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WALTHAM FOREST ECHO

Free
Mar 2024, N° 108

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The E17 Art Trail is coming back!

Turn to page 12 for a preview



The E17 Art Trail is back in June after a three year hiatus! Its organisers and participating artists tell us what to expect on page 12 Credit Jane Sharp

Woman slept on buses while waiting for council housing help

by Marco Marcelline

A homeless 59-year-old woman slept rough for three and a half months while waiting for Waltham Forest Council to provide her with temporary housing.

Shalote Chadambura has been homeless since June 2023, when she and her 21-year-old daughter

were evicted from their privately rented flat in Walthamstow.

A Zimbabwean national who has been living in the UK for more than two decades, Shalote ran into financial difficulties after losing her job as a care support worker in 2022 because her right to remain visa had expired.

In July Shalote was issued with a renewed leave to remain bio-

metric permit which allowed her to work again. At this point she and her daughter were staying at a family friend's house and Shalote, who suffers with type-two diabetes and cataracts, was suffering from failing health.

In September, her daughter Shanice* went back to study at Leicester University and, on 18th October, Shalote's family

friend told her she could no longer stay with them, which meant she was out on the street. From that night until Friday 2nd February, Shalote was sleeping rough and did not manage to have a full shower once.

During the Christmas break, Shanice returned to London and was forced to sleep rough with her mother on buses – even on

Christmas Day. Shanice says she was dealing with the council at this point and that the housing officer responsible for her case did not respond to her requests for emergency accommodation between Christmas Eve and 4th January because she was away on holiday.

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NEWS



FELLOWSHIP IS LIFE

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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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Shalote told the *Echo* she has very poor vision in her left eye due to cataracts, and this means she cannot work. She had left cataract surgery in November, and is also diagnosed with type-two diabetes which she carries insulin around to treat. This information, her daughter says, has been passed onto council housing officers in December.

When Shanice came back to London over her Christmas break, she was forced to join her mother in sleeping rough on buses. After finishing her shift at a Shoreditch bar, Shanice and Shalote would jump on the N55 bus and try to catch some sleep.

Shanice says she was "too embarrassed" to tell friends or colleagues about being homeless. At work she would smile at customers, but then cry on the toilet during breaks. She would "freshen up" in the bathroom, and says she only managed to take one shower over the three-week period she was back in London.

She told the *Echo* that her housing struggles have caused her to fall behind "terribly" in her university studies, and had been close to taking a year out but was now determined to finish.

Shanice said: "I always felt bad for homeless people on the street but now I know how bad it is. It's crazy. I never expected



this to happen to me."

Shalote was only taken off the streets in February when Anthea Ioannou, the founder of homeless non-profit Street Angelz, heard her crying at a GP surgery. Through an urgent public fundraising campaign, Anthea was able to put her up in a Bow hotel on 2nd February

for ten days at a cost of £500. On 12th February the council provided her with emergency accommodation in a Chingford hotel, where she will remain until at least 14th March.

Through tears, Shalote said: "I just pray that God will help me more because what is happening, I don't understand it."

Ahsan Khan, deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and regeneration, said: "We know how worrying the risk of becoming homeless is for people who experience it. We work hard to help anyone who approaches us in need. Unfortunately, the local demand for housing far outstrips supply.

"Medical information was requested on initial contact with the council in October 2023, and was received in February 2024. The case is being assessed using the information available to the council."

A council spokesperson added that the contact centre was open during the entire Christmas and new year period, and a housing officer was also on call for emergency issues. They added: "There are no records of calls regarding this case over the Christmas and new year period."

The spokesperson also said: "[Shanice] was added to her mother's homeless application in November 2023. [She] is currently at university out of the borough until June 2024. There is no application process for temporary accommodation, whether an applicant is offered temporary accommodation depends on their homelessness assessment."

*Names have been changed to protect anonymity.

EDITOR'S LETTER

Welcome to issue 108 of the *Echo*. Our leading story this month is on a homeless woman who was forced to sleep on buses while waiting for housing help. It's a case that worryingly shows how easily residents can slip under the council's radar.

Across these 16 pages you can read an exclusive interview with council leader Grace Williams about her budget [page 4]; find out about a publicly funded Harry Kane statue that's been locked away in storage because councillors can't find a home for it [page 5]; grab a first look at what to expect from the E17 Art Trail in June [page 12]; and delve into the history of Leytonstone House and its famous former occupant [page 13].

Lastly, this is the final issue to feature reports from Josh Mellor who has left his role as Local Democracy Reporter for Waltham Forest, Redbridge and Havering after over two years in the job. His ability to turn around articles at the speed of light and knack for asking the tough questions made him one of the best local democracy reporters around. I'm grateful for his hard work and wish him the best of luck for the future.

If you are able, please consider making a one-off donation through our website (walthamforestecho.co.uk) or becoming a supporter.

I hope you enjoy the issue!

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NEWS

Wild swimming park project comes under threat...

A plan for a secure children's home at a former Lea Bridge waterworks has troubled activists who want to turn the site into a park



An artist's indicative impression of the secure children's home
Credit: London Councils

By Josh Mellor, Local Democracy Reporter

Local residents have voiced opposition to a proposal to build a secure children's home on a protected site in Lea Bridge.

London Councils, an association that represents London's 33 local authorities, claims a former waterworks site on Lea Bridge Road is the "only suitable location" for the specialist home in the capital.

Designs published in early February say the 32,300sqm site would house a mostly one-storey building providing secure accommodation, educational and recreational facilities for 24 children.

The home would provide places for "highly vulnerable" children from the

capital who need secure welfare placements because no other type of care can keep them safe.

Children in welfare placements are often sent "hundreds of miles" from London due to a "severe shortage" nationally, the materials say.

However, the site – a former waterworks currently used as storage by Thames Water – is also the target of a five-year campaign to create a community-owned park and natural swimming area called the East London Waterworks Park.

At a public consultation event on 7th February, every local resident who spoke to the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) objected to the proposals, with many voicing support for a more publicly-

accessible and natural use of the land.

Vicky Clapton, a Hackney resident, said while she appreciates that councils are "massively underfunded," the waterworks park proposals promised a natural and "genuinely" public use of the land.

Lynne Harrison said the loss of "precious green space", which she regularly uses, would be "dreadful".

She added: "I've been living and teaching here for 70 years, people need this space. It's a living, breathing, amazing space – the waterworks park was just going to be so wonderful."

Another East Londoner, who declined to be named, said: "Is this really the only place that they can go?"

"There's definitely only one place that [the park] can go."

The site – bought by the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing for £33million in 2016 – is Metropolitan Open Land (MOL).

MOL is a strict planning designation – equivalent to the Green Belt – that is supposed to protect land from "inappropriate" development except in "very special circumstances".

According to the children's home consultation materials, the designs would be "respectful" of the surrounding area and "financial contributions" would be offered to the council to offset any

harm to the protected land.

