council couldn’t “stand still” when it came to regeneration and highlighted there was a “shortage of housing in the borough”.

Conservative committee member Josh Mastin-Lee and Labour committee member Tim Roberts raised concerns over the lack of affordable housing in the scheme.

Philip Murphy, a town planner, speaking on behalf of developer Regal JP North Finchley Ltd, said: “From an open book transparent basis which has been very carefully analysed, there is not the ability to provide affordable housing as part of the scheme.”

Chair Nigel Young, who proposed a condition that resident spaces on Lodge Lane “remain as such”, said the application was “complicated for the committee”.

However, he said there was “no getting around the fact this is a very significant investment in a town centre”.

Following discussions, councillors voted along party lines with the five Labour members voting in favour of the recommendations to approve and the three Conservative members against them.

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NEWS

Thousands object to developer’s 21-storey plans for North Finchley

BY GRACE HOWARTH, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Nearly 2,000 residents have objected to plans for a major new housing development in North Finchley.

Property developer Regal submitted an application in March to demolish several buildings at Tally Ho Corner and adjacent areas along Ballards Lane and High Road.

They are proposed to be replaced with several blocks of flats ranging in height from six to 21 storeys, comprising a total of 855 homes.

However, a petition has been launched by local residents which to date has gained 1,915 signatures, all objecting to the development on the grounds of “over-development”.

Residents say they are concerned about the scale and massing of the buildings and believe the transformation of the centre should be “more gentle and gradual”.

The residents claim the development will create a wind tunnel effect, while there are also fears over “significant disruption” to traffic due to construction which could

take up to ten years.

Michael Levitsky, a member of The Finchley Society which does not support the plan, said the housing mix on the scheme did not meet local needs.

Only 20% of the scheme’s homes will be designated as affordable housing, which is under the 35% target set for Barnet. Additionally, around 90% of the homes will be one or two-bedroom flats, but the council has said there is a need for family-sized residences of at least three bedrooms.

Finchley and Golders Green MP Sarah Sackman weighed in on the issue and said she would be holding the developer “to account”.

The Labour MP said: “As the outline permission [application] is undergoing consultation, I will be sticking up for the residents of North Finchley by liaising with both developers and the council whilst making sure local people are properly consulted.”

Michael added that Regal’s initial public engagement, which took place last year, was “confusing” and “did not present a clear picture of the development”.

He said: “The deficient consultation by



How Tally Ho Corner might look after its redevelopment
Credit: Regal JP North Finchley

Regal meant very few people were aware of what was going to happen. It is only sinking now. Hence the need for good information from public sources.”

In response, Regal has said feedback from its consultations “directly informed the development proposals” and that its applica-

tion contained documents that “specifically” addressed The Finchley Society’s concerns.

A spokesperson said: “Regal JP North Finchley Ltd (Regal JP), in partnership with the London Borough of Barnet, has worked closely with local stakeholders, including residents, businesses, and the North Finchley Partnership Board, for several years. Feedback from consultations has directly informed the development proposals.

“In March 2025, Regal JP submitted an outline planning application for the first phase of the regeneration. The application is now in for determination by the council, with statutory assessments and reviews currently underway. It includes a range of supporting documents, including responses to feedback raised during public consultation, specifically addressing points from The Finchley Society.”

Michael concluded: “The council must stop turning our suburbs into high-rise estates of expensive low-quality housing. That’s not in the Local Plan, it’s also not the way to address London’s urgent need for affordable housing.”

Barnet Council declined to comment.

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MIDDLESEX STUDENTS: 'WOULDN'T CHANGE A THING' AFTER APPLYING TO UNI THROUGH CLEARING



Abbi

Middlesex University students who got their place through Clearing highlight three top reasons that made it the best decision:

- **Dedication and industry connections of teaching staff**
- **Beautiful campus with connections to central London**
- **Support for students to achieve more than they ever dreamed**

At last month's Whatuni Student Choice Awards – the largest UK awards voted on exclusively by students – Middlesex was named University of the Year in London (second in the UK), and came top in the UK for facilities. It was also voted first for student life and first for student support in the



Duha

capital (fourth and fifth in the UK respectively for these categories).

"I was happy because I was at a place where they really value my work and value me, pushing me further to do the best I can," says Computer Science student Duha Kasim. She praises her lecturers for offering her hands-on experience by setting real-life projects. Another attraction, she says, is the range of part-time job opportunities to support students through their studies. University careers service MDXworks helped her with her CV and organised networking events.

First year fashion marketing student Angel Adegbuyi says that Middlesex's cultural diversity was something she was looking for. She was inspired by the number of societies and events: "they have something every single day – Middlesex is never boring".

Angel and her course mates benefit from being so close to the hub of British fashion in London's West End. In their first term, the whole cohort took their lecturer's advice and got dressed up to go to the Fashion Awards at the Albert Hall, after a trip around designer stores to talk to managers about marketing approaches.

Photography student Abbi Tompkins says first year has been "eye-opening". She says: "I've done so many things I never thought I would". She went on a trip to Middlesex's Mauritius campus, and outside of her studies rediscovered her passion for judo. She's excited where Middlesex will take her next.

Pharmaceutical Chemistry student Matthew Nderu also felt like he'd made the right decision, on his very first day at Middlesex. His lecturers have been very supportive and accessible, he says. He was pleasantly surprised by the opportunities for going on trips, including fossil-hunting on the Jurassic Coast, and visiting the Eden Project.

