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26th June



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Gibbous
89%/0.49

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14th July



30th July



Waxing
Gibbous
99%/0.5

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The Great North Leisure Park in North Finchley which now faces redevelopment after the deputy mayor of London overturned Barnet Council's decision to refuse planning permission – see pages 2, 8 and 11
Credit Mira Shah

Parents left scrambling after sudden closure of New Southgate nursery

BY LEILA DAVAUD

Parents have expressed their shock after a New Southgate nursery closed suddenly.

Bright Horizons New Southgate was shut on 18th May due to staffing problems, with parents later being told that the nursery's Ofsted registration had been suspended.

Talking to *Barnet Post*, Krisztian Pósch, whose two daughters attended the nursery, asked: "How are we supposed to give them our trust again?" The sudden closure created significant disruption for his family. "We were told on 14th May that the nursery would close on 18th May.

"Me and my partner had to take some time off work to figure things

out and we are lucky to have been able to. Not everyone has this luxury."

With clear disappointment, Krisztian added: "My daughters don't understand why their routine changed so suddenly. We knew there was a staff shortage, but we were far from thinking it would get to this point." He added that communication around fees and future arrangements had been difficult.

The closure has since been followed by regulatory action. On 27th May, parents received a call from Bright Horizons. "We were informed that Ofsted had suspended the nursery's registration," explained Krisztian. Ofsted is the government agency responsible for inspecting services providing education and

skills for learners of all ages.

The *Post* contacted Bright Horizons to ask for its position. A spokesperson said: "Following a period of significant staffing challenges, we took the decision to temporarily close New Southgate nursery because we did not believe we could continue to operate in a way that meets the standard of care our families rightly expect from us.

"This was a difficult decision, and we understand how upsetting and disruptive it has been for families and colleagues. Following the closure, Ofsted informed us of its decision to suspend the nursery's registration. This is a temporary measure and one we are considering appealing. Our immediate

focus remains on supporting affected families and colleagues, including helping children transition to alternative nearby nurseries wherever possible."

However, parents have criticised the short notice given before the closure and questioned why they were not informed sooner about Ofsted's concerns.

Christianna, whose child attended the nursery, said she wasn't aware of the inspections. "We feel very upset with the fact that they weren't transparent with us. If we had known that there were issues we would have possibly transferred our child to another nursery."

Continued on page-3



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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City Hall overturns Barnet Council decision on controversial developments

KUMAIL JAFFER, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

City Hall has intervened to overturn Barnet Council's decision to reject the development of more than 1,700 new homes across two projects.

Mayor of London Sir Sadiq Khan used his devolved powers to 'call in' proposals for 1,500 homes on the Great North Leisure Park site in North Finchley and 283 homes near High Barnet Station after the council voted to refuse both applications.

Councillors refused the former application due to fears around overdevelopment on the site due to the "scale and density" of the scheme.

Developers outlined plans to replace the existing leisure park with a new building, including a proposed outdoor lido, in addition to the new homes, which includes tower blocks up to 25 storeys tall.

The proposal said 341 of the 1,485 homes would be affordable, a proportion of 25%.

James Langsmead, a deputy planning manager at Barnet Council, told the public hearing in City Hall on Wednesday, 27th May that members refused the application initially as the proposal would be "out of character" with the local area and that it was not supported by a relevant Section 106 agreement.

Mary Hogben, from The Finchley Society, added: "This is not designed optimisation, but numbers-led gross maximisation.

"This is bad housing design with the wrong mix of housing to support growth in Barnet. Barnet is achieving their housing targets – therefore, there is no justification for this extreme density to the detriment of the health and wellbeing of future residents."

But a representative from developers Regal London said the site was a "textbook example" of an area that officials should be aiming to develop on.

Deputy mayor Jules Pipe, who was making the final decision, ruled in favour of the developers.

He told the meeting: "There is a very clear and urgent need to deliver more



Campaigners from Our North Finchley outside Hendon Town Hall ahead of the original vote
Credit: Sammi Davis Photography

homes, especially genuinely affordable homes, to tackle the housing crisis.

"We cannot afford to leave brown-field sites such as this underused."

At High Barnet, developers had applied to build 283 homes in five blocks with heights between five and eleven storeys.

However, council officers said some of the buildings were of "excessive height" and were out of character with the local area. The vast majority of responses to the public consultation were also objections, primarily around the removal of the 177 station car parking spaces and pressure on local services.

GLA officers were satisfied with the boost to housing supply, the affordable housing ratio of 40%, and the impact on the local area.

However, at the hearing, Barnet Council planning officer Sam Gerstein said the site is not suitable for tall buildings, while the loss of the station car parking would have an impact

on commuters using an 'end of line' public transport hub.

Other objectors at the hearing raised issues with station accessibility, suggesting an older-than-average local population may struggle with approaching the station on foot or bicycle.

Theresa Villiers, the former Tory MP for the constituency, told the deputy mayor that expecting residents to tackle the steep route up to the station without a car was unrealistic.

She added: "The tower blocks will seriously distort the skyline – development on this scale was rightly rejected by Barnet Council. This kind of development is the kind of proposal our planning system was designed to stop."

Representatives from the developers said their car parking survey revealed that the spaces were not serving Londoners, but commuters from as far as Stevenage, Grantham and Huddersfield, and so were not "essential" for local residents.

However, Pipe concluded the high proportion of affordable housing and location overrode objections.

He said: "We need to take opportunities to build new homes on highly accessible sites where key transport infrastructure is already in place.

"The height optimises development capacity in this highly accessible location. It is inevitable that schemes with this number of units will be visible – artificially constraining height in such locations will drive development to greenfield sites, including Green Belt, which will be less sustainable and car dependent.

"While the station car park is well used, its loss would promote more sustainable ways of travel...and have

a beneficial impact on air quality."

Dan Tomlinson, the MP for Chipping Barnet, told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS): "Barnet Council rejected this application at its planning committee by an 8–1 margin, as it is clearly not in line with the Local Plan.

"It is in black and white in Barnet's Local Plan that seven storeys is the maximum for housing on this site. It isn't right for the GLA to overrule elected councillors to approve a scheme with an eleven-storey block that contravenes the plan."

Sarah Sackman, the MP for Finchley and Golders Green who opposed the scheme when it was presented to Barnet Council, said: "We must get the balance right between protecting community spaces and building more affordable homes.

"I will be pushing City Hall to maximise affordable housing and increase transport provision, so this development delivers real improvements for North Finchley."

A spokesperson for the Barnet Labour Party said: "It's extremely disappointing that two local planning decisions based on the Local Plan and London Plan and with the backing of the local community have been overturned by the GLA."

Read more on how local campaign groups and politicians have reacted to this news on pages eight and eleven.

NEWS

Continued from page-1

She chose to not move her daughter to a different Bright Horizons nursery. “The alternative locations were not convenient for us, and we have lost trust in the organisation. We are aware that when the North Finchley nursery closed, parents were given two months’ notice.”

She added: “The staff never shared any information about the challenges they were facing. Whenever we raised questions, we were directed to the management team. Over the past year, while there were changes we gave Bright Horizons the benefit of the doubt. However, this situation has changed our view.”

Another parent, who asked not to be named, said they felt they had little choice but to move their daughter to another Bright Horizons nursery after receiving such short notice.

“We were given only two and a half working days notice of the closure, along with the option to move our daughter to another Bright Horizons nursery the following week,” they said.

“If we had chosen a different nursery, we would have needed to apply for a place, pay a registration fee and complete a settling-in period. Given that both of us work full time, we simply could not take two weeks off on such short notice.”

The parent said they only learned about Ofsted’s

Credit Anna Myslowska Kiczek via Unsplash



“Ofsted had been working with Bright Horizons since last year”

suspension after their child had already transferred to another Bright Horizons setting. They also said they had been “unaware of the number of Ofsted visits made to the nursery in recent months”.

“We were made aware of only one Ofsted visit in February but no

results were ever shared with us,” they said. “We were completely unaware that they also visited in November 2025, December 2025, March 2026 and April 2026.”

Parents said they had asked nursery management whether the closure was linked to regulatory issues but were told there was “nothing that

they were aware of”.

Documents published by Ofsted make clear that inspectors had been working with Bright Horizons since last year to ensure that the nursery was able to meet regulatory requirements.

This activity was followed by a full inspection in February which highlighted a series of actions needed, with four out of six areas of activity described as requiring “urgent improvement”.

In a letter published on 7th June, Ofsted explained the timeline of its engagement with Bright Horizons. In conclusion, it said: “We suspended the provider’s registration on 26th May 2026 because we believe children may be at risk of harm.

“Suspension allows time for the provider to take steps to reduce or eliminate the risk of harm to children. The provider has a right to appeal against a suspension. The provider may not provide childcare for which registration is required while the suspension is in place and may commit an offence if they do so.

“The provider is still registered with Ofsted.”

Underhill CPZ hours under review after petition presented to council

BY JOE IVES, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Barnet Council will review the hours of a controlled parking zone (CPZ) in Underhill following pushback describing it as “aggressive” and harmful to local businesses.

The move follows concerns raised on behalf of residents and six businesses in Mays Lane at the local authority’s cabinet meeting last month.

A petition titled “Stop Barnet Council from killing trade due to parking charges” received 1,377 signatures by the time it was submitted on 18th March.

Addressing cabinet on Monday, 15th June, Gina Theodorou, one of two lead petitioners, said the controlled parking hours in Mays Lane street were “disproportionate” and directly affecting shops whose “survival depends entirely on convenience



Mays Pets in Mays Lane, Underhill
Credit Google

and brief customer stops”.