The children's home development team is understood to have claimed that the site is the "only suitable location" by preparing a detailed assessment of 70 sites across London.

The site sits within the Lee Valley Regional Park, which was created in the 1960s to develop and preserve a 26-mile long "green lung" between Hertfordshire and the River Thames.

Planning guidance published by the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority says any proposals which are not "compatible" with the surrounding park "will be resisted".

Waltham Forest's deputy leader Ahsan Khan said previously: "Any planning application submitted will be carefully assessed to ensure that the impact on the surrounding environment is fully considered."



An illustration showing what the park will look like
Credit: East London Waterworks Park

...as council scraps Walthamstow lido plans

Increased construction costs, steep interest rates, and a lack of government funding are to blame

By Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

Hopes for a new outdoor swimming space in Waltham Forest have taken a second knock after the council said that a planned Walthamstow lido is "no longer viable".

The lido at Low Hall Sports Ground in the St James Street area of Walthamstow, was a key pledge in Waltham Forest Labour's manifesto for the 2022 local election.

However, the council says it can no longer afford the idea due to a rise in construction costs, high interest rates and a lack of government funding.

The news is a further blow to residents' hopes for new outdoor swimming spaces in

the area, after London Councils last month revealed plans to build a secure children's home on a site of the planned East London Waterworks Park (see above).

Council leader Grace Williams said: "At times of financial constraint for councils across the country, we are forced to make difficult decisions.

"Unfortunately, we can no longer justify the financial cost of a new lido during the current cost-of-living crisis."

In her statement announcing the move, Cllr Williams said that interest rates are at a 15-year high, there is a rising demand for "vital" council services and that Waltham Forest is facing a £28million shortfall for day-to-day services by 2026.

In the run-up to the 2022 election, a Waltham Forest Labour spokesperson said



The lido would have been on Low Hall Sports Ground
Credit: Waltham Forest Council

a new lido would bring "excellent health and wellbeing benefits" for residents.

The council estimates that construction of a lido would have cost £33.5m, funded by government-backed loans requiring £2m annual repayments.

Cllr Williams added: "I'm hugely disappointed that we've had to stop

plans to build a new lido in the borough because it's no longer affordable, but it is the right thing to do in the face of a very difficult economic outlook, and years of reduced government funding."

Chair of the East London Waterworks Park campaign, Abigail Woodman, said: "Open water swimming is good for our physical and mental health.

"Bringing East London Waterworks Park into being becomes even more important now the plans for a lido have been scrapped.

"[The council] can still keep its promise to bring open water swimming back to the borough by supporting our plans to create a community-owned biodiverse park where we'll all be able to swim for free."

INTERVIEW

Council leader: cuts don't mean 'downward spiral' for services

In an exclusive interview, council leader Grace Williams says that her priority remains 'safeguarding' services for residents

by Marco Marcelline

Grace Williams has led Waltham Forest Council since 2021
Credit Waltham Forest Council



Waltham Forest Council leader Grace Williams has said she is not over-seeing a “downward spiral” in public services, amid planned efficiency savings of £18million across the next two years.

Speaking to the *Echo*, Cllr Williams insisted that the biggest portion of planned cuts, a £4.5m saving to the adult social care budget through “reviews” of how it is offered, will not affect quality of service for residents.

Cllr Williams says care workers have been left “firefighting” because of an “explosion of [care] need” following the pandemic. This has meant local authorities have just been “busy keeping the show on the road”, she says, a task which has become harder because the government “won’t [and] hasn’t reformed social care”.

She returns to her point that budget savings will not lead to a “downward spiral” in care quality: “My strong commitment is that we can make change while safeguarding services for those residents”.

Describing her approach to spending, she says: “I’m quite an evidence-based person. I like to look at everything. My brief to [council] officers has been: ‘let’s look at everything we’re doing. Is it good enough? Is it value for money?’, rather than, ‘oh, that bit looks like it could be chopped off.’ That’s not how we [as a council] operate.”

Could there be greater public scrutiny of council spending decisions to make sure that residents are on board with planned budget savings before they are finalised, however? Cllr Williams responds saying that “we do have a public meeting where our budget proposal is shown in full”.

She adds: “Most of the changes that we are making are management actions which shouldn’t have any impact on

residents because they’re about council systems working better. Where there’s going to be a service change, there will be a full consultation.”

A council press officer attending the interview interjects to say: “There’s no public organisation that holds public scrutiny meetings when you’re coming up with a budget; the NHS doesn’t, schools don’t.”

One of the planned management actions is a “review” of the libraries service “operating model”, a move which is projected to save £550,000. Asked if this means if library closures are on the horizon, Cllr Williams says: “We really still believe in libraries. What we want to make sure of is that we’re putting our resources in the right place.

“We also need to be realistic that some of the libraries we have are assets that are very, very hard for us to maintain. I can’t sit here and say it’s going to mean that all the libraries stay open or that any libraries are going to shut. Reimagining libraries means that we put more [council] services into them, for example.”

On the topic of selling council buildings to make extra cash, Cllr Williams said there was more of a focus on monetising venues through commercial

partnerships or ventures while still holding onto them as assets.

“I think the view that the two choices you have are either keeping [buildings] and leaving everything just as it is, or selling [assets] off is quite old-fashioned. We’ve got really good examples of where we’ve been able to do something that’s a bit more sustainable and clever. Look at the Vestry House Museum; we’re not closing it, we’re not locking it down, but we’re looking at how we can sustain it so that partners take on, or commercial operators take on some of the responsibility for it.”

Some critics of the council argue that it could avert making cuts and that it is not putting up enough of a fight to the government.

“We could spend literally every day [telling the government] ‘give us this!’. I think there is an element now that this has gone on so long that it’s quite hard to lobby a government that is not even making the pretence of operating effectively. So lots of the things that you might expect from the government such as listening to local authorities are no longer being done,” Cllr Williams said.

When asked if a change of government is what the council needs to change its fortunes, Cllr Williams was keen to emphasise that there’s “no magic money tree” that Labour can rely on to “fix ten plus years of local public services being cut” through austerity.

However, she clarified that she had confidence in Labour having “a plan to work with local authorities, health partners, police and schools” if they get in. “Labour can be trusted when it comes to reforming public services. That doesn’t mean it’s going to be easy, I think it’s going to be really, really tough. But for me, the solution is to have an ambitious government that’s got a vision and I think that’s what Labour offers.”

You can read the full budget on the council’s website.

NEWS

The Jazz Yard development in Walthamstow (below) was built by Sixty Bricks



Council-owned developer set to be shelved

A council decision due to be approved this month will make Sixty Bricks ‘dormant’

by Josh Mellor, Local Democracy Reporter

A council-owned housebuilding business is to be shelved amid “challenging economic conditions”. Waltham Forest has built 299 homes, including 188 council homes, through its company Sixty Bricks.

However, a decision due to be approved this month says the council will make the company “dormant” due to financial uncertainties.

