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# WALTHAM FOREST ECHO

Free  
Jan 2023, No. 94

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Brian Wallace (courtesy of Locate International)

# Who was 'Brian Wallace'?

*Investigators hope to finally crack an eight-year mystery*

by Victoria Munro

Volunteer investigators are trying to solve the almost eight-year-old mystery of a man killed in Walthamstow.

On 22nd January 2015, at about 10.20pm, a man was struck down by a driver on the corner of Forest Road and Hoe Street and tragically died.

The driver was given a suspended sentence for their part in the crash but, despite working and living locally, the victim was never identified.

Six months ago, charity Locate International began investigating, uncovering new details about his life, and hopes to finally inform his family of his tragic death.

Locate International founder Dave Grimstead said: "We appreciate that this incident took place nearly eight years ago now and that the man was known to live a private and quiet life.

"[But] our teams work on long-term missing and unidentified person cases and regularly deal with cases that have remained

unsolved for decades.

"Sometimes details that seem insignificant to the public match up with other information we've already received. We've managed to resolve cases much older than this one using seemingly minor pieces of information and hope to do the same for this man."

The dead man had no ID on his person when he died and the only numbers in his phone were related to his work as a builder.

Police believe he lived in Chingford Road under the name "Brian Wallace". He was a white

man aged between 50 and 70 and around 5'7" tall.

So far, the Locate International team have learned he frequented the William The Fourth pub in Leyton, had a Northern accent and had family – and possibly estranged children – in the Sheffield area.

Locate International volunteer Freya Couzens told the *Echo* Brian's case is "fairly unique" as the charity rarely has photos to work with.

The team's latest lead involves looking into whether Brian had links to the local fishing community

due to clues in these photos.

She added: "We are fairly confident that this man spent the last decade of his life at least in Walthamstow.

"Whatever we can learn about his behaviours, hobbies and interests could connect us to his past life, helping us find his friends and family."

If you think you ever met Brian, please contact Locate by emailing [appeals@locate.international](mailto:appeals@locate.international), calling 0300 102 1011 or visiting their website <https://locate.international/brian-wallace-appeal/>



# NEWS



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Waltham Forest Echo is the borough's free community newspaper. We publish monthly and distribute 15,000 free copies of each issue

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## Suspected WWII bomb found at town hall

A suspected WWII bomb was unearthed at Waltham Forest Town Hall last month, forcing council staff to evacuate.

Forest Road was closed by police at around 1.30pm on 1st December and reopened approximately three hours later.

The suspected bomb may have been discovered due to construction work taking place around the town hall to build 433 new flats in five blocks.

In a statement after the buildings reopened, a council spokesperson said: "Thank you for your



The police cordon in Forest Road

patience, and thanks also to the emergency services for their work this afternoon."

During the initial Blitz, which lasted from October 1940 to June 1941, more than 700 bombs were dropped on Waltham Forest.

On 16th August 1944, a V1 "flying bomb" hit the corner of Hoe Street and Church Hill, killing 22 people, injuring 144 and destroying dozens of buildings.

The Grade II-listed town hall building, which first opened in 1941, underwent a £25million refurbishment last year.

## Worker building incinerator dies on-site

Work building a controversial new incinerator near Chingford was briefly suspended after a worker's death.

Police were called to the construction site shortly after 3pm on 23rd November after Ioan Sabou, a 50-year-old from Haringey, was hit by a heavy goods vehicle.

The site in Edmonton is owned by the North London Waste Authority (NLWA), which handles waste from seven North London boroughs and is chaired by Waltham Forest Council's deputy leader Clyde Loakes.

The NLWA confirmed the death on 25th November and announced they were suspending construction while the police and

Health and Safety Executive investigated at the scene.

On 30th November, the NLWA announced work would resume "following the completion of site investigations", although the Metropolitan Police confirmed the wider investigation is ongoing.

A NLWA spokesperson said: "Our heartfelt thoughts are with the family, friends, and colleagues of the deceased team member. We are offering support to those affected during this extremely difficult time.

"Construction activities will follow a controlled approach to restarting, once a thorough review of safety procedures for each activity has been completed.

"The decision to reopen the

site follows extensive consideration. The welfare and safety of staff is paramount, therefore the activities associated with the incident are still under review and will not commence until Acciona are completely satisfied that it is safe to do so."

The current incinerator, built in 1969, is being replaced with a new, expanded facility in a controversial project opposed by environmental campaigners.

The rebuild will cost an estimated £960million and will allow the new incinerator to burn up to 700,000 tonnes of rubbish a year.

The construction is being carried out by Acciona, awarded the contract in December, after all other bidders dropped out.

## Thousands of new bike parking spaces being installed

More than 3,000 new parking spaces for bicycles – costing £1.6million – are coming to the borough soon.

Last month, Waltham Forest Council announced it would install more than 500 new bike hangars around the borough to add to almost 700 available currently.

Hangar spaces are available for local residents to rent for £35 a year per bike, which the council claims is "amongst the lowest [fee] in London".

Between January and March this year, the council will also open new cycling "hubs" outside stations, adding 160 spaces at Blackhorse Road Station and 26 new spaces each outside Chingford and Highams Park stations.

Deputy council leader Clyde

Loakes said: "This investment will give over 3,000 more residents in our borough easy access to their bike near to their home. All the bike hangars are secure, waterproof, convenient and safe places to store your bike.

"Alongside our eleven cycle hubs at key transport locations across the borough and the 50km and growing segregated cycle lanes – the second highest in London – we're showing that Waltham Forest will continue to be a leader on cycling in London and across the UK.

"Cycling and walking is good for you physically and mentally, and supporting and expanding active travel transport infrastructure is a key part of our commitment to building a greener and cleaner borough.

"Apply for your spot in a bike hangar today – and together let's reduce harmful emissions and make our neighbourhoods safer and less polluted places for everyone to enjoy."



A bike hangar Credit Waltham Forest Council

## Band D council tax likely to rise to over £2,000

**by Josh Mellor,**  
Local Democracy Reporter

Council tax for band D properties in Waltham Forest will likely rise above £2,000 in April as the council works to close a £14million budget gap.

Last year, chancellor Jeremy Hunt announced councils can now increase their portion of the tax by up to 4.99% without a referendum, whereas previously the limit was 2.99%.

While the increase must be approved by the full council, corporate director of financial services Ursula Gamble told councillors the announcement meant this year's predicted funding gap had dropped to £10m.

Speaking to a budget scrutiny committee on 22nd November, she said: "I think that, eventually, the gap probably isn't as horrific a picture as it could have been."

