



Your independent community newspaper

# WALTHAM FOREST ECHO

Free  
March 2023, No. 96

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# Town centre tower profit evaporates

by Victoria Munro

**T**he multi-million pound profit expected from a 17-storey tower being built on council land in Walthamstow town centre has evaporated, a new report reveals.

Plans to build 91 flats and a new nursery on the Juniper House site in Hoe Street, directly opposite Walthamstow Central Station, were agreed in June 2019, with construction expected to finish in 2021 but currently still ongoing.

The council originally expected the income from the new flats, 50 of which will be sold on the private market, to provide a profit of £2.6million, which it planned to invest in the flats being built around the town hall.

However, a report prepared for a private meeting of council leaders last month showed the project has since become approximately £4m more expensive than the £37.7m budget agreed four years ago.

While the difference is partially offset by an increase in the predicted market value of the new flats, the project is now expected to lose £562,000, which the council will have to borrow.

The report reveals that nearly half of the increase is due to the tower's construction company, Hill Partnerships Ltd, demanding an extra

£1.8m from the council "due to Covid-19 and other cost increases".

The company originally agreed to charge around £30.1m for the project but, in negotiations that began in August last year, demanded a 6% increase because of "significant cost inflation to both materials and labour" caused by "global and national market conditions".

The report notes that failing to agree a "satisfactory" sum with Hill Partnerships and insisting on the previously agreed amount could lead to a legal battle with the company, "which would, in all likelihood, [be] prejudicial to a successful project outcome and [result in] higher costs".

The remaining £2.1m increase comes from other development costs on the council's side, such as consultancy fees, charges from third parties like Network Rail, expected fees for estate agents and other unspecified staff costs.

The report notes that the need to borrow money to finance the project will cause "a £95k pressure to the [council's] general fund for the foreseeable future", as well as having ramifications on the town hall development that were not made public.

Thankfully, some income is also expected from leasing

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Juniper House  
under construction



# NEWS



FELLOWSHIP IS LIFE

**MAR 2023**  
**No. 95**

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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commercial space in the new tower. While at least part of the space will be home to the promised nursery, one unit will house the borough's first ever university campus.

Plans to open a University of Portsmouth (UoP) campus in Waltham Forest were revealed in 2021, after more than a year of private talks between the university and the council.

While it appeared at the start of last year that the campus would occupy Central House a few doors down, UoP has now agreed to lease space in Juniper House for the next 15 years.

The report adds that the opening of the new campus "will provide an important landmark for the whole community" and "has the potential" to contribute £9.2m to the local economy long-term.

As per the original plan for the building, Central House will likely instead be redeveloped into a block of at least 60 flats with office space.



## A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

by Victoria Munro

**A**spectre is haunting Waltham Forest – the spectre of gentrification.

Two years ago, *The Sunday Times* named Walthamstow one of London's best places to live, praising its "arty, crafty shops, street market and pretty houses". Nowadays, few traders at Walthamstow Market can afford to live locally, as the average price of those pretty houses is well over half-a-million pounds. In what feels like a sign of the times, the iconic pie and mash shop L. Manze - long considered symbolic of a particularly East End working-class culture - reopened last month as an up-market chain restaurant.

It's impossible to truly know what stringent assessment goes on behind closed doors at publications like *The Sunday Times* before they decide where is or is not a nice place to live. At other outlets, however, there is a more clear - and mercenary - process at work. An article on news website *Londonist* from December last year, entitled "Now Is The Time To Move To Walthamstow - Here's Why", was sponsored by housing association L&Q and

attempts to flog flats in two of their recently completed developments. In an interesting coincidence, on the exact same day, *The Telegraph* published an article listing Walthamstow among Britain's coolest neighbourhoods.

The sole blame for Waltham Forest's exploding house prices, which jumped more dramatically over the last decade than in any other London borough, cannot be placed at the feet of journalists writing puff pieces. On the other hand, a property with an inflated price tag is worth nothing without someone willing to pull their wallet out. If people already living in the area cannot foot the bill, the only option remaining is to convince someone elsewhere it is a good idea to move in.

This is why it is hard not to view the decision of *The Sunday Times*' *Style* supplement to list Leyton's E10 postcode among the top ten "coolest" in the UK earlier this year without some degree of alarm. Entirely coincidentally, the first flats in the area's immense 750-home development, Coronation Square, are now on sale.

From the perspective of a property developer, this is the perfect time to expand which swathes of

the borough are deemed desirable. If, as alleged in a 2019 *Time Out* article on "The trends that defined London in the 2010s", the prototypical hipster began the decade living in Shoreditch, was "outpriced to Clapton" and "when he was priced out of Clapton[...] moved to Walthamstow" then they may need to move again soon. In 2001, the median house price in Chingford Green was around £50,000 more expensive than in Hoe Street ward. Twenty years later, the reverse is true.

Thankfully for this hypothetical hipster, the prices just next door in Leyton have failed to fully keep up, at least so far. In the last 20 years, the gap between the median house price in Leyton and Hoe Street wards has grown from £9,500 to more than £84,000. If developers like Countryside, who are behind the Coronation Square development, have their way then we could see this close again in the decades to come.

But, when it comes to the spectre of gentrification, not everyone is scared of ghosts. In the summer of 2020, Waltham Forest Council's deputy leader Clyde Loakes told cycling podcast *Spokesmen*: "I don't like to use the term gentrification. It's

not something that I believe in."

When given the opportunity to clarify this comment last December, he told the *Echo* that "stagnating is not an option", adding that the council "must balance [its] responsibility to attract investment with the need to retain the essential character of the borough".

"Everyone wants to live in a nicer, cleaner, greener area - the people who will lose out if we do nothing to attract investment will be the people who live, work, and study in Waltham Forest."

He further explained that financial contributions paid to the council by developers enable "infrastructure and improvements that make life better for everyone in Waltham Forest", listing Lea Bridge Station, Walthamstow Wetlands and Soho Theatre Walthamstow among assets the borough could not have afforded "without inward investment".

He added: "Residents will continue to see these improvements in the next few years as the new Lee Valley Ice Centre opens, we develop plans for a new accessible footbridge over Orient Way, and the proposed Low Hall Lido progresses."

The question that remains is who will still be around to enjoy them.



## INTERVIEW

# Singer Fleur East on who Walthamstow made her

Credit Piotr



by Victoria Munro

**W**hen it comes to her career, Walthamstow's Fleur East feels like "a cat with nine lives".

In a career spanning almost two decades, the singer and radio presenter has competed on *X-Factor* twice, signed and parted ways with a major label, toured with producer DJ Fresh and, last year, made the grand final of *Strictly Come Dancing*.

She had the misfortune of her second album *Fearless* dropping just three days before the UK entered its first Covid lockdown but thankfully she's not run out of lives quite yet.

Fleur's latest single *Count The Ways* was released in January, while her third album will come out by the end of the year, and she's playing her first headline show in years at Islington's Union Chapel this month.

Last month, she spoke to the *Echo* about growing up in Walthamstow, the area she called home for more than three decades.

"Growing up here kind of made me the bubbly person I am now," she said. "I always want to talk to people, make friends and be really sociable - that was the essence of Walthamstow and still is now. Everyone feels like one big family."

Fleur's family home was off Shernhall Street, which is home to her old church and all her schools "from nursery to sixth

form", and she "loved that everything was so close".

