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Local News Is Our Aim

THE ARCHER



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A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.



Mike Gee and friends head the protest. Photo by Erini Rodis

Barclays to close

By Daphne Chamberlain

Barclays Bank has announced that it is to shut its East Finchley branch in December after over a century. The bank has been open in East Finchley since 1890. The future of the building it occupies has not yet been confirmed.

The closure of the branch on the corner of Fortis Green will come as a blow to local customers and businesses, whose closest alternative will be in Muswell Hill.

Barclays said it had decided to cease business in East Finchley because the branch was significantly less busy than others in the area

and could not offer the best level of service. The company plans to invest more heavily in its busier branches such as Muswell Hill, which is viewed as a flagship.

Barclays' area director Tim Archer acknowledged the inconvenience the closure could cause to some East Finchley businesses but said nothing could be done about it.

Asked to explain how the level of service for East Finchley customers would be improved by having to travel to another branch, Mr Archer pointed out that other branches had quick paying-in points, foreign currency desks, and more personal bankers.

He said that East Finchley was often without a personal banker on Fridays, whereas Muswell Hill would provide this service every weekday and on Saturdays.

Told that some customers, particularly the elderly or disabled, feel they will lose out by having to make awkward or time-consuming journeys to see a personal banker, and may not want to bank online or by telephone, Mr Archer made no comment.

Barclays has offered redeployment to the East Finchley staff after the closure on 2 December. Mr Archer said that he had interviewed them all, and was trying his best to accommodate their preferences.

Letters sent to customers have told them that most of their day-to-day banking can be carried out free of charge at the Post Office. The Post Office has confirmed to *THE ARCHER* however, that some transactions carry a fee, depending on the company.

The branch provides a book in the service area for customers' comments and many of them have used it to voice their concern and disappointment about the closure.

Ring around the Wilmot

By Erini Rodis

In the spirit of non-violence a ring of hands circled the Herbert Wilmot Centre on Monday 10 October, as local people protested against the council's decision to demolish the site in Eagan's Close.

While Mike Gee and Miranda Dunn of the Green Party, which organised the demonstration, gathered everyone together, children darted off to climb trees on the Holy Trinity School roundabout. "See!" called out some mums, "this is what our kids resort to when they've nothing to do!"

The site has been closed for some time due to vandalism, is letting in water and needs to be cleared of broken glass.

Loss of facilities

Labour Councillor Colin Rogers was also there. He praised the hard work undertaken over nearly three years by

all the groups and individuals trying to save the centre. The council, he said, was more interested in gaining money from selling the land than in providing proper youth facilities for the local community.

He said: "The closure of the Herbert Wilmot Centre is part of a deliberate ploy by the Tories to deprive East Finchley of youth services, and to allow unscrupulous developers to develop the adjacent Stanley Field. This has left various after-school playgroups, football clubs and choirs without any facilities near to where their members live - it's a cruel and cynical policy."

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