In Waltham Forest, an increase of 5% would equal an extra £77.22 per year to residents in band D homes, raising their total bill to £2017.16.

Council housing residents may also face a rent hike of up to 7% depending on the council's final budget decision in February next year.

A 7% increase to a two-bed council home in Waltham Forest, currently costing £438.56 a month, would represent an extra £30.68.

To close the £10m budget gap, the council has already drawn up plans to make £7m in "savings", although it has not confirmed which services would be affected.

According to a report before the committee, the council's reserves of £114m are the 19th lowest of London's 32 boroughs.

A "stress test" carried out by local government association London Councils suggests that boroughs in the capital are likely to face annual funding gaps of £10-£50m for the next two years.



## INTERVIEW

# Over half a century fighting for Leyton's biggest estate

by Victoria Munro

In 1965, Margaret Wilks, then 27 and a new mother, was among the first to move into the recently completed second tower of Leyton's Beaumont Estate.

Almost 60 years later and at the age of 85, she has seen her home undergo many changes, including the rise of the infamous Beaumont Crew gang, also known as LGR or Let's Get Rich.

Margaret remembers tension bubbling in the early 1990s and erupting dramatically in 2002, when conflict between the Beaumont Crew and a nearby gang claimed a number of lives.

In response, Margaret and her husband Brian, who died last year, helped organise four events bringing hundreds of young people together in the hopes of easing the conflict.

Speaking to the *Echo*, Margaret recalled: "When we first moved into the estate, it was still a massive building site. It was a very close community then, a lot of the people that moved in were people I had gone to school with.

"Brian and I joined the residents' association in 1972 when it had just started up. The estate had become a bit unruly and there were other people moving in that we didn't know so we wanted to see if we could get something going to include them.

"It did seem to work for quite a few years, we organised a lot of things for the children. During the summer, we'd get four or five coaches and take them all to Southend. It was small things but it brought people together.

"The council were quite good with us and did help us out with quite a bit of money at the time, unfortunately there's not enough money around to do that now."

By the time the estate was transferred from Waltham Forest Council to housing association L&Q in 2002, things had been "a bit hectic" for almost a decade.

Margaret said: "I'd say it was around 1993 when it started to get a bit iffy with the gangs. There was a lot of tension between Leyton and Hackney, although it was not as violent as it is now.

"You would suddenly realise when you were walking around the estate that young people were not going around in ones or twos but groups of six or eight.

"You had the Beaumont gang and then one in the Oliver Close estate, which was run by a different housing association. It was all to do with this idea of staying out of each other's 'patch'."

Her recollection is supported by the findings of a 2007 report entitled *Reluctant Gangsters: Youth Gangs in Waltham Forest*, written by Professor John Pitts from the



Margaret Wilks in her flat on the estate Credit Tamsin Cogan

University of Bedfordshire.

Professor Pitts interviewed a number of anonymous informants from the borough and found that, by the late 1990s, four families "dominated organised crime in Waltham Forest", including four brothers who lived on the estate.

The brothers "having previously specialised in armed robbery" moved into the "highly lucrative" drugs trade. By 2001, the Beaumont Crew was "the major supplier of narcotics" in Waltham Forest.

Professor Pitts wrote: "In 2002, a core member of the Beaumont gang was robbed by someone from the Oliver Close gang (OC), who was, in turn, 'bottled' by the brother of the victim. It is likely that the original robbery was related to a dispute over a drugs deal.

"In the ensuing conflict, the Oliver Close gang affiliated with Chingford Hall and

later the 'Boundary Boys' and the Cathall gang, all of whom had 'beefs', smouldering resentments, with the Beaumont gang about, amongst other things, the way they had muscled in on the drugs business a few years earlier."

While admitting she remembers the ensuing spree of violence "only vaguely", Margaret and Brian were quick to act, getting involved with the council's "Defending the Hood" events.

She said: "We brought 400 youngsters to Walthamstow Assembly Hall and laid on a dinner for them to see whether we could break up the gangs a bit.

"The first time we did it, we laid all the tables out and, when it was over, all the knives and forks were gone. We made sure we used plastic ones the next time.

"I think it did help gradually bring them together for a little while but eventually

those who were involved grew up, married and moved away."

In a bid to get the estate's young people off the streets, Margaret also helped launch a number of activities in the community centre on the estate, known as the Seddon Centre.

With Brian, she also assisted in police sweeps for weapons, argued for the installation of CCTV cameras and successfully campaigned for three dilapidated 20-storey towers to be knocked down and replaced with houses and smaller blocks.

Fellow estate resident Cyril Smith, who lived near Margaret and Brian for more than 50 years, said: "Between them, they were always organising things for us. Their door was known for being open to neighbours in need[...] nothing was too much trouble for them.

"Brian and Margaret had a clear sense of right and wrong and a lovely way of keeping people united – no matter their tenure, politics or background. To be able to factor in everyone's needs and come up with a practical and fair solution for all takes great patience and understanding.

"As a husband-and-wife team, we knew them for putting others first, sometimes at the expense of their own needs. And even if this meant their own home was last on their list of concerns."

Since her husband's death, Margaret has so far resisted attempts by her granddaughter to persuade her to leave the estate she has called home for so many years.

She said: "She always asks why I don't move in with her in Suffolk; it's very nice out there but I'm a Londoner. I do like London still, although I wish it hadn't altered as much as it has. Leyton is not the area I grew up in, it has become quite dowdy.

"The estate has changed a lot, people are more nervous[...] it's just not the same atmosphere around here. There's people living here now where, no matter how much you try, they just don't want to know. If you say 'good morning', they won't answer you and that took some getting used to.

"People used to take pride in where they live but now they don't bother because they feel nobody else does. It could be a nice area to live in but the money just isn't there for it now."

However, she added: "As far as I'm concerned, I haven't noticed much tension on the estate recently. It definitely never worries me to walk around anywhere here, it never has. Maybe that's just my attitude to things, Brian used to say he worried about me at times.

"We are planning to get the residents' association going again next year, as we haven't been able to do anything since Covid-19. If word can get around, it might kick off and start something else up."