She said: "Before school, everyone would knock on my door and we'd all walk together and, afterwards, a massive group would come back to my house to sit and watch MTV."

"On the weekends, I'd go to the market or hang out at Selbourne Walk [now 17& Central shopping centre], my first job was at the Topshop there. I used to go to Sun On Cafe in the market every single lunch time, that was my place."

"So much of my life is still in Walthamstow. Anyone I meet from here, you just have this bond, there's a real sense of pride being from here."

This sense of solidarity meant that, when she bumped into E17 lead singer Brian Harvey in a Greggs early in her career, he was quick to offer some advice to a budding singer.

She said: "E17 was the only group in the area that had made it big so they were a huge inspiration for all of us growing up. They made it so that meant we could too."

"[Brian and I] ended up having a curry together, he listened to all my music and gave me some advice. He saw from early on there was something there and was confident I would have a career."

It's a feeling Fleur says was shared by many of the people she grew up with, adding: "Everyone who knew me always knew I was going to sing, none of the people that went to school with me are surprised at what I'm doing now."

"I was always sure, I just didn't know how I would get there. I did my first singing lessons at age ten or eleven in the music school in Walthamstow Village, which is still there, and I did a few shows at The Standard."

Her early passion was "really encouraged" by her parents, who both loved music. "We listened to it every day in the house: Stevie Wonder, George Michael, Earth, Wind and Fire, Madonna."

"They were musical in that sense and both claimed they could sing when they were younger, although I don't understand where that vocal talent disappeared when they got old," she joked.

Much like her first album *Love, Sax and Flashbacks*, released in 2015 under Simon Cowell's label, Fleur's latest single is heavily inspired by the 70s classics she grew up listening to at home.

She said that, while her sound is "still in the same vein", her new music is "more mature, more laidback" than the work she was cre-

ating as a younger and less confident artist.

She said: "I learned a lot signed to a major label, I was very inquisitive and wanted to know how everything worked. Now, doing it on my own is very liberating, I can be more playful with things and I've got a lot more say."

"There was a period where I had been trying so long, doing all the right things, in the right circles and it just wasn't happening. Then *X-Factor* came along and I burst onto the scene in a really big way - went all over the world, did all the things I dreamed of doing - but it just didn't last long at that level."

"But, having experienced that, I'm now in a position where I have more control of what I do and I'm more comfortable and secure in who I am as an artist. Before I used to write from other people's experiences, now I'm writing from my own."

Accordingly, Fleur hopes her show this month will be a good opportunity for people to "get to know [her] a bit more", adding: "I don't want them to leave with it just having been another show. It's about my past, my present and my future."

"I'll have a live band and there'll be a lot of dancing as well, I want to put the *Strictly* training to good use."

Asked if she'd be keen to perform again at The Standard, due to reopen soon, she added: "I would love to. Anything happening locally in Walthamstow, I would be there."

Find out more about Fleur East and buy tickets to her show on 16th March on her website: [fleur-east.com](http://fleur-east.com)



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# NEWS

The police cordon outside The Duke  
Credit Penny Dampier



## Four stabbed in pub attack

**F**our men were injured during an attack in a Walthamstow pub last month.

Police were called to The Duke in Wood Street at approximately 8.15pm on 13th February and found three men with stab wounds inside, ranging in age from 27 to 42 years old.

A short distance away, in Shernall Street, they found a 20-year-old man with far more serious injuries, who was left in “life-threatening condition” for more than 24 hours.

This man has since stabilised and been arrested on suspicion of attempted murder, although he remains in hospital while his injuries are treated.

The Metropolitan Police are appealing to the public to help them find out more about the events leading up to the attack, which they suspect was “targeted” but do not believe was gang-related.

Detective Inspector Grant Stevens said: “We are in the early stages of piecing together what happened and would like to hear from anyone who was inside the pub and witnessed the attack.

“Whilst news of this kind is concerning, I would like to reassure the community that we believe this was a targeted attack and there is nothing to suggest any wider risk to the public. We do not believe it was gang related.

Anyone with information that could assist the investigation is asked to call 101 quoting CAD 6988/13Feb. To remain anonymous contact the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

# Underused museum set for £4.4m revamp

by Josh Mellor,  
Local Democracy Reporter

**A** Walthamstow museum that currently costs the council £18 per visitor is set for a £4million refurbishment.

Since June last year, architecture firm Assemble has been working on plans to “revitalise” Vestry House Museum in Walthamstow Village.

Housed in an 18th Century former workhouse, the museum tells the history of the borough through exhibitions and an extensive archive of objects, artworks and photographs, which take up approximately a third of the building.

However, it currently only receives around 22,000 visitors each year – a mostly older group that does not reflect the borough’s diversity – and costs the council about £400,000 to run.

After receiving £17million from the government’s Levelling Up Fund to “unlock Walthamstow’s potential” as a cultural destination, Waltham Forest Council has committed £4.4m to revamping Vestry House.

In an online meeting last month, the council’s head of creative engagement Hadrian Garrard said the new vision is a “space where heritage meets innovation”.



Vestry House Museum Credit LDRS

The archives will be digitised and relocated to another location in the borough, while on-site “cultural partners” will use the space for activities “inspired by the museum and heritage collections”.

Hadrian said the online meeting was only “one step” of public engagement, before the council’s cabinet decides the next step in

“April or May”.

He added: “There are still things to be resolved and worked through, this is about setting the direction of travel that is best for the Vestry House Museum.”

The council’s target is to raise the number of visitors from 22,000 to 60,000 per year, placing a new focus on school groups and host-

ing 150 free events.

Some of the 800,000 objects in the museum’s archive could be displayed in locations across Waltham Forest, such as the Pump House Museum, Chingford Hub, libraries or the town hall.

The museum will also set up a community advisory panel to “restructure” its relationship with local history groups who have “done so much in the past”, the head of creative engagement said.

Following the meeting, a spokesperson for the Waltham Forest History and Heritage Network told the Local Democracy Reporting Service they were “grateful for being informed” about the proposals for improving the building.

They added: “We also welcome assurances that those interested in and knowledgeable about Waltham Forest’s history will be kept regularly informed about the plans for changes to the Museum.”

However, local group WIILMA Community Voices stated the online meeting was “controlled and stage-managed” and questioned why they had not received any updates on the plans for “well over a year”.

Questions and feedback about the plans can be submitted here: [bit.ly/3SaSr9u](https://bit.ly/3SaSr9u)

## Government to rebuild four local schools

**T**he government has pledged to rebuild four local schools over the next decade, as part of a nationwide programme to make schools “resilient to climate risks” and “net-zero in operation”.

Last month, plans for one of the four schools – Highams Park School – were finally unveiled, proposing to redesign large parts of the campus to make room for “greater outdoor space” and a main hall big enough for “full-scale school productions”.

Highams Park School is a secondary academy in Handsworth Avenue that specialises in sports and technology. Also selected for the rebuild programme were Chingford Foundation School and Burnside Secondary PRU, both in Chingford, and Eden Girls School in Walthamstow.

The Department for Education has so far selected 400 of the 500 schools and sixth forms that it

will rebuild in the next decade and says schools were chosen “based on how immediate their need for improvement is”.