Currently, visitors parking in Mays Lane need to pay between 8am and 6:30pm, Monday to Saturday. Theodorou argued these restrictions are “vastly more aggressive” than those in the surrounding Chipping Barnet CPZ, which only operate for one hour, from 2pm to 3pm, Monday to Friday.

She added that there was “zero evidence” that local businesses wanted these restrictions or believed they were helping trade through higher parking turnover. Theodorou argued that, in fact, the opposite was true, and relayed reports from some of the businesses on the parade.

These included a response from Mays Pets, the last independent pet shop in Barnet. According to Theodorou, the pet shop said that parking charges, double yellow lines and reduced parking spaces had led to “a 50% loss of takings” and meant the business had to lay off long-serving staff.

Theodorou also noted that, while not condoning vandalism, the fact that some parking signs had been repeatedly painted over “demonstrates

the depth of local anger and a complete lack of public confidence”.

She asked the cabinet to introduce fairer parking charges, arguing that “across Underhill residents feel completely ignored” and urged cabinet members to “listen before more harm is done”.

“Once these shops are gone they cannot be replaced,” Theodorou warned.

Underhill ward councillor Josh Tapper also spoke at the meeting, urging his senior Labour colleagues to take action.

Cllr Tapper said: “It’s really important that we see a positive outcome to respond to these concerns, one that incentivises local people to support and use our local businesses on Mays Lane whilst also deterring all day parking.”

Both Theodorou and Cllr Tapper asked the local authority to consider adjusting the parking charge period on Mays Lane to between 2pm-3pm, making it in line with the hours of the Chipping Barnet CPZ.

Alan Schneiderman, the Labour-run council’s cabinet member for environment, responded that he

was “aware” of the concerns raised by the parking charges.

Cllr Schneiderman said the charges were introduced to ensure the street was not “an uncontrolled area where people could park all day”, adding: “That’s not actually going to help people who want to come and visit those traders.”

He said the local authority would be looking into responses from a recently-concluded public consultation on Barnet’s CPZs, which includes the one in Mays Lane.

Nevertheless, Cllr Schneiderman conceded that the suggestion to reduce Mays Lane’s parking restrictions to between 2pm and 3pm on weekdays “does make sense”.

This, he agreed, could still discourage people from leaving their cars there all day at the same time as reducing the impact on businesses.

The cabinet member said he would be asking officers to assess this option and send back their findings within 20 days.

The council, Cllr Schneiderman concluded, was “keen to listen” and resolve the issue.

NEWS



A modular school building built by The Werner Group in Redcar, North Yorkshire Credit Identity Consult

Council looks to ‘modular’ solution for expanding Send provision in Barnet

BY JOE IVES, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Urgent building works have been approved by Barnet Council to create “additional interim” school places for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (Send) by September.

Last month, John Anthony, the local authority’s executive director of children’s services, signed off on plans to set up such provision at the Queenswell Schools site in Whetstone to address the expected shortage of places.

The plans, which involve the commissioning of quick-build “modular” facilities, follows the council warning “existing provision is outstripped by projected demand”.

The council expects Oakleigh Junior School and Mapledown Secondary School to be oversubscribed from September 2026 onwards, according to a report prepared ahead of the decision.

The authority will now enter into a £3.65million contract paid for through grant funding from the Department for Education (DfE).

The contract is set to go to Wernick Buildings, part of The Wernick Group. The business, which had a reported turnover of more than £200m in 2024, describes itself as a group of companies specialising in the “sale and hire of permanent and temporary modular buildings, site accommodation and

off-grid power solutions”.

Once the deal is signed, the “interim” measures will be delivered “over phases” with an initial phase “commencing immediately to meet the most urgent need for September 2026”. A second phase will start in September 2027.

Mapledown School, Queenswell Infant and Nursery School and Oakleigh School are set to house the facilities needed by this September. “Engagement with all three schools has been ongoing in relation to requirements and the proposed changes,” the council said in its report.

Mapledown School will see the construction of “five modular build classrooms, therapy spaces and associated staff and ancillary spaces”, including toilets. The council says these facilities will be “installed” on a disused playing field and former playground, which is separate from the mainstream school site.

One “modular build classroom” will be built on the early years playground at Queenswell Infant and Nursery School.

Oakleigh School, meanwhile, will see “minor internal reconfiguration of existing classrooms” to provide extra space as needed.

Rapidly growing need for special needs provision is not limited to Barnet. A Department for Education (DfE)

report published by the government on the same day as the council’s decision revealed the number of pupils with Send support had increased by 33% nationally since 2016, with a further 2.8% rise in 2025/26.

At the same time, government funding for local authorities providing Send places has lagged behind demand. Last year, London Councils warned that almost half of the capital’s local authorities were at “heightened risk” of bankruptcy due to insufficient government funding.

The cross-party group, which acts as a representative for every London council, warned that local authorities across the capital could be facing a cumulative budget deficit of £500m by the end of the 2026/27 financial year.

In May, Pauline Coakley Webb, the council’s cabinet member for family friendly Barnet, admitted that “the increasing complexity of needs among children with Send is placing unprecedented pressure on the mainstream and specialist systems”.

On its website, The Wernick Group says that “modular construction offers several advantages” for education providers, including “faster project timelines”, reduced on-site disruption and “predictable building dimensions and layouts”.

North London Hospice site in Finchley to close for a year as £10m rebuild begins

BY RICHARD CUBITT

North London Hospice will temporarily close its inpatient unit in Finchley for a year while a £10million rebuilding project gets underway this month.

The charity will use the Jade Ward at Edgware Community Hospital as an alternative inpatient unit while construction takes place at its Woodside Avenue site.

Capacity will be reduced while works take place, as Woodside has 15 beds but Jade Ward only has twelve.

A spokesperson for North London Hospice said: “We have assessed our occupancy

levels over the past twelve months and believe the needs of the community will continue to be met in our temporary Inpatient Unit and through our community nursing teams. We are proud to still be able to offer inpatient services during this project, something that other hospices undertaking similar work have not always been able to do.

“By working in partnership with NHS Property Services to temporarily lease facilities at Jade Ward, we will be able to continue to provide outstanding care whilst creating a unit fit for the future, that will benefit our community for decades to come.”

The work at Woodside Avenue will begin in August and the rebuilt unit is expected to open in autumn next year.

A spokesperson for the hospice said the project was needed because “as the population has grown, aged and increasingly includes younger people in need, the demand for hospice care has risen”.

They continued: “The needs of patients have become broader, more multifaceted and complex. While end-of-life care,

interventions and equipment have evolved, North London Hospice facilities have not.

“After extensive consultation and research, including exploring several different options, hospice leaders concluded that a complete redevelopment of the Inpatient Unit is the best solution for the charity to meet future needs of patients.”

The construction project, titled ‘Building for Tomorrow’, will be overseen by Neilcott Construction Ltd and is expected to cost £10m, with most of the funding coming from donors, trusts and private sponsors as well as the government.



North London Hospice's site in Woodside Avenue, Finchley Credit Google

The charity will launch a public appeal this autumn to raise the remaining £2.4m.

North London Hospice was founded in 1984 and was the UK’s first multi-faith hospice. They receive 3,500 referrals for patients with a life limiting illness every year and are the only hospice for adult palliative care operating in Barnet.

Declan Carroll, chief executive of North London Hospice, said: “Our patients are at the heart of everything we do. We know that at their most vulnerable hour, being cared for in a homely, comforting, personable environment really matters. It makes a lasting, meaningful difference.

“So, we owe it to them and their families to rebuild our inpatient unit in accordance with modern standards, to preserve and safeguard our specialised, vital care now as well as into the future.”

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NEWS

Concerns raised after three ‘never events’ recorded by NHS hospital trust in just two months



BY JOE IVES, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

A patient undergoing resuscitation had a guidewire accidentally left inside their body in one of three ‘never events’ recorded by a North London NHS hospitals trust over a two-month period.

These serious mistakes were discussed by Julie Hamilton, board trustee and group chief nurse at Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust, during the board’s meeting last month.

NHS guidelines define ‘never events’ as “serious incidents that are wholly preventable” if national guidance and safety recommendations are followed. These provide “strong systemic protective barriers” and should be “implemented by all healthcare providers”.

“It is disappointing that these keep happening,” Hamilton admitted at the meeting.

The trust member argued that they should be preventable “with the right systems in place”, adding: “They’re called never events

because they should never happen.”

Royal Free London runs Barnet Hospital, Chase Farm Hospital, North Middlesex University Hospital and Royal Free Hospital.

The three ‘never event’ incidents happened in April and May. None were reported by the trust during the entirety of the previous twelve-month period, Hamilton said.

Two of them fall under what the NHS calls “wrong site” incidents. One of these saw a patient receiving “a wrong injection during a procedure” and another having a line placed into an artery instead of a vein.

The third, and most serious, involved a guidewire accidentally being left inside an “acutely unwell” patient who was in a “resuscitation situation”. Hamilton did not disclose where this accident happened.

The trust board member argued

Royal Free London normally has a “low threshold” for reporting such serious mistakes and said two of the three incidents “had no harm”.

However, she also emphasised that the trust was “taking the opportunity to do a bit of a relook” at actions taken following a “previous little spell of never events”.

North Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust was merged into Royal Free London in January 2025.

This move came after both trusts had been experiencing ongoing issues, highlighted by poor waiting times and critical reports from Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspectors.

The merger, designed to improve services and offer “better joined-up community services”, made Royal Free London one of the largest NHS organisations in the country.

It now runs four major hospitals, including three accident and emer-

“
The most serious incident involved a guidewire being left inside a patient
”

gency (A&E) departments, across the North London boroughs of Enfield, Barnet and Camden, with North Mid also serving large parts of Haringey.