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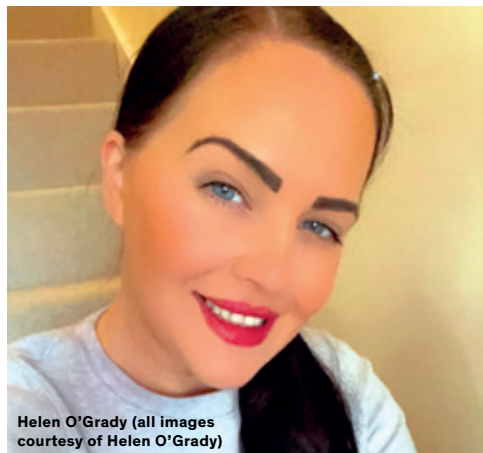




## NEWS

# Homeless mothers report appalling conditions in emergency hostels

by Josh Mellor, Local Democracy Reporter



Helen O'Grady (all images courtesy of Helen O'Grady)

**T**wo homeless mothers report appalling conditions in the hostels used as temporary accommodation by Waltham Forest Council.

They say they dealt with stained mattresses with no sheets, possible bedbug infestations and concerns about their children's safety from other residents.

While both families only became homeless after their landlords decided to sell, Waltham Forest Council says dwindling supply and increased demand has made it difficult to find homes locally.

Chingford mum Helen O'Grady, 41, and her three young children were evicted on 16th November and, in just over a month, were moved between four different East London hostels.

She told the Local Democracy Reporting Service she refused to stay at one hostel after arriving to find stained mattresses with no bedsheets and, in another, woke up to find what she believes was a bedbug crawling on her chest.

She said: "A clean room and dignity are standard, even people in prisons have standards. Just because I'm homeless why am I not entitled to the same stuff?"

Highams Park mum-of-two Katie was evicted in 2018 and has been moved six times in the years since, including a year-and-a-half stint at an "unsuitable" Leytonstone hostel.

That move, in April last year, forced her to send her teenage son away to live with a relative, while her young daughter stayed with her but was "petrified" by noise, substance abuse and "mad drama after drama" in the hostel's communal areas.

Katie said: "There were people who had been in jail and other people from outside would come in and out all the time.

"I had to call the police lots of times, there was anti-social behaviour outside and inside the building. It was getting worse and worse... no-one was listening until they had that court warning."

Despite a council assessment eventually deeming the place "unsuitable" for them, it took a further two months and the threat of court action through a solicitor before the council found the family a flat in the borough.



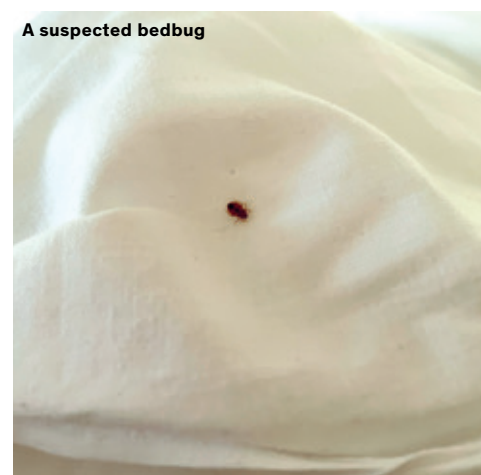
A bare and stained mattress

She added: "Other temporary homes I have seen have been horrible, it's clean and big and I'm fortunate that I got it. I've gone through hell in the last few years – it's been a struggle, such a struggle."

Katie has been on the local council housing waiting list for 14 years but competition is stiff. Last year, less than 700 council homes were allocated to a waiting list of more than 7,000 households.

The borough now has 9,699 council homes, 458 less than in 2011, as some were purchased through right-to-buy.

When contacted for comment, a council spokesperson said it works hard to ensure those at risk of homelessness have "a roof over their head" while looking for suitable settled accommodation.



A suspected bedbug

They added: "We appreciate how stressful the situation is for anyone in this position. Local demand for housing is increasing, and the supply of affordable properties is limited.

"We are pleased that Katie and her family are happy and settled into their new accommodation."

The spokesperson did not comment on Helen's situation but called on the government to support the building of more family homes for social rent and to improve tenants' rights by "putting an end to no-fault evictions".

They also claimed Waltham Forest Council has "one of the best records" of building social rent homes for families, providing government figures showing that, in the last three years, it delivered the sixth highest number out of London's 32 boroughs.

## Three 'local festivals' planned in next two summers

By Victoria Munro

**A** "local festival" will take place in Chingford or Leytonstone next summer, as Waltham Forest Council tests its plan to turn the borough's neighbourhoods into marketable "destinations".

Following the pilot festival next summer, two further festivals will be held in Walthamstow and Leyton in the summer of 2024.

A report prepared for council leaders last month stated the festivals will "celebrate the individuality of residents and the neighbourhood", while also drawing in visitors and trade for creative businesses.

It adds that there is "an option to extend to further dates and locations based on the success of the pilot event", as the current plan means at least one of the four neighbourhoods would not host a festival.

The report reads: "Using the festival to

engage local people[...] we provide a real-world example of what is possible in their neighbourhood, providing an experience of what is to come in the future."

The Leyton festival will take place in Coronation Gardens at the same time as work on the first phase of the Coronation Square housing development is due to finish.

The first phase of construction will see 429 of the planned 750 homes built, alongside a "health hub", nursery, market square and commercial units.

A "Walthamstow Fringe" festival will take place in the same summer to launch the council's vision of the area as a "cultural quarter", which hinges heavily around the opening of Soho Theatre Walthamstow in the spring of that year.

Earlier this year, Walthamstow's long-running free summer festival – Walthamstow Garden Party – came to an abrupt end without "any discussion or warning".



Local festival Walthamstow Garden Party was cancelled earlier this year Credit Penny Dampier

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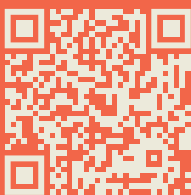
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## FEATURES

# The profit-driven future of Waltham Forest culture

by Victoria Munro

An ambitious plan hopes to see council-owned cultural sites become profitable by handing them over to “specialist providers”.

Waltham Forest Council owns a number of cultural venues around the borough, including William Morris Gallery and Vestry House.

This financial year, the council’s culture and heritage budget will see a predicted loss of more than £5million, expected to grow to £64.8m in the next decade.

A report prepared for council leaders last month states the council hopes a shift “away from council-run spaces” towards renting to external operators will “remove operational costs and generate surplus income”.

Its “long-term ambition” is to use the revenue generated by this strategy to create a local fund for “culture, enterprise and related activities delivered in the borough”.

To prepare them for being handed over, long-running venues like Vestry House and William Morris Gallery will be “refreshed” and “revitalised” in the coming years.

The revamp of William Morris Gallery, due to complete at the end of next year, aims to “diversify its offer”, using its lawn spaces for events “on a temporary or permanent basis”.

