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The tower crane is erected at Prospect Ring for the new block. Photo Mike Coles

A towering sight

Work is well under way on the construction of the new 13-storey tower block in Prospect Ring, N2. Hoardings went up on the building site that was once occupied by a row of homes and garages, and in September a huge



High rise: How the finished block in Prospect Ring will look.

tower crane was installed, standing high above the existing 11-storey blocks on either side.

There will be 51 flats in the new development, which is being funded by Barnet Homes. It is taller than the two existing blocks but narrower and therefore has a smaller footprint on the ground. There will be 24 new parking spaces. Construction work is expected to last well into 2020.

Always waiting for the 263 bus

By Daphne Chamberlain

Last month we published a Soapbox from East Finchley resident Anna Lowenstein. It was a cry of frustration from a bus user dependent on the 263. Anna is relatively new to the area, but she was perpetuating a very long-standing grievance that the High Road section of the route is overcrowded and prone to long waits.

She compared the excellent bus services in Muswell Hill with the one inadequate bus along our High Road. One argument is that East Finchley has less need of buses because we have the Tube, but many people living to the north of the area are as far away from the Tube as parts of Muswell Hill are.

Recently, most people agree that the 263 has improved in reliability, but at the same time new developments mean that it is serving more customers. The result is that travelling conditions in the buses are still often described as like being in a cattle truck.

And look at the typical length of the 263 queue outside the Tube station, compared with far fewer people waiting at the other stop, served by three bus routes.

The Archer has been recording complaints and hopes of improvement to the 263 since at least 2002. Fifteen years ago, then Leslie Road resident Hazel Burnett formed the East Finchley Bus Group, which for several years collected statistics, mounted bus watches, suggested shuttle buses and met with Transport for London. Each time, members were told that traffic further down the route was to blame.

In 2005, London Transport Users Committee identified the 263 as a problem route, particularly the 'solo stretch' between East and North Finchley. Recorded average waiting time was twice as long as it should be and, in just over one in 10 journeys surveyed, passengers




The queue for the 263 bus at East Finchley station. Photo Mike Coles

had to stand for all or part of their ride. However, the Committee said that TfL would probably not consider it financially viable to put on another bus.

In 2006, the then Head of Barnet Environmental Services confirmed in writing that a single bus service along the main radial route between East and North Finchley was inadequate. Barnet Council, however,





were accused of favouring other transport over buses.

It's all a far cry from the 1950s and 1960s when bus passengers on the High Road in East Finchley had the choice of three routes to take them directly into central London. These were trimmed back over the years, leaving just the 263 today running as far as Highbury.




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