



Crowd feeding: Chef Giuseppe Sollo and his partner Silvia Mazzetto are heading a project to provide meals to children who would otherwise go hungry over the school holidays. Photo Mike Coles

Chef cooks up group of volunteers to feed children

By Ruth Anders

After a bid to extend free school meals to children over the October half term was voted down by MPs, East Finchley resident Giuseppe Sollo took footballer Marcus Rashford's statement that "the superstars of this nation lie in local communities" as his inspiration.

Working as a chef in the House of Commons himself and knowing how much food is wasted as a result of health and safety regulations, Giuseppe was spurred to action to make sure youngsters in need didn't go hungry.

"I want to support local children," he told *The Archer*. "I can cook, so I know I can help East Finchley kids who need feeding during school holidays. But I need help to do it."

His initiative prompted an avalanche of responses via the East Finchley Community Facebook group and on Saturday 24 October Giuseppe met a dozen volunteers outside Amici Delicatessen in the High Road, N2.

Long-term support

Giuseppe, under the auspices of East Finchley Neighbourhood Support group (formerly East Finchley Covid-19 Support group) has now teamed up with local chef, Viola Slod-

inska and is forging links with local food banks, schools and religious organisations in order to get meals to anyone who needs them. He hopes his initiative will continue as a long-term project to provide support as long as there is a need.

You can join the team of volunteers or find out how to support the project at www.Facebook.com/groups/EastFinchleyNeighbourhoodSupport

Future of library secured

By David Gritten

After years of uncertainty, the future of Muswell Hill Library finally seems assured. The library, which dates back to 1931, is to remain at its present location, a charming Grade II listed building on Queens Avenue, N10, and work will now be done to upgrade it.

Charlotte Pomery, Haringey Council's assistant director for commissioning, told *The Archer*: "The council is investing around £545,000 on work to improve the library. The works will result in better accessibility, technology upgrades, new furniture and a much-improved customer experience.

"Haringey remains absolutely committed to Muswell Hill Library and to keeping it at its present site, as this huge

investment demonstrates."

This announcement signals the end of a four-year period of uncertainty, during which time Haringey considered moving the library to a site in Muswell Hill Road close to the roundabout.

That plan angered local residents, 2,000 of whom formed the group Friends of Muswell Hill Library to oppose it. The group's chair George Danker recalls: "It was a dark, dingy

place with a low ceiling, no space for parking, and near one of London's steepest hills. Not all the library's users have fantastic mobility. It was inappropriate."

Mr. Danker is convinced Haringey's investment could greatly enhance the Queens Avenue site; he believes a lift to its upper floor would be a good start. And he is pleased by the sum of money being proposed: "It would be brilliant. The building could be there for the next 80 or 90 years. That would do the job."

Huge frustration at 'rushed' cycle lanes on High Road

By John Lawrence

The introduction of two short stretches of bus lane, together with the new cycle lanes along either side of the High Road in East Finchley, has created huge traffic tailbacks at peak hours and robbed shops of precious parking spaces, leaving motorists and traders in despair.

Work began in September and carried on through October, creating dedicated but intermittent cycle lanes in both directions between the North Circular Road and The Bishops Avenue, some defined by a painted blue surface, some cordoned off with bollards.

On the positive side, pedestrians and cyclists have welcomed the accompanying introduction of a 20mph zone for large parts of the High Road, and the lanes themselves make cycling safer in places, although they are not continuous, forcing cyclists to move in and out of the traffic at pinch points.

and pedestrian islands along the High Road have been radically altered to accommodate the new lanes. Hard-pressed shopkeepers along the High Road have seen loading bays outside their premises removed.

Pareesh Shah, who runs C W Andrew Pharmacy, told a meeting of the N2United business network: "Not everyone who uses East Finchley shops and services is local and the easiest way for them to reach us is by car. We could end up losing these customers, putting more strain on businesses during an already ridiculously difficult period."



View from the top deck: A small stretch of bus lane between East Finchley station and the Fortis Green/East End Road junction is causing long tailbacks on the northbound approach.

Impact on traffic and parking

However, drivers heading into East Finchley up the Great North Road from Highgate during peak hours now find themselves sitting in a massive queue of traffic stretching south from the Fortis Green junction to the A1 junction because the previous two lanes of traffic have been funneled into one to make room for a dedicated bus and cycle lane.

Many people are angry at the way the scheme has been implemented, with comments on the East Finchley Facebook page labelling it as "rushed", "confusing" and "dangerous".

Street markings, pavements

Consultation

Barnet Council chose East Finchley to trial the cycle lane scheme for 18 months after receiving time-limited funding from the government. East Finchley councillor Alison Moore told the same meeting that, while backing the scheme in principle, she was frustrated by the lack of consultation with the community.

Cllr Moore pointed out that the council will be obliged to consult fully before deciding whether to make the scheme permanent, and asked people to continue to send their comments to her and her fellow East Finchley councillors.

Council response

The Archer asked Barnet Council why there had been no proper consultation over the scheme and how it would decide whether to keep it in place after 18 months. We also asked for their response to the loss of parking spaces and the rise in traffic congestion. Despite repeated requests, at the time of going to press we had received no answers.

See Letters, page 11.

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