The report states the council is considering “working with partners to monetise Aveling Field” and turning the Lloyd Park lodge house into a William

Morris House offering “themed stays for visitors”.

The Vestry House “revitalisation”, while still in the early stages of planning, could open in spring 2024 and “bring new life to the building”.

The council also hopes to see currently unused sites like One Hoe Street, Walthamstow Assembly Hall and Chestnuts House – whose guardianship tenants were abruptly evicted this year – come back into operation.

One Hoe Street is due to come “back into use” next summer so it can act “as an information point for the cultural offer” borough-wide.

At the start of 2024, “there is an opportunity”, the report states, to see Chestnuts House in Walthamstow “transformed from a disused space into a vibrant community”. Creative studio space company Eat Work Art have been shortlisted as potential operators.

In early 2025, the council hopes to “bring Walthamstow Assembly Hall back into life as a cultural venue”, making “better use of outdoor space”, adding a cafe and bar and “creating additional units for trading”.

An entirely new venue, Tramworks, will be created next door to Soho Theatre Walthamstow in summer 2025 by redeveloping Hatherley Mews.

The report prepared for council leaders mentions only a handful of cultural sites located outside of the Walthamstow area, which it hopes to launch as a “cultural quarter” at the start of 2024.

The Chingford Assembly Hall could see a “meanwhile activation launch” early next year, in which it would be handed over to an operator for three or more years “before the wider development of the site takes place”.

The council states this would “bring new life into the building, testing use cases and viability for the future development”, provide a “large-scale event and performance space” while the Walthamstow Assembly Hall is unavailable and “support the current food distribution community use of the space”.

The need to move the food distribution hub out of Chingford Assembly Hall so it could be redeveloped was the reason a Walthamstow community centre was threatened with eviction earlier this year, although the council U-turned after widespread opposition.

In summer 2024, the first phase of construction at the immense Coronation Square housing development in Leyton, due to deliver 750 flats in total, is due to complete.

The council sees the development as “an excellent opportunity to create a cultural site”, envisioning a “market square”, event space and a screen for “art installations, films and sport screening”.

Other projects anticipated outside Walthamstow include plans to “activate Leyton Sports Pavilion” to “restore [the] iconic heritage asset” by handing it over to a specialist operator, expected in the first half of 2025.

Vocal Communities Credit Luax



## Local Votes for Local Migrants

*Angelo Da Costa Mengowako from Vocal Communities on the campaign to improve democracy in Waltham Forest*

Waltham Forest is a special place for me, as a migrant born in Angola who moved to the UK as an inquisitive, politically conscious nine-year-old.

I feel our borough is one of the most welcoming places in the UK for migrants, whether they’re fleeing persecution or seeking a better education or work. Those, like me, who have grown up here are thankful that the UK opened its borders to people from around the world.

Our borough is one of the most diverse in the country, with more than half its residents coming from a minority ethnic background. In addition to 171,000 residents born in the UK, our borough is home to 51,000 European migrants and 55,000 from further afield. On paper, it appears fair and equal but, when polling stations open, it’s a different story.

Despite legally calling our borough home, not everyone has the same right to a say on who represents them and how their community functions. EU citizens retain their right to democracy under the Brexit agreement and Commonwealth citizens – such as those in the Windrush generation – can vote thanks to the 1971 Immigration Act but this is not the same for those of us from other countries.

Thousands of Waltham Forest

residents who are citizens of large swathes of South America, Africa and Asia must “throw away” any previous national identity to have a voice in this country, regardless of how long they have lived in England. This demonstrates a deficit in English democracy and it is not the same everywhere in the UK. If we cross the border into Wales or Scotland, all legal residents, no matter what country they were born in, have the right to vote. England’s failure to follow their example is unfair and discriminatory.

Those of us in Waltham Forest who migrated from countries outside the EU and the Commonwealth want to take part in our society – and, in many ways, we already do. According to University College London, immigrants from outside the European Economic Area contribute approximately £5.2billion to the UK economy every year, much of which will be from non-Commonwealth citizens living in England.

Regardless of our nationality, those who have settled in Waltham Forest deserve a seat at the table. I encourage you to join the Local Votes for Local Migrants campaign and help us bring the same democracy enjoyed by Scotland and Wales here.

Find out more about the campaign on: <https://vocalcommunities.org/>



William Morris Gallery Credit ProfDEH/Wikimedia

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## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Reggae disco celebrates seven years



Matthew (right) with August guests Papa Scotchie and Melvina Moves Credit Jas Bhabra

Seven years ago, two friends started a monthly disco to bring a celebration of reggae to the borough. Matthew Jones and Dan May held the first General Echo in The Victoria pub in Hoe Street and say the night was originally “pretty low-key”.

Since then, it has grown enough to attract big names in the genre, including Dennis Bovell, Don Letts and Tessa Pollitt, former bass guitarist for The Slits, playing this month.

Matthew told the *Echo*: “Dan and I just wanted to start a little night playing reggae tunes in a pub. We’re both big fans of this music and used to run a night in Leeds, where we went to

university, and had bought a lot of records over the years.

“After a few months, we realised it would be quite boring if it was just us playing every month and started inviting other people to play. There’s a real wealth of selectors in London who are passionate about this music.”

Explaining his years-long passion for the genre, he said: “I think reggae is really unique, so much incredible music has come out of this tiny island in a relatively short space of time.

“We’ve been doing the night for seven years and every month I still hear things I’ve never heard before that I think are amazing. Once you start getting into it, it seems to be a bottomless well of treasure.”

The night is currently hosted in Walthamstow Trades Hall and Matthew added that the venue is a “perfect home”.

He said: “Everyone that works there basically volunteers trying to keep a venue going that’s an asset to the local community and welcoming to everybody.

“We want to keep General Echo going as long as we can. We’re not in it to become DJs ourselves or do anything bigger or better than where it’s got to now, we’re really happy with it.”

Find out more on Facebook and Instagram @generalechosound or Twitter @gen\_Echo\_echo

*“Once you start getting into [reggae], it seems to be a bottomless well of treasure”*



Kerry Jackson Credit Marc Brenner

## Kerry Jackson at the National Theatre

*Tom Phillips reviews a new play set in a Walthamstow tapas restaurant*

It’s fair to say that Walthamstow has changed a bit in the last few decades. Those changes provide the backdrop for April De Angelis’s enjoyable, if shallow, new comedy – in which avatars of the old and the new Walthamstow meet, bicker and find small moments of human connection.