It says that since the company completed its first 299 homes – at a profit of £3million – property development has “changed significantly” with increased building costs, slow growth in sales and borrowing becoming more expensive.

Sixty Bricks had been poised to build up to 226 homes in its second phase of building work, using loans of up to £130m from the council.

This included 100 new homes at Church Lane Car Park in Leytonstone, 40 flats at Chingford Library and Assembly Hall, 23 flats in a vacant nursery in Vicarage Road, Leyton, and to continue building at Hylands Road in Walthamstow.

Cracks in the company’s plans began to appear last year when the council spent £5.4million buying 13 unsold one-bed flats in a Sixty Bricks development known as the Jazz Yard in Brunner Road, Walthamstow.

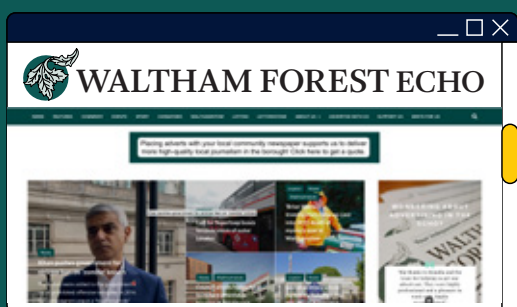
A summary of the options estimates a saving of £2.1m per year on the company’s operating costs, which include about 16 staff.

Only one of the company’s proposed projects is likely to go ahead – an “infill” of 83 flats in Walthamstow’s Priory Court council estate – although this will be handed to an in-house team at the council.

A “specialist financial and legal advisory service” will now manage the move at a cost of £150,000.

Sixty Bricks only built on land the council already owned and was partly funded using loans from the council at an interest rate of 6.5–8% per year.

In turn, the council financed those loans at a profit by taking out government-backed loans at low rates available to local authorities.



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NEWS

Harry Kane statue locked away in storage for years

Two Chingford councillors have struggled to find a home for the £7.2k statue which they commissioned more than four years ago

by Josh Mellor, Local Democracy Reporter

A statue of Chingford-raised Harry Kane has languished in storage for years because councillors cannot find a home for it.

In 2019 and 2020, Endlebury ward councillors Emma Best and Roy Berg quietly allocated £7,200 in Waltham Forest Council's 'community ward funding' to a new statue of the England captain.

They planned for the statue to be revealed as a surprise celebration of the locally raised star footballer.

Cllr Best and Cllr Berg, both Conservatives, had hopes of installing it on a platform at Chingford Station but Transport for London (TfL) rejected the proposal following a safety risk assessment.

Speaking to the Local Democracy Reporting Service, Cllr Best said she has spent "hours and hours" trying to agree a home for the statue with "stakeholders". She admitted there has been a "delay", caused partly by the pandemic, but argued that she has also been trying to find the right time and place to unveil it.

The statue was funded through Waltham Forest Council's community ward funding, an annual grant of up to £10,000 for "local initiatives, projects or improvements" that councillors in each of the borough's wards share out.

The funds for the statue came from a pot of about £6,600 allocated to Cllrs Best and Berg's Endlebury ward every year.

Local resident Trevor Calver uncovered the existence of the statue after checking how funding for Endlebury ward is being spent. He accused Cllrs Berg and Best of paying for the statue "without proper consideration" of what local residents would want to see in their area.

Trevor said: "I've been trying to find out where it is and who's paying for the storage. It's ridiculous, £7,200 up the wanny. It's a joke – but it's not funny."

A spokesperson for Harry Kane said: "We are really excited about the statue and although it has been ongoing since 2019, we feel in the coming months is the right time to reveal the statue, especially with Harry being England and Tottenham's all time top goalscorer. It is what he deserves.

Harry Kane grew up in Chingford
Credit: Wikimedia Commons



"The location of the statue is really important to us and like Emma said we are having some issues at the moment, but when we get it right, we will be happy to go."

There were mixed reactions to the statue proposal when the LDRS visited

Chingford Station.

A local woman said the statue was important to show that someone as successful as Harry Kane hailed from Chingford, but that it "could have [been] put up in 2019".

A second resident said that although Harry is a "local hero", the council should spend its money on "other things" like supporting homeless people.

A Waltham Forest Council spokesperson said: "Community ward funding projects are suggested by residents and approved by ward councillors, who lead on communications around ward funding opportunities and the delivery of projects or events that receive funding.

"Each year there is clear guidance on what can and cannot receive community ward funding, depending on the corresponding theme.

"All ward councillors must unanimously approve projects to receive community ward funding.

"Councillors must follow the guidance provided to them, which is reviewed each year."

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NEWS

Free fitness classes suspended after council demands 'unaffordable' fee

Our Parks, which runs four classes every weekend, was told it would have to pay to use council-owned parks



Our Parks class participants Credit Our Parks

by Marco Marcelline

A free outdoor exercise group has suspended its classes after Waltham Forest Council demanded it to pay a £25 fee for each session it runs.

Our Parks, which ran four fitness classes each weekend at four parks across the borough, was told in December that it could no longer use four council-owned parks for free.

At the time, Waltham Forest Council's parks department notified Our Parks that it would need to pay a licence fee of £25 for each class it operates. The move prompted months of wrangling with the council, but the parks department has maintained that the fee must be paid.

Founder Born Barikor said the move would cost Our Parks a total of £5,000 a year; a cost he says he cannot take on. The fee request makes Waltham Forest the only borough in London to charge Born for using its parks, which he describes as especially "sad" because it's the place where the classes began.

According to Born, the "deeply disheartening decision" to charge Our Parks "overlooks the substantial cost savings [it] generates for LBWF. Depriving individuals, who rely on this programme as

their primary outlet for physical activity, not only promotes inactivity but will most likely also incur greater health expenses in the medium and long term".

Our Parks kicked off in Lloyd Park in March 2014, and for its first two years of operation it was funded entirely by the council. In 2016, the council reduced its funding offer and the programme sought more diverse funding, such as from the Mayor of London. Since 2020, it has been entirely self-funded and Born says it is operating at a loss.

In January, the council's sports and leisure team offered support in exploring external funding opportunities that could help them continue the classes.

But Born says the flagged funding pots were not open until March or April. He pointed out that the council was directing him to funding to pay a fee that "could easily not be charged".

Born, who is Black, adds the programme was especially targeted towards ethnic minority communities who are more susceptible than other groups to having poor health in the borough. He said: "If I hadn't been so vocal, [Our Parks] would've been another ethnically diverse movement that would've been put aside because no-one thought through how much this impacts people."

The programme, which operates in Lloyd Park, Leyton Jubilee Park, Langthorne Park, and Ridgeway Park, is suspended until the council changes its decision or alternative funding opportunities can be secured. Only one fitness class, a rugby session in Leytonstone, can continue to run because it is completely funded by the Rugby Football Union.