All the disappointment Duha Kasim felt after not making the offer for her original university choice was quickly dispelled when she got to Middlesex. She says "now that I'm here I feel like I wouldn't change a thing". Abbi Tompkins changed her mind to apply to Middlesex through Clearing because it was much more local and had better transport links than her original pick. She was drawn to Middlesex because everything is in one place on campus.



Matthew



Angel

Find out more about Clearing and how to apply: www.mdx.ac.uk/clearing/what-is-clearing/

NEWS

Rawlings slams Zinkin’s “fake rage” as leaders clash over Edgware development

BY DAVID FLOYD

Council leader Barry Rawlings was involved in an angry row with his Conservative counterpart last month as the two leaders clashed over a major development in Edgware.

In a testy exchange during the council’s cabinet meeting on Tuesday 17th June – at the point where non cabinet members are invited to quiz the cabinet – Cllr Rawlings showed his displeasure after opposition leader Peter Zinkin criticised the council for failing to take questions from campaigners opposed to the TfL Ballymore development.

Cllr Zinkin told the meeting he was “appalled” that the Edgware residents had been prevented

from raising questions directly at the meeting because officers said “they had not applied in time”.

He hit out at the “completely unfeeling, unlistening nature of this process” which led to the campaigners being unable to speak before labeling the council’s approach “an absolute disgrace”.

However, the usually avuncular Cllr Rawlings was clearly unimpressed by the outburst and drew attention to his opponents’ role in the Edgware development responding: “I would point out that, obviously you know I’ve been a councillor for a while and this Edgware plan was originally your plan, the Conservatives.”

Referencing amendments to the TfL Ballymore plans following the election of his Labour

administration he noted: “We’ve lowered it, you wanted higher buildings. And the fact that this happened was allowed by your administration in April 2022 before we were elected.”

Concluding his remarks, the frustrated leader added: “So while I like the fake rage and it’s nice to have a bit of acting: let’s be honest, this has resulted from your decisions as well as ours.”

The disagreement was triggered after the cabinet was asked to approve a plan for £41.5million that would otherwise be due to the council in Community Infrastructure Levy money as part of the TfL Ballymore development being allocated for use by the developers on local infrastructure in the Edgware area.

In a statement last month, campaign group Save Our Edgware said the plan “amounts to a developer clawback – using public money to underwrite a private scheme the developer itself has described as ‘unviable’ without public help”.

However, speaking at the meeting, cabinet member for housing Ross Houston said: “What we’re not doing is handing over £41m of public funds to a developer, for example, which is one of the comments that I’ve seen on social media.”

After some confusion around scheduling, plans for the TfL Ballymore development are now expected to be discussed at a newly arranged strategic planning committee meeting on 23rd July.

Council leader Barry Rawlings

Opposition group leader Peter Zinkin



Residents have say on new ‘placemaking framework’

BY GRACE HOWARTH, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Barnet Council has launched a consultation on how to create “good quality places” in Barnet.

Residents have the opportunity to comment via a survey that will run until Thursday, 3rd July.

The council explained the new ‘placemaking framework’ it’s currently developing is not just about “building new infrastructure” but about creating spaces “people want to be in”.

The survey asks residents whether they’re satisfied with their local area, whether they think it has a “strong sense of identity” and whether it’s a place where people from different backgrounds “get along well”.

Safety travelling at night is also queried as well as which town centre residents visit most often, why this is, and whether they’re satisfied with it.

In 2022 the council created its new strategy for town centres which it said had “sustainability at its heart” and an aim to engage with businesses, residents and local community groups. In 2023 a new placemaking team was set up, tasked with making this strategy a “reality”.

Now, the council said the aim of the consultation was to “establish a set of principles and direction for this placemaking”.

For more information and to take part in the consultation:
Visit engage.barnet.gov.uk/barnet-s-new-placemaking-framework

Concerns continue over performance of Barnet Homes

BY GRACE HOWARTH, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Barnet Council has insisted its housing repairs service must “go further”.

Cabinet member for housing and regeneration Ross Houston told an overview and scrutiny committee last month that repairs being done on time and delays being addressed were “real problems”.

Last year a ‘repairs improvement plan’ was implemented to address these “recurring issues” and in a report on the plan’s progress an increase in resident satisfaction and a decrease in formal complaints was recorded.

However, Cllr Houston said the scrutiny committee still needed

to continue to hold arms-length management company Barnet Homes “to account”.

Speaking on the action plan, he said: “I think the repairs improvement plan, that has been put in place, has had results.

“I think we need to go further and I think it’s important that this committee and the cabinet hold Barnet Homes to account in relation to that journey continuing in a positive direction.”

Part of the plan involved creating a ‘P2 Team’ for emergency repairs, a “new approach” to assisting residents.

The team consists of four operatives with skills to complete “the majority of emergency repairs” and a “positive impact” was seen “quickly”.

The report found a 12% in-

crease in the amount of emergency repairs being completed on time year on year.

However, the amount of non-emergency repairs getting completed on time had decreased slightly from 60.7% in 2023/24 to 59% in 2024/25.

Labour committee member Kath McGuirk asked Barnet Homes to speak on the result.