The setting is the tapas restaurant recently opened by the titular Kerry (Fay Ripley) in Walthamstow Village. (“Walthamstow Village Borders”, someone corrects her, indicating that any resemblance to a certain real-life Orford Road institution stops at the decor of the nicely detailed set.)

Kerry’s a proud working class woman still chasing the dream of Thatcher-era aspiration but things aren’t going smoothly at El Barco. Costs are high; footfall is low; her antique fridge could get the place shut down on health and safety grounds; and she doesn’t actually know much about Spanish cuisine. Croquettes? She’s had a few.

The narrative spark is provided by Kerry’s combative relationship with Stephen (Michael Gould), a widowed middle-class academic with a store of *Guardian*-approved opinions and a bundle of unprocessed grief. As his worldview and Kerry’s clash, they first trade barbs before – inevitably – tumbling into bed.

The play works better as broad, bawdy comedy than as a deeper examination of the issues it wants to raise. Serious topics are picked up and then discarded, often jarringly. It wants to say something about gentrification but struggles, because it’s unsure which – if any – of its characters are

actually gentrifiers. Kerry, an Essex transplant funding the venture with her mum’s Right To Buy money, is awkwardly positioned as both sides of the debate, which fizzles out before it starts.

And as an examination of modern Britain’s class schisms (rendered here mostly as matters of taste, not economics) it would be more convincing if its cast were liberated from stereotypes. When one character ends up voicing the play’s weirdly depressing message – that the classes are so divided they should simply never mix – it feels like a conclusion reached only because the deck’s been stacked by a script which prioritises punchlines over plausibility.

What saves it is that those punchlines are plentiful, solid and delivered energetically by an engaging cast. Anchoring it is Ripley’s barnstorming turn as Kerry, a woman with zero filters who unapologetically pursues what she wants and wears other people’s disapproval like armour. The *Cold Feet* star is clearly having a ball in her return to the stage and it’s down to her that we can care about Kerry’s dreams, even as she reveals herself to often be a nightmare. Among the rest of the cast, Madeline Appiah and Kitty Hawthorne do good work finding layers of humanity in otherwise one-note roles.

It’s an entertaining evening and worth it for Ripley’s performance – even if you’re left with the frustrating feeling that a more satisfying meal could have been assembled from these raw ingredients.

Read our interview with playwright April De Angelis on the *Echo* website.



### Programme Manager

St James Street Big Local (SJSBL) is a lottery-funded, volunteer-led community programme based in the St James Street area of Walthamstow, working on projects to make it a better place to live for many years to come.

To help us achieve this, we are looking for a Programme Manager; it’s a diverse role that involves juggling project and budget management, comms, finance, admin, events and a lot of community capacity-building activities with local volunteers and organisations. You’ll be a self-starter with experience in project and budget management.

In this role, you’ll lead and be part of a team of friendly people passionate about improving the local area. This is an excellent opportunity for someone with strong connections to the area who wants to make a real difference and play a vital role within a small and influential organisation. We particularly welcome applications from people who have or can develop strong connections to the local area and are from Black and Ethnic Minority and Eastern European backgrounds.

To apply, please download the Job Description from <http://www.stjamesbiglocal.co.uk/> and send a CV with a cover letter stating how you meet each of the criteria in the Person Specification to [stjamesbiglocal@gmail.com](mailto:stjamesbiglocal@gmail.com). The deadline is 9 January 2023 at Midday. Interviews for those shortlisted will take place the week commencing 16 January 2023.



CRIME

# Man who killed over restaurant row jailed

A man who stabbed someone to death after being asked to leave a Leytonstone restaurant was jailed for life last month.

Aturas Kurpis, a 39-year-old from Limehouse, was sentenced to life imprisonment – of which he must spend at least 21 years in jail – on 9th December.

The court heard that, on 5th November, Kurpis went to the same restaurant as Paulius Karalius and his girlfriend and began “behaving badly” while drunk, snatching the microphone from a singer.

After Paulius told him to leave, Kurpis called someone at the restaurant – with the phone held up on speakerphone – and loudly threatened to stab him, according to witnesses that night.

Kurpis later confronted Paulius outside his girlfriend’s home in Limehouse and stabbed him in the chest with a kitchen knife.



Aturas Kurpis  
Credit Metropolitan Police

Paulius was rushed to hospital but died six days later.

Detective Chief Inspector Neil John said: “Kurpis is a man with a history of violence who has previously carried out numerous assaults and has served time in prison for a knife offence.

“In contrast, Paulius Karalius was a man of good character who was just spending a Friday night out with his girlfriend.

“Kurpis was drunk, but his intent that night was clear. He threatened to stab Paulius in a phone call, went to his flat, armed himself with a knife and then went downstairs to do bloody murder.

“Kurpis has been found guilty and I am sure that London will be a better place with him behind bars for a long time, but this will only be a small consolation to the family and friends of Paulius.

“This is another young life lost to a senseless scourge of knife crime and the loss will never leave those affected.”

While released on bail as officers continued to investigate, Kurpis fled London and was eventually tracked down at an address in Dartford, where he was arrested on suspicion of murder.

# Chingford woman almost lured ex to his death

A Chingford woman was found guilty of trying to murder her ex-boyfriend after accidentally returning to the crime scene.

Shannon Rule, a 22-year-old from Ashwood Road, arranged to meet her ex near his Morden home on 22nd June to discuss threatening texts he had received from her new partner.

Unbeknownst to the 25-year-old victim, this man, 23-year-old Daniel Gaudin from Waltham Cross, came with her and shot him several times in a “horrific broad daylight attack”.

Gaudin and Rule fled but, after getting lost in the unfamiliar streets, accidentally doubled back on themselves and were arrested by officers guarding the scene.

Detective Inspector Iain Wallace said: “Our thoughts foremost are with the young man, whose life was changed in an instant following a shocking and utterly needless act of wanton violence, born out of Gaudin’s sheer jealousy and insecurity.

“He had no idea of what would unfold that day and the terrible



Shannon Rule, a 22-year-old from Chingford  
Credit Met Police

injuries he sustained will mean he needs assistance for the rest of his life. Gaudin and Rule will now pay the price for their ruthless, calculated attack with their freedom.”

Rule claimed she had no idea what Gaudin had planned but a jury heard she sent multiple texts to her ex, warning him her new partner had a gun.

She was found guilty of attempted murder at Kingston Crown Court on 22nd December, while Gaudin pleaded guilty at an earlier hearing.

The pair are due to be sentenced at the same court on 19th January.

