

Letters to the Editor

The editor is grateful to residents who use the letters column but must reserve the right to edit long letters.

Meadway Court
NW11

Sir
I was knocked off my bike twice in the summer, hence this letter. What has been on my mind for months has at last found its way out of the pen.

Bicycling around the Suburb, which has been such a wind in my face freedom, a life enhancing pleasure, might also be made more practical.

July 15, between the hours of three and five on a Sunday afternoon, all the pavements and pathways, twittens and tarmac in the Suburb, were opened to bicycle use, for the First Annual Tour de Suburb, organised by the Local Agenda 21 Team.

Tandems, tricycles, mountain bikes, touring bikes, were trundled out of their sheds. What fun. The volunteer staffed refreshment stops became social occasions, the paper chase sort of map (i.e. name five ball games

played on Lytton playing fields. Boules!) and then, think on it, an open air movie.

It made me think. Wouldn't it be nice if made possible, and so safer, that all these twittens, twiddles, footpaths and pavements, be open during the school run hours, to make it more feasible for children, commuters and shoppers to go about their business? And so not add to the amazing four by four traffic and not to add to the parking dilemma?
Just a thought.

Yours
Ellen Gilbert

Grey Close
NW11 6QG

Sir
It has been encouraging over the summer months to note that some

residents are taking the trouble to maintain the grass verges in front of their property.

Whilst Barnet Council aims to cut the grass verges on 13 occasions between March and October it is not adequate and the grass cuttings are often left on the verges.

Having recently returned from the United States where the grass verges are beautifully manicured, could we possibly emulate this here on the Suburb? I hope so.

Yours
Rosalind Josephs

Hogarth Hill
NW11 6BA

Sir
It must have been a most unpleasant shock for Eileen Whelan when she discovered that her cheque book had

been intercepted and a substantial sum of money stolen. (Autumn Issue No.73). I hope the bank acted quickly when the crime was discovered.

But I think it is a retrograde step to suggest that cheque books should no longer be trusted to the post. Surely in these days of sophisticated technology it is not difficult to identify forged signatures? Even without technology, a little commonsense helps. A little while ago I had to cash a cheque at a branch where I was not known and the cashier asked to see a sample signature - in this case my credit card - before paying out.

I am only one of the elderly people who find access to banks a bit difficult and appreciate a new cheque book automatically arriving through the letter box as the old one gets towards the end.

Yours
Megan Hooley

Greenhalgh Walk
N2 ODJ

Sir
I refer to the letter in the last edition from Professor Sam Eilon, where he surmises that many residents of the Suburb would agree that a review of planning procedures in the Suburb is well overdue and that they should become more transparent and more accountable.

I certainly do agree, as a result of my own experiences. It seems that there is no rhyme nor reason behind individual planning decisions taken by the Trust. We used to live in a three bedroomed house on Litchfield Way, and, due to the increase in size of our family, applied for permission to build a two-storey extension. On 2 May 1986, we received a letter from the then Trust Architect which read 'the Trust Council decided that it must refuse consent for this scheme on the grounds that it is too large and

obtrusive in relation to the original house and the site, architecturally unacceptable, and that it has adverse effects upon the amenities of neighbouring properties.' It then went on to suggest that we consider a single storey extension, which in fact we did.

Imagine our surprise, when, having moved sometime later to a larger house, we saw that the new occupants had been granted permission to build the original two-storey extension which we had requested, and also a two dormer loft extension!

Although we requested an explanation from the Trust, none was forthcoming.

I agree with Professor Eilon when he states that decisions are made behind closed doors and there is no appeal procedure. Certainly, none was available to us.

Yours
Suzanne Fine

Hello everyone,
I had the pleasure of visiting the Suburb again on the weekend after being away for a number of years. I noticed that plastic windows have started to appear all over the Suburb, and I was wondering if there is any aesthetic control on these. Some do look quite acceptable and others are understandable, for example those in the flats on Falldon Way. Others just detract from the architectural merit of the Suburb.

Should some guidance be offered to preserve the Suburb's architectural heritage?

ELAINE CORMACK

Elaine, sorry but I for one think not being able to replace your windows is a complete pain, it winds me up when people that 'pop' back and don't live here say it's bad and to try and name and shame. I live on Falldon Way and the windows in my house have a nasty 2nd pane of glass that means I lose all window sills and they look terrible from the inside and yet I cant do anything about replacing the rotting and neglected windows I inherited when I bought the place.

JAMES SIMMONDS

Elaine, the main reason the Suburb looks far better than most surrounding areas is because we do not allow fencing.

All our properties are surrounded by mainly green hedging it certainly is not due to the beauty of our windows and window frames.

I am surprised in your walk you did not notice all the window frames that need repainting, are peeling, rotting and which really do detract considerably from the appearance. I am quite certain it is possible to find acceptable modern windows made with long lasting maintenance free materials that overall help enhance the appearance of the Suburb.

I personally think it is a shame that no effort has been made by the Trust to address this matter and that they still insist on using totally inferior materials that require constant maintenance and are totally unsuited for the purpose and result in far too many shabby looking window frames. Furthermore it is ecologically unfriendly to have windows that squander, so unashamedly, world resources.