Highams Park School principal Nigel Armsby said: “Following an extensive design process[...] we are delighted to be able to share with you our proposals for the future of Highams Park School.

“The regeneration plans will make Highams Park a more sustainable and efficient school and our students will be provided with brand new facilities, learning in an outstanding environment where they will be able to flourish and fulfil their academic potential.

“Highams Park has always been a school which has proudly served its local community, and we want to maintain this close relationship by receiving our community’s feedback on the proposals.”

Information on the plans for Highams Park School is available at [highamsparkschoolfuture.co.uk/](https://highamsparkschoolfuture.co.uk/)

## Police believe missing man found dead

**A** young man who walked into Walthamstow Marshes and “vanished into thin air” has reportedly been found dead.

Nathan Cole, a 32-year-old from Notting Hill, was last seen in Walthamstow on the evening of 21st January shortly after 11pm, walking along Banbury Road in the direction of the River Lea.

He had tentative plans to go to a gig in Camden that night and told his mother Niuska when he would be home but, by 6am the next morning, her Whatsapp messages were no longer reaching his phone.

Speaking to the *Echo* previously, Detective Inspector Fiona Van Kampen said: “Data from his phone suggests he went into the marshes, only he never came out the other end.

“We simply don’t know what happened, it’s like he vanished into thin air basically. At this stage, anything is possible.”



Nathan Cole (courtesy of family)

On 17th February, officers were called to a canal near Towpath Road in Edmonton, where they recovered the body of a dead man.

While formal identification has yet to take place, they believe it is Nathan and his family have been informed.

Police are still awaiting the results of a post-mortem but “do not believe the death to be suspicious” at this time.

Nathan is survived by his large and close-knit family, including four younger siblings.



# NEWS

## Pair charged with Chingford murder

The police cordon near Chingford Sainsbury's



A young couple turned themselves into police after a homeless man was found dead in Chingford.

Police were called to the woods between Chingford Sainsbury's in Walthamstow Avenue and the nearby Morrisons at around 9pm on 15th February after someone reported seeing an injured man.

Tragically, by the time they and paramedics arrived, it was already

too late to save him and he was declared dead at the scene.

The man was later identified as Preda Eugene, a 39-year-old who had been living in a hut in the same woods where he was found. A post-mortem revealed that the cause of death was an injury to his head.

The day after Preda's body was discovered, a young couple - George-Elvis Tobosaru, 22,

and Violeta Ionescu, 21, both of no fixed address - turned themselves in at a police station in South London.

The pair have since appeared at the Old Bailey charged with his murder, which they denied. A provisional trial date was set for August this year.

Detective Inspector Frank Copley, said: "Although we've now charged two people in connection with Preda's murder, I am still keen to hear from anyone who has information about what led up to his death.

"We know that he was living in a hut in the woodland but what happened to cause his death? Did you see him, or anyone else in the area between Saturday, 11th February, and the day he was found? Any piece of information could be vital in establishing exactly what happened."

Anyone with information or any witnesses who are yet to speak with police are urged to call 101 quoting reference CAD 7445/15eb.

To remain anonymous, please contact the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

## Cop sacked over corpse photo

A Waltham Forest police-woman was sacked after asking a colleague to send her a photo of a rotting corpse so she could show it to her relative.

Bonnie Murphy, who worked for the unit that polices Waltham Forest and Newham, was dismissed on 27th January after a misconduct hearing.

The panel heard former PC Murphy asked Jamie Lewis, then also a Waltham Forest cop, to send her a photo of a man found dead in non-suspicious circumstances in January 2020.

In March that year, then-PC Lewis also helped her cheat on a police driving exam by sending her a previous exam and answers.

Chief Superintendent Simon Crick said: "There was no policing purpose for the image to be shared with PC Murphy and neither officer considered this was inappropriate behaviour that should have been challenged and reported. This is totally unacceptable.

"My thoughts are with the

family of the man. I totally understand how distressing this must be for them.

"I expect officers on my command to conform to the highest standards of behaviour and any officer who falls below these standards can expect to be dealt with robustly."

Bonnie Murphy was sacked without notice and will now be barred from working for the police in future.

In November last year, Jamie Lewis was dismissed from the Metropolitan Police for taking inappropriate photos of two murdered sisters at a crime scene in Wembley.

He and another former colleague, Deniz Jaffer, were jailed for two years and nine months each for misconduct in public office after the photos were discovered.

It was previously revealed Lewis and Jaffer were in a Whatsapp group of 41 other Met officers called "the A-team", in which a racist slur for Pakistanis was also used on more than one occasion.

## PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES FACE INSURANCE PREMIUMS INCREASE OVER 1000 %



Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) covers professional practices, such as accountants, architects and surveyors, in the event of a client complaint in respect of the service provided. Many professions within the construction industry are required to have PII as part of their respective industry governing body's regulatory requirements.

Over the past three years, companies have seen increases in their PII premium by as much as 1000%. This has resulted in many practices having to cease trading. Ultimately, the consumer is suffering as the supply of professionals in specialist areas is reduced and costs are being passed on to the consumer. This adds yet more misery to the current cost of living crisis.

It is not just in professional services that there is an insurance crisis. As of January 10th, 2022, the Government set out a new plan to protect leaseholders from having to pay for unsafe



CREDIT UMIT YILDIRIM

cladding. Unfortunately, there is no such protection for other professional services and their regulatory required insurance. The Housing Secretary, Michael Gove, recently described the insurance market as 'failing' due to escalating increases, some of more than 1000%, including long leaseholders as a result of Grenfell.

Reasons cited for this dramatic premium increase include loss of profitability by insurance companies, decreased supply of providers within the market, future uncertainty and higher levels of exposure. Additionally, despite premiums increasing drastically, the coverage being offered is generally restricted and reduced.

Belleveue Mortlakes Chartered Surveyors started a trade body called PIFA (Professional Indemnity Fairness Association) in an attempt to assist and provide support, particularly to small/medium-sized firms in the broader construction industries who feel under-represented. The platform allows firms and professionals, in any industry, to put forward their views and concerns via <https://thepifa.com>. These are circulated within the industry and the working committee of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors on the subject of PII, of which we have a role.

It is our view that, unless the Government intervenes soon, our worst fears will be realised. There will be an almost complete annihilation of professional small/medium-sized businesses in the construction sector, leaving larger corporations dominating the sector, as always, to the cost of the consumer.



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# FEATURES

Aspiring set designer Reese Campbell



## Better living through carpentry

by Victoria Munro

**A** Leyton furniture manufacturer is helping at-risk youth by introducing them to the “healing power of making things”.

Thinkfound is based in the Argall Avenue industrial estate and sells furniture made from recycled materials, such as wood found in skips.

Founder Chris Barrett always knew he wanted his business to help people but fell into working with the borough’s youth almost by chance.

After allowing his neighbour’s son to come work with him as a favour, Chris told the *Echo* the boy’s friend knocked on his door and asked for work too.

He said: “That boy later got expelled from school - he had learning difficulties and anger management problems - and this was a place he could come to learn skills while he got himself sorted enough to go back into college.

“There’s a healing power to making things and doing meditative jobs like sanding, people really relax here. The UK also doesn’t do too much manufacturing anymore[...] so we’ve lost a lot of jobs suited for people

who don’t do well in academia.” The boy eventually returned to college but unfortunately ended up in a young offenders institution after throwing acid at a group “that were after him”.

