



Letters to the editor

The good, the bad and the ugly

Dear Editor,

Having arrived accidentally around 1990 I realise that I've ended up living in East Finchley for nearly half my life; the longest I ever lived anywhere before was five years. Inertia and convenience has kept me here but now it's time to downsize, moving only to the other branch of the Northern line and close to the Heath extension, so still within walking distance. Good things about East Finchley I shall come back for include: the wonderful Fuel Lands allotments; Black Gull books; walks on the wild side in Coldfall, Highgate and Queens woods; being able to walk or cycle off-road to Ally Pally or Finsbury Park along the old railway; the cafes therein (shame about the loss of the cafe in Cherry Tree); the fabulous Phoenix cinema; the purpose-built genius Iyengar studio behind the off-licence; the level of community engagement and activity exhibited by *THE ARCHER*, the community festivals and friendly locals. What I shan't miss will be the whingeing about change and development. Why is new development always met by comments on how much worse traffic and parking will be? Really no-one but the infirm has any excuse to drive or be driven locally to the High Road. The proposed development behind Budgens/Iceland looks interesting and contemporary, if a little over-designed, and will create much needed homes on what is otherwise a really ugly eyesore of a corner site. Bring it on, I say.

And a bit of choice, even if it is from one of the big supermarkets like Sainsbury's, would be welcome. Waitrose would be preferable, as profit goes to all the staff, not shareholders or family owners, but the anti-change brigade shot themselves in the foot fighting that one off. Did no-one see Caffe Nero coming and try to fend that off? As if there weren't enough cafes already, but no butcher, baker or candlestick maker. So farewell, East Finchley, and welcome in the new.

Yours faithfully,
Alexandra Rook,
Park Road, N2.

Lost for words

Dear Editor,

I recently wrote to my MP, Mike Freer, on the subject of the Welfare Reform and Work Bill, Clauses 13 and 14, which will adversely affect many disabled people, stating I had the lifelong degenerative disease Multiple Sclerosis and that proposed cuts to welfare would impact on people with MS. I enclose the closing paragraph of his reply:

"I hope this has also gone some way to explaining the ways the Government is ensuring the system protects those with the most serious conditions, such as [insert relevant condition], including exempting the Support Group component in ESA and its UC equivalent from the benefits freeze and the Benefit Cap."

When I pointed out that his proof reading left something to be desired, I was told that a standard response can be expected from a standard email.

A busy MP using a template is not unacceptable, but to leave a one-size-fits-all-disability insert blank I do find pretty insulting. It left me feeling [insert relevant expletive] very let down.

Yours faithfully,
Harriet Connides,
Manor Park Road, N2.

Parking pickle

Dear Editor,

I recently received a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) for not displaying a valid resident's permit in my car parked outside my own house. This despite the fact that Barnet no longer issues actual permits to display but monitors the system electronically!

I wrote to Barnet who said the PCN was issued erroneously owing to a "technical problem" and the notice was rescinded. However, your readers may be concerned that Barnet has declined to respond to my enquiry as to whether or not they will be issuing reminders to residents to renew their permits.

Beware, as I suspect Barnet will place the onus on residents to ensure their permits are not out of date in an effort to swell income by parking fines.

Yours faithfully,
Malcolm Goldstein,
Address supplied.

Esso site neighbours

Dear Editor,

Regarding access to the site of the former Esso petrol station on the corner of the High Road and Church Lane, when I bought my house in Leopold Road in 2007, I made the effort to find out to whom the strip of land at the back belongs. It is the Junction Road Motor Company and they are based in North Finchley.

As far as I remember they use their land to store vehicles which are waiting for insurance claims to be settled. A few weeks ago I phoned them when the Esso site was razed, and there were no plans to sell.

I suspect a fair number of us would hate to see the site changed. It has recently been tidied up to some extent, and the side entrance is now in more use than previously.

Incidentally, when I first looked into it some years ago, I believe I was told that it was condemned land due to something noxious having been stored there during the war, but I can't substantiate this.

Yours faithfully,
Linda Dolata,
Leopold Road, N2.

Which bus now?

Dear Editor,

What a pity that when the bus shelter near Kokos on the High Road was replaced the Transport for London contractors failed to replace the bus indicator as it was the only indicator with all the East Finchley buses coming through. An indicator really helped in making an informed decision about which bus route to opt for.

Yours faithfully,
C. Stevens,
Fairlawn Avenue, N2.

Academy has done its best

Dear Editor,

I would like to thank all at the Archer Academy for consulting the N2, N3 and NW11 community regarding their admissions policy. Although the school was set up to educate the children in these three postcodes, the catchment area has shrunk to such an extent that this year only children in N2 have been offered a first round proximity place. Children from N3 and NW11

have unfortunately missed out. The fact that the Archer Academy is so over-subscribed is a reflection of the great reputation it has established in a very short period of time, as well as the lack of secondary school places in the borough, especially for girls. The Academy cannot single handedly solve the problem for Barnet, but I feel that by changing its admission policy to include the four feeder schools in NW11 and N3 in addition to allocating proximity places, it has done its best to remain true to its original vision of serving the children of NW11 and N3 as well as N2.

Yours faithfully,
Fiona West,
Address supplied.

Elephant in the room

Dear Editor,

The Archer Academy Trust has now published the results of its recent admissions consultation and has reached a decision based on the evidence, with a commitment to reviewing the decision on an annual basis. However, it is clear that local parents are feeling extremely anxious about their chances of securing high-quality secondary school places for their children.

The elephant in the room is that we actually have four local schools which are within walking distance if you include Fortismere, but two of these schools are unpopular with local parents and under-subscribed. In this current year 7 (2015-2016) I understand that Bishop Douglass School has 97 vacant places and Christ's College has 79 vacant places, when both schools have capacity for a 180 intake each (larger than the Archer Academy's 150).

In 2010 the governors at Christ's College turned down a request to go co-educational. In 2013 the

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school received a disappointing "needs improvement" grading from Ofsted. Parents have voted with their feet and are not choosing Christ's College for their sons. Similarly, Bishop Douglass does not look like it has made much headway in becoming a first-choice school for local Catholic families.

Isn't it time that something was done to hold these two schools to account for this terrible waste of our local resources, particularly at a time when the pressure for school places is becoming even more intense? What action are the governors at these schools taking to improve matters? What action can our local politicians take?

Yours faithfully,
Helen Drake,
Address supplied.

Boxed in

Dear Editor,

During the school drop-off run to my children's school, we have noticed an increasing number of unsightly green telecom boxes on East End Road.

There are now 12 of these carbuncles in a row outside the Five Bells pub. This is in addition to two large and malevolent masts.

Do any readers know if there anything we can do to stop the seemingly inexorable growth of these eyesores and preferably have them relocated?

Yours faithfully,
Stuart Miller,
Address supplied.



Relaxing brew: Coffee and Chat members enjoy catching up

Coffee and Chat session ready to welcome you

EFAB's friendly coffee morning, Coffee and Chat, held at the Clissold Arms in Fortis Green every Monday from 10.30am to 12 noon, is going from strength to strength and helping people feel more connected to the local area.

All are welcome to pop in for a cuppa and a chat, with local information available and a friendly ear to listen and share ideas with. There's just a £1 contribution for refreshments.

EFAB Community Friends volunteer their time to be there every week, with attendees

ranging from their 30s to their 80s. Other social events such as lunches and evenings out are being planned by some members.

If you'd like more details about Coffee and Chat or to find out more about EFAB, call Lisa Smith on 020 3778 0228 or email us@efab.org.uk.



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