L. DWHECK

Go to Letchworth to see how that first Garden City compares with Hampstead Garden Suburb - plastic, aluminium, standard timber section sashes, you name it, Letchworth's Parker and Unwin and other cottages have got it. It is really striking to see how what here is an attractive terrace is transformed into any early C20 housing estate where

Windows on the Web

The HGS List e-mail discussion group has about 150 people on the register and is a constant source of enlightenment on a wide variety of subjects. Recent topics have included celebrity residents, which led to whether they live on or in the Suburb; Henrietta Barnett School admissions criteria; dog walking, and fouling, on the Heath; the play area planned for Central Square; the non distribution of notices for the School's exhibition of plans; graffiti; street lights; congratulations to the RA on the fireworks and much more. One subject which could perhaps do with a wider airing is the, for some, vexed question of repairing or replacing windows. The following is a small selection of contributions to the argument.

owners can do what they like - different and assorted windows done without reference to neighbouring materials and patterns are much more jarring than you'd think. You can't ensure that this year's off-the-shelf windows will be around next year so you can't match your neighbours' last year choice. So everyone would have something different in no time at all and you'd be surprised how soon Hampstead Garden Suburb would lose its homogeneity.

The windows we've got are GREAT - there is no such thing as maintenance free, last for ever anything anyway - replacement plastic windows are not uncommon and even at best they are only expected to last 30 years or so and have you seen that DIY stores sell paint for them? And how is it more ecologically friendly to throw away something made 90 years ago (sending it to landfill or to be incinerated) and replace it with a fossil-fuel based material which needs new glass, new ironmongery too - while the old is filling skips?

Our wonderful old timber windows are:
• Easy to repair and maintain using traditional and common skills and tools
• Easy to add to - new security measures etc. which can't be added to plastic frames

They can be draft-stripped and secondary glazed (if you must but thick curtains for cold winter nights are just as good - and any double glazing for worthwhile acoustic effect must have a substantial air gap so the whole unit is much thicker, encroaching onto your window sill - if you are on Falldon Way James S, you've probably got the free issue secondary glazing which does take up a lot of your window sill because it was done for sound reduction - thermal, thinner, double glazing wouldn't do the same to the noise).

They can be taken out and repaired and put back in, reglazed (but modern float glass lacks the liveliness of the 'hand made' stuff we've got now and its loss is noticeable).

The wood they are made of is better than anything you will buy now - it's not grown the same way anymore. When the Suburb was built, we were still importing timber from the forests of eastern Europe and the trees had taken a long time to grow which results in close grain and thick trunks (therefore very little sap wood in proportion to harvestable timber). Now, all our wood is from managed resources where speed of growth is the most important thing (so wide growth rings) and trees are felled soon after they reach maturity (so sap wood is a large proportion of the total) and to get any kind of life out of it we must fill this timber with chemicals. This is fine of course, we don't want to be felling virgin forests, but what we've got already is miles better. So, not only do we want to keep windows that look the same but actually to keep the same windows and repair them and they will last another century.

Well, maybe I've got a bit of bee in my bonnet about this.....but its all true!

ROZ ARCHER
GRADIPLCONS AA

Your timber window frames may be wonderful - just try living with Crittal metal ones - rust, condensation, draughts, cracking window panes (we replaced 60 last year!). They are not ecologically sound, and certainly the houses which have replaced them with 'plastic' look much smarter than our 70 year old ones, which are a constant battle to live with.

LYNNE LUCAS

I agree that the metal frames need more attention and maintenance as once the paint coat fails, rust spreads rapidly. I think it tends to be the rust which leads to cracking panes rather than differential movement. There isn't usually a problem with finding matching replacements - though often the old aren't as bad as first appears - once the rust is stripped off its often seen that the metal is still sound and frame and opening light fit once again, getting rid of draughts. And if you have to replace, the replacements can be galvanised before powder coating or painting and will survive with less vigilant maintenance. Condensation can't be any worse on the frames than on the glass.

Keeping what you have has to be more ecologically sound than anything else (what with waste generation in skipping them and the manufacture of the new ones, no matter what they're made of).

I can't agree with you about the plastic substitutes looking smarter - they inevitably have a thicker section and look clumsy in comparison with the elegant metal ones.

ROZ ARCHER
GRADIPLCONS AA

I think this is an excellent discussion. Personally I think the strict controls are vital to

maintain the character of the Suburb. Surely that is why we chose to live here.

However I also feel that the Trust and/or original style window manufacturers should be trying to design windows that match the original styling yet which offer considerably improved insulation. And I do not believe that means we MUST have plastic frames!

SUSIE GREGSON

I read all this ranting and raving about windows etc.. if people don't want these rules/regs then move elsewhere...you don't need to go far - just across Finchley Road. If you want new windows that satisfy the rules/regs then get up and look for them - any good carpenter can do it... Roz is 100% right about good maintenance being all that is req'd for the wooden frames - any that need replacing just get a good carpenter as I said - I have not had any problems with even such nationals as Express Glass who replaced trad windows exactly as they were before for me and a regular jobbing builder who made new patio doors AND internal doors to match existing originals...why does everybody have to moan about this all the time - it is very tedious.

NICHOLAS LANGFORD

If you have a computer at home and would like to join the HGS email discussion group just log on to www.hgs.org.uk

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