



Letters to The Editor

Clamping Down

Dear Sirs

I feel obliged to write to you regarding practices on the part of a wheel clamping and vehicle removal company operating in East Finchley. My Honda Accord went missing from Diploma Avenue on Wednesday 27 August - I had parked it in a private residential car park, around 8.30 am, and discovered the car was missing around 1 am on Thursday. However I had imagined that the car was parked in its usual place for which I have a resident's parking permit. I immediately reported the car stolen to Scotland Yard and Colindale Police, who recommended that I contacted a Call Centre where records for towed-cars are coordinated. The Call Centre confirmed that they had no record of my vehicle being towed away.

Based on this information I formalised my report of a stolen vehicle to the Police. Having waited several days for reports from the Police regarding my stolen vehicle's location, I proceeded to search for and purchase a new car.

Thirteen days after my car's disappearance I received a letter notifying me that the vehicle had been impounded by a private limited company. The letter also stated: "The impoundment and storage charges are due to exceed the value of the vehicle. If the vehicle is not collected in the next seven days we will arrange for its disposal to cover our losses".

Until I received the letter from Vehicle Clamping Securities Limited I had completely forgotten that my car was parked in a tow-away zone - for this reason I reported the vehicle stolen.

Regardless of any legal requirements for clamping companies to report an impounded vehicle to the owner, it should surely be a matter of practice that this is done in a timely manner. Holding the car and levying excessive impoundment charges must surely be seen as an exploitative practice.

Is it fair that a resident can lose their car as a result of a simple mistake? It seems that exploitative corporate enterprises can act as judge, jury and executioner on these matters. There is surely something wrong in this.

Name & address supplied

Undemocratic

Dear Sir,

I have recently received, and responded to, Barnet Council's consultation document concerning the future of the East Finchley Library.

I am not a great user of the Library. I am however disturbed as a believer in local democracy by the way in which this "consultation" is being carried out. I live with my family. We add up to two adults, one 17-year-old and one 15-year-old. We received one consultation form, presumably to be shared out among us as we saw fit. We are a fairly typical family.

What happens where, as for example in the house next door to us, four or five unrelated friends share the premises, and no doubt have different needs and views on this subject? One voice still appears to speak for all.

Is this the planning process, in which 'consultation' must be under-

taken, no matter that the responses to it are ignored? One is more or less used to that, but the credibility of the system would be enhanced if one felt that all potential consultees were in fact consulted. Why not one questionnaire to each person on the local Electoral Register?

Yours sincerely, F O H Coulson Durham Road.

The Real Ruestions

Dear Sir,

We received a survey recently regarding the proposed library, but not once does the questionnaire actually ask you (or even mention) whether you are for or against a Waitrose. By looking at the questionnaire, one does wonder about the integrity of the Conservative council who are backing this for their own self-interests and not the public's. Clearly, if they were interested in what the public wants they would ask the one question, which they are afraid to ask. Even money that they would never produce the results of this if it was asked.

We think it is outrageous that the only way that the Council can get the Waitrose building in is by selling the idea of a new improved library, almost one could interpret being a corporate back hander.

Why don't they send out a survey and ask the 'real questions' which the 'local people' want to answer? I dare the Council to send out a questionnaire to the public of East Finchley asking the question: Do you want a Waitrose in East Finchley?

This does beg the perplexing answer to the question: If the public don't want a Waitrose in East Finchley, why are they proposing to put one there? The answer of course is rhetorical.

Name & address supplied

Protest at Procedure

An open letter to Leo Boland, Chief Executive, Barnet Council Dear Mr Boland

Re: Library Consultation, East Finchley

I am writing to protest at the conduct of this consultation. The questionnaire and exhibition are both leading and grossly misleading by not fully informing the residents of all the options and the implications of each option.

Everyone will tick Option B - why not go for what seems the best option?

However, people are not being fully informed on the following:

- (a) There are no council funds to build the new library in Option B, (b) Option B can only be built as part of a commercial development to build a very unpopular and outsized supermarket on our high street, and (c) The existing library could be successfully modernised and extended, a group of independent architects from East Finchley have shown that.

Barnet is not offering/exploring the option of modernising and extending the existing library, and not telling people about the link to the outsized supermarket because a resident 'mandate' for a new library would provide the pretext for compulsory purchase orders against existing businesses standing in the way of the developer's plans for the building of this supermarket.

