



Developers win long battle for medical centre

By Janet Maitland

Developers have finally won a long battle to build a medical centre on the site of Finchley Manor Garden Centre on East End Road. The centre will have facilities for consultation, diagnosis and treatment, including minor surgery.

The medical centre has been controversial from the beginning. Thirty local people petitioned against it when Cloverdale Estates, the developers, first submitted an application in 2007. Planning permission was refused as the plan did not protect the status of the site, which is designated as Metropolitan Open Land, equivalent to the Green Belt.

The developers tried again with a revised application in 2008. Because the council treated this as a new application, the people who had signed the petition were not told and so did not protest again. None of the local GPs and pharmacists were consulted, despite the fact that Barnet's procedures specify that every effort should be made to consult relevant amenity groups.

Objections received

Even though the consultation was limited, three objections were nevertheless received. This should have been the trigger for the application to be considered by a more local sub committee but this did not happen as some objections were received after the closing date. Planning permission for a centre of 1,000 square metres was finally given in September 2008.

A few months later, Cloverdale Estates went back to the council for permission to double the size of the building to over 2,000 square metres. The Mayor of London objected. His concerns were about access, transport, parking and sustainability, not size. Barnet Council refused the application, not because of the increase in size per se, but because the number of enclosed cycle spaces that would now be required would spoil the open character of the land. They also had issues about sustainability.

Changes made

Cloverdale Estates tried again with a further application to Barnet early this year. The Mayor again raised objections, saying that improvements were

needed in relation to energy efficiency, access for disabled people, and transport and parking. But he lifted these objections once he had been informed by Barnet that the developers had made a few changes to their plans, in response to his concerns.

Planning permission was finally granted on 17 March subject to a number of minor conditions. None of the changes or conditions is related to the size of the centre.

Councillor Colin Rogers claimed permission might not have been given if he had been able to have the application scrutinised at the more-local planning sub-committee. The application was aired at the central planning committee.

Glad to sit down after the Big Fun Walk

Hundreds of walkers set off from East Finchley tube station on a sunny Sunday in March and raised thousands of pounds for the North London Hospice. Ten-year-old Joe Lawrence was among them and here recalls the highs and lows of the day.

On 21 March a charity event happened. My family and I walked eight and a half miles into the centre of London for the North London Hospice. It was called the Big Fun Walk. My dad, mum and sister went with me from East Finchley station to Westminster. We all enjoyed it and the children were given medals at the end.

We had stops to eat and drink. One was for biscuits; another one was for a choice of sandwiches and a carton of orange juice or water. It was a bumpy journey going through the parks, with downhill, uphill and long flat stretches. We saw



Oliver Graham Smith in action.

Oliver magics up a tricky career

By Jessica Tully

What started off as just a hobby has turned into a potentially successful career for one teenager. Fifteen-year-old Oliver Graham Smith, of Midhurst Avenue, is giving David Blaine a run for his money with his own unique magic tricks.

The young magician has been performing since he was 13 and had his first ever gig at an 80th birthday party. Oliver told *THE ARCHER*: "I first realised I wanted to be a magician when I was in Year 5 at school. It was the cups and balls trick that sparked my interest. I went home and started

learning basic tricks off the internet and practising them for hours and hours. I practised every day for the first two years."

Oliver's parents were his only audience then. "I used to make them sit down every night and ask them if I could show them a new trick. It must have been so repetitive for them."

The teenager is now studying for his GCSEs and has hopes of working in marketing and advertising, but still loves performing magic when he can. He performs his own gigs and assists magician Christian Lee on the first Friday night of every month in Madame Jojo's in central London.

All-weather pitch in action

By Sheila Armstrong

Headteacher of Oak Lodge Special School, Lynda Walker, welcomed visitors to the opening of its new Multi Use Games Area (something like Astroturf to you and me) on a sunny day in March. The tape was ceremonially cut by Councillor Andrew Harper and the pitch declared open, then the school lost no time using it immediately for a hockey tournament.

CLr Harper praised the work being done at the school off East End Road, calling it a jewel in Barnet's crown and welcomed the building of the new facility. The pitch replaces the old muddy football field. In addition the school will get its long awaited trampoline later

this year as reported previously in *THE ARCHER*.

Other improvements to the school are an attractive new entrance and reception area, offices and staff room. Funding for the works comes from the government's Building Schools for the Future Scheme.

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