In an email to council leader Grace Williams, seen by the *Echo*, Born wrote: "We and our Parkers have contacted every Waltham Forest councillor and although several responded with sympathy to our plight, the overriding message is that the council is facing a funding crisis and must seek revenue where it can. I fail to compute how preventing 11,000+ registered Parkers in Waltham Forest

from accessing coached exercise for free and improving their mental and physical wellbeing is a sensible calculation as we all know the financial strain mental and physical health issues places on local authority budgets."

The decision to suspend Our Parks sessions comes just weeks before the organisation's planned celebration of its ten-year anniversary in Waltham Forest.

Born says he hopes the council reconsiders its decision to impose the fees, and recognises the "invaluable" service Our Parks provides. Until then he says he is committed to finding a sustainable funding solution so he can resume operations.

The move has meant four fitness instructors who were contracted on a freelance basis by Our Parks have lost their jobs.

Leah Jung, who led Our Parks classes at Leyton Jubilee Park every Sunday, is one of them.

She was about to begin what became her last session on Sunday 11th February when two park rangers came up to her and said she wasn't allowed to proceed with the class.

Following a hastily arranged phone conversation with the HR team at Our Parks, the park rangers permitted Leah to continue with her class but the attempt to stop it from happening unsettled some of the attendees.

Leah said: "There were quite a few [sports class] participants there already; they were quite

upset because there's such a community feel at these classes and they've been coming for years."

She adds: "I'm upset as well. A bit of my income is hit. I now have to find extra classes [to teach] within Better Gyms to cover that [income] loss."

Regular user Roisin McAteer said the council's decision displayed a "lack of common sense", and was "counterintuitive". Roisin told the *Echo* she started going to the classes back in January 2022 because she couldn't afford a gym membership at the time, and she found it to be a "great way to meet people" that she wouldn't usually meet.

She says that since attending the classes she has noticed a three-fold benefit to her mental, physical and social wellbeing. Conversations and connections made during classes regularly continue afterwards in a very active WhatsApp group, she said.

Now that the programme is suspended, Roisin says she will find it harder to be motivated to keep fit as she'll be "lacking that social community" and communal encouragement that Our Parks provided for her.

She added: "We turn up in all weathers – rain, shine, and often downright awful conditions – this is an important part of our lives that the council is taking away from us for no reason."

Naheed Asghar, cabinet member for health and wellbeing, said: "Like every local authority we are facing the combined challenges of growing demand for core services with more than a decade of cuts from central government."

"This means that we increasingly rely on income from non-statutory service areas such as parks to safeguard the essential services on which residents rely."

"We regularly get asked to waive fees for free events and sessions in our parks. These fees, which are benchmarked against other London councils, help cover costs including upkeep of grounds, and maintenance of equipment."



Our Parks founder Born Barikor Credit Our Parks

HOUSING

Council approves plan for 27,000 new homes by 2035

by Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

Waltham Forest Council is pressing ahead with its ambition to build at least 27,000 new homes in the borough by 2035.

Last March, the Local Plan – which will guide development in Waltham Forest over 15 years – was subject to a planning inspector-led public inquiry at the town hall.

Before the hearings planning inspectors had expressed “significant concerns” about the council’s target.

However, they have now ruled that the Local Plan provides an “appropriate basis” for developments after the council agreed to several changes.

These include the council limiting where tall buildings can be built, new homes in flood zones and protection of industrial land. The Local Plan was approved by cabinet on 22nd February.

The council’s spokesperson did not respond when asked why the updated Local Plan will not be debated by one of its scrutiny committees.

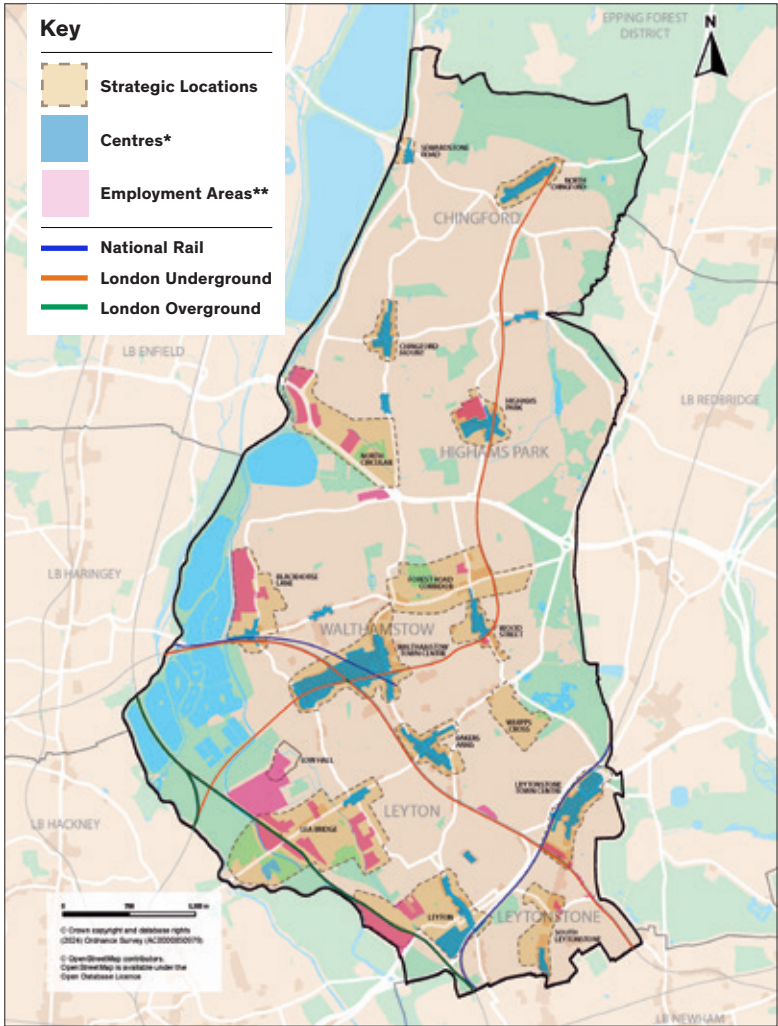
In 2022, the inspectors’ key concern about Waltham Forest’s high housing target was “insufficient” evidence showing the borough had the need or space for so many homes.

Since then, the inspectors said the council provided updated evidence including a housing trajectory, five-year land supply, timescales, evidence of consultation with developers and more localised plans such as “area frameworks”.

This now “satisfactorily demonstrates” that the Local Plan would be “effective”, they have ruled.

Approving this plan is not the end of the council’s new planning policies, as the council has chosen to separate the Local Plan into two parts.

Part one, which is what was approved, is described as a “strategic” overview of development, while part two – which is now significantly out of date – will



This map shows the parts of the borough that have been earmarked for development Credit Waltham Forest Council

look at specific sites.

Delays to the plan’s approval have not prevented permission for major developments, with several large schemes gaining planning committee approval in areas that Waltham Forest says are suitable under its “emerging Local Plan”.

Other aspects of the plan inspectors pushed the council to change included a “clear definition” of a

tall building as at least ten storeys or 30 metres high and confirmation that the “appropriate range” will be between ten and 17 storeys.

