

Save New Barnet

Newsletter

n.b.

31st January 2018

Hello again, friends of the Save New Barnet Campaign and welcome to a news roundup.

Victoria Recreation Ground

Work has started on the building of the New Barnet Leisure Centre in Victoria Recreation Ground. It is anticipated that this should be completed by May 2019.

As part of the planning conditions for the development of the swimming pool, a replacement children's playground was required. In December plans were published by Barnet Council for improvements to the entire park. These plans can be seen at the Community Centre in Victoria Road or online on the Council's planning website: tinyurl.com/vicrecplan

We have been monitoring public reaction to this masterplan. There is overwhelming appreciation of the obvious high level of investment shown by the planning application drawings submitted to Barnet which demonstrates that the Council is clearly keen to raise the standards. However, a number of comments reflect concerns that the capital cost is not going to be affordable, and that cuts will be made leaving a pale imitation of the original concept.

At the public consultation sessions for the leisure centre that took place in the bowling club in 2016, details were not known of the Recreation Ground external works and further consultation was promised later. To our knowledge none has been carried out.



The wide range of facilities proposed for all ages is most welcome although there are significant omissions in equipment for children. There is disappointment that the excellent facilities in Oak Hill Park and Friary Park are not being replicated.

There are many areas that are welcome and the following comments are made zone by zone, based on the planning application masterplan document.

PROPOSED ACCESS SECTION

- This drawing has been compiled from out of date information and shows the main access to be down the narrow path by the nursery from Victoria Road. However the future main park entrance from the south west is to be from Albert Road via a new wide ramp and alternative steps as shown on the One Housing Victoria Quarter scheme approved drawings.
- There is no reference to upgraded lighting and CCTV covering the entrances and paths.

ZONE 1

- This is the least overlooked area of the Rec and there are concerns that mounds and climbing walls and similar structures will provide cover for drug dealing and other antisocial behaviour.

ZONE 2

- Concrete table tennis tables are welcomed as are the chess/draughts tables but seating must be durable and vandal resistant.
- Why not also include road safety training and play with miniature road network with pedestrian crossings and junctions as at Friary Park?

ZONE 3

- There are great concerns at the loss of a football pitch. Only one is shown.
- Now that players can use the bowling club facilities for changing and toilets, these pitches are being used more. They are well drained and an asset to the borough. We question whether Sport England have been consulted and whether this acceptable to them.
- Could Zone 1 and part of Zone 2 be used for a 75% full size pitch?
- The football pitch is adjacent to the Pool with activities for children further away. It would be safer and desirable to have the children's equipment nearer to the Leisure Centre.
- Outdoor Gym equipment widely welcomed. This should be located where it has oversight of the children's play area.
- There are concerns about the outdoor theatre. It takes up space that could be used for the second football pitch or other equipment re-located from Zones 1 and 2. It will be labour intensive to cut the grass between the rows and this alone will damage either the seating or the strimmer/mower.
- There is no skateboard/BMX area raised previously and still considered a high priority in the community.

ZONE 4

- Is there a secure see through fence around the play area? There should only be one entrance/exit to make it easier for parents to monitor their children. The drawing suggests planting which could obscure oversight of the area. Sensory planting needs supervision and should be in a separate gated area.
- There appears to be a slide in the drawing but no swings, see saws, ships, climbing frames, fireman's pole, zip line - all the equipment that is heavily used in Oak Hill Park and Friary Park. These are serious omissions.
- The designs for zone 4 are very attractive but also very expensive to provide and maintain. Tunnels, steep mounds and climbing walls can conceal unacceptable behaviour. Sand in an open environment is a potential health hazard as the area is accessed by foxes, rats, cats and dogs, all of which leave urine & excrement.

ZONE 5

- We welcome the nature walk, the biodiversity and the access to Pymmes Brook .
- Will the paths be easily overlooked from the rest of the Rec? The drawing shows shrubs or tall planting.
- Where is the Rose garden? It would be a shame to lose it altogether.
- Where is the Fountain going? This is a key part of New Barnet's history.
- The wooden sculptures look great but will probably have a limited life before they are vandalised, fade, rot and fall apart.

GENERAL POINTS

- Many people avoid the Rec because it is perceived as unsafe, and there have been recent incidents of mugging, antisocial behaviour, vandalism, drug dealing and drug taking.

- There is no reference to improved lighting and CCTV coverage.
- There is a need to ensure planting does not inhibit visibility at all times.
- The Council has limited money and too few staff for the maintenance of roads, paths and parks which is being seen everywhere across the borough. The drawings show items that are expensive to buy, to replace, and to maintain. There is a constant theme of the lack of consideration for the cost of maintaining the grounds and equipment.
- Is there a clearly identifiable safe path around the perimeter of the Rec for the increasing number of joggers and for dog walkers?

SUMMARY

The community overwhelmingly welcomes the fact that the Council is proposing considerable investment to the Recreation Ground and many of the proposals will make a real difference. The main concerns relate to the loss of a football pitch, lack of equipment for primary age children and its location, and in particular the lack of any reference to improve the safety of the public when using or walking through the Rec.

New Barnet Community Association Annual General Meeting

There will be an open public meeting in the Community Centre in Victoria Road starting at 7.30pm on Friday 9th February 2018. After the short business meeting part of the AGM is completed there will be a presentation on the New Barnet Leisure Centre and improvements to the Recreation Ground by Cassie Bridger, the lead officer for this project from Barnet Council.

Victoria Quarter Development

One Housing continue with the groundworks for their major residential development on the former gasworks. Demolition of properties fronting Victoria Road behind the blue hoarding will take place imminently. The council have now granted permission for the modifications to the 'gateway' scheme which will see the demolition of the empty Salvation Army hall.

Ten Years On

It was late January 2008 that residents in New Barnet received a hand delivered letter from Tesco announcing their intention to build a large mixed use regeneration scheme including a superstore. Within a couple of days a group of local residents had met up and set in motion what quickly became the 'Save New Barnet Campaign'. Soon ASDA also revealed their scheme for a superstore and flats on the neighbouring gasworks site.

We have come a long way in ten years. A good housing scheme has been built on the Tesco site. The gasworks site is finally being cleaned up and redeveloped at a reasonable density and height. A long desired swimming pool is being built which will hopefully rejuvenate and protect Victoria Recreation Ground.

Change is inevitable but local residents CAN make a difference if they work together to identify as a community what is for the common good and speak up and lobby those in positions of power.

Regards,
Save New Barnet Campaign Team

Save New Barnet Campaign

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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.