



The site of the proposed Waitrose and library development - photo by Erini Rodis
We have marked the extent of the development on the photo above, which is taken from outside the railway station. To the right the development stretches out of site, almost to Cherry Tree Wood. The shops as far as Baronsmere Road are included.

What the Local Traders Think

By Femke van Iperen

The Waitrose plans have not been submitted yet at the council and most people agree it is difficult to voice an opinion until they have seen them. But traders between Cherry Tree Woods and Baronsmere road, who will be affected directly, have expressed their initial views.

Mini-Cab station GLH, which started in 1968 and has an 18-year lease remaining, surprisingly refused a £200k offer. Managing Director John Scott, who is a member of the 'Warning on Waitrose' committee, said: "We are happy here and we would fight it all the way. From a social point of view we have a fleet with over 200 vehicles, currently employ over 50 people and, over time, provide a lot more employment than a supermarket. I've been here since 1969, and some of our workers have been here for 20 to 30 years of their lives."

We cannot comment

It was more than a year ago that Waitrose approached Rennie and Partners, Chartered Surveyors on 26 High Road since 1979. But they were not contacted again and the business is now about to build an extension, which will double the business and has been approved by Barnet council. Proprietor Ian Rennie, said:

"My biggest concern is with the loss of seven residential units, and a lot of small businesses, in a borough which has an objective to provide 17,780 new houses by 2016 and already has a shortfall of 3,000; it just doesn't seem to make sense."

Waitrose has not yet contacted Travel Etc, at 22 High Road since 1997. Its proprietor said, "We are a growing business, we've just employed two new staff and are taking two new trainees next year. We would not want to move our business; we are based in the local community, and 80% is walk-in from this area, and commuters from the station. I don't know if we would survive elsewhere, and where would we go?"

A spokesman for Waitrose said they could not comment until planning is official and said, "We are interested in having a Waitrose in the East Finchley area but we cannot comment on specific issues at this stage."

The Neighbourhood Watches

Residents living close to the proposed Waitrose site appear to be as divided in their opinions as is the rest of East Finchley, along with some "don't knows" and a few "don't cares".

Locals were alerted to the possibility by *THE ARCHER* in September 2001 under the headline "Ripe for Development." In line with their policy of setting up cafes in parks, Barnet was inviting tenders for the disused pavilion in Cherry Tree Wood. Rumours linking the leasing of that building to Waitrose Stores and the setting up of a supermarket next to the park entrance were rife.

In December our article "Waitrose in the Wings" reported that Dr Rudi Vis, MP for Finchley and Golders Green, had told the AGM of The Friends of Cherry Tree Wood that he had seen plans for a Waitrose store on the site in question. At a subsequent meeting Colin (now Councillor) Rogers told the Friends that local Labour councillors had seen these informal plans.

It has taken a whole year for any plans to surface and be seen by those likely to be most affected by the development. Borough representatives, including those on Finchley Forum, have consistently parried all queries with the reply that as yet no formal planning

application has been made.

Wow

But now a group of people have gathered to voice their own "Warning on Waitrose." Their concerns include the inevitable increase in traffic, congestion and pollution problems and the adverse effect on businesses in the High Road. Cherry Tree Wood could suffer and the East Finchley "village" feeling would be destroyed. Previous plans were said to include a Barnet Council drop-in centre and public toilets, and the suggestion of a large sum of money to improve the locale. WOW is worried that this has now been dropped in favour of a new library. Who knows what other changes might be made before any planning permission is sought?

Some supporters of the idea have prefaced their answer with, "I'm ashamed to admit it, but...". Those in favour include older people who would find the flat walk to Waitrose easier; people with children who would have fewer roads to cross; teenagers looking for part-time jobs and those who feel that Waitrose offers a better range of products.

WOW plans to hold a meeting for people to air their views on the subject. If you want to learn more, please contact one of the following: Jan on 8883 9130; Ken on 8444 7728; Jan on 8348 4324

To Be or Not

By Mal Jacobs

The things that affect older people when shopping are maybe a little different from those of the average shopper:

With the rumour of a proposed Waitrose supermarket in East Finchley a comparison with existing available shops is inevitable. Living on the 143 bus route, shopping often depends in which direction the first bus to arrive is heading, be it East Finchley, Finchley or Brent Cross. Once established, the proposed Waitrose store could bring more business to the area and also bring back some of the people who now shop in Finchley.

A nice cup of tea

None of the existing supermarkets have a tearoom - and a nice cuppa when shopping would be excellent. It would also give us another toilet in the town!

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