The council’s more vague previous definition of a tall building was “taller than their prevailing context”.

Tall buildings should only be permitted outside of these specific sites in “very limited circumstances,” following an assessment showing that the proposal meets a number of requirements including “good local public transport connectivity” and “exemplar design”.

Similarly, residential developments should only be allowed in higher risk flood zones following a “sequential test,” and possibly an “exception test,” that should steer new developments to lower risk areas.

The full Local Plan is available to read on the council’s website



Council ordered to pay £18.8k for housing failings

by Marco Marcelline

Waltham Forest Council has been ordered to pay £18,800 in compensation for three separate housing failings.

The Housing Ombudsman made three findings of “severe maladministration” in regards to its handling of a damp and mould case, its response to a succession application following the death of a tenant’s mother, and its dealing of a five-year-long anti-social behaviour case.

The first finding of severe maladministration was in the case of a council tenant and her family, who had to wait eleven months for the council to arrange an inspection of their mould-infested home. In this case the council was made to pay £2,737 in compensation.

The council was also ordered to pay a resident £4,750 for failing for seven years to secede their mother’s tenancy to them when she died. This meant that council tax, and housing benefit accounts went unadjusted during

this time, causing the resident a “significant” impact. It took until a fraud check for action to be taken on the issue.

In the third case, the council was made to pay £11,300 in compensation to a resident who resorted to sofa-surfing after dealing with anti-social behaviour (ASB) and gang activity at her council property for five years.

Instead of taking ownership of the case, the council continually referred the resident back to the police.

According to the ombudsman, the resident endured “years of feeling unsafe in her home, scared of what might happen to her or her young children, and suffered a significant decline in her mental wellbeing”.

In its learning statement, the council said it “fully accepts” the Housing Ombudsman’s findings and apologised “unreservedly to the residents who were affected” by the three documented failings.

You can read the full version of this article on our website.

Leytonstone estate regeneration put on hold

by Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

Plans to demolish a Leytonstone council estate that is plagued by fire safety concerns have been put on ice.

Residents of the eleven-storey Fred Wigg and John Walsh towers were told last July by Waltham Forest Council that the estate would be rebuilt with “circa 450–500 new homes”.

In 2019 the council began a refurbishing and safety works programme that has cost £10million and is still unfinished.

In early February the council told residents flammable cladding will be removed from the building. Two days later it announced that the proposed demolition will be delayed due to the “challenging economic climate”.

This is the second time in six years that the council has dropped plans to regenerate the estate.

The council’s decision to remove “expanded polystyrene (EPS)” insulation on the outside

of the building was prompted by a London Fire Brigade enforcement notice issued in November.

However, the Fred Wigg and John Walsh Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) says the notice does actually not order the cladding’s removal.

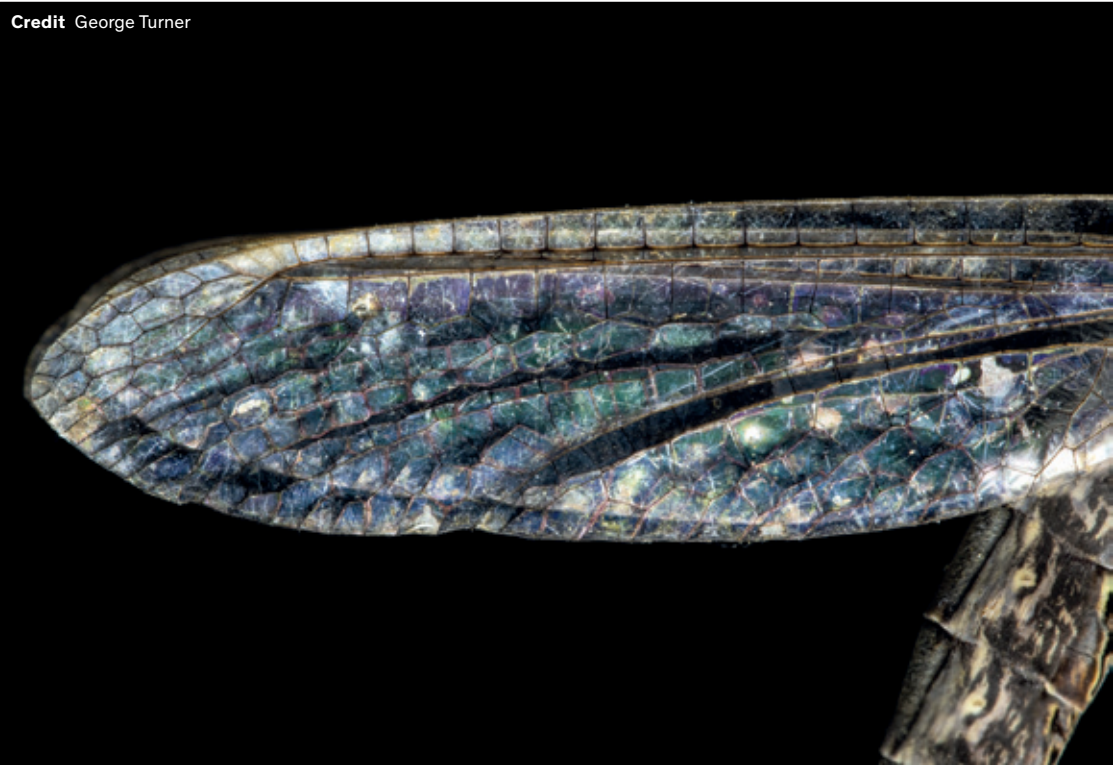
The only direct reference the notice makes to cladding is to recommend that the council change its fire strategy from “stay put” to “simultaneous evacuation”.

Instead, the notice says fire detection should have been installed in the communal areas. This would “replace” waking watch fire wardens who have been on duty in each tower 24-hours a day. The TRA says having a waking watch has “wasted up to £2m” of tenants’ money over four years.

The notice also said smoke ventilation windows in hallways were blocked by metal shutters and contractor’s hoists which would create “smoke filled” communal areas in the event of a fire.

The council has until October to comply with the enforcement notice.

ARTS & CULTURE



Patterns in nature

Snapped by recent photography graduate George Turner, this captivating close-up shot of an owl fly wing won the East London Waterworks Park's Patterns in Nature competition. The photo will be on display at The Mill Community Centre in Walthamstow from 5th March until 4th April.

Speaking after his win, George said: "I took this photograph during a thunderstorm in the middle of the OSA Peninsula, Costa Rica. "This owl fly was taking shelter under a branch, so I lay on my back, holding my camera upside down and began shooting!"