Chris said: “It’s a fine line where things can go in London if you are an angry teenager with not much thought of the future, I can relate to that. He was an incredibly nice lad but he suffered from a lot of rage.

“In a way, we failed him but we also gave him tools which he used later. He left London and got into the construction industry and his time here helped with that.

“Certain sectors of society might say ‘how dare somebody throw acid, get him in jail’ but Thinkfound doesn’t think like that. Someone might have a difficult past but we want to facilitate them to have a better future with no judgement.”

Thinkfound now offers free training and work experience to a wide range of “at-risk youth”, which Chris notes is “essentially everyone” in a city like London, including young offenders, care leavers, young carers and those struggling to find employment.

They have taught 15 people so far this year and hope to have 50 to 100 people through their doors

by the end of the year.

Chris said: “For many of the young people, it’s not really about the woodwork, it’s about turning up and getting used to a workplace and to working with other people.

“We [also] have a sly green agenda. We’re trying to get young people attached to reusing and remaking, although we don’t preach or push it.”

For those that do discover a passion for woodwork, Thinkfound has solid links to the construction industry and the creative sector, in areas like set design.

Reese Campbell, 19, said she found out about Thinkfound from Waltham Forest Council’s Future Formed team, which aims to help young people into creative work.

She said: “I want to get into set design so it’s helpful to learn how to use tools, construct things and read a plan. I definitely want to work in the arts, maybe in theatre or TV.”

In order to raise more money to support the free training, Thinkfound also plans to start offering paid-for courses for the general public on weekends and evenings.

**Find out more about Thinkfound on the website here:** [thinkfound.co.uk](http://thinkfound.co.uk)

## Educating to end FGM

by Victoria Munro

**A** local non-profit founded by a survivor of female genital mutilation (FGM) is hoping to end the practice by educating the next generation.

FGM - also known as “female circumcision” - involves cutting off parts of the female genitals and is illegal in the UK.

However, Hibo Wardere, the Walthamstow founder of Educate Not Mutilate, said the practice is “thriving in secrecy”, adding: “There are girls taken to Whipps Cross Hospital who have been cut but they’ve never left the country.”

In an effort to stamp out FGM, she delivers sessions in schools across England, as well as training for health professionals and police.

Educate Not Mutilate operations manager Faiza Mughal said that, over the years, they have educated “more than 6,500 people” about the devastating impact of FGM.

Hibo told the *Echo*: “Education, for me, is prevention. It doesn’t cost that much but, if we were to invest in education, we would see lots of changes in our youth. Giving them information makes them stop and question things that may be happening in their home.

“The generation growing up now

all the time.

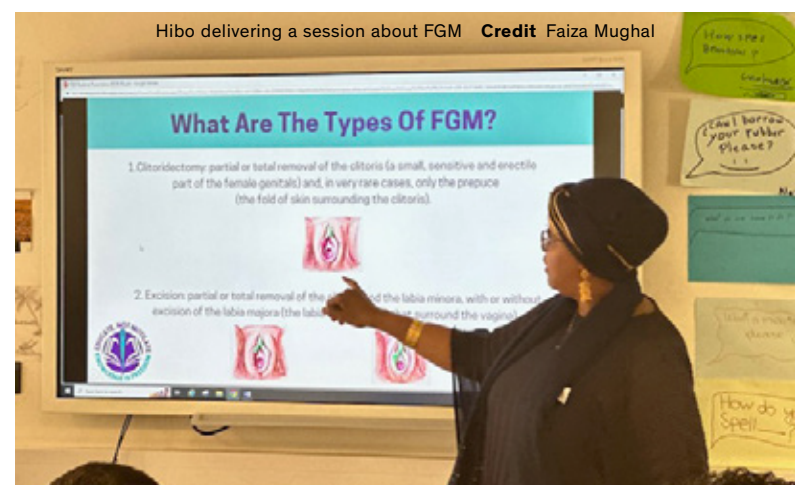
“But something will always make you stop. For me, it was volunteering in a school about ten years ago. There was a ten-year-old girl and the school suspected she might be taken home to be cut, it brought my trauma into my face.

“I remember thinking that I thought I had left this behind but, in reality, I had just put tape over it. I knew I had to face that side of me, that’s why I opened up about my own experience.

“I don’t know what happened to that girl, she was taken home and never returned. In the back of my mind, I always dedicate everything I’m doing to her, she was the person that made me talk.”

Hibo said she is glad people are beginning to see FGM as “just like any other child abuse”, adding: “The biggest barrier is really the lack of funding. I know communities will open up eventually if I am persistent[...] but, without funding, that work is impossible to do.

“We need to make our communities educate and value their girls just like they value their boys. Their community back home might isolate them because they didn’t cut their daughter but they are in the UK, they don’t need to care about those people.”



is so powerful and eager to know what’s right and wrong. To hear some of them say they will never stand by and let their daughter or their cousin be cut is amazing.”

Hibo said that, other than the risk of serious health problems, “the trauma of being cut can literally take over your life”.

She said: “It touches every aspect of your life: emotionally, psychologically, physically. You can have flashbacks whenever anything happens between your legs.

“For almost 30 years, I didn’t live for myself, I just lived for my family. I was petrified and always running

Hibo also gave her thanks to Waltham Forest Council, saying she owes much of her success today to their support.

She said: “Years ago, I gave my first speech, which was very emotional and very raw, in the council chamber. I told them you must educate people and they did.

“Waltham Forest became the first borough to tackle FGM from the inside, I’m very grateful to be a resident in this amazing, diverse borough.”

**Find out more about Educate Not Mutilate and donate here:** [linktr.ee/educatenotmutilate](http://linktr.ee/educatenotmutilate)

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## FEATURES

# A week in the life of... a commercial director

*The working diary of Will Webb from the Waltham Forest Business Network*



**M**y name is Will Webb and I run Mountain Way Pictures with my business partner George Magner. We are an agency that creates impactful, cinematic videos for clients like the Royal Opera House, the Barbican and the Lord Mayor's Appeal. I'm based in Walthamstow and George is in Bath but our work regularly takes us all over the UK.

My week started on Saturday in Doncaster, more than 150 miles from home. I was working on a project for The Royal Ballet, filming 300 young people dancing for their families and friends in the open air. It ended up being a marathon day of work, followed by a sprint on the train home to edit the video so it would be ready for the following Monday.

By the time that video came out, I was deep into filming our next project: an advert for

Scottish indie game developer Hairy Heart. This complex video packed a lot into its 45-second runtime, including extensive 3D computer graphics of cars added into real world footage. In practice, this meant filming a lot of empty rooms!

Tuesday was another ambitious project for Cambridge University. George had been working with them to create a film in response to some hard-hitting research, which ended up being far more like a conventional film than our usual work. Preparation for this project included casting a diverse range of actors, hiring a crew and sourcing locations.

Most weeks aren't as busy as this one. Since we're a small team, normally a lot of our time is spent reaching out to potential clients

or bidding on projects rather than filming. Additionally, every day we do spend filming means many more days spent editing what we've shot, as we also do this in-house.

