

Ham&High

Hampstead & Highgate Express
100A Avenue Road NW3 3HF

EDITORIAL

Phone: 020-7433 0000
Newsdesk: 020-7433 6217/6214
Fax: 020-7433 6229
e-mail: editorial@hamhigh.co.uk

ADVERTISING

Phone: 020-7433 6200 (display)
020-7433 6250 (classified)
Fax: 020-7433 6259
e-mail: advertising@hamhigh.co.uk

COMMENT

Walklate sequel is a real horror story

IN Hollywood, the general rule is that the sequel is never better than the original. But people who are interested in the continuing drama of Alexandra Palace will find the publication of Walklate Two every bit as compelling as Walklate One, perhaps even more so, in some respects. Walklate One was the damning 100-page report into the horror of the subsequently aborted sale of Alexandra Palace to Firoka. It painted a picture of an out-of-touch AP Trust which failed to keep itself informed of the negotiations, and listed a weak governance regime, poor staff performances, lack of financial understanding, poor communication and an absence of legal scrutiny among its shortcomings. Cllr Charles Adje, who was chair of the charitable trust at the time, came in for special criticism and there were calls for his resignation and for all the trustees to reconsider their positions. The former general manager, Keith Holder, was also implicated in the costly shambles. No-one was safe from Mr Walklate's eagle-eyed scrutiny. Things have moved on: Firoka, cheekily, is now trying to sue the council for breach of contract even though it pocketed the profits while it was in charge and enjoyed the luxury of having the £770,000 wage bill for seconded staff paid for by the council (Mr Walklate is bemused by this arrangement and states that it must have been a financial sweetener to Firoka for its 'continued interest' – so what a waste of money that turned out to be). Walklate Two stars Cllr Adje, rather unedifyingly trying to lay all the blame for the disaster at the feet of Mr Holder, and referring the investigators to a lengthy letter he wrote to the Ham&High following publication of the first report. In this now infamous letter, Cllr Adje pointed the finger at board members, trustees and very senior council officials. In one startling paragraph, he points out that all but one of the board member at the time were new appointees with no previous involvement – as close to an admission of not knowing what they were doing as you are ever likely to hear from an executive member of a local authority. The bottom line of Walklate Two is that the granting of a licence to Firoka was probably unnecessary and has now led to the squandering of some £1.5 million of taxpayers' money. It could be much more than that, before long. There's the real sting in the tail – and surely someone other than the Haringey taxpayers must suffer as a result.

Editor Geoff Martin

Deputy Editor Laura Evans

Publishing director Dave Blake

Publishers Archant Regional Ltd

ARCHANT } LONDON

The Ham&High, incorporating the High&I, is the quality paper for Hampstead, Highgate, Camden Town, Kentish Town, West Hampstead, Hampstead Garden Suburb and Golders Green.

The Broadway Ham&High is the quality paper for Muswell Hill, Crouch End and Hornsey. Visit www.hamhigh.co.uk for more information

Dial-a-Ride is vital lifeline for many

THE London Assembly recently investigated TfL's Dial-a-Ride service following numerous complaints from people with disabilities and organisations representing those with impaired mobility.

The investigation confirmed the views, expressed by Dial-a-Ride users, that the service is in drastic need of improvement.

Despite the Assembly's findings, Mayor Boris Johnson has refused to review the Dial-a-

Ride service, believing that members should start to see significant improvements now that the new booking system is in place.

According to the Mayor, users can now expect more trips, fewer cancellations, and will find it easy to make trip requests.

I have long been a supporter of Dial-a-Ride and understand what a lifeline this door-to-door transport is for the Londoners who use it.

I want to ensure that the service is working

as well as it possibly could be. I would like to ask any Dial-a-Ride users to let me know how the service is performing and report any failures (and successes) by writing to me at Joanne McCartney AM, City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London SE1 2AA or emailing joanne.mccartney@london.gov.uk

JOANNE MCCARTNEY
Assembly Member for Enfield and Haringey

Light railway could solve Brent Cross transport problem

LAST Thursday night, Camden council (like Brent Council already) endorsed its officers' views that the £5-billion Brent Cross Cricklewood development should be opposed, mainly due to the huge amount of extra traffic on our roads – over 29,000 extra cars every day, according to Barnet Council's development framework. No doubt the promised extra buses would get stuck in all that extra traffic as well.

A new Thameslink station at Brent Cross would inevitably mean closing Cricklewood Thameslink station (even though the Brent Cross developers are prepared to throw some temporary improvements at it, to satisfy the 2004 Inspector's Enquiry).

In fact, since Kentish Town Thameslink would then be the only station without longer platforms, Kentish Town Thameslink is likely to close as well, after the full Northern Line upgrade is completed, and the northern ticket office at King's Cross St Pancras is open. Only West Hampstead Thameslink would remain!

