



The opening of the new Sainsbury's on the High Road. Photo Diana Cormack

## Sainsbury's store opens after a three-year wait

By Diana Cormack

Almost three years after announcing it would be coming to East Finchley, Sainsbury's finally opened its new Local store on the High Road last month.

The two long-empty properties on the corner of Leicester Road, occupied by Bike and Run and restaurant Mama Jack until early 2016, were a blot on

the landscape and people were beginning to wonder if the shop would ever materialise.

Sainsbury's, who originally planned to open in the

summer of 2016, said it came across some obstacles which forced it to take its redevelopment plans back to the drawing board.

However, once work started last autumn, it was quickly finished and the time came for the opening ceremony, which was beautifully performed by a group of children from Holy Trinity Primary School breakfast club.

Store manager Ezmi Coutinho, who has 15 years' experience working for Sainsbury's, told *The Archer* that she had already had a warm welcome from people in East Finchley and said the store would love to help the community in any way it could.

# Traders won't survive tough times unless we shop locally

By David Melsome

N2United, the business network for East Finchley, finished last year with a soiree at a packed Bald Faced Stag in the last but one trading week before the holidays. Representatives from local shops and businesses as well as from the Phoenix Cinema, No2Plastics and this newspaper, joined together to enjoy food and festive drinks and have fun, but also to reflect on a challenging year, particularly for independent traders.

### Impact of

#### Sainsbury's Local

The soiree happened on the day the long-anticipated new Sainsbury's Local store opened, which many thought was likely to add further pressure to independent traders on the High Road and even further afield on East End Road.

Despite the good humour and merry environment, talk inevitably turned to the difficulties small businesses face and what can be done to reduce the downturn in trade seen over the past year. It's not just the retailers that are struggling. Restaurants in the area that have managed to stay open have had to cut prices to attract customers at a time when they should have been filled with festive parties.

#### Our custom counts

Chair of N2United and local businessman Nick Allan said: "Now more than ever small businesses and the shops in our community need the support and, more particularly the custom, of the wider community if we are to avoid small businesses closing and the loss of more local shops with the associated negative impact on our neighbourhood."

Government reports show this isn't just a local issue for East Finchley, as similar stories are reported across the country, but Mr Allan added: "Despite the changes in our shopping habits, local people can make a real difference to the local traders we all say we love by making more effort to 'shop

local' and by taking advantage of their special services to help our local trades thrive."

The N2United evening ended with thanks and the presentation of a handmade belt from Koko's to Johanna Vigilante for her service as the group's secretary over the past couple of years as she steps down from the role and heads for Watford to join the new home of the Bobath Centre, where she is interim fundraising and marketing executive.

For more information visit [www.n2united.co.uk](http://www.n2united.co.uk) or follow @n2united.

## No plans to improve 263 bus route

You may remember a letter from reader Anna Lowenstein in our October edition asking why the north end of East Finchley where she lives is served by only one bus service, the 263, and why it often has waiting times of up to 15 minutes.

Transport for London responded to Anna's complaint by saying there were no plans at present to provide more services on this route. Customer service adviser Lauren Bastable pointed out that the 263 was in fact a high-frequency service, claiming there were up to 10 buses per hour in the morning rush hour and around six per hour during the rest of the day.

Anna told us: "If that's their idea of a high-frequency service, heaven knows what the low-frequency services are like. The main problem is the lack of any other bus service on the same stretch of road. If there were other buses going to Fortis Green Road and East Finchley station, I imagine most people would be satisfied if the 263 only passed every 10 minutes, because there would be plenty of alternatives for most requirements."

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