Kate Laffan, group director of resident services, said the positive result was down to the dedicated team which had been implemented at “no extra cost”.

She said: “What would happen previously, when you had a report of water pouring through a ceiling, the plumbing job that was booked-in for another tenant had to be cancelled and that resource diverted.

“That tenant may have had their job cancelled a few times for that reason so the P2 Team has worked really well since it’s been in place starting from May last year.”

Kate said the council still had a “journey” with non-emergency repairs and put the “lag” down to a lot of “old jobs” being recently closed.

“When we started this repairs and improvements piece, we had a lot of old jobs. We had jobs that were going way back, and actually over time we’ve reduced those,” she said.

She added that once closed the service’s “average performance” was impacted. However, she believed by quarter two “non-emergency repairs will see an improved performance”.

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INTERVIEW

10

“I always bring it back to the local”

One year on from her election, David Floyd talks to Finchley and Golders Green MP Sarah Sackman

Last year’s general election saw Barnet’s three Conservative MPs replaced by three Labour representatives with Sarah Sackman, who had run unsuccessfully in 2015, becoming the new member for Finchley and Golders Green.

Unusually for a new MP, Sackman was immediately invited to join the government and has spent her first year in two junior ministerial roles alongside getting used to being a constituency MP.

I ask her what the highlights are from the past year, both locally and nationally. The best part of being a local MP she says is “that chance to engage with people and advocate for them”.

This means “being visible and accessible and meeting people who’ve never met their MP before, people who tell me they didn’t know what an MP did” and has included “holding pop-up street surgeries in garden sheds, in the middle of council estates, on our local high streets”.

More specifically she is proud of working with residents of a local housing estate on Granville Road who were left “without access to basic facilities” after “poorly executed works”.

Sackman explains: “I was able to work

with them, listen to their stories, advocate to both Barnet Homes and the local developer, and achieve compensation for their loss. So that kind of thing’s really satisfying”

She is equally proud of Labour’s work on housing at a national level including the Renters Rights Bill and “record financial investment” into affordable housing.

The MP’s job, she says, is about having “the ability to see it from the very local grassroots level, right through to parliament, where we can make a difference and get real systemic change”.

Sackman was appointed as Solicitor General last July then, following a mini reshuffle in December, she became minister of state for courts and legal services.

Of her current role, she says: “We are trying to transform the justice system which we inherited on its knees” but adds: “I always bring it back to the local. I think, what would my constituents in Finchley and Golders Green say, what do they want from the justice system?”

“I look down the road from my constituency office, to Barnet Court in Finchley Central, that court has been boarded up for months due to the disrepair and neglect of the last Conservative government.”

As a result, she says, many local people



are having to wait longer for cases related to debt or family matters to be heard and “that is a massive motivator putting fire in my belly, in my role as a justice minister, to fix our justice system and deliver a sense of security”.

While it is unsurprising that a Labour minister would be keen to point the finger at the previous government, Labour also has problems of its own making.

I ask Sackman about the controversy around winter fuel payments which were cut for most pensioners in July last year before being restored for many last month. How could it be right to both make the cut and then to reverse most of it?

As a minister, Sackman predictably outlines the government’s position. She says: “The state of the public finances that we inherited were absolutely dire,” and adds “the number one job of government is to create stable finances”.

However, she says it’s also “right to say that when circumstances change, we change with it” and “because we’ve got the economy onto a more stable footing, we’re starting to see green shoots recovering, lower interest rates” so “we can afford to extend winter fuel payments to a greater number of pensioners”.

Sackman describes winter fuel as one of the “tough choices” faced by Labour and I move on to another one, the looming vote on proposed cuts to disability benefits. With 7% of Finchley and Golders Green’s working age population receiving these benefits, is she confident that the proposed £5billion worth of cuts won’t harm her constituents?

“We’re a Labour government, and the Labour Party will always look out for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society.”

The problem she explains is “not only is the welfare budget ballooning in such a way that we can’t afford it as a society, but that one in eight young people are not

in education, training, or work”. She adds: “That is an outrage. And that is doing a disservice to those young people.”

I ask specifically about personal independence payments, which are based on need rather than whether someone is in work. Sackman responds that she knows that “personal independence payments can play a really important role in many people’s daily lives,” and adds: “I expect that what the package of reforms will bring forward is a balanced proposal to target the resource where it’s most needed.”

On the day I talk to her, Sackman has been in the House of Commons taking part in the historic vote on assisted dying, which passed its final vote with a majority of 23 and is now expected to become law.

Sackman voted for the bill and says she did so “for a really fundamental reason, and that is one of human autonomy and choice”.

She adds: “We have control over so many aspects of our life, and yet the one experience that will come to all of us, the manner and timing of our death, is one over which, until today, we have no control.”

“I listened carefully and reflected deeply on the views of hundreds of constituents who have strong feelings on both sides of this debate, and I want to pay tribute to all of them for the respectful and heartfelt way that they put that across.”

In her previous *Barnet Post* interview, Sackman talked about her love of Tottenham Hotspur.

I ask if she is taking Spurs’ recent win in the Europa League, their first trophy for 17 years, as another success in her first year as an MP. She responds: “For many years I did worry that my two greatest causes in life, the prospect of a Labour government and a Tottenham trophy, that neither would come to pass, but it’s been a wonderful year of progress and I hope Spurs, like this Labour government, are just getting started.”