Between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023, Royal Free London recorded eight ‘never events’, while the former trust running North Mid recorded four.

In the 2023/24 financial year, the last complete financial period before the merger, Royal Free London recorded two while the North Mid recorded none.

Speaking at the meeting, Royal Free London chair Mark Lam said ‘never events’ needed “continued monitoring” to ensure a pattern of mistakes does not start to develop.

When Royal Free London carries out its audits on the checklists designed to prevent such incidents, the trust’s compliance is usually “pretty good,” Hamilton said.

The board member said these checklists are important, but admitted that addressing the “wider dynamic” in some of the locations where these mistakes are happening was also a key factor.

She said “human factor elements” are usually at play during such incidents. These, Hamilton said, include specific details of how staff work together and the “culture in those situations”.

Hamilton said the trust will make sure “there’s a real clear dynamic” between specific teams. Focusing on improving this, Hamilton said, is what the board “hope will make the difference”.

Dr Gillian Smith, chief medical officer of Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust, agreed that “human factors training is really important”.

She added: “It’s how we maintain that because we know that however often you remind people about checklists and do this work, it’s that constant training and iteration as teams that we need to maintain, and I guess that’s the culture shift we need.

“It’s not just a one-off training intervention, it’s something we need to shift ourselves towards and do it on a continuous basis.”

Barnet resident left injured after car crash claims council ‘bullying’ him over debts

BY JOE IVES, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

A local resident said he’s facing “institutional torture” after claiming Barnet Council had ignored the impact of his injuries from a severe road traffic accident.

In a statement shared with the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS), a Barnet resident argued he was “being driven to a physical and mental breakdown” by the local authority and insurance solicitors, 16 years after a “catastrophic” road traffic accident.

The man, who described himself as a master carpenter, accused the council of “financial bullying” by “placing charges” on his home and not giving him the 25% single person council tax discount he’s been entitled to since 2013, when his marriage broke down.

“I use all my brain power just to block out the pain and keep breathing,” he said, adding: “To have bailiffs at the door of a man who is physically ‘frozen’ is not debt collection, it is institutional bullying.

“I am a vulnerable adult, and I have been abandoned.”

The Barnet resident said he was demanding an immediate Section 13A debt write-off, the removal of all property charges, and an independent investigation into his “16-year ordeal”.

Responding to questions from the LDRS, a council spokesperson said the local authority “cannot comment on the details of individual cases” but would be reaching out to the man and is “committed to supporting and protecting vulnerable residents”.

“As part of that commitment,” the spokesperson continued, “we have put in place new parameters for identifying vulnerable residents that need additional support”.

They added that, over the past year, the council has been working with “civil society organisations locally”, including Citizens Advice Barnet and the Chipping Barnet Foodbank, “to improve processes and further strengthen the support available in complex cases”.

They continued: “For those facing hardship, we offer a council tax support scheme or discretionary relief under Section 13A.

“In all correspondence, we signpost residents to our award-winning benefits calculator, as well as wider financial advice and support. Enforcement action is always a last resort.”

NEWS

Brunswick Park tower blocks to be demolished

BY JOE IVES, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Plans to knock down and replace two Brunswick Park tower blocks at “disproportionate risk of collapse” have taken a step forward with Barnet Council set to acquire an important leasehold.

The collapse risks for Holmsdale House and Stanhope House tower blocks on the Coppies Grove Estate were detailed in a 2021 structural report carried out by the local authority.

Naisha Polaine, the local authority’s executive director of growth, formally signed off on plans to acquire the lease of Holmsdale House on 19th May, with further details published in a report later that month.

The acquisition of the leasehold for Holmsdale House is the latest step in the local authority’s plans to demolish the ailing buildings and replace them with a new housing development.

A 2025 report by council-run organisation The Barnet Group explained that uneconomical “major remedial works” would be needed to ensure the two tower blocks would “remain habitable” and safe.

The decision to carry out the redevelopment scheme was made by the local authority’s cabinet in November 2023, with decisions over property acquisitions subsequently delegated to Polaine, a senior council officer.

The recent decision to purchase the leasehold of Holmsdale House has been made as part of a “land assembly” process. This will give the council the legal rights needed to demolish the tower block as part of the redevelopment process.

According to a report prepared ahead of the decision, the local authority “is seeking to acquire all properties by agreement as soon as practically possible”.

The council already holds a “freehold interest in the site” but needs to acquire the leaseholds for all the buildings in order to begin demolition and redevelopment of the site.

The local authority said the lease acquisition

of Holmsdale House has been carried out in line with its Compulsory Purchase Order compensation rules and an “approved acquisition strategy”, adding: “The leaseholder is non-resident and the agreed terms reflect the approved offer for nonresident leaseholders.”

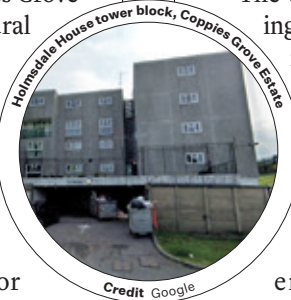
The council argued the building “is not suitable for guardians” to move into prior to the beginning of the redevelopment works. Instead, once the acquisition has been formally completed, the council plans to ensure the property “remains safe and secure until demolition can take place”.

Although the exact financial details regarding the acquisition have not been made public, the council said “the total direct cost” of obtaining the leasehold for Holmsdale House will reach a maximum of £343,272.

The local authority has an approved application for £7.5m in grant funding from the Greater London Authority (GLA) for the project.

It has also been granted just over £640,000 from One Public Estate Brownfield Land Release Fund, a cross-government initiative, to pay for the demolition works.

In its recent report the council said the lease acquisition of the Brunswick Park tower block “will support the redevelopment of Stanhope and Holmsdale House, Coppies Grove, which will support the target to deliver 1,000 affordable social rent homes as set out in the 2023–2026 Corporate Plan”.



Holmsdale House tower block, Coppies Grove Estate
Credit Google



The redevelopment plans
Credit Pollard Thomas Edwards



Emergency services at the scene of the attack in Golders Green in March
Credit Anna Mahtani

Fifth person charged in connection with Golders Green ambulance attack

BY DAVID FLOYD

A fifth person has been charged in connection with the arson attack on Hatzola ambulances in Golders Green in March.

Subhan Ahmed, 18 and from Walthamstow, was charged with assisting an offender, contrary to section 4 of the Criminal Law Act, 1967.

He was bailed and appeared at Westminster Mag-

istrates’ court on Tuesday, 16th June.

Ahmed is the fifth person to be charged in connection with the incident on 23rd March near the Machzike Hadath Synagogue on Highfield Road, which saw four ambulances used by the Jewish volunteer service set on fire.

Hamza Iqbal, 20 and Rehan Khan, 19, both British nationals from Leyton, and a 17-year-old boy, a dual British and Pakistani national

from Walthamstow and Judex Atshatshi, 18, a British national of Dagenham were all previously charged with committing arson destroying or damaging property being reckless as to whether life would be endangered.

They appeared at the Old Bailey on Friday, 24th April and were remanded in custody, with a trial date set for January 2027. The next hearing will be at the Old Bailey on 28th August.

Once a month not enough?

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NEWS

Our North Finchley rallies donations to fight deputy mayor’s approval of Great Northern Leisure Park development

BY LEILA DAVAUD

A community campaign group is raising funds to challenge the Greater London Authority in the courts following a controversial planning decision.

Our North Finchley is fighting back after deputy mayor Jules Pipe overturned Barnet Council’s refusal of plans for a major housing development at the Great North Leisure Park (GNLP).

The group’s community gathering and walkathon, held on 14th June, was originally planned as a celebration of North Finchley and an opportunity to raise funds for local charities.

The event took on new importance for the members after the deputy mayor approved the development at City Hall in May.

The scheme put forward by developers Regal/Arada would transform the GNLP site with thousands of new homes across a series of high-rise tower blocks. Barnet Council refused planning permission last year, citing concerns over the scale and impact of the development.

In response to the deputy mayor’s decision,

Our North Finchley is preparing what it said is its final remaining option: seeking a judicial review of the approval process.

Speaking to *Barnet Post* on behalf of the campaign, George Ttoouli said: “The community remains determined to continue the fight. The walkathon was planned back in January to support local charities.

“After Jules Pipe’s decision, we decided to ask for more support to face the legal challenge. We need to pay lawyers and a barrister, and we want to make sure we are able to keep challenging this decision for the sake of the community.”

More than 70 people attended the event to rally behind the campaign. “We managed to raise around £6,000, which brings the total amount raised through our online fundraiser to about £11,000. We are grateful.”

Our North Finchley needs an additional £6,000 in order to be ready to take action as soon as its legal advisers “come up with a plan,” he explained.

“We believe there may be grounds to challenge the approval and we are awaiting final advice from our legal team.”

The group said it had been overwhelmed by



the community response and its generosity.

“We won’t stop,” said George. “We’re taking a little break between our actions on the ground, but we’ll be back. Maybe with a

bowling tournament at Hollywood Bowl. The important thing is that people show up.”

To support Our North Finchley’s campaign:
Visit gofundme.com/f/support-the-our-north-finchley-campaign

Barnet Society backs legal challenge to High Barnet decision

BY NICK JONES

Barnet Society members have voted decisively to support and contribute to any campaign to mount a legal challenge against the deputy mayor of London’s decision to overrule Barnet Council and authorise the go ahead for blocks of flats on the car park at High Barnet Station.

The deadline for an application for a judicial review is Tuesday, 7th July.

