



Another unwelcome presence in the car park behind Viceroy Close - See this month's Soapbox on page 11. Photo by John Dearing.

Council Rejects Car Park Flats

By John Dearing

With all the attention currently on the Waitrose proposal, it would be easy to forget that there has been another development application that would affect East Finchley in an adverse way. The proposal to build a four storey block of flats on the car park to the rear of Budgens has been around in various forms for the past three years. The net effect of this would be chaos in the car park and the adjoining part of East End Road, affecting everyone who uses that area and putting a blight on the lives of the Viceroy Close residents.

Not a car park?

On 29 September 2003, the Planning Department finally announced that a meeting of Barnet Council had decided to reject the proposal. They said, "Inadequate information has been submitted concerning the impact on lorry movements, off-street parking for future and existing residents and town centre shoppers." Interestingly, this contradicts

the view of the owners of the car park (the aspiring developers, not Budgens) that it is an 'Access Area' not a car park. They also said, "the siting of the proposed building... would create an undue sense of enclosure to Viceroy Close"

Appeal likely

Given the amounts of money involved, the nature of private developers, and promotion by the Deputy Prime

Minister of over-development in the South-East of England, it is likely that there will be an appeal. In the meantime, more and more potholes and fly-tipped rubbish will accumulate, with the owners doing nothing to maintain this central part of East Finchley.

Still, it is one small victory for local interests, and a stinging reversal for invasive development.

Consultation Confusion Continues

By Daphne Chamberlain

As reported last month, some people have requested and received extra forms from Quality Fieldwork, the organisation running the survey on the future of East Finchley library.

Quality Fieldwork told me that they not only expected us to ask for other copies, but invited us to do so. Their covering letter carries no such invitation.

Barnet Council's Tricia Little commented that Quality Fieldwork must have been confused. She added, "We were originally going to invite young people to apply for their own forms."

Will additional forms be counted?

The Council says no, because they will not carry serial numbers, although forms requested by unconnected people living in the same house would be valid. These should have been allocated code numbers, but Barnet has kept no record of people asking for additional forms.

Why not send to everyone on the electoral roll?

Quality Fieldwork said that would not have ensured an accurate representation. Barnet Council said it would have been contrary to the data protection act.

Street Survey

How about the 125 people interviewed outside the Underground station? Some had already filled in postal forms. Quality Fieldwork told me that the survey was so small it would not affect the result. However, Barnet said that the interviews should not have gone ahead at all if somebody had already answered the questionnaire.

Barnet confirmed that the

street survey was targeting 18-24s, and people from ethnic backgrounds, because "experience had shown them that these categories were hard to reach". So too, they said, were "people living in council houses".

Focus group consultations are to be set up in "deprived areas", and schools - both primary and secondary - will be consulted. I was told that monitoring of responses from various sections of the community is carried out throughout the period of the survey.

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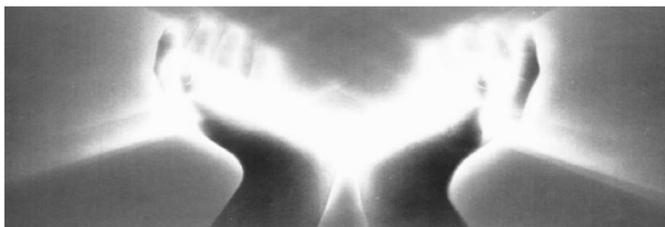
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