See George's work on his Instagram:
@georgeturnermacro

Join the reuse and repair revolution

Kirsty McNeil from Artillery tells all about the forthcoming Reuse and Repair Fair

As part of Waltham Forest Council's response to the climate emergency and cost of living crisis gripping our country, the climate emergency team and waste and recycling team has teamed up with the long established Forest Recycling Project (FRP) to create the Waltham Forest Reuse and Repair Directory. In celebration of the directory launch, Artillery CIC (producers of the E17 Art Trail, High Street Adventures and more) is producing three Reuse and Repair Fairs for the Waltham Forest Reuse and Repair Festival 2024. The fairs, each in a different part of the borough, will focus on enabling all of us to waste less, reduce carbon emissions and save money. There will be plenty of fun activities for all ages, workshops, talks and demonstrations, giving everyone the opportunity to learn how to reuse and create, fix things themselves or to discover the many local organisations and social groups available to join and visit. Everyone is invited to get involved and make the most of events and workshops during the



Kirsty McNeil from Artillery tells all about the forthcoming Reuse and Repair Fair Credit Artillery CIC

fairs. The first fair, on 9th March, will see workshops on how to make upcycled Sajada, an Islamic prayer mat. For adults with some sewing skills already there is a British Sewing Bee style 'refashion challenge'. There'll also be an ever-popular sharing event that will be hosted by Forest Recycling Project and Walthamstow Toy Library where everyone can bring along an item to mend or alter and take part in one of the sewing circles. What are you waiting for? Join the reuse and repair revolution!

For a full list of the events and for more details:
Visit artillery.org.uk/reuse-repair

LISTINGS

COMEDY

Robin Ince
Tuesday 5th March, 7.30pm
Walthamstow Trades Hall, 61-63
Tower Hamlets Road E17 4RQ

Robin Ince is many things. A comedian, an author, a broadcaster and a populariser of scientific ideas, 'The Guardian' once declared him a 'becardiganed polymath' which seems about right. He is probably best known as the co-host of the award-winning BBC Radio 4 series The Infinite Monkey Cage with Professor Brian Cox. This event also features performances from Other Theresa and Steve McLean.

Tickets £5 or £3 (Trades Hall members)
Visit walthamstowtradeshall.co.uk

WORKSHOP

Free Soho Theatre workshops
Tuesday 5th & 12th March, 11am-1pm, Wednesday 6th & 13th March, 2.30pm-4.30pm
The Mill Community Centre, 7-11 Coppermill Lane E17 7HA

If you're thinking about stepping into the spotlight for the first time, come along to our friendly informal introduction to theatre and comedy skills at The Mill. Join us at The Mill where over eight sessions you'll explore a variety of theatre and comedy skills, including writing, performing, improv and more. Ahead of opening Soho Theatre Walthamstow our eight-session taster course will help you find your comedic voice and hone your writing and performance skills. You will be working with established performers, some of which you may have seen already on our stages.

Free but registration is necessary.
To sign up:
Visit sohotheatre.typeform.com/to/JTYbAgfQ

FOLK

Cohen Braithwaite-Kilcoyne
Sunday 10th March, 7.30pm-10.30pm
Ye Olde Rose and Crown Theatre Pub, 53 Hoe St E17 4SA

Described as 'captivating, bold and striking', Cohen Braithwaite-Kilcoyne is at the forefront of his generation of English folk musicians. Traditional ballads, songs and tunes form the basis of Cohen's material, but with a smattering of baroque, renaissance, ragtime, and music hall thrown in for good measure.

Tickets £8 (unwaged), £10 (general admission)
Visit wegottickets.com/event/602511

SEWING

Reuse and Repair Fair
Saturday 9th March, 11am-3pm
George Mitchell Secondary School, Farmer Rd, Leyton E10 5DN

The first of three reuse and repair fairs this year. These expert-filled fairs will offer repair and upcycling for free, including clothing and textiles, toys, household electric goods, furniture, and home. This event includes sewing machine repairs, visible mending, upcycling workshops and the Forest Recycling Project's fabric rescue project, as well as a bike mending station and an electronics repair cafe. All visitors are encouraged to bring along clothing to alter and mend, household items for repair, and bikes for maintenance.

Free
Visit artillery.org.uk/reuse-repair

PARENTS

Eco Tots swap shop
Thursday 29th March, 10am-11.30am
The Mill Community Centre, 7-11 Coppermill Lane E17 7HA

Eco Tots is a group aimed at climate concerned parents/carers of children under two. The idea is to create a community of like-minded families whilst also drawing in parents who have not previously been involved in climate action. The plan is to meet monthly or thereabouts, to share and swap toys and clothes, to talk openly about the climate crisis and to link up with community groups and local activists to learn more about how to take the next steps towards a more sustainable future for children everywhere.

Free
Email e17ecotots@gmail.com

CHARITY

Royal British Legion fundraiser
Sunday 3rd March, 2pm-6pm
Walthamstow Cricket Club, 48a Greenway Avenue E17 3QN

The event will feature a fundraising stall selling World War Two books and live music will be provided by The Boykes, John Arthur, Al Neville, Jerokeef, Tom Poslett, Robert, Tony Hands (ex Tea For the Wicked), Greg Rose, and Al Levy.

Free admission

Submit your listing

Email wfecho@socialspider.com by Monday 18th March

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Apprenticeships | GCSEs

Adults (19+)

Access to HE | Higher Education
Part-time | English & Maths | ESOL

COMMENT



The council moved visitor parking permits online on 27th February
Credit Lord Baileys/Canva

The council is leaving our older residents behind

Terry Day, befriending officer at AgeUK, says the council must rethink moving parking permits online

The council says withdrawing the paper over-60s visitor parking permits, replacing them with an online system, will not disadvantage anyone. Well, Age UK Waltham Forest and nine other local charities disagree.

Under the new system (which started on 27th February) free visitor parking permits for over-60s are online only. This means older people have to set up an online account and then book a permit online or over the phone each time someone visits them by car.

45% of Londoners aged 75+ do not use the internet at all, many others hardly at all. Many older people also struggle to use the phone because of dementia, memory problems, hearing or visual impairments, tremor, swollen fingers; the list goes on.

The council has, under pressure, put in place some things to make it easier for some people who are not online to book a parking permit some of the time.

The council's parking permit phone line will operate Monday to Friday from 9am

to 5.30pm, but only 18 of the 81 controlled parking zones (CPZs) exclusively operate within those hours. Many operate until 6.30pm or later on weekdays; many operate on Saturdays; twelve operate seven days a week. What use is this limited phone line to people living in the other 78% of the CPZs?

They say people will be able to book their parking permits up to 28 days in advance. But do older people not get to have spontaneous, or emergency visitors?

They say that an older person can nominate one or more trusted people, who can book parking permits online for them. But a lot of older people have friends who are also not online and who rely on driving.

They say there is an automated service, whereby the older person can phone a number and book the parking permit by pressing the keys on the phone. Such systems are extremely complicated and off-putting to lots of younger people, let alone many older people! How is someone who is hard of hearing supposed to

use that system?

How can the council say that no-one will be disadvantaged by this new system? Loneliness and isolation are a huge problem for many older people, and are proven to be bad for people's health. This change will only exacerbate that. Yes, the council has to make cuts to services, but those cuts should protect, not target some of the most vulnerable people in the borough.