Although Barnet Council has yet to announce if it has any intention of challenging the mayor’s decision in the High Court, Barnet Residents Association said it is seeking advice on whether there might be grounds for pursuing a judicial review.

When asked for their response at the annual general meeting of the Barnet Society, members voted unanimously in favour of the society contributing towards the cost of an application for judicial review.

There was also a unanimous vote by those

who were present to contribute personally to a legal fund – and half the members who were there indicated they would contribute £100 each if necessary.

Robin Bishop, the society’s lead on planning issues, told the meeting that possible grounds for judicial review might be that the deputy mayor had pre-judged the application and ignored Barnet’s Local Plan which limited the height to seven storeys – when the proposed scheme included one block of eleven storeys.

A High Court challenge would be costly: initial legal advice would amount to around several thousand pounds, and a full legal challenge



could cost around £40,000, which might double if costs had to be paid to Transport for London.

Committee member Nick Saul advised the meeting that the deputy mayor’s decision could be challenged on the grounds it was a test case when it came to applications to build on Transport for London land.

Calling in the High Barnet Station scheme for the mayor’s approval was not a first in itself, but was the first to be considered and decided upon at a hearing at City Hall.

Similar applications for developments at Stanmore and Canons Park stations were called in, but were withdrawn before a hearing took place.

An alternative suggestion made at the meeting was that local groups might launch a petition to persuade Barnet Council to declare the station car park as an asset of community value – a step which would prevent the land being developed by TfL’s investment subsidiary Places for London and developers Barratt.

This story was originally published at barnetsociety.org.uk

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NEWS

Dutch-style zero emissions zone needed to clamp down on diesel van use in London, mayor told

London should introduce a Dutch-style zero emission zone for commercial vehicles to stop the proliferation of polluting diesel vans in the capital, the mayor has been told.

Sir Sadiq Khan has sought to clean up London’s air and make the capital a net-zero emissions city through funding and encouraging vehicle electrification at all levels.

However, at the end of 2025, the number of diesel vans registered by businesses in London broke the 100,000 mark for the first time since records began and is set to continue to rise. In comparison, there were only 5,582 battery-electric vans registered by companies in London at the end of last year – meaning that for every company electric van, there are 18 diesel vans on London’s roads.

Figures show that just 2% of diesel vans scrapped under City Hall’s Ultra-Low Emission Zone (Ulez) scrappage scheme were replaced with an electric vehicle.

A dozen leading campaigners from environmental and health organisations have now asked Khan to look to the Dutch model, where a date is set by a city, after which all newly purchased vans must be electric in order to enter a designated zero emission zone.

In a letter to the mayor seen by the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS), they said vans are now the single biggest transport source of NOx emissions in central and inner London, claiming such emissions “contribute to nitrogen dioxide (NO2), a toxic gas linked to asthma attacks, lung disease, heart disease, strokes, and thousands of premature deaths”.

The authors added: “Other European cities are showing what ambitious leadership can achieve. In the Netherlands, zero-emission zones for freight are accelerating the transition away from diesel vehicles and giving businesses the certainty needed to invest in cleaner transport.

“The Dutch model works because it establishes clear, long-term rules and ensures that companies operate on a level playing field.

“Without decisive action, we fear the number of diesel vans will continue to rise, undermining your air quality and climate goals for years to come. London has led the way before on clean air policy. It can do so again.”

The zero-emission zones would apply to all commercial vehicles including those owned by or operated on behalf of councils, like bin lorries.

A City Hall spokesperson said they were currently working with cities that have introduced zero emission zones to



BY KUMAIL JAFFER, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

▲
Ulez sign in North Cheam
Credit Harrison Galliven/LDRS

“understand their impact” before taking any action.

In 2025, the Netherlands introduced 18 zero-emission zones for freight, with plans to expand to 29 municipalities by 2030. In the first half of 2025, 78.4% of newly registered vans in the Netherlands were battery-electric – far above the EU average of 8.5%.

Electric truck registrations rose by 187.6% year-on-year, representing a quarter of all new electric trucks sold in the EU.

By comparison London is still behind on the cultural shift, with cash-strapped councils starting to row back on climate pledges in order to save money. Hillingdon Council

recently revealed to have spent £500,000 on Ulez fees because of its ageing vehicle fleet. The council’s current fleet consists of 295 vehicles, just three of which are electric and six hybrid.

Their solution to cut the cost of Ulez fees has been to buy 32 new Ulez compliant diesel vehicles rather than electric alternatives. Kensington and Chelsea Council also recently bought new diesel waste vehicles because they are cheaper at the point of purchase.

To make the transition easier for diesel users – especially business owners – a different date can be set for those firms that need more time to make the change, the letter said.

“

The zero-emission zones would apply to all commercial vehicles including those operated on behalf of councils, like bin lorries.

”

Zak Bond, campaign manager at Clean Cities, a signatory of the letter, said: “Action to get diesel vans off our streets has not just stalled; it is going in reverse. Crossing the 100,000 mark for company-owned diesel vans should be a wake-up call for London.

“The alternatives exist, but we need the Mayor of London to step in with the leadership needed to electrify London’s van fleets at the pace the climate and air quality crises demand.

“The Dutch have shown us that zero-emission zones for freight, after a certain date vans have to be electric to enter the zone, can accelerate the shift to cleaner vehicles. It’s time for some Dutch courage in London.”

Jemima Hartshorn, founder of another signatory, Mums for Lungs, added: “Every day, more dirty diesel vans drive past our schools, nurseries and homes, polluting the air our kids breathe, worsening asthma and setting them up for a lifetime of ill-health. Parents are fed up with hearing promises about the air being clean, when we can smell diesel fumes and when we see our kids coughing.

“Our children are missing out on school, dinners at home, and playing with their friends, because the mayor allows more and more diesel vans on our roads.

“The mayor must act with the urgency this public health issue demands. We urge him to deliver a zero emission zone for freight in London to ensure that vans are cleaned up, London’s kids can breathe easier, and London’s future can be diesel-free.”

A spokesperson for the Mayor of London said: “We know Ulez has been a huge success in cleaning up London’s air. More than 53,000 older, more polluting vehicles were removed from London’s roads before the Ulez expansion was implemented. This shows the scheme working exactly as intended.

“Building on the world-leading Ulez and our work to electrify the bus and taxi fleets, we are working with cities that have introduced zero emission freight zones to understand their impact, while TfL has published guidance to support local schemes. We are also partnering with C40 Cities to trial shared EV charging for high-mileage fleets including vans, to support their shift to fully electric.

“Alongside this, we are working with partners across the public and private sectors to understand London’s future logistics needs and identify opportunities for innovation through the London Logistics Plan as we continue to build a greener, fairer London for everyone.”

COMMENT

Continuing to deliver for Barnet's residents

BY COUNCIL LEADER BARRY RAWLINGS

Following May's local elections, I am incredibly proud to have been re-elected as leader of Barnet Council. The past four years of service as council leader to our community have been an absolute honour.

The election was the most closely contested in Barnet's history with Labour and the Conservatives securing the same number of seats – 31 each. This means Labour and Conservative councillors make up nearly 99% of the council, with only one Green Party member.

To reflect the parity in council seats between the two main parties, the council will adopt new ways of working. Peter Zinkin, the leader of the Barnet Conservatives and the opposition, will attend our cabinet meetings as a non-voting observer, and most scrutiny committees will be chaired by the opposition, providing a greater role in scrutinising the work of the administration.

While Labour and Conservatives hold different views on how to do things, we both want the very best for our community. We agree that greater engagement between administration and opposition will provide us

with the political stability we need to face up to the many challenges the council faces over the coming years.

Most importantly, we share the aim of getting the council's finances on a sound footing. Before the local elections, the council set a very challenging target of reaching financial sustainability within the next three years – and to achieve that we must work constructively together.

The council's budget has been squeezed between two pressures – a decade of reduced government funding and a recent surge in need within our community for costly services, such as temporary accommodation for families made homeless and children's

and adults' social care. We have been diligent, already finding tens of millions of pounds in annual cost savings. However, we have twice needed to apply to government for exceptional financial support to close our budget gap.

By cross-party working with the opposi-

tion, we will put in place a sustainable way of running Barnet's finances, as well as lobbying central government for a fairer way of funding local authorities faced with rising statutory costs.

An effective approach is to invest in the



Barnet Council leader
Barry Rawlings

short term to make cost savings in the long term. Providing temporary accommodation is now one of Barnet's biggest costs, and the knock-on effects on the health and wellbeing of residents placed in such housing also come at a high cost. That's why we have secured 1,000 more council homes in the past four years and we are committed to providing 1,000 more social rent homes by 2030.

We will keep Barnet moving. We aim to cut roadworks times by 20% by charging extra penalties to dawdling utility companies for working too slowly. In the past four years, we have fixed 16,500 potholes. In 2024, we

announced a £97m five-year investment programme to upgrade our roads and pavements. We will continue to install more street-level EV charge points.

Keeping the public realm clean and tidy is a priority. We will maintain the free community skips service to continue to increase recycling and help tackle fly-tipping. Last year, £100,000 in fines were issued against fly-tippers in the borough. We will continue to crack down on fly-tipping and litter to keep Barnet clean by using our revamped CCTV system and fines.

The recent spate of antisemitic attacks perpetrated against our Jewish communities and Islamophobic attacks against our Iranian community have appalled us all. Those who hate our diversity shall not divide us.

We will work with the Metropolitan Police and local communities to increase awareness, helping those targeted to report hate crimes and access justice. A £500,000 government grant will be invested in a long-term programme to foster stronger relations between our communities.