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## HOUSING

# Map shows 26 sites set for new towers by 2035

by Victoria Munro

A new map reveals all 26 sites where Waltham Forest Council hopes to see tower blocks built. The council submitted the map of sites for “tall buildings” as part of its latest bid to have its Local Plan, a document shaping future housing and other development, approved by the government’s Planning Inspectorate.

The draft plan was sent back to the council earlier this year, after inspectors raised concerns about its ambition to see 27,000 new homes built by 2035, an average of around 1,800 every year.

The map shows the majority of sites for tall buildings – defined as towers of ten or more storeys – are concentrated in the south of the borough, with only three located north of the North Circular.

## Walthamstow

The Blackhorse Lane area is one of the council’s most important locations for new housing, with the potential for up to 3,700 new homes.

The largest development proposed within the site, although a planning application has yet to be submitted, could see eight towers, ranging from 27 to 38 storeys, built at Uplands Business Park.

Of the sites on the council’s “tall buildings” map, some have already received planning permission, including two opposite each other in Forest Road.

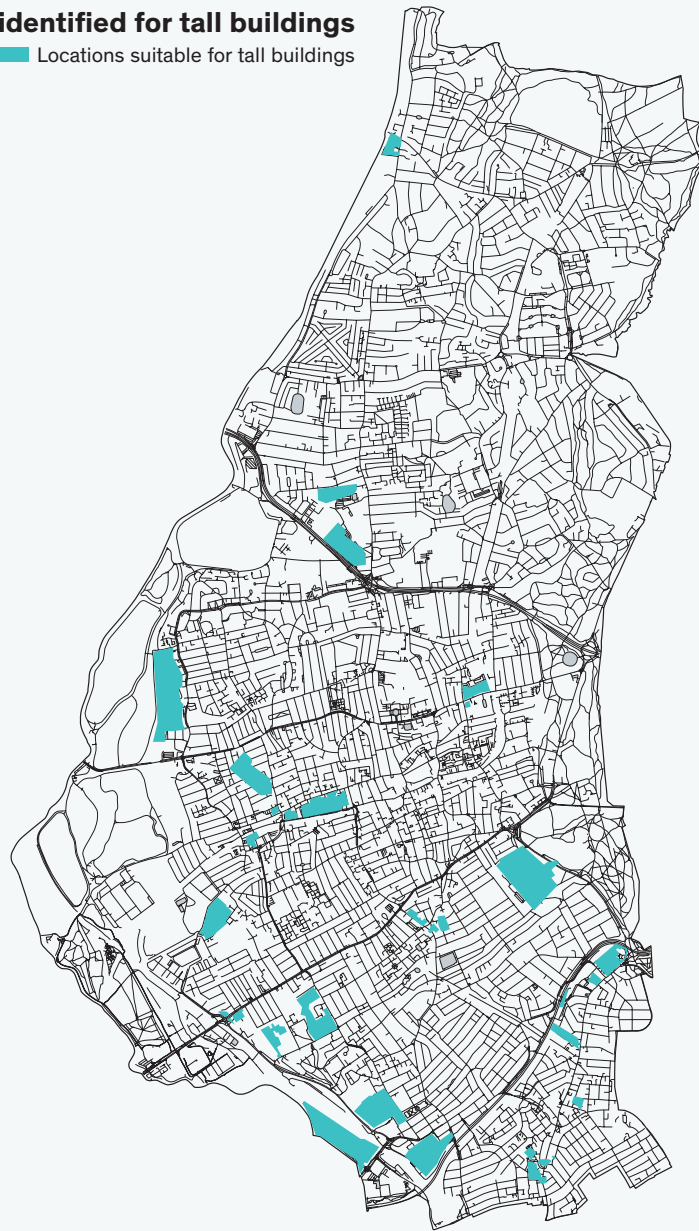
These are an eleven-storey building on the site of the former Wood Street Library and eight flat blocks on the former Homebase site, ranging from four to 18 storeys tall.

Construction has already started on the immense towers – 34 and 26 storeys high – planned at The Mall (now known as 17&Central) site in the centre of town.

Other sites earmarked for tall towers include the Sainsbury’s and Wilkos in the High Street, St James Quarter and Walthamstow Central Station.

## Sites identified for tall buildings

Locations suitable for tall buildings



## Leyton

The second largest site for new homes set out in the draft Local Plan is at New Spitalfields Market in Leyton, where the council expects to see up to 2,750 new homes.

The current market, the largest in the UK, has occupied the site since the early 1990s but is expected to move to a new home in Dagenham by 2026.

Elsewhere in Leyton, “flagship regeneration project” Coronation Square, which will deliver 750 new homes at the Score Centre site, is already well into its first phase of construction.

Other sites that are already underway include the controversial Lea Bridge Station development and hundreds of homes at Lea Bridge Gasworks.

Potential sites include almost 2,000 new homes at Leyton Mills Retail Park, 1,250 at an industrial site in Auckland Road and 700 each at Low Hall Depot and an industrial site in Estate Way.

## Leytonstone

In Leytonstone, the biggest development is the plans for the Whipps Cross Hospital site, which received outline planning permission for up to 1,500 new homes in November last year.

However, the High Road Tesco and adjoining sites, including the McDonalds and Moreia Welsh Presbyterian Church, could make way for up to 1,100 new homes.

While a planning application has yet to be submitted, around 600 new homes are likely to be built on the Avenue Road estate and Thorne Close.

Other sites are Joseph Ray Road, Church Lane car park and the Matalan site. An industrial site in Howard Road is also set to be redeveloped and, while no new houses are currently suggested, the draft plan notes the potential for “the introduction of other uses”.

## Chingford and Highams Park

The borough’s northern area has been far more resistant to tall buildings, with some Conservative local councillors previously claiming anything above three storeys would harm its “quaint, semi-rural” character.

There are far fewer sites earmarked for tall buildings past the North Circular, although each one represents hundreds of new homes and will likely provoke fierce opposition.

In Highams Park, the Sainsbury’s car park in Walthamstow Avenue has been put forward as potentially accommodating up to 430 new homes.

The Morrisons supermarket and car-park could see 270 new homes, according to the draft plan, while the Motorpoint in Sewardstone Road could make way for 385 new homes.

To find out more about the draft Local Plan, visit the council’s website here: [www.walthamforest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan](http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan)

# Third plan to redevelop The Standard approved

by Josh Mellor,  
Local Democracy Reporter

Plans to replace Walthamstow’s iconic former music venue The Standard, adding a 272-room “shared-living” development, were approved last month.

On 6th December, Waltham Forest’s planning committee greenlit developer Scape’s proposal for a nine-storey building opposite Blackhorse Road Station.

