



A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.

Historic house finally bites the dust

By Daphne Chamberlain

Goodbye, Valona House. One of the oldest buildings in East Finchley has finally been demolished as developers move in to prepare for replacing it with a new block of flats.

Anyone new to the area may not have realised that the hoardings that have stood opposite the Underground station for more than three years were partly concealing a handsome 200-year-old house.

Built in the 1820s from local brick, Valona House was here long before the railway, when the Old White Lion pub was a coaching inn called the Dirt House, Market Place was a famous pig market, and neighbouring manor houses stood around the notorious Finchley Common.

The hire car years

Originally one private house with stables, it was bought in 1953 by Cyril Wilds, a well-known local man who ran a fleet of hire cars. He had started off by keeping his cars in the station forecourt, but now moved them to the courtyard of Valona House, and leased the house as flats.

windows, counted against it.

Controversial development

Despite a petition with more than 1,000 signatures, and vehement objections from many other people, including The Finchley Society, the development application was finally granted in June 2018. Objections to the proposals listed poor design, overdevelopment, encroachment on neighbours' privacy, lack of parking space, and the risk of accidents from vehicles being forced to reverse out into the High Road in a blind spot.

Final approval was hedged around with conditions, which only resulted in new plans, involving even more flats (in one instance below ground level).

Last year it was listed for sale at auction, and bought by Can Deniz, who is also building the flats in the car park behind

Budgens. The current plan is for 24 one-, two- and three-bedroom flats, plus a commercial unit. With the Northern line and bus services on their doorstep,

no parking facilities will be provided.



Bring the house down: Valona House being demolished last month. Photo Mike Coles



Frontage: Valona House as it was in the early 2000s

Minicab business Greater London Hire took over from him in 1968, becoming a valued part of East Finchley life. When their lease expired in 2017, they were forced to move to Bounds Green, and developer Safeland were very soon presenting plans to demolish the house and build 21 flats with two parking spaces.

A last-ditch attempt to save the house by getting it listed was unsuccessful. A fire in the 1980s had destroyed a rear extension, and the replacement, plus possible enlargement of some

Clean-up mystery after the night before

By Ann Bronkhorst

An odd time and place to choose for a get-together, a January night and a damp Coldfall Wood. Our picture shows what was left behind the morning after.

Furious, the Friends of Coldfall Wood arranged to meet to clear up after the unknown revellers, only to be beaten to it by persons unknown. These good people not only removed the chairs and litter and filled in the fire site but also left a message saying: "Have fun but please remove your rubbish".

It's great to know that users of the wood care enough to tackle a mess like this one. The Friends send grateful thanks to some unknown good fairies!



Abandoned: Chairs and litter surround the remains of a fire in Coldfall Wood

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