



Neighbours alarmed at flats plan

By Daphne Chamberlain

Local residents are furious about a current planning application registered with Barnet Council. If approved, this application would allow part of the terrace of shops and flats in the High Road between Fortis Green and Fairlawn Avenue to be extended upwards and to the rear. The section concerned is numbers 58-60, above Josephines Florist and the former Panoptica premises.

The proposal is to add an extra floor, enabling the existing accommodation to be developed into six self-contained flats, and a three-storey rear extension. The application includes off-street parking and access.

Neighbours are angry and worried about the prospect of over-development, increased traffic, loss of light and privacy, and the ruin of a pleasant architectural façade.

One resident of Fairlawn Avenue told us: "I am already overlooked by the existing second floor of this terrace. I have my curtains drawn most of the time, and an extra storey will make things much worse. We buy parking permits, but often can't use them already, and the problem of rats and rubbish behind the terrace would get worse. This will set a precedent."

The Barnet website gives the target date for a planning decision as 14 September. At the time of writing, no date had been fixed for a site visit. Any member of the public can submit an online comment. The Barnet website is www.barnet.gov.uk, and the planning application number is F/02631/10. See our letters' page.



East Finchley's Mary O'Toole (Trustee), Cllr Anthony Finn (Mayor of Barnet) and Gill Dodge (CEO Noah's Ark Children's Hospice). Photo by Lorraine Keach

New voyage for Noah's Ark

Noah's Ark Children's Hospice has found a site to build a new permanent home. The charity has become the leaseholder of the Barnet Countryside Centre, also known as the Denis Bland Nature Reserve.

The nature reserve at Byng Road, High Barnet, presents a unique opportunity for Noah's Ark to establish a children's hospice at the heart of the community to complement the support it is currently providing to local children and families.

Over the next few months Noah's Ark anticipates applying for full planning permission, having already achieved outline planning permission as part of the original bid for the land.

The past few months have been an exciting period for Noah's Ark. In May the Mayor of Barnet chose it as one of the charities he will support during his term of office in 2010-2011. For more information contact the Noah's Ark office on 020 8449 4477.

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Natural born swimmers

Babies as young as just a few days will now be able to take part in multi-award-winning swimming classes starting in East Finchley. The Water Babies programme, designed to make the most of babies' natural affinity with water, teaches confidence and safety, using specialist techniques that see many swimming short distances from as young as 30 months.

Therese Rodohan and her sister Carmel run the classes in the pool at Oak Lodge School, Heath View. Therese said: "The lessons give you such a feel-good factor." Carmel added: "I think we often underestimate just how much children are capable of, even when still babies. And they clearly love the sense of freedom that being in water provides."

Despite the emphasis on parents and babies having fun, the course does have a very serious safety point to it, teaching the babies water skills, such as turning onto their backs or swimming to the nearest solid object following a sudden submersion.



Finley David Muir photographed by Jez Dixon for Water Babies

"With research showing that new mothers are less likely to suffer from post natal depression if they can gain support from their peers, that's another reason why we're very proud of what we do," said Therese.

In the last three years, Water Babies has won four national awards: Best Swimming Class,

Best Baby Development Activity, and Best Baby & Toddler Development Activity with *What's On 4 Little Ones*; and Best Children's Activity with Tommy's.

For more information about classes, contact Carmel on 020 8349 5239 or visit www.waterbabies.co.uk.

No more library late fees

Library users in Barnet can now borrow nearly 1,000 fiction and non-fiction titles via their personal computer using the new free eBook service.

Customers can log on to the council's digital library website, install free software and then download the latest audio or eBooks. Titles can be transferred to supported MP3 players or iPods, with some titles even available to burn to CD for future reading.

Up to ten titles can be loaned out at any one time and, once the three-week loan has expired, the eBooks are automatically returned to the central digital library collection, meaning no risk of running up late fees. The eBook service can be accessed at <http://barnet.lib.overdrive.com>

Victory over Fortis allotments

By Sheila Armstrong

The Fortis Green Community Allotments Trust has completed the purchase of the Fortis Green allotments site from Thames Water, after months of campaigning and negotiating.

The deal was done exactly one year to the day after Thames Water's shock announcement that they were selling the land for potential housing development. Now the land will be owned and managed by the not-for-profit organisation set up last year, maintaining its use as allotments for all time. On its website reporting the good news, the trust thanked all its supporters for their donations and messages of goodwill. It said: "None of this would have been possible without the fantastic

contributions of the local community and friends from further afield. We're extremely grateful for your help in saving this small but lovely part of green North London from the threat of development."

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