From Wednesday onwards, I sat at my desk working at shaping messages and visuals for our clients, which included finishing a round of videos for Walthamstow's own Beaten By A Whisker. On top of that, I did the usual work of an entrepreneur: meetings with clients, answering emails, responding to briefs, and negotiating whose turn it is to make coffee with my partner. Our work takes us to some extraordinary places, with long hours and complex logistics, so it's good to end the week focusing back on the stories we're trying to tell.



## London's least exclusive club

by Victoria Munro



Manager Sharon with a photo of the club's founders

**A** century-old social club in Leytonstone is hoping to finally cast off its 'hidden gem' status.

While Leytonstone Social Club in Harvey Road is technically in the same family as the snooty members clubs of central London, the two could not be more distant cousins.

Founded in the aftermath of the First World War as a club for former soldiers and their families, the doors are now open to anyone, including dogs and children.

As a case in point, on the day the *Echo*

visited a large portion of the bar was taken over by a playpen for manager Sharon Crowe's youngest grandchild - or the "next generation of bar staff", as one regular joked.

The club's more than 230 members, who pay £20-40 a year for discounted drinks and a number of other perks, are "very close-knit", according to Sharon's daughter Shannon, although she adds: "It's not hard to be part of that knit."

Sharon told the *Echo*: "When people join, it's like they're coming into a family, not just somewhere they can get a drink and watch a bit of entertainment. It's a group where people care about each other."

"Normally in a pub you don't learn people's names, you just learn what they drink, but it's different here."

A number of regulars boast their own nicknames, such as Kevin 257 - so-called because he used to drive the 257 bus - and a man named Dave, known as "Hedgehog" because he drunkenly fell asleep in a graveyard and woke up to a nursery of hedgehogs beside him.

Shannon added: "Sometimes, if you go into a pub, there will be someone acting a bit weird but that doesn't happen here. We never need security on the door on Fridays or Saturdays,

"I think it's because it feels like a family here and that makes people respect the space. It's like someone has come round to drink in your front room - they wouldn't disrespect your house so they don't disrespect the pub."

The club was founded in 1921, although a search of the borough's local history archives has revealed little about the men that set it up, other than the fact the space was used for boxing tournaments.

The club was originally called the Ex-Servicemen's Club but changed its name in 2021 to seem less exclusive, although Sharon notes they are still "faithful to tradition" and collect donations constantly for a veterans' charity.

She said: "A lot of people don't seem to know we are here and we hope to show people

that we want to be a part of the community. When I took over [eight years ago] I wanted to make it a busy place, where everybody had something for them."

"There's not a lot of live music around here so I wanted us to be on the map as somewhere that promotes it. It also means new people will come in and experience the club."

True to her word, the club has a packed calendar, hosting a blues jam every Monday, jazz nights on Tuesdays, gigs ranging "from country and western to punk rock" on Wednesday, live entertainment every Friday and Sunday, and even more.

Sharon added: "You don't have to be a member to come in and see what it's like. We just ask that people become a member if they come in three or more times in a month."

"We're on Facebook and Instagram trying to target the younger crowd because pub culture seems to be dying out. That's why we host events to get people coming in."

"Like everywhere, we are struggling but we are hoping we will be here for another one hundred years. The members have been very good, they jolly us along."

**Find out more about Leytonstone Social Club and how to become a member here:** [leytonstonesocial.club](http://leytonstonesocial.club)





ARTS & CULTURE

Flying the flag



Members of the borough's Twinning Association with their flag Photos courtesy of Alisa Ruzavina

A community arts project has created flags celebrating the “treasures” of Walthamstow High Street, based on interviews with Walthamstow Market traders.

The project was led by artist Alisa Ruzavina, who co-designed eight treasures with the help of community groups, and produced by arts organisation Artillery CIC.

The flags are a companion to the *Walthamstow Griffin* sculpture, a “guardian” of the High Street created by Sandie M Sutton, that now hangs above the corner of Carisbrooke Road.

Groups that got involved include students at Waltham Forest College, the borough’s Antigua, Barbuda and Dominica Twinning Association and members of the borough’s pay-what-you-feel community cafe The Gleaners.

Alisa told the *Echo*: “The idea is the *Griffin* is a symbol of protection and my part of the project is about what those treasures are.

“All the fabrics for the designs

have been sourced from the amazing range of fabric shops that can be found along the High Street.”

The eight flags represent the ‘treasures’ of public space; creativity and DIY; the market itself; visions of the future; past heritage; food; multiculturalism and women-led businesses, of which Alisa notes there are unfortunately “not many” in the High Street.

She added that one of her favourite moments from the project was showing the ‘public space’ flag designed by Waltham Forest College students, which celebrates the area’s public transport, to local Transport for London workers.

She said: “They were so happy because they said nobody ever comes to them with good things to say, they only ever get shouted at. The fact students designed it; they were really overjoyed.”

All eight flags are currently on display at 1B Window Gallery in Coppermill Lane but will be available in future as decoration for local events.

*Flags of Our High Street Treasures* was funded by the Mayor of London as part of the ‘Untold Stories’ project, with additional support from Waltham Forest Council.



Saeed from Saeed's Fabrics with the creativity flag



Local artist Angry Dan has completed his tallest ever mural – an immense 32 feet – at the home of female upholsterers Sit Collective in Grove Green Road, Leytonstone Credit High Flying Drone Artists

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LICENSING ACT 2003  
Notice of Application for  
a New Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that **Annabelle Plant Based Ltd** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the grant of a Premises Licence at **Witch 'Wich?', Unit 38, Wood Street Indoor Market, 98-100 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 10:00–17:00; opening hours Tuesday to Saturday from 10:00–17:30**

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).

Representations must be received no later than: **23rd March 2023.**

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). It is an offence to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with this application. A person is liable to an unlimited fine on conviction should such a false statement be made.

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Licences For Special  
Treatment Public Notice

Notice is given that **Jhon Cueva Sosa** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for a Special Treatment Licence for:

- Tattooing
- Licence for the premises: **Red Snake Tattoo Studio 318 Hoe Street E17 9PX**

Anyone wishing to oppose the application must give notice in writing to the Licensing Officer, Resident Services, Licensing Service, 3 The Square, Leyton, London E10 5NR **within 28 days of publication** specifying the grounds of opposition.

Persons objecting to the grant of a licence must be prepared to attend in person before a Committee of the Council.

LICENSING ACT 2003  
Application for the Grant  
of a Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that **KK & AC Ltd** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the grant of a Premises Licence at: **Taro Japanese Restaurant, 76 High Street, Walthamstow E17 7LD:**

- Supply of alcohol consumed on & off the premises, hours premises is open to the public: **11:00–22:00 daily**

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 or by email: [licensing@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@walthamforest.gov.uk).

Representations must be received no later than: **7th March 2023.**

It is an offence to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with this application. A person is liable to an unlimited fine on conviction should such a false statement be made.



# HOUSING

Cabinet member for housing Ahsan Khan at the launch of the Affordable Housing Commission Credit WF Council



## Developer CEO sits on affordable housing panel

by Victoria Munro & Josh Mellor,  
Local Democracy Reporter

A group of eight experts – including the CEO of a major developer – is conducting a “deep-dive” inquiry into the problem of Waltham Forest’s affordable housing.

The Affordable Housing Commission, launched by Waltham Forest Council on 25th January, will meet behind closed doors four times this year before presenting its findings in the summer.