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ARTS & CULTURE

12

Running around writing stories

As part of a series of interviews with Barnet people, Simon Ellinas talks to ‘citizen journalist’ Nick Jones

Many Barnet Post readers will be aware of Barnet’s own ‘citizen journalist’ Nick Jones.

Jones is a stalwart of The Barnet Society, for whom he reports and writes on many local topics; a task which, he says, is increasingly difficult.

As Nick explains: “Local journalism has changed a lot. It’s hard to find out what’s happening any more. Council sessions often go ahead without reporters being present and you have no access to police stations (in towns lucky enough to have one!) so local people no longer know what is going on. And, in this day and age, people have become their own reporters with instant broadcasting on social media.”

And while it seems to be a sad but common practice for local newspapers, owned by large out-of-town conglomerates, to fill their pages from submitted press releases rather than sending out reporters, Nick says: “I’m glad to see that the *Barnet Post* is valiantly trying to fill what I call the ‘democratic deficit’”

Nick started in journalism after leaving school at 16 with the aim of getting into broadcasting. Newspaper work included stints at the *Portsmouth Evening News* and the *Oxford Mail* before landing a job on *The Times* as a parliamentary reporter. This led to work on BBC Radio Four during the ‘Winter of Discontent’ of 1978–79 with all its industrial unrest and strikes.

“And then it all exploded with the arrival of Mrs Thatcher who was determined to take on the nationalised industries culminating in the miners’ strike of 1984–85. I knew this was going to be a fight to the finish and it was a story I didn’t want to let go.”

At this time, Nick was working on radio which he found frustrating because “you’re the first one to get an interview but you don’t have anything tangible at the end of the day”. An avid reader of all the newspapers, Nick kept a collection of clippings about the miners’ strike; not just news items but also the multitude of cartoons produced at that time. He has just turned this archive into a book: *The Art of Class War: Newspaper Cartoonists and the 1984–85 Miners’ Strike*, in time to commemorate its 40th anniversary.

The book reflects Nick’s keen interest in how events are affected by media manipulation. “I realised how important the role of the media was during this time. The miners thought they could win with their industrial strength but, of course, Mrs Thatcher won. I believe she was one of the first politicians to understand the importance of publicity and the ability to manipulate the news.”

“Most journalists tend to be journalists for life”

Nick’s collection of cartoons on the miners’ strike stood out “like a Bayeux Tapestry” documenting the events and he has delivered 24 orange boxes (purloined from Barnet Market – he doesn’t eat oranges!) full of cuttings and scripts to be archived at Sheffield University.

Upon retiring in 2002, Nick had no desire to stop writing. So he began reporting for The Barnet Society as a ‘volunteer citizen journalist’.

He has been rewarded with a doctorate from the University of Wolverhampton and is an honorary professor at the University of Cardiff where he often delivers lectures about the media.

It seems that a career can be passed on in the DNA if Nick’s family is anything to go by.

“My brother was a journalist, but, unlike me, he says he doesn’t want to see a blank screen again. My son is also a journalist – covering the financial world – but he’s got it under control. When work is finished he can switch off.

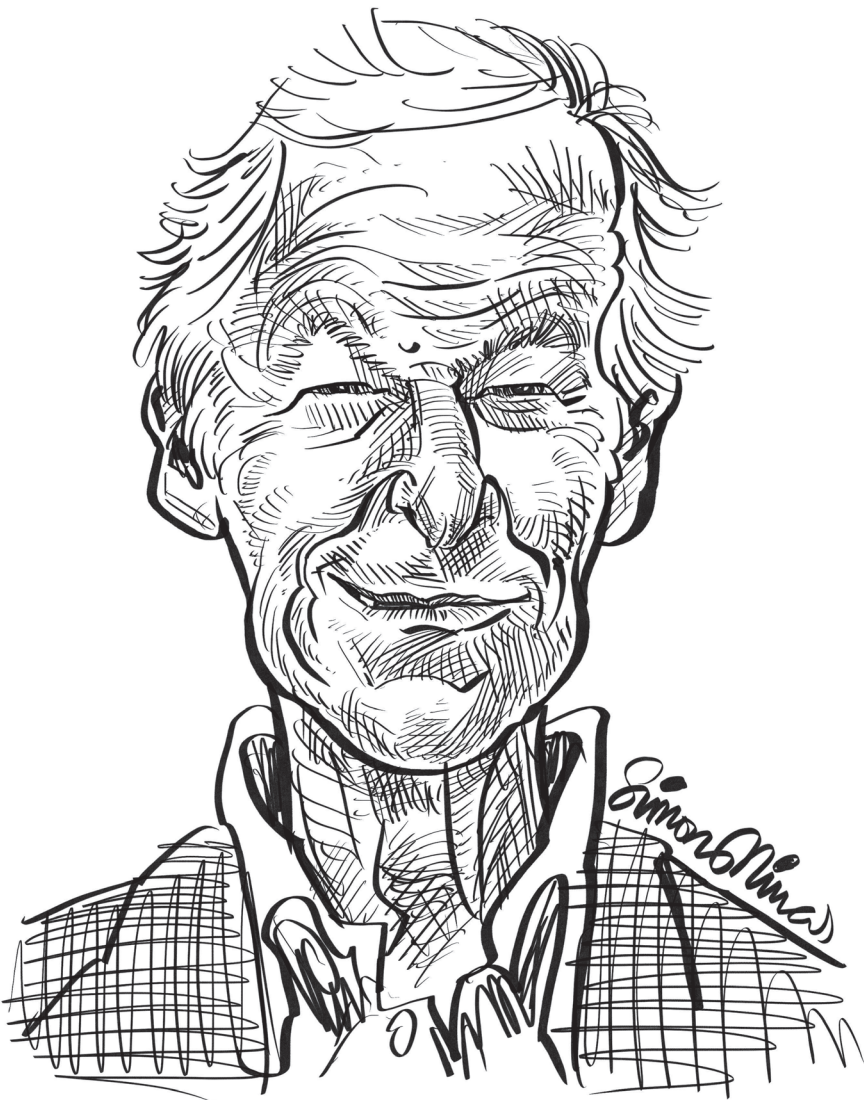
“But, with me, there was no desire to give up. Most journalists tend to be journalists for life. You just have that inquisitive mind. I’m always thinking about my next story. My wife thinks I’m a complete lunatic running around writing stories!”

