



15th July 2024

Hello again, friends of the Save New Barnet Campaign, and welcome to our final newsletter.

Victoria Quarter Planning Application (Gasworks Site)

Thank you for supporting us through this long and closely fought campaign (see the timeline below!). It has, at various stages, taken all our spare time and energy. Over the course of almost 16 years, we have poured over hundreds of drawings, written reports and speeches, leafleted the local area and generally tried to raise awareness amongst local councillors for the need for appropriate development including homes which are comfortable to live in and responsive to climate change. As a community voice, we have also raised concerns over the impact locally, in particular relating to infrastructure and parking issues. We would like to say a big thank you to everybody who has helped in whatever way they could, including delivering leaflets, assisting with exhibitions at the community centre and generally letting others know what has been happening at the gasworks site.

Disappointingly, as we're sure you already know, permission was granted in March for the most recent Fairview proposal despite considerable opposition including a strong objection from the Save New Barnet Group (SNB). The approval is for 420 flats, bringing the overall total (including the Gateway Site currently under construction) to 486. This is an increase of 115 units (30%) over the scheme approved in 2016/17 (and 181 units or 59% over the original 2014/15 scheme). The earlier proposals were already designed at urban densities but, at four and five storeys (with the compromise of a single eight storey tower added in 2016/17), they were more appropriate responses to the site and would have provided a better standard of accommodation, particularly in terms of daylight levels and overheating. Had Fairview got on and built the 2016/17 scheme, new residents would have moved in by now.

Planning Applications Timeline

- 2015: approval for 305 flats and houses (4-5 storeys high); the proposal is submitted by ASDA and references SNB's masterplan. It is strongly supported by SNB and local residents. Barnet's planners state that the scheme has 'optimised' density, in other words that a level has been reached beyond which design failures such as lower levels of daylight in flats would undermine the overall quality of the scheme.
- 2016/17: approvals for 357, then 371 flats and houses. Both applications are made by One Housing Group. The Salvation Army site is included (2016) and pressure from the GLA to further increase density leads to the inclusion of a single eight storey block in 2017. Since the site is not designated as suitable for tall buildings, SNB remains neutral in relation to this amendment and expresses concerns over height and density.
- 2020: an application by Citystyle Fairview for 652 flats is refused (despite a recommendation for approval from Barnet's planners). Local residents and SNB strongly oppose the scheme and almost 1000 objections are logged on Barnet's planning portal.

- 2021: a second application by Citystyle Fairview, this time for 539 flats, is refused. Again, this had been recommended for approval by Barnet's planning department. Residents and the SNB put up strong opposition for a second time. Following the decision, councillors on the planning committee attend a meeting with Barnet's planners to which there is no public access. They are persuaded to withdraw the objection relating to the poor quality of the proposed living accommodation.
- 2022: Fairview appeals the 2021 decision to refuse planning permission. SNB maintain that the living accommodation proposed is of an unacceptably poor standard and that the proposal is over-dense/inappropriate in relation to its context. Barnet Council joins with SNB on the grounds of inappropriate development which is harmful to its context. The Planning Inspector upholds the decision to refuse permission on both grounds.
- 2022: Fairview takes the appeal decision to judicial review. Their case is dismissed.
- 2023: The site is split into two sections and permission given for the Gateway site (now under construction) for 66 flats and a retail unit.
- 2024: approval for a further 420 flats is given, bringing the overall total to 486.

What did we achieve?

- Reduction in density: at 486 units, the scheme is less dense than Fairview's previous submissions, of 652 units in 2020 and 539 units in 2021.
- Some reduction in height: compared with the developer's previous two applications, there has been a reduction in height. The 2020 scheme increased Block A to ten storeys with the majority of the remaining blocks between seven and nine storeys. The 2021 scheme featured eight 7-storey blocks – just under the threshold for Barnet's classification as 'tall'.
- Some variation in block typology: both the 2020 and 2021 schemes consisted of a series of rectilinear blocks set out on a grid, resulting in a sterile, regimented appearance. The 2021 proposal which went to Planning Appeal in 2022 was described by the Planning Inspector as 'an alien typology' which caused 'a dislocation within the area'. The reintroduction of 'finger blocks' in the latest proposal (loosely based on the 2012 and 2016/17 designs) has introduced some visual variety although this is rather undermined by the increased height of the buildings.
- Improved landscaping: with the reintroduction of the 'finger block' layout, there is a more 'free-flowing' connection with the park and, if the landscaping scheme is implemented, the 'soft edge', where garden spaces open onto the park, is a welcome improvement compared to the access road which marked the park boundary in previous proposals.

