



LETTERS

The Finchley Society

Dear Sir

In your August issue, on page 2, you have a report headed "New Use for Old Barracks".

The first paragraph states "The Finchley Society has 'called for' the former Territorial Building on the other side of the North Circular to be used for housing".

This is not correct. We did not "call for" any one particular future use for this building. At our Planning Committee meeting on 10 May 2000 we noted that the Council appear to be in favour of warehousing use but our members expressed concern about traffic problems. The minutes continue (and I quote verbatim):

"Other suggestions for future use were: Agenda 21 proposed it should be a fire station; A community facility; Incorporated into the Hollywood Bowl complex; a car showroom; site for low cost, low rise housing.

After discussion it was agreed that in view of the stated need for housing in the borough, this should be the first choice, then possibly an extension of the leisure centre, or use by emergency services."

As you can see, these were only suggestions and, of course, the final decision will be taken by the authorities concerned.

Yours sincerely
Heather Winton (Hon. Sec.,
Finchley Society Planning
Committee)

Shopkeepers bleat

Dear Sir

Re: Baronsmere Traffic Scheme: The above scheme is a success and most welcomed by local residents. We eagerly await the CPZ scheme for further benefits.

Your front-page article in the October edition is a shopkeepers' bleat. You would do well to appreciate that shopkeepers exist solely to serve local residents, not the reverse.

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey White
Summerlee Avenue, N2

Baronsmere Road closure

Dear Editor

Another very one-sided leading "news" item in your "community" newspaper. Where are the interviews with supporters of the scheme?

The dangerous activities of the determined rat-runners reported only serve to show how reckless these people are, with scant regard for the safety of others. This is precisely why they needed to be barred from residential side streets. Your paper would do better encouraging readers to write to the police to secure better enforcement, rather than attempt to undermine a measure taken to promote safety and health in a network of family houses. Equally, the dangerous manoeuvres outside Bernard Tomkins can readily be addressed by a sign on the island banning U-turns. I have already suggested this to the council.

It is of course to be regretted if

local businesses suffer. But there is still ample space on yellow lines at the end of Baronsmere Road (in fact this has been extended) for customers to stop briefly whilst popping in to the corner shop or chemists. They are still doing this all the time. The only difference now is that, if they have come from the East, they must turn around afterwards. If they are not able or prepared to walk, this is not such an unreasonable inconvenience.

Yours sincerely
Pete Crockford,
Baronsmere Road, N2.

Baronsmere Road*A statement by the editor*

The Archer supports any traffic control measures that prevent the streets of East Finchley being used as rat-runs by commuters. What does concern us is the failure of the council to think things through. The changes to traffic flows in Baronsmere Road should not have been done in isolation, but should have been part of a wide ranging traffic policy to divert traffic away from residential streets. As was pointed out in the news story in our October issue it is that aspect of the new road scheme that we wish to highlight.

We consider that the Controlled Parking Zones should have been introduced first, that a filter light should have been introduced at the junction between the High Road and Fortis Green to ease the congestion problems and that the island designed to control access to Baronsmere Road should have been designed to stop inconsiderate drivers performing dangerous manoeuvres and rat-running along Baronsmere Road.

We also consider that the council has failed to consider the full impact on local businesses and made provision for delivery drivers to have access to the alley serving the back of the shops.

At the moment the scheme is only half what it could be, failing to effectively protect the residents of Baronsmere Road from rat-runners, whilst creating added congestion and tempting the more selfish motorists into dangerous manoeuvres.

Perhaps the only solution will be to follow the lead set by Haringey Council and block Baronsmere Road completely just before the entrance to the alley and change the traffic lights to ease the congestion. Then we might have a safer environment for all the people of East Finchley.

David Hobbs

GARDENING

Drowned Dogs

By Zena Robson

November - called 'the month of the drowned dog' by Ted Hughes. Of course, in your own garden you will know that walking over wet or frosted grass is not a 'good thing' as it simply compacts the soil underneath. North London soil is generally clay and therefore subject to being a quagmire through the winter and in a dry summer somewhat akin to a building site.

The answer lies in the compost. Horse manure is a good all-purpose soil conditioner but beware of buying cheap stuff that hasn't been properly composted, otherwise every weed seed known to man and the Almighty will sprout amazingly. Mushroom compost is also good stuff but know that it has added lime and is therefore quite alkaline. This means that it is not suitable to use around acid-lovers like camellias and pieris.

Sand Trap

On that subject, you may be re-planting containers for winter: watch out for those rather large blousy-looking heathers in cerise and white and avoid like the plague. They are not cheap and are also propagated in almost pure sand. 'So what?' you may ask, well, there is no way that a plant raised in 75% sand can miraculously be expected to thrive in a multi-purpose peat-based compost and in fact they don't. If you like winter flowering heathers that will be all right in a neutral soil, you should be looking for Erica carnea as a lime-tolerant type but not always easy to get hold of.

I don't worry too much and will be seen being tempted to buy the Calluna vulgaris heather for winter colour.... I don't expect to be able to keep it much after April having been planted in a straight multi-purpose rather than its preferred ericaceous compost.

Container Sport

As you plant up containers, spare a thought for colour schemes. I'm going for purples, blues and oranges this year in painted terracotta pots; for a bit of sophistication, I have painted pots black and have planted them up with 'Queen of the Night' and 'White Emperor' tulips with forget-me-nots over the top. Keep it simple and be bold.

I could have gone for straight red or yellow tulips with yellow-green Euonymus for some permanent planting. Small Iris reticulata look great in small pots on their own but covered in horticultural grit to show off the beautifully-veined petals in early spring.

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Any reader who feels strongly about any matter is invited to use this "Soapbox" column.

Please note that opinions expressed are those of the writer alone.

**Problem Centre**

By Michael Ricketts

Re: 82 High Road, N2.

A letter was sent in August to 145 residents and stated a "Proposal for the change of use of 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors of 82 High Road N2 from offices to a counselling and advice centre". So far no problem.

We then called the council to ask about the proposed use of the centre to be told it will be a self-referral centre for people with alcohol and drug problems. We were surprised as we did not see an obvious need in the village and just did not understand why would it be good for the community to have this centre in the middle of the shopping parade on the High Road. It is situated above Barclays Bank, next to Threshers off-licence, opposite the Bald Faced Stag pub and at the main pedestrian crossing of the High Road. We were unaware of this letter until a neighbour told us about this late last week (so were many of our neighbours).

Across the road from us we met Dr. Stephen Graham and his family. Dr. Graham has been involved with drug users and in his letter to Cllr. Moore he states: many users use these centres to make contacts to obtain supplies of drugs and that many users trying to 'kick the habit' will not use these centres as they will often meet the suppliers they are trying to avoid.

Not in our High Street

Our belief is that this is not only a planning but also a community issue. We certainly do not object to the facilities that such a centre would provide but seriously question the location. We were inspired to write to *The Archer* because of the article that was placed in the last issue about LA21. It stated that their main objective is that they would like to make East Finchley "the place that you want to live". Will this still hold true for the future if this centre is placed here?

Our High Street is the street where we want to, and do, shop. Please help us keep it that way.