It was around the time of his tenure at Radio Four that Nick moved to Barnet. “I first arrived in the summer of 1973 when there were swifts and swallows flying about. I thought ‘Well, this is a wonderful little place.’”

In Nick’s view, local issues like the fate of the Whale-bones Estate and the future of the Spires Shopping Centre seem to be as clear as mud. “Nobody knows anything.” And another story he’s interested in is the mysterious felling of ULEZ poles on Rowley Green Road. “Who’s been cutting them down?” That’s a story we can undoubtedly look forward to reading in the future!

Nick’s published books include: ‘Strikes and the Media: Communication and Conflict’ (Basil Blackwell, 1986); ‘Soundbites and Spin Doctors: How Politicians Manipulate the Media – and Vice Versa’ (Cassell, 1995); ‘The Lost Tribe: Whatever Happened to Fleet Street’s Industrial correspondents?’ His latest publication, ‘The Art of Class War: Newspaper Cartoonists and the 1984–85 Miners’ Strike’ is published by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (North) and is available for £12.00 (inc. p&p) from cbfnorth@outlook.com or Housmans Bookshop, London, housmans.com.

To read Nick’s news reports on The Barnet Society website: Visit barnetsociety.org.uk/news



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Review: *The Bird Apocalypse*



Taking clear inspiration from Alfred Hitchcock’s 1963 psychological thriller *The Birds*, the piece brilliantly channels that same creeping paranoia and escalating sense of isolation. Instead of relying on jump scares, the production lingers in the quiet, uncanny moments, echoing Hitchcock’s mastery of suspense and the unknown.

But what truly sets this piece apart is its Punchdrunk-influenced immersive style. Audiences are not passive viewers but active explorers, moving through a fragmented, eerie environment, where narrative is pieced together through sound, texture, and whispered encounters.

The experience is small scale, with a total of three spaces – but you’ll find yourself in bird-damaged living rooms, eavesdropping on audio diaries of survivors, and following trails of feathers through a shadowy corridor. Each space is intricately designed, allowing you to uncover your path through the story with cryptic clues unravelling.

The level of detail shows a thoughtful choice of a somewhat distressed set dressing, enhanced by a subtly unsettling sound design. Gorbonosova and Lennon have created a boundary-blurring theatrical experience that is both technically impressive and emotionally resonant, playing with themes of control, fear, and the fragility of human security.

Immersive, disorienting, and deeply engaging, *The Bird Apocalypse* was a must-see at this year’s exhibition festival. Thoughtful, haunting, and artfully executed, it’s an outstanding example of what student theatre can achieve when bold ideas meet rigorous craft.

Find out more:
Visit mdx.ac.uk/study/the-degree-show

Christiana Rose on an immersive student showcase

Part of The North London Degree Show Festival 2025: e .. motions at Middlesex University that ended last month, it is worth highlighting a standout experience from the theatre

students who have a showcase titled *The Bird Apocalypse* a free immersive theatre installation which was located on the ground floor of The Grove Building in Hendon.

Created by the talented student duo Daria Gorbonosova, BA Theatre Design and Daisy Lennon BA Theatre, *The Bird Apocalypse* drops you into a chilling, atmospheric world, where nature’s order has fractured, and birds have become the silent, stalking force of dread.

COMMENT Fly-tipping has become an epidemic in Barnet: here’s how Labour is cracking down on it

BY DAVID PINTO-DUSCHINSKY MP

Fly-tipping is a blight on our streets and a slap in the face to the vast majority of residents who take pride in our community. Whether it’s dumped furniture, bags of junk, or just assorted household rubbish, we’ve all seen the mess left behind by a few selfish individuals who think the rules don’t apply to them.

I want to make it absolutely clear: I won’t stand for it.

Alongside the everyday issue of litter, fly-tipping has become far too common across Hendon, including in areas like Burnt Oak, Colindale and West Hendon. Residents there have told me how fed up they are of seeing their streets treated like dumping grounds. And I agree. Our pavements, green spaces and communal areas should be places of pride, not dumping grounds for rubbish.