What are we disappointed with?

- Density: this has increased by 30% compared with the scheme approved in 2016/17 (and 59% compared with the original 2015 scheme). Squeezing in additional units has exacerbated design problems (see below) and as a result, the proposal fails to comply with standards set out in the GLA's London Plan as well as local planning policy.
- Overheating: almost half the new units require active cooling, increasing energy consumption. This is expensive to run and since the figure rises to 77% in the London Affordable Rent units, will disproportionately affect residents on lower incomes. It is a consequence of a developer-led project in which standard flat designs have been deployed along the railway line and shading devices rejected at an early stage on cost grounds. A more sustainable design approach suggested by SNB for the buildings along the railway line, taking account of orientation and noise as recommended by the London Plan, was rejected by the developer.

- Poor daylighting levels: 25% of the new flats fail to meet daylighting guidelines (rising to 38% in the London Affordable Rent units). This is largely the result of the developer having reconfigured the design of the finger blocks, increasing the height to six storeys and reducing setbacks. Many of the units which fall below guidelines do so by a significant margin.
- Habitable Rooms without windows: although the London plan prohibits kitchen dining rooms without windows, there are 35 such habitable rooms in this scheme. There are also 17 kitchens without windows – posing a risk of condensation and mould should mechanical ventilation stop working.
- Undersized living areas: many living spaces do not comply with expected standards for area and habitable room widths set out in the London Plan. The worst affected blocks are the London Affordable Rent units where 83% fail to meet expected standards.
- Loss of the houses: the houses in the 2015 and 2016/17 schemes helped integrate the scheme into the surrounding area and also provided visual variety. Victoria Quarter is now a development of flats only with no houses.
- Height: in contrast to the 2016/17 scheme, the majority of the blocks in the current scheme, at six storeys, fail to comply with the height limit of four to five storeys set in the New Barnet Town Centre Framework and will be very imposing and out of keeping with the existing area, particularly when viewed from Victoria Recreation Ground. The additional storey height on the finger blocks is particularly detrimental to daylight levels in flats on the lower floors.

What next?

The Save New Barnet Group (SNB) was originally formed in 2008 to represent residents' objections to applications to build superstores - by ASDA on the gasworks site and Tesco along East Barnet Road. We produced an alternative masterplan (for low rise housing and a swimming pool) and subsequently, the group's focus shifted to ensure that any development was appropriate to its outer London location, providing good quality, comfortable homes, resilient to climate change. Homes which would still be here and successful in 100 years time. Although the recently approved scheme does not live up to our hopes and expectations, its approval means that there is little more that we can do as a group in relation to the gasworks site.

How can local issues be addressed in the future?

Although SNB has, at times, highlighted other issues raised by residents (for example changes to bus routes) in future, any local concerns should, if possible, be raised directly with our local councillors, assembly member, or MP (contact details below). However, as communication with the council has become more dependent on the use of digital skills, some groups of people find making their voice heard difficult and the Community Centre is often approached by local people about all sorts of problems including fly tipping, house extensions, builders burning waste, pot holes etc. NBCA still exists and, as well as providing services and running many community activities at the centre in Victoria Road, is happy to guide and advise people on local issues. In particular, staff at the centre are currently putting together an up-to-date sheet with advice on making complaints about Council Services and basic guidelines about the planning application process. Like SNB, the formation of NBCA was itself a response to a local planning issue - a plan in 1971 to drive a road across Victoria Recreation Ground to get access to the Gas Board Offices. Locals pointed out that the Board owned an old social club building which could be removed to create the link road from Victoria Road to the Board's Offices (this is the other part of the Albert Road loop) and so the problem was avoided!

