



Letters to The Editor

Planning confusion

Dear Editor

I received a letter from Barnet Planning Team giving me the opportunity to make comments on the proposed redevelopment of the Leopold petrol filling station at 217 High Road. The proposal is for redevelopment of the service station to include a new single storey building for retail sales, canopy over repositioned pump islands, repositioning of vehicular access from High Road and provision for 11 car-parking spaces.

The accompanying guidelines on how to comment on planning applications opened with 'Your council is committed to consulting neighbours and other parties who could be directly affected by planning applications.....' This surprised me because, to my knowledge, none of my neighbours have been consulted. On further investigation I was unable to find any public notices posted in the vicinity of the petrol station and when I actually enquired at the petrol station the staff had no knowledge of such notice.

I am concerned at this proposal because (1) this site is already a busy, dangerous junction subject to heavy traffic plus the additional hazard of it being in close proximity to a school and (2) If the 'retail sales building' is part of a major chain it would have serious impact on the livelihood of the small independent shops in the area and this, in turn, would have an adverse effect on the character of the area.

Hazel Burnett
address supplied

Save our conservation area

Dear Editor

I am writing to express my concerns about the plans to build a large building for the Garden Suburb Institute and two large blocks of flats on the site of the National Hospital for Neurology, just behind East Finchley Station.

Traffic will increase on our already congested local streets and create even more pressure on overburdened on-street parking areas, not to mention increased noise and pollution and the felling of fine trees.

Michaela Fellner
Cherry Tree Rd, N2

Send your correspondence to: "Letters Page", The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 8JA. (Due to space restrictions, letters over 200 words will be edited)

Post Office Protest

Dear Sir,

It was heartening to see such an excellent turn-out of local residents at Avenue House today, 4 March to meet with Post Office Ltd officials and explain why the main Finchley Church End Post Office should be saved from closure.

However, it was disheartening to speak to the post office representatives, such as Jackie Illsley and George Hooper, who gave the impression that they hadn't come to consult with us but to explain why they had already decided to close Finchley Church End Post Office. Certainly, this was the view of the Postwatch representative who was present. She was disturbed that Ms Illsley kept stressing that it was a 'purely commercial decision' and that the Finchley Church End Post Office was 'losing money'.

Of course, not even Postwatch has been shown the accounts which prove this. So the suspicion is that Post Office Ltd is just going through the motions. It implies that public opinion doesn't matter to the people who run our post offices. Ms Illsley told me that the Government had given the Post Office the authority to go ahead with closures in branches like Finchley. I stressed that this is hardly something to reassure the elderly and mothers with children as they struggle on to buses up to North Finchley in heavy traffic to visit their 'local' post office once Finchley Church End Post Office is closed. 2000 names on a petition saved Hampstead's South End Green sub-post office from closure.

Post Office Ltd must have received at least double that number of letters and names on petitions to save the Crown Post Office of Finchley Church End. So we mustn't give up hope, but we must be suspicious of the process which we have all just gone through.

Yours sincerely,
Andrew Mennear
212 Ballards Lane, N3

Parking Fears at Thomas More

Dear Editor

I read with interest the article by Sophie Leighton and although I am a tenant living in Cecilia Close (on the same estate but off Hamilton Road), I am concerned that not all tenants on the estate have been informed about the proposed building on the Thomas More Centre car park as the entire estate is experiencing car parking problems which may escalate further.

As parking spaces are not pre-allocated on the entire estate, if the prefabricated building is erected on the car park site, there is nothing to prevent staff and visitors to Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute parking wherever they want to on the estate and thus depriving tenants even further of lack of a parking space.

I have lived on the estate for more than 20 years and have seen it gradually deteriorate.

Yours sincerely
Betti Blatman
Cecilia Close, N2

Postal walks cut

Dear Editor,

It has come to my attention that the postal service intends to cut eight of the 28 walks in the area of East Finchley. This reduction in public service spells disaster not just for residents of the area but also for those unfortunate posties who will be burdened with the extra work.

In an age when people are increasingly getting several pounds of junk mail a year it is outrageous that postmen and women are expected to do more work for the same pay. The postal service should think about the real cost to their workers of these money saving measures before implementing them.

Noel Lynch
Green Party Member of the London Assembly
City Hall,
London SE1

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.



Rush Hour

By Sam Groves

The dominant characteristic of our culture industry is 'speed'. For a long time we have conflated progression with acceleration. Every new gadget and gismo that is unleashed onto the market is, one way or another, selling us this product.

Advances that at one time were inconceivable have failed to satisfy our appetite. If anything, our desire for speed has itself gained pace. So much so that we are now at a time when information is more accessible than it has ever been. At a touch of a button or a click of the mouse we can [more or less] get hold of anyone or anything we want. For the discerning consumer there is a virtually infinite potential.

Wasted

It is ironic, then, that our compulsive attachment to speed means that these facilities are wasted on the majority of us. News, music, film is worth nothing unless it is heard in time, unless the consumer is given the opportunity to be among the first crop to "discover" it. We are only interested as long as it is fast, loud and shocking. People favour the immediate hit over media that requires any investment of thought or patience. The result? An industry that churns out the same signs, sounds and images because they are the most familiar and therefore will grab our attention the quickest. The apotheosis of this trend can be found on Sky Digital. A service that promises genuine choice and quality yet continually resorts to replaying episodes of *Beadles About* and *Gladiators* (although anyone that has seen *Shadow*, armed with a peudal stick, go to work on a man may beg to differ)

Refuge in the bland

At the same time this lack of curiosity and imagination indicates a certain ambivalence towards the fast and furious environment we have cast around us. Desperate to retreat to an enclosed space that is predictable and controllable we continually fall back on the media we understand; taking refuge in the bland, the repetitive and the pedestrian. We may tolerate the semblance of diversity but only on condition that it tastes the same and we can eat it with a knife and fork. The tragedy is that at a time when our world has more windows than ever, most of us choose to keep the curtains drawn.

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