

**Letters****Crazy paving****Dear Editor,**

I thought the Soapbox article in praise of the newly arranged paving in front of the Muswell Hill Odeon in the April edition of The Archer was very interesting, but I would like to offer an alternative viewpoint.

Previously we had on this site a side road with free parking for visitors to Muswell Hill, and raised beds of plants, providing both greenery and somewhere for people to sit.

All we have now is off-white paving stones. If you want to park you have to drive into the Odeon car park at some expense. You can sit down outside the cafe, but only if you buy something to eat.

I wonder, did anyone ask the shopkeepers of Muswell Hill if they approved of the removal of free parking areas for potential customers? Was there any sort of survey before these changes? And who paid for it all, bearing in mind how cash-strapped our councils are supposed to be?

What it now makes me think of is an architects' model; architects are notorious for building models without anything actually useful for pedestrians or passers-by, as they apparently make the place look untidy.

Rumour has it that the whole project was intended to remove convenient areas where pupils from Fortismere School were apt to congregate during lunchtime periods and after school, socialising, eating, and, horror of horrors, apparently dropping litter!

Yes, this whole project, at a cost of I don't know how many thousands of pounds, was designed to reduce the amount of litter dropped by young students! Was anyone else aware of this?

Yours faithfully,
Pete Eiseman-Renyard
Fortis Green, N2.

Old Barn for all**Dear Editor,**

Regarding the future of the Old Barn community centre (*THE ARCHER*, May 2015), there are, as far as I can tell, three areas of land under dispute: the Old Barn building; the play area; and the green woodland next to it.

I feel, as do many others in the local community that I have spoken to, that any decision to develop these areas should fit in with the desires and requirements of the surrounding neighborhood, and not be made by a committee of people representing what they feel we should have.

So far I have had no literature through the post and nobody attempting to reach out to ask me how I feel about the proposed works on these sites. Considering how this will affect the surrounding area I would have thought that this would be the first thing to action. I for one would be interested in what the

majority of residents are in favour of, and what they oppose.

One thing is clear: we cannot just sit back and let this area degenerate any more. How long will it be before the Old Barn becomes a potential target for squatters; how long before there is an accident at the rotting, decaying play area because children climb through the hole in the fence, or the back gate to the park area, held up by a piece of string, breaks and falls onto the public footpath?

As has been echoed in many other letters in *THE ARCHER*, I would like this area to benefit not one single community, but all of us. Reopen the Old Barn, build a park for the children that complements the Newstead Nursery and create a space that breathes a bit of life into the area.

Yours faithfully,
Oliver Jude,
Lucas Gardens, N2.

Avenue character destroyed**Dear Editor,**

I am writing in support of Ian Cormack's Soapbox column in the May issue of *THE ARCHER*. The Bishops Avenue is comprised of very large, expensively luxurious properties, constantly being rebuilt in ever more incongruous and flashy styles, not in keeping with the traditional English large houses which were built in the Avenue from its construction in 1887 by famous architects of the day.

There is little outward sign of community along The Avenue, with privacy, exclusion and security dominating recent developments. Many houses are kept empty except for caretakers round the back. As Mr. Cormack observes, this is happening all over central London. Land and properties being kept out of use by foreign investors should be subject to a Land Tax or Rent which could be put to the benefit of the local community.

The Bishops Avenue falls within the Hampstead Garden Suburb Conservation Area, designated by Barnet Council in 1968. This means that the council's efforts in the area should be geared to preserving and enhancing its special character. Why has the council not upheld its duty in this regard? Houses which have beauty and historical interest, be they large or small, should be preserved for ensuing generations.

Yours faithfully,
Primrose Chamberlin,
Leicester Road, N2.

Get in gear for cycling breakout

Breakout - Chain reaction: Riders get ready to set out on last year's Suburban Breakout. Photo by Jim Brown of Stevenage CTC.

By Nick Bloom

It's time once more for East Finchley's annual cycling challenge, the 100 kilometre Suburban Breakout on Sunday 12 July, organised by Central London CTC, with help from Barracuda Cafe and Bike & Run on the High Road.

The route is a fairly easy spin into Hertfordshire with one or two little lumps, but push hard or take it steady, it's not a race. Your speed overall must be above 15km/h, no more than 30km/h. It's an ideal 'first event', and a good 'first on fixed', as well as being a pleasant training ride for those doing Ride London soon after.

This is an audax event, so it's about getting round under your own steam. You have to follow the route sheet (no signs), and sort out any mechanicals (no broom wagon). There are no timing chips, no gold medals, but there is a fine cup of coffee when you get back.

The start is at Barracuda Café, 118 High Road, N2, at 9.30am, but please turn up in good time, especially if you have not entered. Advance entry £7, on the day £10.

For more information, routesheet, map and entry forms please see the website www.centrallondonctc.org.uk/audax. You can also contact the organiser Nick Bloom by email at nick@centrallondonctc.org.uk and by phone on 07768 354010, or pop in to Bike & Run on the High Road for advice.

Any reader who feels strongly about any matter is invited to use this "Soapbox" column.

Please note that opinions expressed are those of the writer alone.

**Take back the city**

By Sam Grove

On Saturday 9 May a campaign called Take Back the City was launched in East London. The campaigners are ordinary people who believe that London has become a city run in the exclusive interests of a tiny minority of rich people at the expense of the majority and who are committed to bring London back under democratic control.

The idea is to create a popular people-led movement that can build a set of radical demands that will make London more democratic and inclusive.

East Finchley in the 1980s and 1990s was quite poor when compared to other areas in North London very close by. But it had a rich sense of community. We had youth centres, a football club, a community festival. There were things to do for everyone regardless of wealth. As house prices have soared, East Finchley has become much richer financially, but is poorer in terms of its community.

In spite of the changes, East Finchley has managed to resist the erosion of its community in a way that many other areas have been unable to.

We did this when the Tory Council tried to ban our Community Festival. We did it again in blocking the opening of a Waitrose and the closing of our public library. We still have our festival, our newspaper and a High Road full of local shops.

By teaming up with broader campaigns across London the voices of ordinary Londoners can be heard. If you are interested in getting involved email info@takebackthecity.org or visit the website www.takebackthecity.org

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