The site was, until 2011, home to a venue known as The Standard and the

council has previously approved two applications to redevelop it, both of which failed to materialise.

Most recently, planning permission for a new venue and 300 “co-living” flats was awarded in 2020 to The Collective, which went into administration less than a year later.

Committee members voted unanimously in favour of Scape’s application, with chair Jenny Gray urging the company not to “go out of business” before completion.

The plans include a basement venue with a capacity of around 500, an open-plan

workspace, lounge and reception on the ground floor and 272 private bedrooms and kitchenettes above.

The scheme contains no affordable housing, meaning final approval will only come after the council has finalised a Section 106 agreement with Scape, requiring them to help fund affordable flats elsewhere.

Scape argued that, even without affordable housing, the scheme will make a £6.9m loss due to the £779,000 cost of buying the land. However, a one-off £500,000 payment has been agreed as the council’s consultant believes the scheme will be “in surplus”.

The rooms, each 20–27sqm large, will contain a bathroom, small kitchen, double bed and “generous storage space”. Each floor will also have two shared outdoor terraces and an indoor “breakout space”.

The report notes that the communal kitchen size is “limited” but that refreshment bars on the ground and first floor would “reduce any pressure”.

On its website, Scape describes itself as a student accommodation company that already runs six sites in London. Studios at its Wembley site are on the market for £1,100–£1,400 per month.



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COMMENT

Councillor comment – Cllr Miriam Mirwitch, Hoe Street

It's been about six months since I was elected as a Labour and Co-operative councillor for Hoe Street ward and it's a privilege to serve this diverse, generous and vibrant community. I and my fellow councillors, Ahsan Khan and Andrew Dixon, have a lot to be proud of in our area, from the Waltham Forest Hub and the beautiful St. Mary's Church to community organisations like Walthamstow Toy Library and Church Hill Road Gardeners. A particular jewel in our ward – and indeed our borough – is Vestry House Museum. So many residents enjoy its rich archives, informative exhibitions and beautiful gardens and I am immensely thankful for the wonderful volunteers, community groups and staff who support it. This is why I want to reassure residents that Waltham Forest Council has no plans to close Vestry House. In fact, the council is committed to more investment, new partnerships and work to



Cllr Miriam Mirwitch Credit Jas Bhabra make the building more accessible. This project is a really exciting opportunity to ensure that a wonderful asset in our borough can be enjoyed by even more of our community. The current building and archives are unfortunately inaccessible to many residents with disabilities. Additionally, the current collection of objects stops in the 1950s. There is a rich and diverse modern history in Waltham Forest that we want to

also see reflected in and expressed at Vestry House. The council is currently working with community groups and heritage experts to draw together some options for the future. They have been meeting with local historians, volunteers and more. As councillors we want to make sure that residents' voices are heard front and centre in this process and we'll be working hard to make sure that your concerns are heard and addressed. There will be a consultation this spring where even more residents can share their thoughts and you can also send questions and feedback directly to [vestry@assemblestudio.co.uk](mailto:vestry@assemblestudio.co.uk). The history of our borough deserves to be celebrated and its future looks bright too, especially with Soho Theatre Walthamstow and a new lido on its way soon. I'm so proud to live in Waltham Forest and to be able to work to support our incredible community.

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The Licensing register listing full details of the application is kept by the Licensing Service, Town Hall, Fellowship Square, Forest Road, London E17 4JF. The application may be viewed Monday to Friday between the hours of 9am – 5pm (except Bank Holidays).

Any person wishing to make a representation in respect of the above activities may do so in writing to the Licensing Service, Town Hall, Fellowship Square, Forest Road, London E17 4JF.

Representations must be received no later than **12th January 2023.**

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Notice is hereby given that **L McCoy Drinks Limited** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the grant of a Premises Licence at **Luke's Cider Tap, Unit 3 The Georgian Village, 100 Wood Street E17 3HX.** The nature of the application is as follows:

- The sale of alcohol for consumption on & off the premises Tuesday to Saturday from 10:00–21:30; opening hours Tuesday to Saturday from 10:00–22:00

The Licensing register listing full details of the application is kept by the Licensing Service, Waltham Forest Town Hall, Fellowship Square, Walthamstow, London E17 4JF. The application may be viewed Monday to Friday between the hours of 9am – 5pm (except Bank Holidays).

Any person wishing to make a representation in respect of the above activities may do so in writing to the Licensing Service, Waltham Forest Town Hall, Fellowship Square, Walthamstow, London E17 4JF or via email: [Licensing@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:Licensing@walthamforest.gov.uk).

Representations must be received no later than: **11 January 2023.**

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# AROUND THE BOROUGH

## HIGHAMS PARK

### Vision for revived cinema unveiled

An artist's impression of the new cinema  
Credit Mammoth Capital



by Josh Mellor,  
Local Democracy Reporter

New plans to redevelop the Regal Cinema building in Highams Park were unveiled last month.

Locals formed a queue at Hale End Library on 5th December to see the latest proposals for the historic building in Hale End Road, which has sat unused since 2015.

Developer Mammoth Capital wishes to build a six-storey

building with 33 one and two-bed "high quality" flats, with a cinema, foyer and café on the ground floor.

The developer's presentation adds: "The proposed elevations have been designed to appear as if they step up from the subservient surrounding low-rise buildings."

"A sympathetic extension, that wraps around the existing facade, further reinforces The Regal as a local landmark."

Residents looking at the designs said they are keen to see

a local cinema brought back to life, although a representative of the developer said no operator has yet committed to running it.

Local resident Gemma said: "We're really positive about the whole thing – we would rather see something rather than nothing. I hope they build it."

The building opened in 1911 as Highams Park Electric Theatre and was renamed The Regal Cinema in 1935. Its Art Deco-style facade was added when it was partly rebuilt in 1935.

It continued to operate as a theatre until 1971, later becoming a bingo hall, snooker hall, bar and nightclub before being "repossessed" and "left vacant" in 2015.

Planning permission to redevelop The Regal with 30 flats above was first granted in 2018, on the condition that the cinema must be in use before the final eight flats could be sold. Two years later, a committee agreed Mammoth could reduce this condition to five flats.

## LEYTON

### Second GP risks closure this year

Leyton GP practice is in special measures after failing to provide care "in a timely way" or treat its patients with "kindness, respect and compassion".

The government's health watchdog – the Care Quality Commission (CQC) – rated Francis Road Medical Centre "inadequate" on 1st December, after an inspection in September.