That’s why I’ve been speaking to the Labour government’s environment secretary, Steve Reed, about what we can do nationally and locally to clean up our streets. I’m pleased to say Labour is already taking decisive action. The previous Conservative government allowed fly-tipping to spiral out of control. Councils were left with limited powers and communities like ours paid the price. That’s changing now. Labour is giving councils the powers they need, including the ability to seize and crush vehicles used for fly-tipping. If you’re dumping rubbish illegally, the government and our local council are no longer willing to turn a blind eye.

This Labour government has explained how it will crack down on those responsible. With tougher enforcement, stronger penalties and real support for local authorities, we are giving councils the powers they need to be tougher on waste criminals. Working with local police, councils will now be able to go after the worst offenders, with some repeat offenders facing up to five years in prison. I have spoken to numerous residents across my patch who are relieved to hear about this stricter new approach.

Fly-tipping is unacceptable. It damages our environment, makes our streets and communities messier, and puts unfair costs on residents who might take on the responsibility of disposing of it themselves. Tackling it is one of my top priorities as your MP. By working together – residents, council, and government – we can send a strong message: fly-tipping will not be tolerated in Barnet.

Let’s keep our streets clean, safe and a source of pride for everyone who lives here.



Licensing Act 2003 Notice of Application for a Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that **JAM EVENTS** have applied to the Licensing Authority of London Borough of Barnet for a Premises Licence to permit:

- Summer Jam Festival a small music and food festival with a licensed bar, recorded music, and food stalls
- For the premises scratchwood open space, situated at: Barnet Way, NW7 4HJ

A register of licensing applications can be inspected at 8th Floor, 2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, London, NW9 4EW. Appointments to inspect the register can be made by telephoning 020 8359 7443 during office hours.

Any person wishing to submit relevant representations concerning this application must give notice in writing to the London Borough of Barnet, Licensing Team at the address above, giving in detail the grounds of the representation no later than: **23/07/2025**

The Council will not entertain representations where the writer requests that his identity remains anonymous. Copies of all representations will be included in the papers presented to the Licensing Authorities Sub Committee and will therefore pass into the public domain.

Representations must relate to one or more of the four Licensing Objectives: the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance and the protection of children from harm.

It is an offence liable on conviction to a fine up to £5000 under section 158 of the Licensing Act 2003 knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application.

Dated: 23rd day of June 2025 **Signed:** L. Abraham

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NEW SOUTHGATE



Pigeons were trapped for several days before being freed and some were found dead

Network Rail 'sorry' over trapped pigeons

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

NETWORK RAIL APOLOGISED after its contractor trapped dozens of nesting pigeons inside meshing installed under a New Southgate railway bridge.

Scores of pigeon chicks are feared dead after the blunder on the bridge over the North Circular Road, with British Transport Police also made aware of the incident after being alerted to it by local residents.

While there were efforts to free some of the trapped pigeons, when the *Post* visited the bridge on Friday, 6th June, there were still at least five adult pigeons visibly trapped. Network Rail later returned to free more but it was clear that some had already died.

The bridge carries the East Coast Main Line and Network Rail had been persuaded to install meshing following local concerns over the bridge becoming a "health hazard"

thanks both to a build up of pigeon poo on the pavement and a series of leaking pipes.

However, wildlife law protects nesting birds and Network Rail should have carried out basic checks before starting work. Wildlife rescue volunteer Michael Britton, who works with groups including Pigeon Recovery and London Wildlife Protection, worked with local residents to alert Network Rail and its contractor to the issue. He told the *Post*: "People might not like pigeons, but they are still protected under law, and this [harming pigeons] is a widespread issue with pest control contractors.

"The meshing work has continued even though pigeons were visibly trapped by the meshing that had already been installed."

A Network Rail spokesperson said its teams had returned to free trapped pigeons and added: "We have been carrying out work to replace the

netting beneath the bridge to prevent pigeons from becoming trapped and to address the issue of pigeon mess on the pavement.

"We're aware of trapped birds [...] We're sorry for any distress this might've caused to the local community."

The contractor was Eco Environmental Services Ltd. A spokesperson claimed all the trapped pigeons had been freed and added: "The amount of bird fouling on the pavement directly under the structure is the worst our team have ever seen, the installation of a bird deterrent system will hopefully protect the public from the pathogens contained within it."

Michael hopes criminal action will be taken. A spokesperson for British Transport Police said: "I can confirm our wildlife and environment crime team are aware and are liaising with Network Rail."

WHETSTONE

New 'school street' proposed

BY GRACE HOWARTH, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

BARNET COUNCIL HAS proposed a new 'school street' in Whetstone to ensure pupils can walk and cycle to school in a "safer environment".

A public consultation has launched on plans for the school street in the area surrounding St John's Primary School.

Swan Lane would be closed to general traffic during school drop off and pick up times, from 8am–9am and 3pm–4pm, Monday to Friday, during term time only.

Automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras will be used to enforce the closure.

Barnet Council has already implemented nine school streets and is trialling nine others.

Depending on the consultation, Swan Lane will begin an 18-month trial, during which residents will be able to comment. After the trial a review will be carried out to alter, remove or retain the scheme.

Residents are being encouraged to fill in a questionnaire which asks how supportive they are of the plan and their reasoning.

The council said the school would

"benefit" from being included in its school street schemes and that roads around schools were a "priority" area for making streets "safer and cleaner".

