

# YOUR VIEWS

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## Unauthorised buildings

### Planners need to get a grip

I totally agree with your article "It's like a shanty town" (*Times Series*, February 27).

From my property I am aware of two unsightly outbuildings that are hugely over the size of conventional garden structures, which appear to be of commercial or residential in nature.

Of particular concern to me is a building that appears to have been built as a commercial refrigerator unit in the back garden of a fast food restaurant owner.

This building is within one metre of my boundary and has been built from eight-inch thick polystyrene insulating panels and has a footprint of some 45 sq m.

I complained to Barnet Borough Council's planning department back in 2012 about this outbuilding, but it insisted the structure was within planning regulations.

I subsequently visited the planning department to dispute its measurements and supplied my own.

Although the officer concerned did not disagree with my measurements, I got the distinct impression he was unwilling to admit the structure had breached the planning regulations. It seemed he was more concerned that if he served an enforcement notice, and the property owner did not comply, it could lead to expense for Barnet Council.

What is a senior enforcement officer's job if it is not to enforce the building regulations?

The second outbuilding I can see from my property is just as massive and appears to be of two storeys.

Barnet's planning department must get a grip of these planning violations now or risk the developments as seen in the borough of Slough.

Name and address supplied

## 20mph around schools

### All for enforcing new speed limit

I have to say that I am all for enforcing a 20mph speed limit around schools ("The figures speak for themselves", *Times Series*, Wednesday, February 20).

There is also another problem I think should be looked at. I live very close to Whittings Hill School, and the parking outside the school and in nearby roads is very dangerous at the start and end of the school day.

With the school at the junction of Whittings Hill Road, Quinta Drive and Nuptune Drive, it is a very busy crossroads.

Please can someone look into this

## Development presentation was full of anomalies

On January 30, Barnet planning and environment committee approved the planning application for Brent Cross Cricklewood.

This involves one of the largest brownfield sites in Europe and it will dramatically affect the shape of our part of north London for decades to come. It is proclaimed to become a world-class shopping centre.

There were ten speakers against the current regeneration plan, including Lib Dem councillor for Dollis Hill Ward Alison Hopkins, representatives of Sarah Teather MP and member of the GLA Navin Shah, local community groups and Barnet Friends of the Earth.

It is astounding that so few questions were asked by the Conservative councillors, considering the huge impact of this development, especially as the presentation by the developers was so lacking in definite information and full of anomalies.

So why didn't they ask some questions, even just to prevent sleepless nights in the future?

Both Barnet and Brent councils are weak when dealing with developers, smoothing their passage rather than subjecting to close scrutiny on behalf of residents. Did Barnet really get the best deal with the Brent Cross Cricklewood masterplan?

These are the issues that Barnet and Brent Green parties think

should have been discussed:

- Will the buildings in the regeneration area be built to the highest environmental standards? What use will there be of renewable energy?

- An expansion of Brent Cross Shopping Centre will further exacerbate the demise of North London high streets.

- The Whitefields estate is to be demolished against the wishes of the residents. It is unclear where they are to be housed and in what standard of housing and at what cost.

- Green spaces as far away as the green area in Cricklewood Lane and the triangles in the Railway Cottages estate are to go.

- An incinerator with a 140-metre chimney is still on the plans despite a recycling target of 50 per cent target by 2020 in the UK, when improved recycling rates already mean many local authorities have reached this figure.

- Cities around the world, such as Madrid, Chicago and Hamburg, are planning to reduce car usage and improve public transport and cycling facilities. So why is Barnet going against this trend?

- 29,000 extra car journeys are expected in the Brent Cross area each day. The buildings are being provided with extra basement space – to no doubt greatly increase parking lots on the quiet in the future.

- The £200million earmarked for road improvements should partly be spent on light rail and improving

cycling facilities.

- This is in a city with the highest air pollution of any European capital city. The A406 is already one of the most polluted roads in London – sections of it have been shown to have twice the EU limit for NO2 pollution.

- Transport connections are badly planned. Cricklewood station and the proposed Cricklewood Parkway station could not both survive together as they are too close together according to Network Rail. It is also doubtful that there will be a modal shift of wealthy shoppers onto buses, as the developers envisage.

- The northern and southern halves of the regeneration area are planned to be separated by a ten-lane A406 and to be joined by a 'living bridge' for cyclists and pedestrians. The bridge to nowhere? There are currently no definite continuous and useful cycle paths planned.

Barnet and Brent Green parties will support any community groups continuing to fight against this damaging plan and assist them in any way we can.

**Members of Barnet and Brent Green Parties including Phil Fletcher, Martin Francis, AM Poppy, Noel Lynch and Sharar Ali**  
**Members of Camden Green Party including Natalie Bennett, Green Party leader and Camden resident Councillor Maya de Souza and Sian Berry**

before there is a very nasty accident with a child possibly being killed. Please so something to stop this happening – now not later.

