



Front garden parking to be made easier

By John Lawrence

Barnet Council is relaxing the rules for motorists who want to park their cars in their front gardens in a move billed as a boost for flexible parking.

Residents who want to pave over their front garden for parking will no longer need a minimum garden size of 4.8m long by 2.4m wide. Instead, they will enter into a legal agreement with the council that their vehicle will not overhang the pavement when parked in their driveway.

Rainwater drainage risk

Some may see this as a threat to the quality of our local streets and to our wider environment. *THE ARCHER* has previously printed letters from residents concerned that too many front garden lawns, trees and shrubs were disappearing under concrete.

safety benefits, too, because of the shorter distances from cars to front doors. In addition, cars parked in front gardens could mean more on-street parking spaces available to other residents and visitors.

A common-sense solution?

Councillor Matthew Offord, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, said: "This is a pioneering move, made with the needs of our residents in mind. Many people who drive small cars have been forced to park a long way from their homes and this is a common-sense solution that will relax demand for



Getting permission to park your car in your front garden, like these in East Finchley, is about to get easier

In 2005, Thames Water warned that the rush to pave over our gardens increased the risk of drainage overload and flash flooding because there were fewer places for rainwater to drain away naturally.

Although front gardens are usually private property, residents cannot park there until they have applied to Barnet Council for permission to install a vehicle crossover, or dropped kerb.

The council says the rules were relaxed in response to calls to make the policy fairer for owners of smaller and lesser-polluting vehicles and electric cars, which need to be located close to a power source for re-charging.

It claims there will be personal

on-street parking.

"We are, however, committed to maintaining the green and attractive look of the borough which is why we are spending a lot of time assisting residents to consider the most environmentally friendly ways of converting their front gardens."

Applicants will receive an information pack giving advice on environmentally-friendly design solutions to protect the front garden area while providing a suitable surface on which to park their vehicles.

What's your view on front garden parking? Write to The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 8JA, email the-archer@lineone.net or telephone 08717 334465 to leave your comment.



Miranda at home with her children Jacob and Annabel Holland

From here to maternity

By David Melsome

When she moved into Bedford Road in September 2002, Miranda Levy was an N2 newcomer with a large pregnant bump. Now, she's the proud mother of two children and a big fan of the East Finchley vibe. She's also just published her first book *The Rough Guide to Babies* (Rough Guides, £9.99.)

"When I had my daughter four years ago, I was desperate for a book that really told me how it was," says Miranda, a freelance journalist who writes for publications including *Grazia*, *GLAMOUR* and the *Daily Mail*. "I needed reassurance that the devastation wreaked on my body wasn't permanent, that despite my utter failure to follow a routine I was still qualified to be a mother. Mostly, I wanted a book that made me feel normal. So I decided to write one myself."

Miranda's book contains lots of practical information on all

the basics: feeding (breast and bottle), sleeping (the baby's, and yours), crying (the baby's and yours), baby development and health. There's also a look at the questions new mums often ask: how will the new arrival affect my relationship, will I survive this chronic exhaustion and what type of childcare will suit me and my baby the best?

Thanks to East Finchley's baby-friendly atmosphere, Miranda, 38, enjoyed both her maternity leaves. She says: "The playgroups at the Methodist and Catholic churches were great, the Chorak cakes kept me sane, but best of all were the Bringing Up Baby screenings at the

Phoenix. The sight of all those little faces eating, sleeping and crying was more entertaining than the movies themselves. I also noticed the babies loved films with loud car-chases, but weren't too keen on dialogue. Subtitled movies tended to be the best choice."

Miranda's two children, Annabel, four, and Jacob, two and a half, attend Scribbles nursery on Hertford Road; Annabel is also at Martin nursery. Miranda's husband Mark can be found manically running or cycling up the High Road while Miranda herself prefers to spend her free time staring out of the large windows of Costa Coffee.

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