The council said: "The schemes also help to prevent potential conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians, crowding from pupils and parents outside school gates, as well as preventing the potential of young children being forced onto the roads with traffic."

Residents have until Friday, 4th July to fill in the questionnaire:

Visit engage.barnet.gov.uk/st-john-s-c-e-primary-and-nursery-school-swan-lane-n20-school-street

BRENT CROSS

The first new residents outside Conductor House Credit Barnet Council



New residents move in

BY SOPHIE MITCHELL

BRENT CROSS RESIDENTS have moved into new homes with the opening of part of one of the borough's biggest development projects.

Conductor House, part of the Brent Cross Town scheme, was opened with an event in May for new residents who had previously lived in the Whitefield Estate, and moved into the new properties after being relocated as a part of the Brent Cross Cricklewood regeneration programme.

Representatives from Barnet Council, development partner Related Argent and housing association L&Q joined the Conductor House residents and the Whitefield Estate resident steering group to celebrate the opening day.

The ribbon was cut by Eileen Touil who moved to Whitefield Estate in 1974. At the gathering of neighbours in the new Visitor Pavilion, she said: "I love my new home, I think it has been designed very well and feels safe and secure. As we're less

than a five-minute walk from our previous home, I love that I can still use the same buses and go to the same shops I always do."

Conductor House is part of a wider Brent Cross Cricklewood redevelopment programme that Barnet Council promises will deliver more high quality, affordable housing to the area, as well as new retail space and sports facilities. The high-rise residents have been placed in properties at social rent rates, completing the transition to new buildings for old tenants. It provides 120 homes in total, including shared equity and London Living Rent apartments.

Cabinet member Alan Schneiderman said: "We are committed to doing everything we can to deliver high-quality social housing and affordable homes for people living in Barnet."

"This is a huge moment for us and our partners at Brent Cross Town who have worked together to deliver these fantastic new properties, and I am delighted to see residents settling in well."

Advertisement

Licensing Act 2003

Notice of Application for a Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that **Our Yard at Clitterhouse Farm** have applied to the Licensing Authority of London Borough of Barnet for a Premises Licence to permit:

- **Film events: Sun-Thurs, 10:00–20:30; Fri and Sat 10:00–22:30**
- **Live/recorded music (amplified and unamplified) and Performance of Dance: Sun-Thurs, 10:00–19:30; Fri and Sat, 10:00–22:30**
- **Supply of alcohol: Sun-Thurs, 12:00–21:00; Fri and Sat, 12:00–22:30. None of the events will exceed 500pax.**
- **For the premises: Our Yard at Clitterhouse Farm situated at Clitterhouse Playing Fields, off Claremont Rd, London NW2 1AP**

A register of licensing applications can be inspected at 8th Floor, 2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, London, NW9 4EW. Appointments to inspect the register can be made by telephoning 020 8359 7443 during office hours.

Any person wishing to submit relevant representations concerning this application must give notice in writing to the London Borough of Barnet, Licensing Team at the address above, giving in detail the grounds of the representation no later than: **23/07/2025.**

The Council will not entertain representations where the writer requests that his identity remains anonymous. Copies of all representations will be included in the papers presented to the Licensing Authorities Sub Committee and will therefore pass into the public domain.

Representations must relate to one or more of the four Licensing Objectives: the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance and the protection of children from harm.

It is an offence liable on conviction to a fine up to £5000 under section 158 of the Licensing Act 2003 knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application.

Dated: 25th day of June 2025

Signed: Anika Bakirtzidis

FEATURES



Credit: Joeyy Lee via Unsplash

The paradox of youth: cherish it while you can

Nataliya Tichoniuk examines how social media distorts the perception of youth

‘Youth is wasted on the young’, is a common rebuttal directed at young people when they complain or fixate on their appearance.

Youth is a precious and valuable time that everyone deserves to relish. Youth is a time for adventure and discovery, enjoying the energy of parties, events and festivals, having fun and creating memories that will last a lifetime. It’s a time for being careless and taking risks, along with learning some of life’s biggest lessons.

From what I can tell so far, most people look back on their youth as being the most colourful and vibrant time of their life, grateful for the opportunity of adventure, peak health and strength. While youth can be remembered as idyllic, when you’re actually living through it, you may not realise how significant this chapter is.

It’s a well-known truth that, alongside the nostalgia and wistfulness that comes with reminiscing about youth, there can also be regret. Regret for not being more

grateful for the vitality and innocence of being young. I’ve often heard adults offer advice, urging us to appreciate our youth more and stop obsessing over things we can’t change, most importantly our looks.

It’s now widely acknowledged that social media is detrimental to our wellbeing, regardless of age. It’s also well known that it has heavily altered and distorted our perceptions and expectations of our physical appearance.

Stem4 recently reported that three out of four young people feel unhappy with how they look. The impossible standards set by social media leave no room for mistakes, bad days or ‘weird’ bits, creating an environment that disregards the variability and beauty of being human.

Generation Alpha, immersed in technology since birth, has only known the unrealistic beauty standards curated by social media. These children, aged 0–15, are victims of constant insecurity. They are most fixated on their appearance, primarily due to the beauty trends and tips they are exposed to daily online. As a result, they are highly image-conscious, shaped by this overwhelming culture of beauty ideals.