D Flitney  
Hill Close, Barnet

## Parking meters

### Why not abolish parking charges?

I have read that Barnet councillors are concerned about the cost of reintroducing pay and display parking meters in the borough.

Firstly, as this mess was caused by councillors and not the public, perhaps the cost of removing the totally unacceptable pay-by-phone system and replacing the original cash machines should be borne by the councillors themselves.

Councillors were elected to act for the public, not just to get into power and then do as they please. I don't remember any Conservative manifesto including selling public services to the lowest bidder (or any bidder) or taking away perfectly easy

to manage parking machines and replacing them with high-tech, difficult to use machines. I tried to register when they were first introduced, but the system just crashed. Ever since then, I have totally avoided any council parking space and you have lost hundreds of pounds from me – and I don't think it's just me that is avoiding council parking costs.

If you are worried about the cost of changing the machines over, just take them out altogether and make way for a free parking borough that will get people back in the high streets and visiting the shops and businesses. You will still have yellow lines to generate fines for the council, but unfortunately council mentality would probably just paint more and more lines. I remember finding it quite amusing when Barnet High Street changed to the original parking machines, how many new spaces were found, where before you couldn't park as it affected traffic flows.

The controversial, arrogant and extremely rude Councillor Brian Coleman did just one act whilst in power, that has made a fantastic difference to driving in Barnet – he took out every road hump. Why don't you make another fantastic act

and abolish parking charges altogether – we used to get along fine without them, we still could. And the boroughs businesses could thrive again and warrant paying the huge rates bills.

Phil Atkinson  
Kenerne Drive, Barnet

## Conservatives

### Are councillors fit for purpose?

Whilst perhaps understandable that not one local Tory councillor accepted several invitations to attend a recent public meeting at St James's Church in New Barnet (February 17) organised by the Barnet Alliance for Public Services (BAPS), it was a pity albeit they probably wanted to avoid a verbal roasting from the audience.

One might understand if they were double booked, but it struck me after attending the meeting that BAPS' invitations had been totally blanked. Despite the no-show from the Tory councillors representing the East Barnet ward, a seat for a possible last-minute entrance was provided on the panel. It's also a real pity as the Tories had no opportunity to explain their position on a range of issues.

This left the stage open to councillors from Labour (Pauline Coakley-Webb, Coppetts ward) and Liberal Democrats (Jack Cohen, Child's Hill), the Green candidate for High Barnet (AM Poppy) and Barnet blogger 'Mr Reasonable'.

If the Tories appear so reluctant to attend such meetings can I ask if they organise any public meetings – with a range of panelists – for residents to attend and ask questions in an open debate? I only say all this because a number of residents in East Barnet village have also experienced emailing the ward councillors on several issues to little avail. This hardly strikes me as real engagement with local residents and one wonders if our elected councillors are fit for purpose and just want an easy ride? Now you might understand why I attended the hustings meeting to ask the question that my elected councillors could not answer.

A video of the proceedings can be viewed at [www.barnetbugle.com](http://www.barnetbugle.com)

Roger Aitken  
Jackson Road, East Barnet

## TIMES SERIES

01923  
216216

### REPORTERS

Natalie O'Neill 07795 497327  
noneill@london.newsquest.co.uk

Chris Hewett 07824 530136

chewett@london.newsquest.co.uk

Anna Slater 07795 223610

aslater@london.newsquest.co.uk

### DEPUTY GROUP EDITOR

Michael Pickard 01923 206555  
michael.pickard@london.newsquest.co.uk

### WEB CONTENT EDITOR

Robert Collins 01923 206554  
robert.collins@london.newsquest.co.uk

### GROUP EDITOR

Martin Buhagiar  
mbuhagiar@london.newsquest.co.uk

### GROUP FEATURES EDITOR

Lindi Bilgorri 01923 216331  
lbilgorri@london.newsquest.co.uk

### ADVERTISING

Field Sales Manager  
Sabrina Westwood 01923 216233  
swestwood@london.newsquest.co.uk

### Group Classified Manager

Katy Teather 01923 216290  
kteather@london.newsquest.co.uk

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**Post:** Letters, *Times Series*, Observer House, Caxton Way, Watford WD18 8RJ **Email:** [timesletters@london.newsquest.co.uk](mailto:timesletters@london.newsquest.co.uk) **Fax:** 020 8203 9106 **Internet:** via [www.times-series.co.uk](http://www.times-series.co.uk). Please include your name and full postal address and, where possible, a daytime telephone number. Anonymous letters will not be considered for publication, although names and/or addresses may be withheld where there is good reason. Letters may be edited for length or clarity. The deadline for the letters page is 6pm on Wednesday. Letters may also be published on the *Times Series* website [www.times-series.co.uk](http://www.times-series.co.uk)