We think the borough's older people deserve better treatment from a council which prides itself on taking equality seriously, and is committed to combating health inequalities. Older people will be disadvantaged by this system and we call on the council to reconsider its decision and retain paper permits for over 60s. At the very least, the council should delay implementation until it has got adequate mitigation measures in place and has communicated clearly to everyone how to use the new system.

Anyone interested in volunteering with Age UK Waltham Forest can ring 020 8558 8716 or email volunteering@ageukwalthamforest.org.uk

NEWS

Council U-turns on decision to not recognise paper visitor parking permits

by Marco Marcelline

Waltham Forest Council has rowed back on a decision to stop accepting visitor parking permit tickets and pay-to-park vouchers at the end of the year following backlash from residents.

On 27th February, the council stopped selling paper visitor's parking permits and pay-to-park vouchers and moved to an entirely virtual system via the RingGo app.

In a letter to residents on 29th January, the council's parking services team informed residents that the scratch cards would no longer be valid after 31st December.

In the letter, the parking services team said: "We are writing to inform you about a significant change in how we provide parking solutions. As of 27th February 2024, we will discontinue the sale and issuance of paper permits to residents and businesses. Instead, these products will be exclusively available in a virtual format, accessible through our user-friendly RingGo App."

The letter continued: "Please note that any paper-based vouchers/permits purchased prior to 27th February 2024 will continue to be honoured in the Borough until 31st December 2024 after which time they will no longer be valid. Please note that no refunds will be offered on any permits or vouchers purchased."

The move prompted heavy criticism from residents who had bought scratch card packs that they assumed they would use for years.

Following the backlash, on 31st January, council deputy leader Clyde Loakes announced a U-turn on the decision to not accept scratch cards from 2025 onwards. Announcing that scratch cards would now be accepted indefinitely, Cllr Loakes said: "I know many of you are worried about the scratch cards that you have

purchased and the stock that you may have built up.

"We had originally proposed that they would no longer be valid after 31st December 2024, following concerns raised about the short notice of that end date in just 11 months' time, we have decided that all scratch cards held by residents will remain valid and can be used indefinitely. We will cease selling scratch cards on 26th February or until current stock runs out, likewise these will remain valid indefinitely."

The U-turn did not satisfy groups such as the Afro-Caribbean Elders Association, Age UK Waltham Forest, Alzheimer's Society and Carers First, who wrote to the council in early February to voice their concerns about older people being left out.

In a letter shared with the *Echo*, the organisations said "while we fully accept that such people constitute only a small minority of users of the parking permit scheme, we do not accept that these people do not matter".

Terry Day, befriending officer at AgeUK, added that the council's U-turn "only benefits those people who can afford to purchase in advance large stocks of the visitor parking permits".

A council spokesperson said that the council anticipates savings of "approximately £214,000 in year one". This money, the spokesperson said, "will be reinvested in concessionary transport such as Freedom Passes for the over 60's and disabled residents".

The *Echo* asked the council why there was no consultation on the process to move the visitor parking permits online. The council responded saying an "impact assessment" was carried out instead as a consultation is "not a requirement to change the method of providing two parking permit products".

For help on the move to the virtual system, call 020 3092 0112, selecting option 3, or email wfpshop@nsl.co.uk

ARTS & CULTURE

All aboard the art trail

The iconic E17 Art Trail is finally back this year. The festival's organisers and artists tell us what to expect come June...



Photographer Lloyd Ramos with his photography during the 2021 E17 Art Trail **Credit** Jane Sharp

This year marks the much-awaited return of the E17 Art Trail, which will see Walthamstow's streets, homes, gardens, community and faith spaces, shops, cafés

and restaurants come alive with art.

Speaking to the *Echo*, festival co-producer Laura Kerry emphasised the inclusive goals of the festival. "We've created a framework so people can participate on

their terms, so you can do a small one-day thing or turn your venue into a mini-festival in itself and collaborate with as many artists or venues as you choose, or you can do something as immediate as putting your kids' artwork on your window."

Children's author Kweku Ackom-Mensah participated in the most recent edition of the festival in 2021, and is on the participating board for the 2024 trail.

He took part after seeing posters for the fair when he moved to Walthamstow some years ago, and ended up doing live readings of his children's book at Gnome House. Kweku says he was blown away by the community and support shown during the festival: "I'm from Sheffield and northerners tend to be more friendly than Londoners, but nowhere else in London have I experienced that kind of community."

This year also marks the first time the programme and map of participating venues will be available on a free mobile app facilitated by festival organiser Artillery's partnership with Bloomberg. Kweku said he was "really excited to see how this top of the line piece of technology will be used by all these creatives to make something special".

Morag McGuire, Artillery's co-director, said the return of E17 Art Trail was "really fantastic" given the struggles it had experienced. "Previously we went through the really sad process of having to register the

festival under the [Mayor of London's] Culture at Risk register," she explained.

"The whole [arts] sector is feeling nervous at the moment in terms of how we make sure we're able to deliver great cultural opportunities for everyone in our neighbourhoods. The Art Trail has a great track record of supporting emerging artists and neighbours as well, it's been instrumental in bringing neighbours together and showcasing the amazing talents they have."

She added: "I'm really looking forward to June when suddenly there will be an explosion of art and possibilities in Walthamstow."



Veronica Lindsay-Addy posing with her artwork **Credit** Jane Sharp

Anyone can register to take part in the E17 Art Trail before 1st April. Visit: e17arttrail.co.uk/take-part

Highams Park singer nominated for three Brit Awards

Breakthrough pop-soul artist Olivia Dean is up for three gongs at the March ceremony

by Marco Marcelline

A break-out soul singer who grew up in Highams Park has been nominated for three Brit Awards. Olivia Dean, who released her debut album *Messy* in June 2023, was nominated for three awards at the Brits: Artist of the Year, Best New Artist, and Pop Act. The Highams Park singer is nominated alongside bigwigs such as Dua Lipa, Little Simz, Dave, Charli XCX, and Calvin Harris. The awards show takes place at

the O2 Arena on 2nd March.

A self-taught singer songwriter and guitarist who has been performing since the age of eight, Olivia grew up locally with her mum, dad, and younger brother.

After going to primary school in Highams Park, Olivia attended the prestigious Brit School, whose alumni includes Amy Winehouse, Adele, and FKA Twigs.

As a teenager Olivia busked across London and made it through to the final of the country's biggest street music competition.

Speaking to *The Face* on her upbringing,



Olivia Dean **Credit** Brit Awards

Olivia said: "I was born in Tottenham and raised in Highams Park, but I usually just say Walthamstow because people don't know where that is. It's on the cusp of Essex, basically. I'm an East London girl through and through."

In an interview with *Time Out*, Olivia described Highams Park as being "like a village", with "one primary school, two pubs, and a big Tesco".

