

Report from the Planning Committee 2014–15

This has been a sad year for the Planning Committee. Carol Halls had been our chairman since 2007; she had guided us in a thoughtful and common sense way, and we miss her greatly. Since her death Peter Pickering has been acting as chairman. Avra Archer is our Secretary, and every other month Pat Dunnill makes us welcome in Cornwall Avenue, centrally placed for our meetings.

We have monitors for each ward – Mary Hogben for East Finchley, Avra Archer for Church End, Sheila Shannon for West Finchley and Jacques Astruc for Woodhouse, while Peter Pickering keeps an eye on that part of Totteridge ward that is within the old borough of Finchley. Robert Newton is of great help with his knowledge of the workings of Barnet Council and his enviable power to see the flaws in the documents submitted by developers in support of their applications. Stuart Warner has kept us in touch with the area covered by the Dollis Park Residents Association.

Our objective is to preserve the local, heritage, and conservation character of Finchley, and to support local people in efforts to resist inappropriate development. We are particularly vigilant to prevent the loss of family houses to flats in the quintessentially suburban areas of Finchley. Through the weekly email alerts from the Planning Department of Barnet Council, we receive a list of the planning and tree works applications for reviewing. Comments are submitted on behalf of the Finchley Society either by email, letter or direct comment on the Barnet website, and are sometimes followed up with a speaking appearance before the Council committee and perhaps also by representations to an Inspector on an appeal.

During 2014, the Committee has had reported to it well over a hundred cases. Some of these have related to the continuing construction of large blocks of flats along the High Road from Tally Ho Corner to Whetstone. Other notable ones have been in Church End – the refurbishment of Avenue House Grounds ('Stephens House and Gardens'), Gateway House with the proposed new library, the activities (or inactivity) of Pardes House School and the so called 'Old School House' – and the expansion of Oak Lodge School