



Secretary of State rules on shisha smoking at the Oasis restaurant

By Janet Maitland

The Housing, Communities and Local Government secretary Sajid Javid has ruled that shisha smoking is not allowed at the Oasis restaurant on Church Lane, N2, after a three-year battle which has divided opinion. The restaurant's owner Kahlil Jelbaoui has until 16 May to comply with the ruling.

A Barnet Council spokesperson told us: "We will inspect at some point after this date, though we tend to prefer visits based on intelligence received. Failure to comply is an offence punishable by an unlimited fine."

Restaurant stays, shisha goes

The Secretary of State was asked to rule when Mr Jelbaoui appealed against a notice from the council telling him to stop shisha smoking and demolish the canopy structure over the smoking area at the rear of the premises. The notice was sent last May, shortly after the council finally refused him planning permission to turn the former Alexandra pub into a restaurant with shisha facilities.

Mr Jelbaoui not only appealed against the notice, but submitted another application, this time for a restaurant without shisha use. He withdrew it because of the council's proposed restrictions on opening hours.

The ruling by Mr Javid means that the Oasis can legally operate as a restaurant but it must do so without shisha smoking. Furthermore, Mr Jelbaoui no longer has to demolish the canopy structure and is allowed to stay open until 1.30am on Fridays and Saturdays. There are however conditions about noise levels. We asked Mr Jelbaoui to comment, but were informed he is out of the country.

Local reactions

Some people in the vicinity of the restaurant have objected to the shisha fumes drifting into their homes ever since the

Oasis opened in 2015. Objectors became infuriated that Barnet Council allowed the owner to operate for so long without permission, despite its own campaign against shisha smoking.

At the same time, others saw the new restaurant as a welcome neighbourhood asset, causing far fewer problems than the Alexandra pub it replaced.

Reacting to the news, one local resident said: "The council should have been able to come to this decision without the need for escalation to the Secretary of State." Another called on Barnet to establish a borough-wide framework on shisha smoking near to schools and residential homes.

Spring quiz

Age UK Barnet is hosting its first Spring Quiz to help raise funds for the charity's work in the area.

Everyone is welcome to enter a team of eight or you can just come along and join one of the Age UK Barnet social teams of staff, volunteers and clients. It will take place at 7pm on Thursday 26 April at the Ann Owens Centre in Oak Lane, N2. Entry costs £10 per person, which includes a home-made lasagne. For more information call Wendy on 020 8432 1415 or email community@ageuk-barnet.org.uk.



Reel fan: David Gritten in the projector room at the Phoenix Cinema

Film aficionado wants to talk about the movies

The Phoenix Cinema is starting up its lively film discussion group again after a hiatus, this time with a well-known name at its helm. East Finchley resident David Gritten is a veteran British film journalist who has worked both in London and Hollywood.

He spent 10 years in Los Angeles as an entertainment writer and editor for various newspapers and magazines. On returning home, he spent two decades as London-based arts correspondent for the Los Angeles Times, and as a film critic, interviewer and profile writer for the Daily Telegraph. For two years he was chair of the London Film Critics' Circle. He also edited the last two annual editions of Halliwell's Film Guide.

"I've always loved the Phoenix and its film programming," he said. "I'd go out of my way to visit it even before I moved into the area. I'm delighted to be playing a small part in the range of events it offers."

All are welcome to join the group which will meet monthly and discuss that week's main

release over a glass of wine or cup of coffee in the Phoenix cafe bar.

The inaugural meeting will take place after the early evening screening of *Bombshell: The Hedy Lamarr Story* on Thursday 15 March, which centres on the varied career of the Hollywood legend turned technological genius.

Kate McCarthy, the cinema's Executive Director, said: "We are delighted that David will be leading our film group and look forward to it becoming a regular fixture in the East Finchley film-lover's calendar once again."

To join the film group mailing list, email info@phoenix-cinema.co.uk.

Festival plans are moving fast

By Hilary Townley

Less than four months to go until East Finchley's summer festival in Cherry Tree Wood on Sunday 24 June and things are beginning to move fast.

We've been thrilled by the response to our call for help for the Festival. However we need more! There is still time to get involved with the planning and we do need more volunteers on the day. The more we have, the less you'll have to do. It's great fun and you will be contributing to a fantastic community event. If you want to get involved please get in touch with us at eastfinchleyfestival@gmail.com.

We are delighted by our new website, do check it out at www.eastfinchleyfestival.org and we will be unveiling new

merchandise ideas this year. There are two main ways that we fund the festival to keep it free: the famous brochure, which reaches 10,000 households and businesses, and generous sponsorship. If you would like to take out an ad in the Festival brochure or offer sponsorship to the Festival, please get in touch at eastfinchleyfestival@gmail.com

The next meeting of the organising group is on Monday 19 March at 7.30pm at Martin Primary School, Plane Tree Walk, N2. Everyone is welcome.

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