We volunteers in the Campaign for Better Transport London Group have an alternative. Instead of spending £220million on a new main line station at Brent Cross, we propose a light railway, modelled on the DLR in east London. The aim is to build an outer-London orbital railway that would interchange (unlike the North London Line) with every radial Underground and main line railway in west and north London.

The light railway would use mainly existing, hardly-used freight lines and abandoned track beds, and take over short sections of the Central and Northern Lines (at Mill Hill East).

It might eventually run between Ealing Broadway, Park Royal and Wembley to Brent Cross, Finchley Central and Finchley Road via West Hampstead. Please see our plans which can be viewed at www.bettertransport.org.uk/london_local_group and contact Barnet Council if you are prepared to oppose the extra road traffic and support the light-rail alternative.

We believe the light railway is desirable, feasible and affordable. It is designed to combat climate change, road congestion and air pollution (the random, silent cause of premature deaths). The huge brownfield sites



NIGHT VISION: How Brent Cross would look after development.

mentioned in the Mayor's Strategic London Plan mean this is the only chance in our lifetimes to leverage this extra transport infrastructure, as well, of course, as helping to save the planet.

If you are one of the 'great and the good' then please lobby your councillor to back the light-rail scheme. This means no spending commitment from the boroughs, but planning gain money from all the high-density developments.

In the short term however, we have to stop the Brent Cross monster, which was clearly designed for a different age.

JOHN COX
NW10

AS a member of Brent Friends of the Earth I would like to thank you for your front page story raising awareness of the Brent Cross Cricklewood development (The new city on your doorstep, H&H April 2). It's amazing how few people know that a whole new town and business district are planned on their doorstep.

Regeneration is exciting. However, those of us who have seen the Brent Cross Cricklewood (BXC) plans are against them in their current form.

Our main concern is that Brent Cross town centre was conceived last century, before the 2008 Climate Change Law and EU regulations to reduce CO2 emission by 20-30 per cent by 2020. The only transport provision for local people is road-based, and even assuming only 34 per cent of additional journeys are made by car, this makes an additional 29,000 car journeys each day --

that's 10 million every year! Add to this the extra traffic from new developments in Wembley, Mill Hill East and Colindale, and it will be grid-lock on the roads, and an environmental disaster.

The Northern and Jubilee Lines will be unable to cope. An orbital light-rail option – similar to the DLR – was considered and rejected in 2004. It now needs to be re-evaluated.

The main concerns of residents' associations and other groups focus on whether the development in its current form is sustainable. They object to the scale, density and high-rise nature of the development, the negative effect on the local shops (and hence communities) in Hampstead, Golders Green, Cricklewood, Kilburn High Road, Hendon, West Hampstead, and so on, traffic levels, pollution from the waste plant and from traffic, and a new 'incinerator' producing energy from waste, rather than recycling and for which no environmental audit has yet been submitted.

The BXC proposals are being positioned as outline planning permission, whereas the transport elements are actually full permission. It is therefore essential that Barnet rejects these plans in their current form.

Although the initial consultation was cynically timed over the busy Christmas period, Barnet are now accepting input from the public until April 23.

Readers may wish to make their views known at BXCApplication@barnet.gov.uk.

LIA COLACICCO
Brent Friends of the Earth

Road more dangerous since traffic calming

A MOTORCYCLIST was recently badly injured at the junction of Pages Lane and Colney Hatch Lane. I am very sorry, but not entirely surprised.

Driving in Muswell Hill has become more dangerous since the introduction of so-called traffic calming measures. As both a driver and pedestrian, I have experienced a deterioration in my local environment.

Visually there are so many signs, lines, posts, stickers, and humps that I can hardly take in 'leafy' Muswell Hill... and the smiling or grimacing lit-up signs that indicate my speed distract my attention from prevailing conditions and make me feel like a good or bad child, instead of a responsible, experienced driver.

I am constantly stressed, and annoyed by cameras, petty controls, stalking wardens – and it is little wonder that frustrated motorists speed out of Pages Lane when only two or three cars can pass through on green.

Many local residents fought the introduction of those ridiculous lights. Both Barbara Roche and Lynne Featherstone were asked to implement a trial with no lights but that never happened.

When they are out, traffic flows more smoothly! Motorists are more cautious and polite, and pedestrians can still cross safely, while pollution decreases.

So much money was spent on this system that no-one seems willing to admit it is an impediment. We know that under Ken Livingstone, lights throughout London were deliberately phased to impede traffic flow. To what end? Buses in Oxford Street form a nose to tail queue. It is faster to walk, except it is hard to breathe through the exhaust fumes.

Let's come clean. Let's reassess local conditions and implement a No Lights trial. Then maybe we can all breathe more easily.

As an asthmatic resident living off Alexandra Park Road, constantly clogged with fume-belching vehicles waiting for the lights to change, that would suit me admirably How do you feel?

SUSAN BENNETT
St Regis Close, N10