Delivering effectively for Barnet requires us to continue to listen to and engage with all voices of the community. Having a say in the big decisions that affect day-to-day life in the borough was a pledge we made four years ago. Continuing to work collaboratively with members of the community will ensure that we can develop and shape our services that meet the needs of all residents.

“Greater engagement between administration and opposition will provide us with the political stability”

Dodgy shops have no place on our high streets

BY DAN TOMLINSON MP

Our high streets are at their best when they're full of businesses you can trust – places you feel safe visiting, run by people earning your custom honestly.

That's why I've been raising concerns with the government as your MP and working on this issue as the minister responsible for HMRC.

We can all picture a local dodgy shop. You'll have seen the signs. Shops selling products that seem illegal or off. Multiple identical businesses clustered together on the same street: four mini marts within metres of each other; three vape shops in a row; two of the same phone repair place. Or premises that seem to close and reopen under a new name every few months.

These aren't coincidences – they're red flags, and they need looking into.

Our local business owners in Chipping Barnet



Dan Tomlinson MP
Credit Parliament.uk

make me proud. They keep us connected, give our community identity, and invest in making this place somewhere people want to be.

My work to open the empty shops that blight our high street has led to many wins: a new, more accessible post office that is open for longer; helping new businesses with barriers

to opening up; getting more bins and cracking down on flytipping with the council; and more.

Dodgy premises undermine legitimate businesses who want the best for our high street. They put off investors. They make our high streets feel less safe.

I won't accept that.

So, I'm launching a reporting portal. If you've spotted a business that doesn't feel right on one of our local high streets, you can now tell me about it directly.

I'm keen to hear about premises that you suspect are selling harmful, illegal, or counterfeit products, and shops that may be committing fraud, evading tax, or linked to organised crime.

Where there are grounds for further action, I will raise directly with the relevant authorities – the council, trading standards or the government. The more detail you can give on the issue, the better.

Dan Tomlinson is Labour MP for Chipping Barnet

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COMMENT

A better Barnet through effective scrutiny

Local democracy works best when there is both effective leadership and effective scrutiny. While the administration is responsible for running the council, the role of the opposition is to challenge, test and improve decisions on behalf of residents. In a council with equal numbers of Conservative and Labour members, all committees are split 50/50 between the two groups. This means the chairman of each committee has an incredibly important role as in the event of a tie, they hold the casting vote.

After the local elections, and at our behest, Barnet Council has introduced new arrangements designed to strengthen scrutiny across the authority. The Conservatives have secured chairmanship of four of the five scrutiny committees and a vice-chairmanship of the fifth. We also have the chairmanships of the pension fund committee and the governance, audit and risk management committee (GARMS). With these we will have wide ranging oversight of the council's performance in key duties, accounts and compliance with its rules and procedures. We have also secured a place on cabinet. I now sit at cabinet meetings as a non-exec/non-voting member but with speaking rights and

BY CONSERVATIVE LEADER PETER ZINKIN

can make the case for the priorities we believe Barnet needs to focus on.

For Barnet Conservatives, scrutiny is about improving outcomes for residents. It is about asking difficult questions, examining evidence, focusing on the finances and ensuring that policies are delivering what they are intended to deliver.

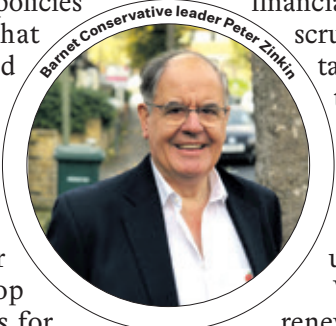
In recent weeks, scrutiny committee chairs have begun working closely with senior officers to develop work programmes for the year ahead. This provides an important opportunity to focus attention on the issues residents raise with us every day: the condition of our roads and pavements, community safety,

planning and development, transport, financial sustainability, and the quality of frontline services.

Our priorities remain clear.

We want to see a council that lives within its means and delivers value for money for taxpayers. Barnet faces significant financial challenges, and scrutiny has an important role in ensuring that resources are spent effectively and directed towards services that residents rely upon most.

We want to see a renewed focus on the fundamentals of local government. Residents rightly expect clean streets, well-maintained parks, safe neighbourhoods and reliable local services. Through the scrutiny process, we will



Barnet Conservative leader Peter Zinkin

Some reporting had become focused on producing documents rather than helping residents

continue to press for practical improvements that make a real difference in the services used universally.

We also want to see residents treated as genuine partners in decision-making. Too often local government can become focused on processes and paperwork rather than outcomes. One positive example of change already underway concerns performance reporting and equality measures. I made a point at the cabinet meeting on 15th June that some reporting had become overly focused on producing documents rather than helping residents understand how services are performing – this was agreed by the Labour administration, and we should be seeing some change in the future. We support a move towards clearer, more accessible reporting that focuses on meaningful outcomes and enables residents to hold the council to account.

The Conservative group's vision for Barnet remains centred on six key priorities: fixing the finances, improving roads and parks, creating safer streets, building better homes, improving transport and respecting residents. These priorities are not simply election commitments; they provide a framework for the questions we ask and the issues we will pursue throughout the year.

Leisure Park development must be improved

Growing up in Finchley, I lost count of the number of birthday parties spent at the Great North Leisure Park (GNLP) bowling, watching films or swimming. Today it remains a venue loved by many families and young people.

But I also know how hard it is as a young person to get on the property ladder and that, for many, it can feel like an unattainable dream. Whether it is families living in insecure sub standard housing, or parents worried about their children's chance of owning a secure home, housing is one of the issues I hear about most as your MP.

This is why it is crucial that we get the balance right between protecting community spaces and building more affordable homes.

GNLP is a site where this balance is being tested. In my view, the site is large enough to accommodate significant new housing and leisure facilities and should be redeveloped – however it is vital that the plans are right for our community both today and tomorrow.

At the end of May, deputy mayor Jules

BY SARAH SACKMAN MP

Pipe decided to approve the current development for the site. Like many of you I am disappointed.

I objected to these plans to both Barnet Council, which refused planning permission, and then again with City Hall.

I have made clear throughout the process that my three tests for this development are that it delivers maximum affordable housing; that public transport and infrastructure is increased; and that the lido and leisure facilities are upgraded for the community with no loss of provision. As things stand, the proposals do not meet these tests.

Whilst I am disappointed, I am not disheartened and am determined to keep fighting to get the very best for residents.

I will be pushing the Mayor of London and developers to ensure we get more affordable housing built than has been promised.

I will campaign for more money to be set aside for more frequent buses and better routes for local people across Finchley. It is right that the mayor has demanded that the developer must increase their funding towards increased transport services. Finally I will hold the developers' feet to the fire to ensure that the



Finchley and Golders Green MP Sarah Sackman

I am determined to keep fighting to get the very best for residents

community lido and leisure centre delivers for local people.

It is crucial that when plans for big developments come along, we get them right, think about long-term inclusive place-making and that they make our area a better place to live and work.

North Finchley is a brilliant area – with excellent schools, parks and a cultural offering, with Artsdepot at the heart of it. When they were facing closure, I wrote to the secretary of state for communities and local government and helped them secure a lease at 50 year peppercorn rent, securing their long-term future in North Finchley. If we want to make real improvements to our built environment and high streets, they must be shaped by the community for the community.

I will keep pushing to ensure that the development of GNLP delivers for residents, makes material improvements to North Finchley and helps all of us to feel pride in our area.

Sarah Sackman is Labour MP for Finchley and Golders Green.

FEATURES

12

Behind the doors of St Andrew the Apostle's new home

With the first year at the secondary school's new site nearing its end, four pupils give Leïla Davaud a grand tour of the Greek Orthodox institution

“Welcome to our school!” Clad in their uniforms, four year eight pupils await visitors at the entrance to St Andrew the Apostle. Members of the student council, the girls take great satisfaction in being guides for the day.

“Let’s go to the olive tree,” suggests Rafaela, eager to get started. She leads the way to the cafeteria, where shades of blue and white evoke a Mediterranean atmosphere. The olive tree – three words on the wall - marks the beginning of an enthusiastic tour blending memories, projects and pride.

“I feel bad for the students who finished school last year,” says Kaja. “They didn’t get a chance to enjoy all of this.”

For 13 years, St Andrew the Apostle stood just a few hundred metres from where the girls are chatting today. The Christian school in Brunswick Park has spent the past decade designing its “true home” with the support of local parents.

Rafaela moves on to describe the classrooms and their facilities. As the girls approach the theatre space, she points to the giant curtains. “It really creates a dramatic effect, don’t you think?”

As if she were already on stage, she speed walks ahead and, with a theatrical flourish, presents the art club’s photo montage. “It’s not my best creation,” she admits, “but it’s still an accomplishment.”

The tour then moves on to the science laboratories. “Six of them, to be exact, and two more for specialist subjects,” explains Evie.

When asked to describe their new school in a single word, Sophia chooses “opportunities”. Later, head-teacher Christopher Martin is told of her answer and can barely hide his delight. “This is what happens when young people feel that we care about them

► Credit: St Andrew the Apostle School



and their future,” he says. “The building was designed around their needs. We’ve created a space that helps establish routines and habits. Something pupils can rely on and build upon.

“It’s also given us, as teachers, opportunities to do more for our students. The extracurricular programme is now thriving, with more than 30 clubs covering everything from sport and art to debating.”

The girls make a brief detour to the library. “It’s a work in progress,” explains Daniel Antoniou, the school’s business manager. “We receive donations and buy books from charity shops. Our aim is to offer easy access to whatever reading material pupils may be looking for. We’re also fortunate to have a brilliant volunteer helping to keep the library running.”

