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THE ARCHER




**CAR SERVICE
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November 2008 No. 182
ISSN 1361-3952

20p
where sold

A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.

Polyclinic on our doorstep

By Janet Maitland

Barnet Council has given planning permission for a polyclinic on the site of Finchley Manor Garden Centre on East End Road. The decision has been met with a mixture of surprise and anger by local people and businesses who claim they were not consulted.

Thirty people signed a petition objecting to the proposal when it was first submitted by Cloverdale Estates last year. Then, Barnet refused permission because the plans were not compatible with the site's Metropolitan Open Land status and there was no evidence that other sites had been explored.

Petition disregarded

When Cloverdale Estates submitted a revised application in July, Barnet did not inform the petition organiser Janice Wagner or the other petitioners, nor was the petition mentioned in the Planning Officer's report to the Planning Committee. "Under planning law, this was submitted by the applicant as a new application and was treated as such," said a spokesperson from Barnet Council.

"The first I heard of this was when I saw a For Sale notice saying that permission for a medical centre had been given," said Janice. "I'm not happy with this at all."

Barnet's planning procedures stipulate that if three or more objections to a proposal are received, the application should be referred to a sub committee for further consideration. Three objections were received but this did not happen. "Some objections were received after the closing date had passed and the report had been written," said the Barnet spokesperson.

Lack of consultation

The polyclinic will offer GP and dispensing service and, as such, is expected to have an impact on local GPs and pharmacists in East End Road and the High Road. However, none of them was consulted despite the fact that Barnet's procedures specify that every effort should

be made to consult relevant amenity groups.

Barnet Primary Care Trust (PCT) was consulted, but did not respond. A spokesperson for the PCT, which already has plans for a polyclinic as part of the planned redevelopment of Finchley Memorial Hospital in North Finchley, told *THE ARCHER* that it has "no objections to these proposals at this stage".

Councillor Colin Rogers raised the concern that the developers might try to work homes or commercial premises into their plans for this site, although there is no evidence that Cloverdale Estates are planning to do this.

Nevertheless, he said: "It was because this application was for a medical centre that permission was given. Should the developers try and change their minds and put in an application for homes or shops, it will be brought to the committee by me, for public scrutiny and debate."



Desperately seeking undies - the Old Barn march. Photo by Paul Dearing

Undies on the outside

Close to 100 men, women and children clad in their underwear walked through East Finchley to help those who are so destitute they can't afford their own.

Organiser Caroline Glasner was moved to act when she discovered the shocking poverty of destitute asylum seekers at a local drop-in, run by New North London Synagogue volunteers. She explained: "I can't imagine having to wear someone else's old undies nor do I want to."

The walkers did a circular route from NNLS in East End Road via the Old Barn Community Centre and back to NNLS where Tesco presented a cheque for £750.

The Desperately Seeking Undies sponsored walk pulled in more than 5,000 items of underwear thanks to the generosity of local businesses and individu-

als. Fagleaves, the online retailer based in Finchley, donated 1,000 items of lingerie alone.

Co-organiser Diane Taylor said: "It is truly shocking that people who have fled torture

and persecution in oppressive regimes hoping to find sanctuary in the UK end up destitute, often in greater poverty than some of those in sub-Saharan Africa."



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