

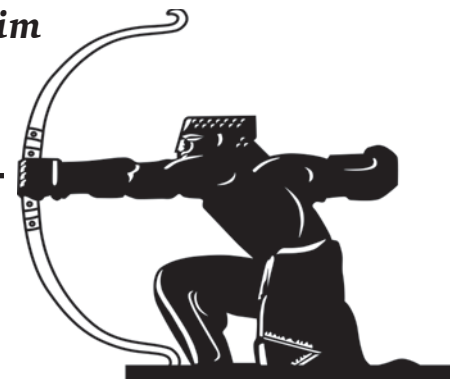


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Chloe Latchmore as Pop Up Opera's Carmen at the East Finchley Arts Festival. See more photos on page 7.

Photo Mike Coles

Homes go-ahead on garage site

By Janet Maitland

For three years, there has been an ugly wasteland at the junction of the High Road and Church Lane in East Finchley after the former Esso petrol station that stood there was demolished. Concrete blocks and metal fencing now border the land and nature has started to reclaim it, leading some locals to name it Buddleia Park.

But, at last, planning permission been given for the new homes that were originally intended for the site following a successful appeal to the Secretary of State. A four-storey block of six flats will front the High Road and three three-storey terraced houses will run along Leopold Road. Sixteen parking spaces will be provided.

Appeal after two applications

Why did it take so long? The developers, Leopold Properties Ltd, submitted a planning application early in 2016, a few months after buying the site from Esso. But Barnet Council turned it down because the housing was thought to be overbearing, bulky, at odds with the surroundings, and an overdevelopment of the site. After another application was refused in 2017, despite some changes, the developers submitted an appeal.

Secretary of State James Brokenshire MP allowed the appeal as he considered the buildings would not, in fact, be



New homes: How the flats would look from the High Road.



Terraced: The three proposed houses on Leopold Road.

over-dominant or out of place. The terraced houses will chime with existing Leopold Road houses, and the block of flats will blend with the mix of other buildings on the High Road.

Soft landscaping will create

a 'green buffer' round the perimeter and the access road down the middle of the site will instill a feeling of openness, said the appeal application.

"I was surprised the council refused the application as they usually approve far worse applications," said East Finchley councillor Arjun Mittra. "It is good to see some family homes, although I would have preferred some retail and employment space, or the retention of a much needed petrol station."

Smoke 'buffers' required

The developers must build non-habitable spaces, such as corridors, on the side of any new homes that are close to the neighbouring Oasis restaurant in Church Lane and its shisha smoking canopy. This was a planning condition based on four site visits made back in May/June 2017 when the inspector detected the smell of shisha smoke, when the wind was in a westerly direction.

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"Give us more time to save the Phoenix"

By John Lawrence

Phoenix Cinema staff made a heartfelt plea to keep their picturehouse independent at a packed public meeting, saying the proposed deal to hand over operations to the Curzon Cinemas group should be put on ice while alternatives are fully explored.

Addressing more than 200 people at the meeting on Sunday 28 October on behalf of Phoenix staff, assistant technical manager Nathan Cable said the Curzon deal was being pushed through in an unnecessary rush and called it a "short-term fix in place of a long-term strategy".

Speaking to The Archer afterwards, Curzon's director of cinema development Rob Kenny said his company would be willing to "pause" the closing stages of the contract arrangement.

Continued on page 6