The GP practice treats around 6,900 patients and is the second in Leyton this year to be slammed by the CQC, as Crawley Road Medical Centre is currently on its last chance to improve or risk closure [#93, p15].

Francis Road Medical Centre was last inspected in 2017, while run by a different provider, when it was given the CQC's second highest rating of "good".

Jane Ray, CQC deputy director for London, said: "Standards of care at Francis Road Medical Centre were below those people have a right to expect."

"This includes a failure to ensure people could access care and treatment in a timely way."



Francis Road Medical Centre  
Credit Google Streetview

"We also found people were treated with a lack of kindness, respect and compassion, and people's complaints weren't always used to improve the care provided."

"We are keeping Francis Road Medical Centre under close review and we will not hesitate to take further action if we are not assured it has made significant improvement."

The routine inspection also found "appropriate standards of

cleanliness and hygiene were not met" at the practice.

However, the report acknowledged that the practice was attempting to improve and "routinely reviewed the effectiveness and appropriateness of the care provided".

Francis Road Medical Centre will be inspected again in March next year and risks being shut down or suspended if "insufficient improvements have been made".

## WALTHAMSTOW

### Charity fundraising to replace mother's stolen bike



Pepsi Monderoy James  
Credit WIILMA

A local arts charity hopes to raise enough money to replace a struggling Walthamstow family's only form of transport.

On 27th November, Pepsi Monderoy James discovered the theft of the cargo bike she and her two young children rely on to get around.

She told arts non-profit

WIILMA she worked hard to save up money for the second-hand bike and that the disruption had left her child with special needs "regularly inconsolable".

Now WIILMA, based in Uplands Industrial Estate, is trying to raise around £2,500 from the community to buy Pepsi a new bike.

A spokesperson told the Echo: "Pepsi couldn't be a more deserving person. She has a background in trauma and crisis intervention support and cares deeply for others."

"We think it is a realistic and achievable amount if enough people pitch in a small amount and every penny raised will go to Pepsi and her family."

Donate to the fundraiser here: [justgiving.com/crowdfunding/helpreplacestolentransportbike4senchild](https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/helpreplacestolentransportbike4senchild)

## LEYTONSTONE

### Flats on top of existing estate approved

by Josh Mellor,  
Local Democracy Reporter

Plans to build new flats on top of an existing estate were reluctantly approved by councillors last month.

The proposals, approved on 6th December, allow developer Southern Territory to add ten flats to three three-storey buildings in Brockway Close.

Several unhappy estate residents urged the council's planning committee to reject the scheme, arguing the extensions would affect their light, privacy and safety.

Resident Noah Blackmore said he was "extremely concerned" about the loss of light to his home, which he suggested the planning report only "vaguely" mentions.

Southern Territory's owner Tas Alexandru and planning agent Jerry Bell argued that

"only nine" windows would see a 20–30% loss of light, which is considered a "minor impact" in planning terms.

Councillors heard from planning officers that, as a permitted development proposal, the plans could only be rejected if they failed a "technical assessment".

Assistant director of management and building control Justin Carr added: "We considered that the impact on the street scene and character of the area is not harmful and certainly not sufficient to justify refusal."

The committee voted in favour, saying the planning laws introduced by the government in 2020 gave them no choice.

Committee chair Jenny Gray said: "I know that residents will be disappointed but we are constrained in what we can do. We can't find any valid reason to refuse this [...] but thanks for coming."



SPORT

# Under new management

*David O’Driscoll interviews the new face behind his local team*

In football, as in life, the only constant is change. You find a team, get attached, pick a favourite player or two and even learn to appreciate the manager and then, in the blink of an eye, it’s a different beast entirely. This is what has happened for fans of Walthamstow FC.

After the club’s runaway success last season, they had a shaky start in the new Southern Central League and, to the surprise of many of the fans, shed their former management duo – John Mackie and Terry Spillane – as “performances have not been at the level expected”. What’s more, at a recent game I attended, I spotted just one player from last season’s team on the pitch.



Nicky Ironton  
Credit Andrzej Perkins

I caught up with the new man in charge, Nicky Ironton, to get his thoughts and learn more about him. Ironton had a lengthy playing career, starting as a professional at Queens Park Rangers, and boasts an extraordinary non-league managerial pedigree with success at a long list of clubs. He guided Welwyn Garden City to the playoffs last season until they were informed at the last minute that their ground was not up to the required standard for promotion

and, as a result, promptly resigned. He had numerous offers but wanted some time out of the game before accepting Walthamstow. “I was impressed by the club’s ambition and fan base,” he told me. “The fact that they get up to 500 per game is excellent at this level. I felt I could not turn down this opportunity.”

Describing his strategy, Ironton said: “I like my teams to play on the front foot, attacking football. I am not a fan of the long ball game.” He has coached at all

levels, including youth football, and believes that a crucial aspect of his success is having the right team around him. It’s clear he knows what works, as he helped start the careers of some top ex-Premier League players, including Dave Kitson and Craig Mackail-Smith.

Ironton believes it’s not too late for Stow to get into the playoffs this season, arguing that this is “where [the club] should be”. He acknowledges the challenge he faces and the massive turnover of players since he arrived and, as a result, is still searching for that missing ingredient. “I feel it’s not far away now,” he said. “This is a good team we are building here. We are just outside the playoffs and it’s a long season.”

If there is anyone who knows how to get Walthamstow promoted, it must be Ironton, as one of the most experienced and managers in the non-league. Wherever he has gone, he has enjoyed success and knows the Southern Central League well. Fans can be confident that the club is in good hands.

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# WE NEED YOUR HELP

## WE ARE LOOKING FOR PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP SUPPORT US TO PRODUCE MORE HIGH-QUALITY LOCAL JOURNALISM IN WALTHAM FOREST

- We have NO shareholders
- We have NO wealthy backers
- We are run by a small but dedicated team as part of a not-for-profit community interest company
- We hold authority to account, expose scandals, highlight inequality, promote good causes, and provide a platform for local people
- Every penny of income from the Echo helps us deliver more journalism in Waltham Forest
- The paper costs nearly £6,000 per month to produce and distribute, but monthly income is under £5,000 currently
- We currently have 262 supporters who contribute around 23% of our income, but we need more!

Can you help us? Our membership scheme has many different options, starting from £3 per month, depending on your ability to contribute. Rewards include having a copy of the paper posted to you every month. Local businesses and charities can also sign up and, for as little as £10 per month, access discounts on advertising.

Find out more at: [walthamforestecho.co.uk/membership](http://walthamforestecho.co.uk/membership)

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