From there, the group heads towards the sports facilities. “It’s gigantic! It makes you want to be good at sports,” jokes Rafaela. Dance studios, a football pitch and basketball courts all form part of the complex.

“The sports centre is something we’re particularly proud of,” says Christopher. “Previously, sports fixtures required pupils to travel to other schools. Hosting our first home event after moving to the new campus felt like a landmark moment, and most of the teachers came along to support.”

The sports facilities and new

laboratories have also enabled the school to play a greater role within the local community.

“It’s a fantastic opportunity for primary schools to visit for science tasting sessions, where pupils can dissect sheep hearts and learn about anatomy firsthand,” Christopher explains. “We also hope to host sports days for schools that don’t have access to these kinds of facilities. We’re trying to include as many people as possible.”

Looking ahead, St Andrew the Apostle hopes to welcome even more community groups onto the site.

“We would eventually like to make the premises available to language schools, as the classrooms are very versatile. Local weekend football

and basketball leagues could also make use of our pitches. There are lots of possibilities.”

Recently, the school has organised an interfaith event for Barnet’s Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. “It’s important for us to celebrate religious education in all its forms,” says Christopher. “We all share one common goal: giving young people access to excellent teaching and meaningful opportunities.”

As the girls return to their PSHE lesson, the tour comes to an end and the rhythm of the school day resumes. For those considering joining them, the school’s open evening on 6th October will offer a first glimpse of the opportunities that await.



FEATURES

13

Something for everyone



CEO Neil Coker Credit Barnet and Southgate College

David Floyd talks to Barnet and Southgate College CEO Neil Coker

It is a tough time for young people in the UK, with recent government figures showing over 1million 16–24-year-olds not in education or employment for the first time since 2013.

Barnet and Southgate College is working hard to change that. When *Barnet Post* visited the college’s Barnet campus in Wood Street, CEO Neil Coker gave a tour of state of the art facilities, designed to prepare students for the job market in industries from architecture to podcasting.

Neil, who joined in 2019 before taking on the CEO role two and half years ago, explains that the college has gone from being an institution that Ofsted inspectors said “requires improvement” to one which is rated as “good” while also achieving an “outstanding” rating for both apprenticeships and its financial situation.

Now, Neil says: “Having built a strong foundation in terms of the quality of education that we provide we’ve been able to invest in the college quite a bit.”

Given the need to find employment in a difficult jobs market: “There’s that real sense that what we’re focused on is our students’ future. So what they’re doing now is a stepping stone to something else.

“Many of our students use that to go on to higher education, to university degrees and do very, very well in that. And many of them go directly into employment or on to paid apprenticeships.”

This means a particular focus on partnerships. Neil says: “We know that on our own, we can do great things – but with the right partners operating together, we can do really exceptional things for the benefit of current and future students.”

He mentions the Screen London Barnet partnership with Middlesex University, Barnet Council and Troubadour Studios, set up last year to help young people prepare

for jobs in film and TV production.

“We’ve got industry connections in there as well as local authority and two of the anchor institutions in terms of further and higher education working together to really create strong pathways through education and learning into employment.”

This focus also applies to the staff the college employs: “We pride ourselves on having highly qualified industry specialists teaching in all of our curriculum areas and continually looking to really think about how we use emerging and current technologies in learning.”

It’s notable that, when compared to a school sixth form, Barnet and Southgate College is a huge institution. It employs around 650 staff across three campuses (in High Barnet, Colindale and Southgate) working with “anything between 10,000 and 13,000 adults and young people each year”.

Around 3,300 of these are 16 to 19-year-olds studying full time courses, alongside older adults studying part-time on courses including access to higher education and professional skills training.

Neil says this mix works well: “Our campuses are full of young people and adults operating together in one environment. I think what that creates is a more grown up feel for our young people

“There’s always a sense of the college being busy. In between lessons, our students have free access to all of the facilities that we have on offer.”

This includes students being free to sit and chat on stairways. Neil says: “Our campuses belong to our students and they’re free to use those as they see fit. What we expect from our students is that they’re consistently ready to learn.”

While a small proportion of students do A-Levels, the majority study something with a specific career focus, whether its health and social care, engineering or creative skills.

Neil says: “We’ve got something for everyone at the college, an environment which really supports the individual student and enables them to achieve their very best in their own context, and that’s something that’s important to us.”



Students studying film and TV production Credit Barnet and Southgate College

One hundred years young

BY AVA DOHERTY

There is an idea of a centenarian as someone who becomes a curiosity: seated in a corner with a lap blanket, politely admired from a safe distance. Mrs Enid Geneve Thompson is not like that.

Born in Jamaica on 7th June 1926, Mrs Thompson celebrated her 100th birthday last month.

She crossed the Atlantic around sixty years ago and settled in Finchley, which she says has been an excellent place to live: good neighbours, easy to get about, the measured verdict of someone who has had six decades to form an opinion. In more recent years she has lived with her daughter and continues to enjoy the local amenities and walks through Victoria Park.

She tells *Barnet Post*: “Family is what has made life meaningful. My children and family

around me give me the confidence to go on living.”

Mrs Thompson’s six children all went to university after she herself was told, as a girl, that education was not for the likes of her. She wanted to be a nurse. Her father said no.

Following a career as a bespoke dressmaker, Mrs Thompson was widowed around forty years ago. Alongside her work and family responsibilities, she also volunteered in local hospitals, giving her time generously to others.

She had lived through multiple eras of profound social change. She vividly remembers sympathising with the Bristol Bus Boycott movement in 1963, which followed a bus company’s refusal to employ Black or Asian staff.

Mrs Thompson was and remains a devoted grandmother. When her grandchildren were

growing up, she often looked after them in the evenings so their parents could work.

Her faith has been a constant throughout, and she now follows church services by telephone with unwavering regularity.

In between, there is television, specifically quiz programmes: *Lingo* and *The Chase*. She watches with a focus that suggests the contestants would be wise not to take it lightly.

In recent months, Mrs Thompson lost her final remaining sibling, her brother, aged 96. She has outlived her husband and many of her friends.

Now the last of her generation, her family say she meets this with the same composure she has brought to every other stage of her century. Her courage is undimmed. Her zeal for life intact.

She says: “The biggest change has been the speed of things. When I was a girl, you got your information by post. Now everything is instant.”



Mrs Thompson

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FEATURES

Celebrating diversity in Barnet

We're lucky to live in such a diverse borough, with people from many different cultures, faiths and identities. According to the 2021 census, just over 43% of Barnet residents were born outside the UK and over 60% identify with a faith or belief such as Christianity, Judaism or Islam.

Diversity can take forms such as these, but it can also include other parts of our community such as people who are LGBTQ+ or people with a disability. All of these groups are an important part of what makes Barnet great – each adding their own stories, traditions, heritage and perspectives. And as summer begins, Barnet comes alive with opportunities to celebrate each other.

For example, in June we marked LGBTQ+ Pride Month, followed by Disability Pride Month in July. These times of awareness are more than just dates in the calendar, they are vital opportunities to build understanding, reduce stigma, and improve our community.

In a borough like ours, it's vital that we seek to reach out to others and encourage dialogue and understanding. Awareness events create spaces for these conversations. They allow all residents to feel seen, heard, and valued.

At Meridian Wellbeing, we're proud to be part of this community, because we believe diversity enriches us all. Through our work providing mental health and wellbeing services, such as CBT therapy, peer-support, or exercise classes, we have also seen first-hand how awareness and inclusion can transform lives.

Community helps us to raise awareness and break down stigma – things which are vital for supporting our own, and others', mental health. This is particularly important for those residents that face prejudice or inequalities.

For example, research by the NHS and The Mental Health Foundation has also found that people with disabilities and people who are LGBTQ+ are both more likely to experience mental health challenges than the general population.

Having originally been founded over 30 years ago to support Barnet residents of Chinese and East Asian heritage, we have provided support services, activities and events to all of Barnet's many residents, and beyond, for over a decade. We believe that when people feel respected, included and accepted, they are more likely to thrive.

Research by the World Health Organi-



John Truong from local charity Meridian Wellbeing on conversations and community

Credit Amy Elting via Unsplash

sation shows that social connection and a sense of belonging are essential building blocks for good mental health. When individuals feel they can be themselves without fear of judgement, it reduces stress,

“Community helps us to raise awareness and break down stigma”

increases confidence, and fosters resilience.

Prejudice and exclusion only drives fear and anxiety, both for those experiencing it, but also for those engaging in this behaviour or thinking. Once we start down this path, it's very difficult not to find reasons to exclude others.

This is why Meridian Wellbeing runs a number of big events throughout the year which both celebrate Barnet's diversity and are open to all. These include World Mental Health Day, International Women's Day, Mental Health Awareness Week, and our summer market fair. By celebrating diversity and seeking to be welcoming and inclusive, we actively create an environment where we all can feel safe and supported.

We can all contribute to this positive environment through small, everyday actions, such as:

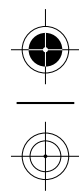
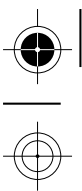
- Being open to others and willing to show our vulnerability. For example, by joining one of Meridian Wellbeing's peer-led support groups like our Wellbeing Cafe or those of our partners such as Andy's Man Club;
- Taking the time to understand someone's experiences. For example, we support Barnet Council's connecting communities campaign to bring together Barnet;
- Challenge stigma – banter or jokes shouldn't be used to exclude or undermine others. For example, in March we hosted an event with Barnet Council to celebrate International Women's Day;
- Learn about the different peoples, cultures and groups that make up our community. For example, in November we hosted a 'Warmth in Unity' event with partners to celebrate Barnet's diversity;
- Make others feel welcome and included. For example, by joining our Wellbeing Cafes at Hendon or New Barnet.