When asked by the Local Democracy Reporting Service why the meetings are being held in private, the council’s cabinet member for housing Ahsan Khan insisted there is “no real reason”.

The council hopes the panel will provide recommendations for the next decade of house building in the borough. Over the last decade, only 5% of almost 9,000 homes built in the borough were cheap enough to rent to those on the council’s housing waiting list, currently more than 7,000 households long.

The panel – which will hear from senior council leaders, councillors and resident focus groups – is made up of eight experts but only two from housing associations, who manage social rent homes not owned by the council itself.

These are the commission’s chair – Geeta Nanda OBE, CEO of Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing – and Fred Angole, who sits on the

board of two housing associations.

The pair are joined by Melissa Tetley, the CEO of Waltham Forest’s branch of Citizens Advice Bureau, and Professor Janice Morphet, an expert in town planning from University College London.

The remaining four experts are representatives from: a major private developer; an “independent thinktank”; the UK’s professional body for those who work in housing; and a non-profit that promises to “build better cities through knowledge, networks and leadership”.

Rob Perrins is CEO of Berkeley Group, a developer that delivers around a tenth of all new homes in London and is behind the Lea Bridge Gasworks development, currently on hiatus due to “construction industry issues”.

Nick Bowes is CEO of Centre for London, a thinktank “dedicated to researching the city’s critical issues”, which recently received large donations from Uber and Prologis, a real estate investment trust based in San Francisco. He was previously an advisor to London Mayor Sadiq Khan.

Gavin Smart is CEO of the Chartered Institute for Housing, the professional body for people who work in housing, which “aims to support the housing profession and influence government policy and thinking” and costs a minimum of £20 a month to join at its lowest membership tier.

Finally, Nicola Mathers is the

CEO of Future of London, which describes itself as a “hub for sector intelligence, connection and professional development” for those working in “regeneration, housing, infrastructure and economic development”.

At the launch of the commission, the council’s cabinet member for housing Ahsan Khan said he hopes it will bring a “fresh pair of eyes” to the council’s policies.

When asked why the sessions will not be held in public, he said the issue “just hasn’t come up” as “commissions are not an exact science” but added: “Nothing that is being discussed is controversial.”

Following the original publication of this article online, a council spokesperson said that minutes of each meeting will be made public.

They added: “The members of the Affordable Housing Commission are industry experts with a wealth of valuable experience[...] all of whom have a deep understanding of the topic.”

“The purpose of the commission is to look at the record of housing in the borough and see what more can be done to build more genuinely affordable homes.

“We have already committed to building 1,000 council homes in this administration and have one of the best records of any London borough in this area. We look forward to the scrutiny the commission and the resident focus groups will bring.”

## Blackhorse Lane ‘not suitable’ for planned towers - yet

by Josh Mellor,  
Local Democracy Reporter

Blackhorse Lane is currently “not suitable” for the immense towers a developer hopes to build, according to the Greater London Authority.

Housing developer NEAT and the world’s largest investment manager BlackRock hope to build 1,800 new homes in eight towers of up to 38 storeys at Uplands Business Park in the industrial Walthamstow neighbourhood.

However, the Greater London Authority (GLA) warns the proposals are currently “not compliant” with the Mayor of London’s planning rules because Blackhorse Lane is not identified as “suitable” for tall buildings in the borough’s current Local Plan.

This Local Plan has been out-of-date since 2020 but the new draft plan, which does identify Blackhorse Lane as “suitable” for tall buildings, is still struggling to win final approval from the government’s Planning Inspectorate.

Last summer, said inspectors refused to approve the council’s latest draft, which set out plans to build 27,000 new homes by 2035, due to “significant concerns” about whether this figure was “justified and deliverable”.

While the council refused to back down over the 27,000 figure, it made changes to the list of sites it deemed suitable for “tall buildings” of ten or more storeys - removing four sites in the north of the borough, one in Wood Street and one in Leytonstone, while adding three sites in Walthamstow and one in Leyton - and will re-consult with residents this year.

Responding to the outline planning application for Uplands

Business Park, the GLA’s planning team wrote: “The proposed development would be clearly visible in long-range, mid-range and immediate views [...] and would be a marked change for the site and surrounding areas.

“In short-range views, it is acknowledged that the proposed towers of approximately 37–38 storeys in height would appear at odds with the surrounding low-rise neighbourhood.

“The positioning of tall buildings of 30+ storeys in the south of the site could have an impact on the neighbouring sites in terms of overshadowing. There is also potential for a wind tunnel effect, though this may be mitigated by chamfered edges and landscaping.”

However, the team added that despite the “significant and transformational step-change in scale”, the tall buildings could be acceptable if they have an “exceptional design quality”.

Other concerns raised by the GLA included the planned mix of affordable housing in the proposals. Affordable homes will make up 35% of the overall development but the vast majority will be “intermediate” rather than “low-cost” homes.

Furthermore, the team called for the designs to take an “industry first approach” by increasing the industrial floorspace to at least 33,000sqm.

This may pose a challenge for architects as the current floorspace is only 28,000sqm and 33,000sqm is the maximum area deemed possible in the current proposals.

Space has only been created for new residential buildings by “co-locating” them next to industrial buildings and downgrading the land from strategic industrial land to locally significant industrial land.



The plans for Uplands Business Park Credit NEAT



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## HEALTH

# Plans for 122-room care home revealed

by Josh Mellor,  
Local Democracy Reporter

A hotel in the middle of Epping Forest may soon be replaced with a new 122-room care home for Waltham Forest's growing elderly population.

Last month, care home operator Care Concern Group revealed plans for the redevelopment of Epping Forest Hotel, which is in South Woodford but lies just inside the borough's border.

The plans would entail knocking down the current hotel building, which has 99 rooms, in order to rebuild it in a way more suitable for residents suffering from cognitive impairment.

During an informal briefing to planning committee members on 7th February, the care group's development manager Andrew Brett said the Whipps Cross Hospital catchment area needs about 1,200 new care home beds in the next ten years.



Epping Forest Hotel Credit Google Streetview

He added: "The hotel has not been doing particularly well, so we see it as a good opportunity in the borough."

Currently, the hotel is advertising its 99 rooms, venue and banqueting hall "on exclusive use basis" and individual rooms cannot be booked online.

The team quoted the council's strategic housing market assessment prediction that the number of borough residents aged over 65 will almost double to 51,000 between 2014 and 2039.

The designs show residents' bedrooms grouped into small "communities", with

access to hydrotherapy, shops, a cinema and a beauty salon elsewhere in the building.

Andrew added: "The design would reduce loneliness and falls – which are two of the greatest concerns for people of this age. The hotel would be replaced with a more attractive building[...] with greener landscaping.

"Whilst we do acknowledge the need for the council to deliver sufficient housing[...] many older people tend to under occupy larger properties."

The site is in the Green Belt, meaning it is subject to strict planning laws, and is surrounded by Epping Forest's ancient woodland. However, the development team said Waltham Forest Council's planning department has indicated it "could support" the proposals following several private pre-application consultations.

Despite the "good location", Andrew also claimed rooms would be priced similarly to other local care homes at "about £1,300 a week".

Planning committee chair Jenny Gray and member Keith Rayner both remarked that plans for 22 parking spaces and 18 overflow spaces may be an issue.

