



What's behind the huge scaffolding on the High Road?

By Janet Maitland

For at least six months a row of shops at 127-133 High Road have been doing business behind a thicket of scaffolding poles. In fact the whole block on the corner of Kitchener Road is covered in scaffolding right to the top of the new roof. The roof and the two storeys of residential flats above the shops are shrouded in protective plastic.

There have been several comments on social media about disruption being caused by the building work and confusion about what is actually happening. Is an extra floor being added or just a new roof, or is it a new roof with a loft extension, and is there planning permission for any of it? We decided to find out what was going on.

No more flats

A planning application for a new roof and a canopy to extend over the external stairs at the rear of the building (reference number 15/04725/FUL) was submitted in July 2015 and approved on 6 October the same year. There were also plans for

an extra fourth storey but these were not approved.

The approval was subject to the submission and approval of details of the materials to be used for the external surfaces of the building. Until then, the only work that could be undertaken was demolition. Details of materials to be used were submitted in March 2017 and approved on 15 May.

Bearing in mind the concerns we'd picked up about the new roof possibly being a loft extension, i.e. additional flats, we asked the council if the building work complied with what had been approved. "The planning enforcement team have investigated and have concluded that the work being carried out is in accordance with the permission in place," said a council spokesperson.

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Some of the East Finchley Artists and their work. Photo Mike Coles

A banquet of beautiful art

The first two weeks in July saw local artists opening their homes for the annual East Finchley Artists Open House weekends. Sixty artists put their work on view in 15 houses around the area plus Stephens House and Gardens in East End Road.

Photographer Mike Coles said: "It seems unique to East Finchley that so many artists of many disciplines enrich and engage with the local community and are part of what makes us special." Find out more about the group at www.eastfinchleyopen.org.uk.

£5K for good ideas

A crowdfunding initiative has been launched as part of the Barnet Together campaign offering people the chance to apply for up to £5,000 to help bring their ideas to life.

Community gardens, street murals, festivals and sports facilities are some of the ideas that might get approval to improve high streets, parks and neighbourhoods.

Barnet Council said projects will be reviewed on a rolling basis, with support for projects that have demonstrated there is a demand within the community for their ideas and have raised a substantial amount of funding of their own. To find out more visit www.spacehive.com/movement/barnet-together.

Make friends with a book

By Daphne Chamberlain

Many of us are discovering that it's fun to read a book together. 'Together' means just that: not reading it alone at home and then meeting afterwards to talk about it. In the Make Friends with a Book meetings, members enjoy together short stories or novels, always with a poem at the end to tie in with the theme of the book.

Those who want to can take turns in reading aloud, stopping at intervals to chat about what they think of it so far. And if the answer to that is the old music hall reply, that's fine. As a member of a local group said, "It gives everyone confidence to join in and express their opinions." Everyone's opinion is valued. As another member said, "It's very welcoming. I feel at home."

Interestingly, it's not unusual to find that people who may have read one or other of the books before actually appreciate them better in this shared experience.

Reading aloud is voluntary, but many people enjoy it, and everyone can enjoy listening as they follow the text. Some groups have members with sight

problems, who can still follow the story in this way.

Two local groups

We have had our own very successful group in East Finchley for several years, meeting at The Old White Lion at 10.30am on Fridays. For some people it may be more convenient to go to a group in Hendon which meets on Mondays, 1.30pm to 3pm, at Cheshire Hall Community Centre, Foster Street, NW4 2AA. This is just off Brent Street, very close to the 143 bus route, and with wheelchair access.

Just drop in, or contact Annette Davies on 07980412905 or Kathryn Fulton on 07801911481: email annettedavies54@gmail.com or kathrynfulton@hotmail.com.



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