The lessons and momentum from an awareness day, week or month should live with us every day and drive us all to make things better.

At Meridian Wellbeing, we believe that by celebrating difference and supporting one another through actions like these, we can create a borough where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

We hosted a Father's Day market fair at the Meritage Centre, Hendon on Sunday 21st June to celebrate all of Barnet's dads with an exciting variety of authentic Asian stalls, food and activities.

You can find out more about our work and services at meridianwellbeing.com, remember to also follow us on social media (@MeridianWellbeing) and to sign up for our weekly e-newsletter.



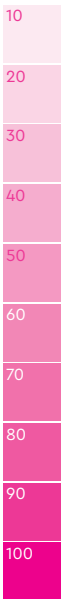
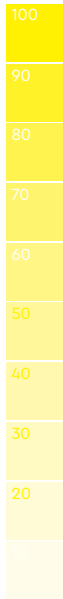
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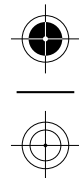
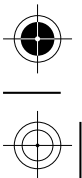
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FEATURES

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Scrolling, smiling, struggling: hidden pressures



Credit: Vitaly Gariev via Unsplash

Dera Eneremadu shares the realities of growing up today

Scrolling through Instagram, everything looks perfect: friends hanging out, awards being won, smiles all around in every selfie. Keeping up appearances has become second nature, like we’re all performing a version of ourselves that looks okay, even when we’re not.

Behind the screens, many young people feel like they are barely holding it together. Mental health struggles are increasingly common, yet support can feel out of reach. From exam stress to complicated friendships and pressures at home, the challenge is real and often invisible.

Why it matters now

Recent years have intensified stress for young people. Exams, university applications, social media comparison and uncertainty about the future weigh heavily. Mental health statistics from Young Minds show that around one-in-five young people aged 8–25 now has a probable mental

health condition, such as anxiety or depression, and many are waiting longer than ever for support.

At the same time, stigma around mental health, the fear of being judged or misunderstood, still prevents many young people from opening up. Feeling overwhelmed at times is normal, but no one should have to face these constant pressures alone.

Three voices, three experiences

When I talked to my friends, they shared not just their pain and stresses, but also how they cope.

Zoe, 17, said: “Some nights I just lie awake thinking about revision and deadlines. It feels like no matter how hard I try, it’s never enough.”

Talking to a peer mentor and breaking tasks into small steps made a real difference.

Liam, 19, shared: “After a tough breakup, I shut myself off from everyone. Social media made it worse seeing people move on while I felt stuck.”

Journaling and joining a creative group gave him space to process his feelings.

Aisha, 16, told me: “At home, things were tense. I wanted to talk to my parents, but I worried I’d be judged.”

Reaching out to a youth support line and joining a local community group gave her a safe space to manage stress without feeling guilty.

Hearing these experiences shows just how varied stress can be yet also that talking to someone and finding support can make a real difference.

Barriers and challenges

Even with strategies and support, obstacles remain. Therapy waiting lists are long, social media amplifies comparison, and school or family pressures can feel relentless. Some young people avoid asking for help, fearing judgement or thinking their problems aren’t serious enough. These barriers make early intervention and peer support vital.

Young voices making a difference

Many young public figures are

now speaking openly about mental health. Singer-songwriter Holly Humberstone, for example, has shared her struggles with anxiety and depression, encouraging fans to seek help and normalising conversations about mental well-being. Seeing someone relatable discuss these issues helps break stigma and reminds young people that it’s okay to struggle.

Finding hope and support

Support does not always come from formal therapy. Small, practical steps can make a difference. Peer groups, hobbies, creative outlets and exercise are all ways to manage stress. Reflection and personal growth are key; each person’s path is unique. Remember, asking for help is a strength.

If you are struggling, you can find support at:

- **Kooth:** free online support for young people dealing with stress, anxiety, exam pressure, friendships and family worries. Kooth offers counsellor chat, self-help tools, articles and moderated space to connect with peers;
- **YoungMinds:** information and guidance for young people on understanding their feelings and finding support that works for them. YoungMinds can help you figure out what type of help to look for and how to talk to someone about what you’re feeling;
- **The Mix:** free, confidential text support for times when you need to talk but don’t know where to start. You can text a trained volunteer for immediate support with anxiety, stress or feeling overwhelmed.

These organisations provide safe spaces to talk, guidance and practical strategies to manage pressures. Mental health is different for everyone, but no one has to face it alone.

Thriving is possible even when surviving feels like all you can manage.

The article was originally published by youth communications charity Exposure: www.exposure.org.uk



Read to the Beat

BY CATHERINE LUSTED

Barnet Libraries is inviting children to join them for an exciting reading journey during the summer holidays!

The Summer Reading Challenge 2026 is delivered in partnership with The Reading Agency and Universal Music Group UK. This year’s theme ‘Read to the Beat!’ celebrates the joy of music and the power it has to move, inspire, and connect us – all through the magic of reading.

Children aged 4–12 can sign up at any Barnet library from Saturday, 4th July and throughout the summer holidays. They will need to borrow and read six books from the library to participate in the challenge. Children can read any books they like – from chapter books, comics or even information books. You can also read eBooks on our Libby app or listen to eAudiobooks on the BorrowBox app.

During staffed hours at the library, children can collect stickers on their reading journey. When they complete the challenge, they will receive a special certificate and medal!

This year, we also have a special challenge for children under four years old. This is a great way to encourage families with younger children to regularly borrow and read books over the summer, especially if older siblings are taking part in the main challenge.

Barnet Libraries have an exciting programme of music-themed events throughout the summer, including DJ workshops, STEM Jams, making instruments like banjos, tambourines, and rain sticks, plus author events and much more!

Sign up for the libraries’ newsletter for families for weekly updates on activities and events for children of all ages:
Visit barnet.gov.uk/librarynewsletters

For more information about the challenge and our other summer events:
Visit barnet.gov.uk/summerreadingchallenge

ARTS

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Celebrating the artist who made Hampstead home

*Estelle Lovatt on marking
Constable's 250th birthday*

This year, we mark the 250th birthday of John Constable, the great British, Romantic Realist, landscape painter.

I Born in East Bergholt, Suffolk, Constable later made Hampstead his home after falling in love with its lush green verdant setting and early Georgian and Regency architecture.

He first discovered the area whilst he was a young fine art student at the Royal Academy. Walking from central London to the Heath, he described the route as the “three miles from door to door [from central London to Hampstead]...see nature, and unite a town and country life”. Its spectacular verdant landscape reminded him of his family farm and Suffolk home.

Rising some 450 feet above the City of London, Hampstead offered great distance from the over-crowded, fog polluted, metropolis and became a relaxing, exhilarating, refuge for Constable, and his family. His wife, whose health

was extremely fragile, benefitted from Hampstead, a spa destination. He praised its fresh air, calling Hampstead “the lungs of London”. And admired “the finest views, unsurpassed in Europe, from Westminster to Gravesend, Kent, and the dome of St Paul’s”, which he painted, sketched and drew as one of the most lovely, spectacular, sights he found.

Constable spent the final 19 years of his life in Hampstead. Capturing views he said included “Childs Hill, fields in Hendon, church spires in Harrow on the Hill, and even Windsor Castle!”

He sketched farm labourers at work on the Heath tending their cows, sheep, horses, donkeys and dogs. Beneath ash, birch, elm, oak and fir trees growing beyond hedgerows, around the ponds.

In Hampstead, Constable developed some of his most experimental painting techniques, including cloud studies for his celebrated six-footer masterpiece, *The Hay Wain*, 1821 (at the National Gallery). Although the painting shows the River Stour and Willy Lott's house it is believed he worked from sketches made by Whitestone Pond and completed this



Credit Cristina Schek

masterpiece canvas in the garden shed of his Hampstead home – not in Suffolk!

Constable loved Hampstead and felt a deep connection with the area. Writing how: “Every day in Hampstead makes me long for a walk”. He preferred the rugged landscape of the Heath to formal city parks, which he considered artificial, saying: “The gentleman’s park is my aversion. It’s not beauty because it’s not nature!”

He added: “My art is found under every hedge; in every lane – therefore no one thinks it’s worth picking...[But] the landscape is too large to go unnoticed...[and the] Canvas takes the place

of God's work; the landscape is God's plan in eye; because since the Creation, no two days are alike, no two hours are alike. No two trees are alike. No two leaves are alike."

He used “a thousand greens to capture the complexity of nature’s beauty.”

He said: "Here, Hampstead, let me take my everlasting rest." Constable is buried with his wife, Maria, and six of their seven children, in the family tomb at Saint John's Parish Church, Church Row, London NW3.

You can celebrate the great Old Master's landmark birthday by following in his footsteps and joining my 'Walk Constable's Hampstead' guided tour.

To visit the places where Constable lived, loved, worked and painted his magnificent paintings, under the effects of 'Skying' and 'Constable's Snow', painted 'alla prima', 'en plein air' in Hampstead Village, London NW3, more than 200 years ago. You'll be surprised what's to discover... and might be inspired to pick up a paintbrush yourself too.