Cllr Rayner said: "Whilst I would never suggest that the council's portfolio holder for the environment [Councillor Clyde Loakes] is an absolute tyrant, he will get serious about projects this size that aren't being seen as car-free. We do get projects this size where, literally, there are only ten parking bays."

Andrew said the number of spaces planned was "around 50%" of what a traditional care home outside London would have, as an estimated 55 staff could be on-site at one time and the site has limited public transport links.

According to a report submitted by planning consultants Nexus, there would be about 270 car trips to the site each day. Nexus argue this would be a "reduction" on the current use of the hotel, despite earlier arguing it is not doing well.

# Third Leyton GP in special measures

by Victoria Munro

A third Leyton GP practice is now in special measures after being deemed "inadequate" by the government's Care Quality Commission.

The Ecclesbourne Practice in Lea Bridge Road treats approximately 10,000 patients in partnership with another surgery in Woodford Green and was inspected in November.

While inspector Dr Sean O'Kelly acknowledged staff had a caring attitude towards patients, he said the practice was not well-led or doing enough to ensure their safety.

In a report published last month he pointed out gaps in training – with some staff unable to perform "basic life support" or recognise the signs of sepsis – and the lack of equipment and medicines needed to respond to a medical emergency.

When asked to comment, a spokesperson from Ecclesbourne Practice said they would learn from the report but felt it "does not accurately portray the hard work that [they] put in everyday in the care of [their] patients".

Practices placed in special measures are reinspected after six months and could face being shut down if they fail to improve.

In his report, Dr O'Kelly wrote: "Staff were not adequately equipped to respond to medical emergencies as there was no defibrillator available. The practice [also] did not hold all the appropriate emergency medicines.

"Not all staff were able to recognise the sepsis red-flag symptoms. Staff were not up

to date with basic life support and anaphylaxis training where it was relevant.

"There were no records maintained for keeping clinical equipment clean and cleaning schedules were not clearly documented. There were no sanitary bins available in some toilets.

"There were gaps in systems to review patients with long-term conditions, where they did not always operate effectively. Therefore, we found gaps in care, as not all patients were being monitored or followed up to ensure their treatment was in line with national guidance."

Ecclesbourne Practice is the third Leyton GP surgery in a year to be placed in special measures, after Francis Road Medical Centre and Crawley Road Medical Centre received damning inspections last year.

The CQC website lists eight practices in Leyton, of which the remaining five hold the second-highest possible rating of "good". However, these ratings are all, at minimum, three and, at most, five years old. The Ecclesbourne Practice was also deemed "good" when last inspected in 2017.

When contacted by the *Echo*, a spokesperson for the practice said they were "in the process of studying" the report "to come up with a strong plan of action for improvement".

They added: "We recognise the important regulatory function of the CQC and would work with them and other stakeholders to ensure that we provide care that is safe, effective and responsive.

"However, we are very disappointed by the overall rating as, in our view, it does not accurately portray the hard work that we

put in everyday in the care of our patients. We are also not convinced that the evidence offered supports such a low rating.

"We are encouraged by the recognition in the report that we are a caring practice. We also take encouragement from the response of our patients in the surveys included in

the report. These consistently showed a performance higher than the average for practices in the area who face challenges similar to ours.

"It is difficult to understand why the inspectors choose to use a national average to make a point about inadequate performance."

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## COMMENT

## COUNCILLOR'S COLUMN

## Kischa-Bianca Green, Cann Hall (Labour)

I was born in Waltham Forest and have spent the majority of my life living, learning and working here but South Leytonstone in particular has always held a warm space in my heart, filled with memories. My aunty and cousins lived there growing up and, when I was a teenager, I entered a talent show at the Nexus Centre on the Avenue Road Estate, a venue I remain very attached to. There has always been a great community feel to the centre and I made many friends through singing, music and performing.

That's why I am ecstatic to have been part of planning the redevelopment of this council estate, alongside my fellow Cann Hall ward councillors Sally Littlejohn and Keith Rayner. These flats were built to cope with housing shortages in the 1960s and don't meet the needs of residents today. It's clear the people living on the estate overwhelmingly agree: almost two thirds took part in a vote about whether to rebuild and a vast majority were in favour.

Regenerating the estate will provide new, high-quality homes for more than 240 existing residents, plus a further 378 new homes, which will include further affordable housing. The project will also create a new



public square, green spaces, room for shops and community or leisure spaces and - I was especially pleased to hear - a bespoke new home for the Nexus Centre. After all the joy it brought me, I am thankful that this venue will continue to provide a space for the community, especially children and young people, to develop their performance skills and show off their talents.

I and my fellow councillors have attended monthly meetings with the officers managing the rebuild and frequently visited the portacabin on-site to see the latest designs and project timelines. I have been very pleased with how well the project

has been planned and the strong focus on resident engagement, with consultants ready and available to answer any questions or take suggestions. Residents themselves have told me they feel very involved and listened to, which has made the entire process much easier and allowed them to feel excited about the future. I think this way of redeveloping the estate is something that should be replicated across the borough, as it has helped to assuage any potential concerns.

The redevelopment of Avenue Road Estate is just one of many positive changes happening in Cann Hall at the moment, from new housing to a new youth hub, the refurbishment of Fred Wigg and John Walsh towers to the South Leytonstone framework and an upcoming pilot to tackle community safety problems. As ward councillors, we are also very proud of our voluntary sector, providing food banks, warm spaces, domestic abuse drop-ins, a boxing club and more.

Next time you are in Leytonstone, stop by Cann Hall and see all the amazing developments.

Email Cllr Green at: [cllr.kischa.green@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.kischa.green@walthamforest.gov.uk)

## LETTERS

Dear WFE

I'VE BEEN A LOCAL RESIDENT FOR around 20 years and love the borough like I know you do too. I have to be honest, I'm frustrated with the continued focus on Black faces and Black offenders in your crime section and think you may have an issue with unconscious bias. Is the crime section even necessary anyway?

I then reviewed other parts of the magazine and it made think: if I was reading this for the first time, what would the paper say about local residents? It seems to me that, put simply, White people look good law abiding citizens - making all the creative offer in the borough and achieving great things - and everyone else not so. Food for thought.

Jake Ferguson,  
Walthamstow resident

**Editor's note:** *The Echo received a number of emails about the crime page in our last issue [#95, p10], which featured four photos of non-white men, including two victims. We regret the impression this created and also recognise that the rest of the February issue was not as diverse as it should have been. In future, we will be placing less emphasis on crime coverage and doing more to ensure the rest of the paper reflects the borough.*

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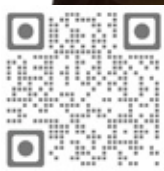
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AROUND THE BOROUGH

LEYTON

Hackney start-up to run community space

A Hackney start-up has received £5,000 in council funding to run a “community living room” in a High Road pub next month.

The space at Pepper’s Ghost will be open on Thursdays and Fridays throughout March, providing “a free hot drink or meal” and “access to important services” in an “inclusive and warm environment”.

The free space will open from 12pm to 6pm and, on Fridays only, from 7pm until 1am with music and dancing. A day and night market on Fridays will champion “independent local businesses”.



Pepper's Ghost pub Credit The Skills Within Developments CIC

The space will become part of Waltham Forest Council’s “winter spaces network”, announced in December last year as a response to the cost-of-living crisis.