In reality, appearance has become a form of consumption – a commodity. Human bodies are placed under a judgmental lens

on social media, where they are intensely scrutinised not only for flaws but also used as tools to manufacture insecurities. These insecurities are magnified and fed back into a cycle of on-line validation, turning people into consumers of their own self-doubt.

Online platforms have sparked a wave of hyper-fixation on appearance and the effects on young people are already visible. Sites like TikTok showcase girls as young as nine following extensive and expensive skincare routines. This creates a vicious cycle where these digital spaces’ unrealistic beauty standards fuel anxiety, with the youngest generation being the most impacted.

Youth is celebrated for its freedom, but today’s young people face intense pressure to meet impossible standards. Change is possible through conversations about self-worth, media literacy and embracing diverse beauty. By promoting authenticity and reminding ourselves to be grateful for the gift of youth, we move closer to a world where self-acceptance replaces self-doubt.

If you’re struggling with body image challenges, you can check out the following resources for support: mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/research/body-image-how-we-think-and-feel-about-our-bodies/tips-improve-body-image and bebodypositive.org.uk

This article was originally published by the youth communications charity Exposure: exposure.org.uk

Summer activities in Barnet Libraries



BY CATHERINE LUSTED

As the summer holidays approach, you may have started to wonder how to keep children entertained on the long (hopefully) sunny days ahead. Barnet Libraries have a full activity programme to help.

Barnet Book Detectives launches on Saturday 5th July. Ideal for children aged four to eleven, simply visit your local library to sign up. The Barnet Summer Read is a great way to keep children reading over the break from school, where research shows reading levels can decline. Children will receive a reading journal when they join, full of activities to complete as well as space to record what they read. Those who read six books before 6th September will be awarded a certificate and badge, and they’ll discover the identity of the mysterious Book Crook,

who’s been stealing books from Barnet’s libraries!

To accompany this, there are a host of free or low-cost events taking place. There are craft events, making magnifying glasses and origami, story writing workshops (one with using coding and robots!), mystery trails and a dance performance set in and around the library shelves! Don’t miss the Mysteries of the RAF at the RAF Museum on Saturday 5th July or Solve a World War 2 Mystery! with author Helen Peters on Saturday 12th July. There’s even a family walk in Hendon to uncover its fascinating past.

For under-fives, join in with a special Dad’s Rhyme Time or Zoom, Zoom, Zoom in a space themed activity session, with rhymes, stories and sensory play.

Find out more at www.barnet.gov.uk/libraries/children-and-young-peoples-library-services/barnet-book-detectives or pick up a Creative Communities programme from your local library

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FEATURES

Community quilt parade

BY LINDA KELLY

The Community Quilt Project Barnet is a grassroots project by people from across the borough. On Sunday 15th June, on the eve of Refugee Week, we paraded our three patchwork quilt banners between Swan Lane Open Space in Whetstone to Victoria Park in Church End, Finchley. We navigated



The quilts are paraded through the streets of Barnet Credit Community Quilt Project Barnet

those pavements with pride. Those who happened to see the back of each quilt would have seen one of three words: ‘Unity’, ‘Celebration’ or ‘Solidarity’. These three words reflected the spirit the quilts were made in. The parade was a culmination of ten months of planning which included several workshops to make the hundreds of patches, beautifully hand sewn by a wide range

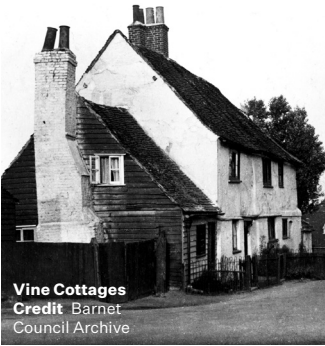
of communities across the borough of Barnet. Some of us were experts in the craft of needlework and others were complete beginners, but it wasn’t just the end product that made these events so positive, it was the process that we went through. Friendships and networks were made, and participants spoke of the positivity of coming together to create something.

Our impetuses for starting this project last August were the frightening far right attacks and threats to refugees and asylum seekers throughout the UK including our own community in Finchley. We decided to start a project made from love and enabling inclusion.

The quilts will now go on display in venues across Barnet and we hope those viewing them will get as much pleasure as we had making them. We may make this an annual event and we will definitely be doing more campaigning with our quilts in the coming year.

Visit communityquiltbarnet.carrd.co

Local society to excavate Hendon site



BY ROGER CHAPMAN

The Hendon and District Archaeology Society (HADAS) will be excavating a site opposite the Greyhound Public House in Hendon between Thursday 31st July and Monday 4th August as part of the Festival of British Archaeology.

The site is now a small Barnet Council run open space, but it is known that Vine Cottages existed on the

site and was demolished in 1937, The photo (left, which appears in the London Borough of Barnet archive) shows what existed.

The objectives of our excavation are to: establish the phasing, uses, occupation and development of Vines Cottages; establish likely date of construction of Vines cottages; establish whether there is evidence of earlier building and uses on this site; understand the wider context and setting of Vines Cottages drawing on previous historical and excavation work undertaken by HADAS and others.

Come along and see the HADAS excavation in action – and then have a quiet reflection on it in the Greyhound opposite.

For more information:
Email roger.chapman99@btinternet.com
Visit archaeologyuk.org/festival/festival-event-listing/vine-cottages-excavation.html

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