For details and tickets see estellelovatt.com or eventbrite.com/o/34402021167

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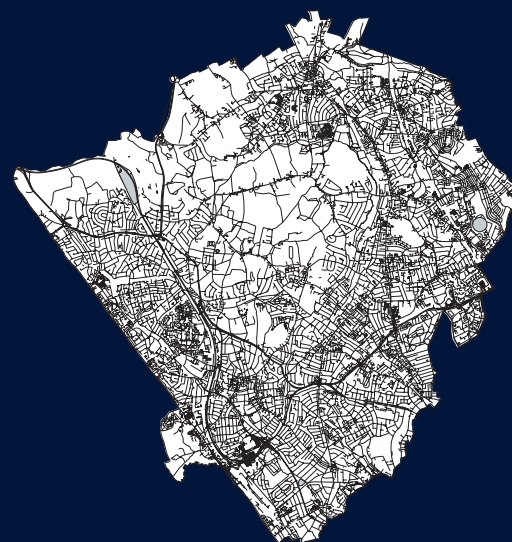
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Steady as she goes for the Bricks

BY OLIVER DEED

While the footballing elite have assembled in Canada, Mexico and the US for the World Cup, those of us involved at the grassroots level are enjoying a break from the beautiful game. The pause provides some time to reflect on the season just past, and the one to come. At Hadley, we get to look back on a solid fourth season in the Southern Football League and look forward to what we hope will be a competitive fifth.

On the face of it, a 10th place finish in the Southern League Division One Central may give the impression the season was somewhat uninspiring but, truth be told, most of us were delighted with that outcome. After losing top scorer Isaac Stones and supporters' player of the season Caoilan McGettigan last summer, and with them some 40 goals, a second consecutive play-off finish was always unlikely. Manager Anthony Clark, who is nearing ten years at Brickfield Lane, continues to work with a budget most rivals would regard as loose change, and another top half finish in the league was a fantastic achievement.

The season opened poorly, with a home defeat to relegated Hitchin Town and an early FA Cup exit, before the wins started to flow. There was a fine run in the FA Trophy, in which the Bricks caused an upset by beating National League South side

► Hadley FC in action against MK Irish in their final game of the season Credit Chris Forster

Dartford in the Third Qualifying Round, before bowing out 1-0 at Tilbury. A rare penalty miss from captain and talisman Luke Alfano that day left Clark and his management team to rue what might have been.

From a player perspective, a highlight was seeing Lenny Asamoah excel having been signed in the summer from Southend Manor. The striker is the very definition of a menace, and his all-action style caused defenders no end of problems throughout the season. In one extraordinary autumn spell, Asamoah scored three consecutive hat-tricks in the league, with the goals coming against Hertford Town, Enfield and Ware. We hope he's back in August but performances like his tend to attract the attention of bigger clubs.

So what of this season? The foundations, as ever, are strong. Inevitably there'll be players who move on, but we hope captain Alfano will stick around alongside the likes of Cameron Ferguson, Jordan Edwards and Finley Aldridge who have been great servants of the club for several years. Some additional defensive prowess is

needed to address a soft underbelly that was occasionally exposed last season, not helped by a lengthy injury list that never quite abated. With a more solid back line and a kinder run on the injury front, there is no reason why the club can't push for the play-offs again.

The 2025/26 season was, in the end,

one of consolidation rather than celebration. But consolidation at Step Four, for a club of Hadley's size, is its own kind of success. The good ship Hadley steadily navigated the odd tricky wave and made it back to port safely. Now the ship looks set to sail once more, with a more illustrious destination in mind.



Cup win brings joy at end of frustrating season

BY AARON TOUBIAN

They say that in life, nothing worth having comes easy. And the climax to Wingate & Finchley's rollercoaster season certainly proved that statement true.

Afi Adebayo's extra-time stunner, in minute 109 of a gruelling Isthmian League Cup final with Ramsgate, sparked ecstasy amongst the Finchley faithful. A collective release of emotion. Pure joy. But such joy is rarely created without frustration before it.

It wasn't until the eighth match of the season, a 2-1 win over Hashtag United, that the Blues enjoyed their first taste of a league victory. Romeo Akinola's spectacular free-kick the difference on that night.

This win came seven days after an exciting FA Cup triumph over Carshalton Athletic, earning Ahmet Rifat's team a trip to Marc White's Dorking Wanderers, where professional pedigree prevailed on the day, resulting in a 7-2 victory for the National League South team.

Then, following a three-week pause, came a rather unusual run of ten consecutive away games. Three different competitions, seven wins, two draws, one defeat. A fantastic return for the Blues, all factors considered. Summer signing Gianluca

► Wingate & Finchley players celebrate winning the Isthmian League Cup Credit Martin Addison

Botti announced his true arrival to the club during this period, finding the net on eight occasions.

When it wasn't Botti in the goals, it was wing-back, Loic Hernandez, who contributed remarkably as a striker, with four in three matches. Undoubtedly, the two standout victories from this crazy run on the road were a glorious 5-0 win at then-league-leaders, Brentwood Town and a 3-0 success over Dulwich Hamlet where, at times, it was very much like watching Brazil.



Despite a successful return home in mid-November, a testing two-month spell followed. The Blues found just one win in eleven games, certainly not helped by four postponed matches during that period. A league campaign which had shown such promise, began to unravel very quickly.

It was a 2-1 home win over neighbours, Potters Bar Town, that stopped the rot. A week later, Botti's brace earned three crucial points against Canvey Island, almost silencing mur-

murs of the dreaded 'r-word'.

Two weeks later in mid-March, Wingate's reward for that 'one win in eleven' came around. An Isthmian League Cup semi-final at Redbridge FC. The contest looked destined for a penalty shootout, before new signing, Remy-Lee Bennison, became the late hero. The Blues were on their way to a cup final for the first time in a decade and a half.

Once they'd done enough to secure step three football for another year, the focus was entirely on the big night in Aveley, and securing silverware.

As for 2026/27, the club remains typically tight-lipped on any player movements but top scorer from last season, Gianluca Botti, has been confirmed as moving to Dartford, leaving a 20+ goal shaped hole in this Blues side.

The Isthmian Premier League continues to go from strength to strength, with local neighbours Enfield Town returning this year, in what will be yet another challenging rollercoaster of a season for our little club in N12.

SPORT

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Hendon players celebrating
Credit Derek Beech

Barnet
getting ready
for 26/27

BY NICK SANDAMAS

After a strong first season back in the Football League, where Barnet just missed out on the play-offs, it was that time to say goodbye to some of those players who were part of the National League title winning squad in 2024/25.

Ryan Glover and Callum Stead have made the step up to League One to join Stockport County and Cambridge United respectively, whilst Mark Shelton has moved up north to join last season's National League winners York City. Anthony Hartigan has gone to Southend and Myles Kenlock has left following the end of his contract.

However, the Bees have been able to keep hold of some of their other title winners in Nik Taveras, Danny Collinge and Idris Kanu.

As we went to press, five new players have entered The Hive door; defenders Zac Williams, Craig Farquar, the midfield duo of Brandon Gormley and Charlie Lakin from Walsall, and Isiah Noel-Williams from Brennan's old club Hemel Hempstead. More are likely to follow.

The pre-season schedule starts on Tuesday, 7th July away to Hitchin Town then it's the annual trip to Hemel Hempstead to compete for the Spencer Cole Trophy.

A tasty set of home friendlies follow against Watford, Luton Town, Oxford United, MK Dons and

Bromley before the season gets underway in earnest on Saturday, 8th August with round one of the League up.

By the time you read this, the Bees' League Two fixtures will have been released, so it's time to get those diaries out to start planning for the 2026/27 season.



The Hive Credit Wikicommons

Miserable season for Hendon

BY DAVID BALLHEIMER

Hendon FC suffered through another miserable season in 2025/26. In 2024/25, the club had their first relegation in its almost 120-year history, and they followed it with another campaign sitting in or close to the bottom four.

Going into the new season with an almost new playing staff, manager Ben Bukowski was full of optimism that the Greens would compete for the title or at least the play-offs. Instead, on the opening day of the season, in an awful match and performance, Hartley Wintney won 3-0. Things quickly got worse with an FA Cup exit in the preliminary round, 2-1 at Steyning Town, from a level lower.

Apart from a relatively good run in the FA Trophy, three wins, including one over Isthmian Premier Dulwich Hamlet, there was little joy in cup competitions and a 6-1 home rout at the hands of Leyton Orient's development squad – the only home cup tie of the season – meant all cup interest ended in January.

On the league front, the first win of the campaign came on 25th September, but there were draws with both teams that would win promotion. Hendon did enjoy a seven-game unbeaten run, but three were in the FA Trophy. In early October, the Greens were 14th in the table, pretty much the high watermark.

Disappointingly, every time the Greens looked as if they might be turning a corner, they suffered a reverse, lost their impetus and

dropped back into the relegation dogfight. A 7-1 win over Fareham Town was a rare high spot (the wins over Dulwich and Fareham earned Hendon two Isthmian League Performance of the Month awards). What frustrated many fans was the fact that there were enough players with experience at higher levels who did not deliver.

The team was scoring plenty of goals, but they were conceding even more; there were two 3-3 and two 4-4 draws and Hendon conceded four in four straight league games. A collapse in discipline hampered the Greens' cause and the club decided to make a change in the dugout after back-to-back wins against Littlehampton Town and Hayes & Yeading United. Ben Fisher was brought in to replace

Bukowski and he started with a win over Ascot United. However, the Greens picked up only five points in the last eight games to finish two points and two places above the last relegation place.

Stars of the season were goalkeeper Josh Strizovic, whose heroics frequently won points when none were deserved, and striker Sam Shaban, who bagged 25 goals in 50 games. Looking forward to next season, the good news is that Fisher has the offseason to put together a new squad, and he has persuaded Shaban and Strizovic to stay for 2026-27. Centre-back Jordan Williams, from St Ives Town, is the first new signing, so it is impossible to predict how Hendon will perform this season. It must, however, be an improvement on last term.



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