



Residents blow their stack at 'botched' gas pipes

First-time buyer Melanie Bruck could hardly believe her eyes when workmen began replacing gas supply pipes around her property in East Finchley.



The new gas pipes attached to homes in Park Farm Close. Photo by Melanie Bruck

Where the pipes have hitherto been well hidden, the new pipes have been attached at all angles across the external walls of her maisonette in what she describes as a "terrible botch job". The work has affected many other homes in Park Farm Close too.

With the support of neighbours, Melanie is battling to get the work stopped before any more damage is done to the appearance of their homes.

Melanie, who has lived in her home for just over a year, said: "The contractors have made no effort to camouflage the pipes or even put them flush against the walls. We've suggested running them parallel with existing pipes and drains, or using slimmer piping, but they are not interested."

One morning, we came out to see a pipe laid in a zig-zag right up the side of a wall. We

insisted the contractors remove it immediately, which they did, but the rest of their work is not much better."

The best way possible?

The replacement piping project is being carried out on behalf of the North London Gas Alliance as part of the National Grid's eight-year programme for replacing old pipes elsewhere in East Finchley and across north London.

Barry Davis, who heads the team carrying out the work, met with representatives of the residents in Park Farm Close to discuss the pipe-laying.

He said: "New national regulations state that these new pipes have to be external so unfortunately there is no other way of doing it. We have the residents' safety at heart at all times and we are doing things in the best way possible."

Sat-Nav stolen from car

By John Dearing

An East Finchley man has had his satellite navigation device worth £400 stolen from his car parked outside his home. The victim had left his Renault Laguna securely parked in Huntingdon Road at 3pm on 1 February. At 7pm, he discovered that two of his car windows had been smashed and his Sony Sat-Nav device and holder had been stolen.

If anyone has any information about this incident please contact the Crime Desk on 020 8733 4544. Barnet Police are advising motorists where possible to take the system out of their cars when parked. Owners are also being recommended to make note of the serial number of the system and keep this in a safe place. Police are then able to return stolen systems to people if they find them during the course of arrests.

There is a website which enables owners to register serial numbers with them for free,

not just for Sat-Nav Systems, but also for mobile phones or anything with a serial number. It is www.immobilise.com and police have access to it to check to see if a system has been registered there when they find property.

The victim in Huntingdon Road asked *THE ARCHER* to warn people about leaving their Sat-Nav devices stuck to their car windscreen. He said: "Just don't do it! Although we knew we shouldn't have left something visible in the car, it is so easy to get used to something being there and simply forget."

Creighton Avenue landmark to be demolished

By Ann Bronkhorst

After months of campaigning, the battle over Strathlene House at 79 Creighton Avenue has ended. On 23 January, Haringey Planning Committee granted Festival Care Homes permission to demolish the large Edwardian house and replace it with a three-storey building to house a home for the elderly.

The proposed development had been criticised by Muswell Hill and Fortis Green Association, Friends of Coldfall Wood, Lynne Featherstone MP, Councillor Matt Davies and many local residents. The planning committee received 121 letters of objection but none in favour. A demonstration was held in Creighton Avenue earlier in January.

Concerns were expressed about the mass, scale and overall visual impression of the proposed building and its effect on the amenities of immediate neighbours. Many felt that the existing house should be refurbished, not demolished.

Traffic and parking problems were anticipated in an area already often gridlocked at certain times of the school day. There were concerns, too, about the impact on the water table, and on the Metropolitan Open Land and woodland nearby.

Last year, the developers began felling mature trees and were restrained only by swift local action (*THE ARCHER* February 2005). The new application contains no explanation or apology for that tree-felling so residents are anxious for the safety of the remaining trees.



Strathlene House makes a last stand. Photo by Erini Rodis

Grounds for permission

Objectors do not understand why this third planning application was successful. One positive reason given was the expectation of up to 30 new jobs. Planners commended the proposed building for its 'independence of form and design, offering a varied element to the street scene' despite its critics' scathing description: 'uninspired, institutional and boring'.

Social Services (and most protestors) say they welcome an affordable nursing, as opposed to residential, home, as there is

a shortage locally. The logic is puzzling, however, when the Planning Officer claims that 'the proximity to excellent passive recreation facilities such as Coldfall Woods' outweighs the considerable distance from public transport and shops.

The Committee have attached conditions to their permission, including several concerning water table and tree-protection; ecology and planting; and part-rendering of the façade. But as one objector says, "These are very small concessions compared with all the objections raised".

Get your green bin now

Barnet residents are being urged to join the green waste recycling scheme and, as an incentive, are being offered a free green wheeled bin for grass clippings, hedge cuttings and weeds by Barnet Council.

Kitchen waste such as vegetable peelings, tea bags and leftover food (but not bones) can also be recycled using the green bins. The organic waste is collected by the council and composted.

To request a green bin or for more information on Barnet's recycling services, telephone 020 8359 7400 or email recycling@barnet.gov.uk. More details can also be found at www.barnet.gov.uk/recycling.

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