



## Letters

### 4,000 new residents

Dear Editor,

I was one of the energised attendees at the East Finchley Town Team meeting in October with representatives of Regal, the developers of the Great North Leisure Park (The Archer, November 2024).

Concern was expressed that so many issues appear to have not been properly considered either for the wellbeing of potentially 4,000 new residents, nor for those already living in North and East Finchley regarding the pressures on the existing infrastructure of the area. Yet a planning application is being submitted at the end of this year.

This would be a huge scheme situated at some distance between the two town centres, with very few amenities for everyday living planned on site and essentially marooned between the North Circular and High Road. No amount of landscaping plans can disguise the fact that this will be a high-rise and high density scheme in a low-rise residential area with huge impact on that local area.

We were told by Regal that they were in the business of building a development and not creating a new town centre community and therein lie the unresolved problems. As there will be so few planned private parking spaces, the new residents will be reliant on the 263 bus route to not only travel to local destinations and amenities but further afield to, for example, the Whittington and Barnet Hospitals. At a previous consultation I learnt that Regal and Barnet Council are in discussions with Transport for London regarding the weak transport links.

Our community will lose its much used local recreation facilities, which may be replaced by substantially reduced versions of the Vue Cinema and Hollywood Bowl in addition to a cafe, on Lodge Lane car park in North Finchley, but again with reliance on the 263 bus route.

The North Finchley Regeneration Plan 2025 plan will also introduce high-density housing on Lodge Lane car park and near the Tally Ho pub into an already densely populated area, again greatly impacting local amenities, transport and services.

**F Petch,  
Hertford Road, N2.**

### We need more homes

Dear Editor

I understand the concerns about the plans to build almost 1,500 new homes on the leisure park in North Finchley (The Archer, November 2024) and hope that they will be properly addressed by Barnet Council when considering the planning application.

At the same time, we cannot all throw our hands up in horror every time new housing is suggested. London is already densely packed and there is a massive need to find new homes for young people and families.

The leisure park site is old and tired and seems to me a good spot for new homes. Okay we will lose a few restaurants but goodness knows there are enough of those elsewhere. If the Vue Cinema moves to North Finchley, we still have the Phoenix right here in East Finchley.

I'd rather new homes were built, but with proper thought given to providing good facilities nearby and proper regard to capacity at local schools and doctors' surgeries. This is where the council must play its part.

**Mike Haworth,  
Long Lane, N2**

### Time to rethink bus/ cycle lane

Dear Editor,

Thank you very much for this excellent local newspaper. I wish to draw your attention to the situation regarding the bus/cycle lane running from just past the station up to the main traffic lights, which was implemented during the covid pandemic.

During the time of the pandemic it was a worthy consideration for cyclists during this very restrictive time. I feel though that, since those restrictions finished, the bus/cycle lane should have been removed.

I have noticed that every day there is severe congestion leading up to the traffic lights and the traffic is often backing up beyond the junction with The Bishops Avenue. This means most of the vehicles are pumping out toxic fumes particularly near the station and under the bridge.

The important thing to consider is the health dangers to the people and especially young ones in this vicinity. Opposite the station is a children's nursery and behind the station is the Archer Academy. Under the bridge are people queuing at the bus stop and then also the hundreds of people going to and from the station.

The implementation of the bus/cycle lanes also took away many parking spaces which were precious for people using the shops, restaurants and cinema. Also, we lost the space for our lovely French Market which was very popular. I believe that the least that could be done is for a survey to take place.

**Roger Ford,  
Great North Road, N2**

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Opera maestros: Pianist Brian Hughes, left, and singer Massimo Modoni

# Curtain up on the world of Italian opera singing

By John Lawrence

The beautiful sound of Italian opera being sung live is often associated with open-air arenas or grand and historic theatres... but it can also be appreciated up close and personal in a house in Squires Lane, N3.

For that is where the Accademia dell'Opera Italiana runs sessions for anyone interested in learning the techniques of Bel Canto and opera singing more widely, with masterclasses by a roster of world-class artists.

The Accademia was founded by music director and pianist Brian Hughes and professional baritone Massimo Modoni to give a platform for the next generation of opera talent, of all ages. Some people who have signed up have come from a choral background,

others haven't sung for years but want to learn new skills.

The pair invite professionals to join their sessions training singers at their home in Squires Lane, with piano accompaniment, covering the essential techniques and mastering some of the great Italian arias from operas by composers like Puccini and Verdi.

Accademia secretary Gabrielle Wong said: "The idea of the Accademia is to fill a gap. There are all sorts of church

and community choirs but very little dedicated to singing opera excerpts and putting on operas.

"So many people have an amateur interest in it but perhaps don't know where to start. Singers don't need a high level of skill to join us. That is where Brian and Massimo will pass on their knowledge."

The Accademia stages regular concerts and hosts a summer residency in Puglia, southern Italy. Find out more at [accademiadelloperaitaliana.com](http://accademiadelloperaitaliana.com)

## Review: Fast Upstairs at the Gatehouse

By Jessica Holt

This play by Kate Barton and Stephen Bennett, well written and performed with skill and commitment, is based on the true story of Linda Hazzard, a physician who practised unconventional methods to cure people, including fasting and herbal remedies.

It explores her life, her unshakeable belief in her methods that had devastating effects on two women, and a journalist who brings her to justice. Despite being set in the 1900s, it resonates today as a warning against unregulated medication and alternative treatments.

Sarah Thom is convincing as Linda Hazzard, presenting the audience with a driven, cold-hearted individual who claims she is a success in a male-dominated world of science. But our sympathy is with the two patients who pay to be cured and who are destroyed physically and mentally: Claire, played by Maia von Malaise, and Dora, played by Imogen Gray.

They are naïve, and the actors portray sensitively how Hazzard is able to manipulate them and bring about death in one case and mental instability in the other.

But it is not all doom and gloom!

Much humour and energy is provided by journalist Horace Cayton, played by Jermaine Dominique. Horace is determined to get to the truth and there is a great scene where he confronts Hazzard, extracting the truth from her and uncovering her motives, which include her greed for money and a determination to establish her methods as credible.

The set, lighting and sound elements support the play successfully, creating an appropriate atmosphere and environment of the sanatorium and the gloomy weather outside.

The actors use the space freely – an office is Hazzard's in one scene then Horace's in another. He is never without his telephone as he pursues his story. An engrossing story, largely unknown, and told truthfully with thought-provoking entertainment.



Convincing: Sarah Thom, playing Linda Hazzard, presents her as a driven, cold-hearted individual who claims she is a success in a male-dominated world of science.

Send your letters to:  
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