New Barnet Community Association

The Community Centre, 48-50 Victoria Road, Barnet, EN4 9PF

020 8441 7044

newbarnetca@gmail.com

How can you help with more general planning issues in the future?

As individuals, we will still be flagging the discrepancies between what planning policy says and what developers are delivering. If house building continues as a developer-led process after streamlining the planning process, we are concerned that the result will be developers making substantial profits in return for producing poor quality homes that neither meet our needs nor respond to climate change. We are also concerned that Barnet's planners have recommended approval of every scheme proposed by Fairview regardless of inappropriately high densities and poor design quality which doesn't comply with planning requirements. We will be talking about these issues with our local councillors, our MP and our GLA representative. Their contact details are below if you want to let them know your thoughts and have a spare moment.

Great North Leisure Park N12 OGL (Finchley Lido site)

As mentioned above we have from time-to-time highlighted other issues which we feel need bringing to the community's attention and on that note, we would like to highlight "The Finchley Lido Site Complex" known as "Great North Leisure Park" which is sparking much conversation from residents in close proximity to the area. This has fallen on our radar primarily because we do not think of it as just a close proximity issue but a borough wide issue. Why? It is a big WHY! The initial talk was the LOSS of the Finchley Swimming Pool, Bowling Alley, Cinema and Restaurants. A massive loss of leisure infrastructure to all Barnets Residents as well as those from further afield.

Attached to this newsletter are 3 documents we have been sent by the local Resident's Association whose catchment area this falls within. We would strongly urge you to grab a cuppa and have a read. There are 3 documents in total, each consisting of 2 pages. They will give you an outline of what has been going on. In principle, the first ideas being floated around were that EVERYTHING would go and only accommodation would sit on the site. The initial outcry from the immediate local community was a resounding NO. We can confirm that this has been acknowledged by the Council and the Developers, but the question is to what extent.

So, do you use the Finchley swimming pool, go to the multiplex cinema, have a family or group outing to the bowling alley, or know someone that does? If so, you need to sign up, speak up and support the Finchley Society in their efforts to secure the leisure infrastructure.

Don't let Barnet residents lose out on vital leisure.

Correspondence relating to the Great North Leisure Park should be sent to The Finchley Society:
www.finchleysociety.org.uk

Attachments:

- Finchley Society concerns re North Finchley Regeneration
- Lodge Lane Car Park Development Proposals March 2024 – LLN12RA Issues
- Great North Leisure Park N12 OGL – a design brief

A final thank you for reading our newsletters and supporting our campaign over the last 16 years.

Kind regards,

Save New Barnet Campaign Team

Contact Details for your Elected Representatives

East Barnet Ward Councillors:

All c/o Labour Group, Members Room, Hendon Town Hall, The Burroughs, Hendon, NW4 4BG

Councillor Philip Cohen
07716 092 333
cllr.p.cohen@barnet.gov.uk

Councillor Edith David
07716 092 375
cllr.E.David@barnet.gov.uk

Councillor Simon Radford
07716 092 393
cllr.S.Radford@barnet.gov.uk

London Assembly Member for Barnet and Camden:

Anne Clarke AM
anne.clarke@london.gov.uk
www.anneclarke.co.uk
twitter.com/anne_clarke
www.facebook.com/Anne4BarnetandCamden

Member of Parliament for Chipping Barnet:

Dan Tomlinson MP
House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA
hello@dantomlinson.org.uk
www.dantomlinson.org.uk
twitter.com/Dan4Barnet
www.facebook.com/dan4barnet



Save New Barnet

Save New Barnet Campaign

c/o The Community Centre, 48/50 Victoria Road, New Barnet, Herts EN4 9PF

 www.facebook.com/groups/18590613740

 www.twitter.com/NewBarnet

E info@newbarnet.org.uk

W www.newbarnet.org.uk

Save New Barnet Campaign is a non-political group of local residents fighting for a better New Barnet. The group seeks to inform the local community about potential changes to the area, and oppose inappropriate developments. The group aims to promote a clear vision for how New Barnet could be developed for the benefit of the community based on the views of local people. The campaign is funded entirely by donations from individuals. It is not bankrolled by any company or commercial organisation.