The Skills Within Developments CIC, chosen to run the project, was set up in January last year and co-founded by Hackney resident Nathan Gabbidon.

Nathan, 44, told the *Echo* he has lived experience of the challenges he hopes the Community Living Room will help address in the area.

He said: “I have struggled in the past with heating my home, getting access to support and with being alone.

“We can’t wait to welcome the community to Pepper’s Ghost, we have plenty of fun planned as well as useful things to giveaway.”

WALTHAMSTOW

Ancient church reopens after revamp



Inside the refurbished St Mary's Credit St Mary's

An ancient Walthamstow church reopened last month after a multi-million pound renovation aimed at making it the “heart of Walthamstow once again”.

In 2015, it was discovered that St Mary’s in Church End was in urgent need of repair and work began in 2021, thanks to

than simply trying to find a way to get the building repaired.

“It became to find a way to make our ancient building the heart of Walthamstow once again, as it has been in centuries past, and in so doing to make it accessible and financially sustainable.

“Church of England churches exist for the flourishing of the whole community and we want our building to be safe, welcoming and accessible to everyone in Walthamstow.”

St Mary’s celebrated its re-opening weekend on 23rd to 26th February.

A spokesperson from the church added that it hopes a church cafe run by Froth & Rind, a coffee shop in Walthamstow Village, will open this month, although they have “yet to finalise an exact date”.

HIGHAMS PARK

Rejected flats going ahead

Two seven-storey flat blocks near Highams Park Station will go ahead, despite being rejected by Waltham Forest councillors last year.

Last March, the council’s planning committee voted to refuse Morris Nourani permission to build 68 flats off Larkshall Road.

Opposed residents had argued the scheme would threaten the area’s “village-like” character.

However, the developer appealed the decision to the

government’s Planning Inspectorate, which chose to overturn the refusal.

Planning inspector Katie McDonald wrote that the height of the planned blocks “would be suitable” as there are already “other larger scale buildings in the locality”.

She wrote: “Locally significant views in and out of the district centre would change[...] some considerably.

“Yet, change does not necessarily equate to harm and the pro-

CHINGFORD

Safety measures for crime-ridden bridge

by Josh Mellor,  
Local Democracy Reporter

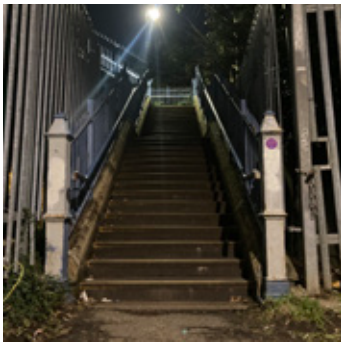
A CCTV camera will be installed on a Chingford bridge after a string of reported robberies.

Since November last year, six robberies or attempted robberies have been reported on the bridge between Beresford Road and Stanley Road, south of Chingford Station.

On 19th January, a resident was taken to hospital after reportedly being “thrown” down two flights of stairs by men trying to steal his phone.

Acting inspector Rob Sewell from the local police told a public meeting of concerned residents last month that they have “stepped up” patrols, while Waltham Forest Council plans to install CCTV.

Until the new camera arrives, the council has installed a mirror for pedestrians to see around the corner at the bottom of the stairs to the bridge, in order to alert them to any-



The stairs to the footbridge Credit LDRS

one lying in wait.

The recent victim, who asked not to be named, told the Local Democracy Reporting Service: “I’ve got two teenage daughters and this is the main thoroughfare. I’m pleased that [the council have] put a mirror there but they should have had one already.”

The council’s neighbourhood manager Chris Georgio told residents the council hopes to install a CCTV camera soon, which he felt “confident” will be there for at least six months.

LEYTONSTONE

Estate to more than double in size

by Josh Mellor,  
Local Democracy Reporter

A council estate will be rebuilt more than twice as tall and with almost double the number of flats.

Avenue Road Estate in Langthorne Road is home to 258 flats in nine-storey blocks but will be rebuilt with 617 flats in towers of up to 23 storeys.

In March 2021, a ballot of the estate’s residents voted in favour of demolishing the original 1960s buildings.

Following five years of consultation, 241 council tenants will be rehoused on the estate, which will soon also be home to 20 shared ownership flats and 375 flats for rent on the private market.

The existing council residents will be rehoused together in smaller blocks to the south

of the site, some as small as three storeys, in line with their “strong preference” to keep their community together.

The planned 23-storey tower, the new estate’s highest point, will be at the opposite end of the site.

Last September, developer Bellway insisted “significant change in the economic environment” meant it needed to renegotiate its agreement with the council to stop the project collapsing.

Agreed changes included the council paying Bellway more for each of the council flats it rebuilds.

Avenue Road Estate Credit Patrick Dowse





## SPORT

# The stalwart of Stow FC

by David O'Driscoll

Over the last season there have been a lot of changes at Walthamstow FC, with both managers and players coming and going, but one constant has remained: attacking midfielder Callum Ibe.

Ibe is the club's current longest-serving player, having made over 100 appearances on the pitch and scored 40 goals during his four seasons with Stow. In my time watching him, I have always been impressed with his joie de vivre; he always wants the ball and is very quick, direct and looking to score. His versatility has also struck me. In the time I've been in the supporters stands, I've seen him play in defence, midfield and attack.

I'm not alone in my admiration. Ibe is a clear favourite among Walthamstow FC's core fan group, 'The Rabble', who have created two chants in his honour. These are "Sweet Callum Ibe", a play on Neil Diamond's *Sweet Caroline*, and a chant about his short-lived

transfer to Enfield FC. Ibe was one of a few Stow players to move to Enfield - who were, at the time, the biggest rivals for the Essex League title - but, after not settling in there, promptly rejoined his old club. To the tune of Amy Winehouse's *Rehab*, fans now sing: "They tried to make Cal go to Enfield, he said 'Stow! Stow! Stow!'"

It's clear Enfield FC has not forgotten this slight. Rabble member Alex Perry recalls: "When we lost at Enfield away last year, they played *Sweet Caroline* on the tannoy to wind him up. So it was very sweet when Ibe got a last-minute winner against them in the return fixture."

Perry adds: "Callum is very popular with the fans because he clearly gets Walthamstow." Ibe is always first to celebrate with the fans and often leads the team over to shake their hands at the end of each game, showing the team's appreciation for the support. On his hundredth appearance for the Stow, he was even given a special celebratory bottle by the Rabble.

Before Stow, Ibe played with



Attacking midfielder Callum Ibe Credit Alfie Dee

several local Essex league teams but his best football to date has come this season at Wadham Lodge. Despite the step up from the Essex League to the Southern League, he has already performed extraordinarily, scoring six goals across 27 appearances so far.

New manager Nicky Ironton says he was impressed from the first minute, adding that Ibe is "an integral part of the team ethos". "His attitude, honesty and desire to be part of the new team was hugely impressive," he told me, "[Ibe] embraced the way I wanted to play, he seemed to have a new lease of life."

"He has been outstanding in every game he's played and scored numerous goals, been man of the match on three occasions and been a massive part of our climb up the table."

Everyone I spoke to felt Ibe had never played better than this season. It is clear that if Walthamstow are to challenge for a spot in the end-of-season playoffs, they need sweet Callum Ibe to be firing on all cylinders.



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