Residents will be very angry

when they find that the survey they have taken part in, in good faith, ends up being cynically used as a lever for an unpopular over-development that will choke East Finchley with traffic and kill off its High Road.

I look forward to your reply

Lilia Bylos Address supplied

One-sided Representation

Letter sent to Pam Usher, Head of Customer Care, London Borough of Barnet (edited).

Dear Ms. Usher

Following our previous correspondence and in the light of the existing building being listed, I write again to offer for discussion our proposals for the refurbishment of the existing East Finchley Library.

Your exhibition at the Library appeared very one sided, listing 'limitations' for the refurbishment and 'facts' for a new library.

Our proposal has gathered extensive support from groups such as The Finchley Society, from our local primary schools' boards of Governors (it appears the Head teachers are unable to comment) and through press coverage, confirming that these plans are worthy of your attention.

You may be interested to know that we were refused permission at the Library to pin up two A4 sheets showing our scheme on either of the two public notice boards despite one of them being a 'pay and put up anything'. We were told this would need Tricia Little's permission; we still await her response.

Our scheme is sensitive to the Grade II listing of the existing building and we are advised that implementing it should not be an issue with regard to the listing. Could you confirm what, if any, implications this may have on our Council's plans to relocate the library? Lastly, we urge you not to sell off our heritage but to use a section 106 (planning gain) on any development that occurs on the Park House site (NOT the adjoining lands) and use the proceeds to refurbish and maintain the freehold on the existing library.

If your reply (as before) refers to the questionnaire and the 'will of the people', we will want to know more about how this council conducts its 'real estate strategy'. The questionnaire proposes a library at EF tube Station without allowing the community full details of the overall development, and what would happen to the existing site. Mr Lyon has told me, himself, that plans for the existing site and building in the event of the library being relocated, have not been discussed. How can you offer the public options without these fundamental aspects being considered?

I look forward to your reply

Yours sincerely James Elliott

Address supplied

Credit this!

Dear Sirs,

I was interested to see your article about 'New Efes' restaurant and the alleged fraud going on. I heard from my father some weeks ago that two of his friends checked their credit card statements after eating there and were indeed billed again and again. I ate there several times and the manager seemed so nice!

Name and address supplied

Any reader who feels strongly about any matter is invited to use this "Soapbox" column.

Please note that opinions expressed are those of the writer alone.



Institutional Disaster?

By Samuel Grove

Since the Council announced plans to build a Waitrose on the Park House site (and adjoining lands) there has been vociferous opposition to it. The concerns of opposing residents predominantly focus upon the implications on the environment, traffic congestion and our local shops. However the proposals may hold much wider implications for East Finchley community which could be just as threatening.

East Finchley is one of the few places in London that can claim to have maintained a community in an age of globalisation where a locality's ability to mark out its identity and determine its destiny are considerably confined. The Waitrose proposals are very much a product of these global processes. East Finchley's success in largely staving off these forces has relied upon a number of local institutions, two of which are seriously under threat from the proposals.

Our local shops serve East Finchley with more than a quality range of goods. They paid for our annual Christmas lights, donate to fundraising events and bestow their windows for the use of residents. Above all they make shopping in East Finchley a social act by encouraging us to talk to one another.

In the initial proposals the library was set to be re-housed on the first floor of a Waitrose supermarket. This too could be to the detriment of our community. Our library is a cherished institution that has come to embody how residents see their relationship with one another. It builds in notions of citizenship and collective ownership into our very surroundings. Were it to be knocked down the library may no longer be regarded as a bastion of the community, but merely a promotional feature of a corporate superstore.

Were the proposals to be carried through, the new Waitrose will not just represent a physical change to our environment but an ideological one.

Word Search

Word search grid containing letters for finding Northern Line stations.

Test your knowledge (and your eyesight!) with THE ARCHER's wordsearch. Can you find the following Northern Line stations?

- Archway, Belsize Park, Brent Cross, Burnt Oak, Camden Town, Chalk Farm, Colindale, East Finchley, Edgware, Euston, Golders Green, Hampstead, Hendon Central, High Barnet, Highgate, Kentish Town, Mill Hill East, Tufnell Park, West Finchley, Woodside Park