



On-off support for better service

By Daphne Chamberlain
A group campaigning for a better bus service through East Finchley has had good news and bad.

East Finchley Bus Watch organiser Hazel Burnett has been told by Barnet Council's Head of Environment and Transport Peter Bradburn that he supports the fight for improvements to the 263 and 143 routes.

He told her in writing: "Bus 263 is the only route on an important stretch of radial road, as is route 143 on East End Road. If route 263 is not made more frequent, then I think we must press for an additional service to augment it, at least between East and North Finchley."

He went on to say that the council will continue to press both London Buses and the operator for improvements to the 143 route.

However, London Buses wrote to Ms Burnett with the news that the frequency of the

263 will not be increased. They told her that after a full review and consultation with all concerned, including Barnet, "the frequency was deemed appropriate".

Contradictions

When *THE ARCHER* investigated these contradictory statements, Barnet confirmed that they were definitely supporting an increase in the service. London Buses have not yet been able to explain to us why they have implied otherwise.

A London Buses spokesperson told us that they had carried out a "loading" survey, which concluded that an extra bus would not be viable. Answering claims that the 263 is often loaded like "a cattle-truck", they said that loading was considered alongside the operator's ability to deliver a reliable service. So problems with vehicles or staff would mean that the operator could not deliver an increased frequency. A new contract for the 263 starts

in February 2007.

Route 17 to the rescue?

Bus Watch will be surveying current reliability this month, in a repeat of their all-day surveys in 2004.

They have suggested that an additional service between East and North Finchley could be supplied by extending route 17 (currently London Bridge to Archway, via Holloway) to North Finchley, as in the past. London Buses will consider this idea when the route is next reviewed, but say that the cost would not be justified because the route would parallel the Northern Line for part of the way.

Bus Watch find this objection "bizarre". Hazel Burnett points out that most bus routes in London parallel Tube lines and other bus routes. She says, "We are asking for a generally improved public transport system with an element of choice, like that enjoyed in other parts of London".

Six sentenced for Bishops Avenue burglary

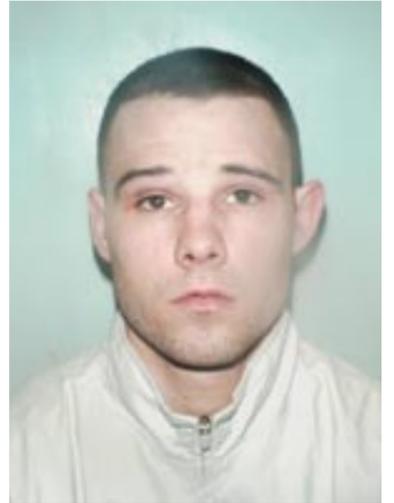
Six people have been sentenced for their part in a £1.7 million burglary in The Bishops Avenue in East Finchley.

Three people, including a 15-year-old boy, smashed their way through the front door of a house in the avenue and dragged a safe from the living room into a waiting van, getting away with jewellery and cash.

They then took the keys to the vehicles parked on the drive and stole a Mercedes and a Lexus said by police to be worth a total of £400,000.

Members of the larger group were already known to police and, following the burglary in January, were kept under observation and seen getting rid of the stolen property.

At Harrow Crown Court, Gerrard O'Leary, aged 22, of no fixed abode, received a seven-year custodial sentence for conspiracy to burgle. A 15-year-old male received a two-year detention and training order for conspiracy to burgle. Louise O'Leary, aged 29, of Garth Rd, NW2, received a four-year custodial sentence for conspiracy to handle stolen



Gerrard O'Leary. Picture courtesy the Metropolitan Police.

goods. John Sheehan, aged 42, of Richborough Rd, NW6, received a four-year custodial sentence for conspiracy to handle stolen goods. Valerie Bennett, aged 19, of no fixed abode, received a one-month custodial sentence, suspended, for conspiracy to handle stolen goods. A 16-year-old youth received an 18-month custodial sentence for conspiracy to handle stolen goods.

Detective Constable Reg Pickering, of Barnet Police CID, said: "We are very pleased that Gerrard O'Leary has received a sentence that will stop him targeting peoples' homes for some time. Gerrard is a prolific offender and the judge has recognised this in sentencing."

Can Barnet afford to turn down sports funding?

By Daphne Chamberlain
Members of the Stanley Field Steering Group were working against the clock last month to prepare their viability plan for developing the field as a sports facility.

With assurances of support coming in, the East Finchley Community Development Trust asked: "Is the Council going to turn down a £1.5 million injection of funding into the borough for sports facilities?" As the country prepares for the 2012 Olympics, the Trust likened their position to the UK delegation last year: waiting for an all-important decision.

All correspondence with Barnet Council has been sent to Council Leader Mike Freer, including the rough estimate of costs presented to Councillor Salingier in November 2005.

Football Association Regional Manager Roger Reed has confirmed in writing that the Football Foundation will consider

funding up to 60%, with a cap of £1 million, of an application from a charitable Trust such as EFCDT. Mr Reed said he would be pleased to assist with the application.

Cllr Freer asked for the viability plan to be with him by the third week of August. *THE ARCHER* understands that the short timescale prevented the appearance of at least one very big name in East Finchley to support the scheme.

Next forum meeting

The next Finchley Forum will be held in East Finchley, at Holy Trinity School, Eagan Close (off Market Place), at 6.30pm on Monday 4 September.

Local Forums offer everyone the chance to discuss topics of their own choice with Councillors, Council Officers and other members of the general public.

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