Messy, a pop and neo-soul record, was well-received by critics and the public alike, reaching number four in the UK charts on its release and being nominated for a Mercury Award.

Reacting to the nomination news on Instagram, Olivia wrote: "As if! 3 Brits nominations, life is unbelievable."

The 24-year-old is set to go on a UK and Europe tour in April and May this year, including three back-to-back dates at the Hammersmith Eventim Apollo. All dates bar two, in Cologne and Berlin, are sold out.

FEATURE

Credit Maltiek via Canva



Notes from nature

As spring begins to stir, Kelly Bowers writes about the ancient Pagan tradition of Ostara

Spring Equinox falls on 20th March this year. It marks the halfway point between the winter and summer solstices (the shortest and longest days of the year respectively), when the length of night and day are completely equal.

Ostara is one of eight Pagan festivals that mark the 'Wheel of the Year' (the seasonal calendar), and it celebrates the beginning of spring. In ancient times people worshipped the Germanic goddess Eostre during this festival; women wore white, fires were lit, eggs were decorated to honour fertility and offerings of sweet honey were made. Eostre represents rebirth, renewal and awakening.

Although the origins of the festival are debated, the English monk Bede wrote about it in the 6th Century, but it is thought the tradition precedes this by many centuries. It is believed that the Christian festival of Easter, takes its name from the goddess Eostre, where we also find the root of the word oestrogen, the female fertility hormone.

There are plenty of folklore

myths and stories about the goddess. Some say that she found a wounded bird on the ground late in winter. To save the bird, she turned it into a hare. However, the transformation was incomplete and the animal took on the appearance of a hare, but was still able to lay eggs. These symbols of spring – eggs, rabbits or hares – are still familiar today.

Whether you have a spiritual or religious tradition at this time

of year, we can all celebrate the wonderful changes occurring around us in the natural world. Walking through the parks and woodlands of Waltham Forest these past few days it's been joyful to see the bouncing heads of snowdrops (now in their final weeks), the sunny yellow of abundant daffodils, purple and white crocuses beginning to show their blooms, alongside primroses, pink and white hawthorn blossoms. Occasionally

I can even catch the scent of early wild garlic. As well as celebrating our beautiful plant life, the birds are more vocal in the mornings; for example, I heard a goldfinch from my bedroom window the other day.

I love learning about the ancient traditions of these lands and seeing how they weave into so many parts of modern culture. Emerging from the darkness of winter months feels welcome. Like the squirrels darting around Lloyd Park we can feel our bodies start to unfurl and stretch out. It might feel like the time to make some new plans and embrace the invitation for newness that Ostara brings.



The Germanic goddess Ostara, who was worshipped in ancient times during the festival of Ostara Credit Wikimedia Commons

HISTORY

The untold Black history of Leytonstone House

Local historian Claire Weiss previews her forthcoming book which reveals that a prominent abolitionist lived in Leytonstone

Abolitionist and resident of Leytonstone House Philip Sansom by Thomas Lawrence Credit Tate/Creative Commons



Three local historians, Peter Ashan, Geoff Nicholls, and myself, are compiling a book which probes data on wall plaques at Leytonstone House and interpretation boards at the adjacent Tesco store referencing Leytonstone House occupants.

The exceptional building, one of the few such structures in today's Waltham Forest to have avoided extensive 19th and 20th Century housing developments, was sold in 1868 by the Buxtons as the future Bethnal Green Home for the juvenile poor and later, within living memory, it became the Leytonstone House Hospital. Today, a Grade 2 listed building, it is the office accommodation of a firm of chartered accountants.

In our research for the book we have uncovered that prominent abolitionist Philip Sansom made Leytonstone House his home from 1795 until his death in 1815. But Sansom's residency is not displayed on the plaques. Our book, *Slave Trade Abolition and Leytonstone House: the Sansoms, the Buxtons and Black History* explores possible reasons for this, especially given that a large Sansom tomb stands in the graveyard of St Mary's parish church in Leyton.

Having identified a unique image of the 1866 visit by Aina Sarah Forbes Bonetta Davies, an Egbado princess of the Yoruba people of west Africa, to Rachel

and Thomas Fowell Buxton at Leytonstone House, the authors traced that her visit was connected with the Church Missionary Society, an organisation significantly supported by Buxton and whose links to Sierra Leone also gave rise to other Black visitors coming to Leytonstone.

Noting that Sansom was financially successful in his Lombard Street bank 'Messrs Harcourt, Blake, Sansom, Postlethwaite' and held investments in the London Dock Company, the book shows that the slave economy was integrated into the City's commercial and financial structure. For example, one-third of London dock investors were active in slave-trading connections.

In the Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society's booklet *Leyton in the year 1840*, David Ian Chapman writes: "Where Whipps Cross Road joins the northern end of Leytonstone High Road stands to this day Leytonstone House. It is not known for certain when the house was built but it is thought to be at least the eighteenth century. There is much confusion as to who actually lived there."

Now we know.

'Slave Trade Abolition and Leytonstone House: the Sansoms, the Buxtons and Black History' will be published in late spring

Leytonstone House Credit Karl Weiss



AROUND THE BOROUGH

CHINGFORD

Woman in hedge height row could face £4.8k bill

By Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

A Chingford woman who has faced years of complaints from neighbours over her towering garden hedges could face a £4,800 bill from Waltham Forest Council for not cutting them enough.

Sales consultant Joyce Noel, who lives on Priory Close in Chingford, has refused to cut several hedges which block sunlight into neighbouring gardens, because they contain “seven or eight” wood pigeon nests.

Joyce has resisted trimming the hedges – each at least five metres tall – despite anti-social behaviour orders from the council and long-running complaints from neighbours.

On 15th February, the council’s planning enforcement officers called in a large team from its tree surgeon contractors Gristwood

The towering fir tree hedges are at least five metres tall and block sunlight into neighbouring gardens Credit LDRS



and Toms, a locksmith and the police in a bid to cut the hedges.

But the team left within two hours without trimming a single branch, after finding “evidence of nesting birds”.

The council action followed years of complaints from Joyce’s neighbours which concluded in a remedial notice last month, ordering her to cut the hedge down to 3.5m or face a £4,800 bill for tree surgery work by the council’s contractor. The council now claims

Joyce will have to pay for the contractors’ time.

Joyce criticised the council for coming to cut the hedge down when it was pigeon nesting season and claimed that the council’s own senior planning officer who came to inspect the hedges in January had seen the nests.

A council spokesperson said it had “no alternative” but to take direct action after several years of trying to work with Joyce.

They added: “Contractors attended on Wednesday 14 February and, whilst carrying out full due diligence before starting work, found evidence of nesting birds that meant they could not proceed.

“We are awaiting information about the costs for our contractors’ time, which will need to be met by the homeowner.”

Joyce’s neighbours declined to comment.

WALTHAMSTOW

Community organiser wins humanitarian award

A Walthamstow community organiser has said she is “in shock” after winning a humanitarian award.

On winning Ayrshire Council’s Robert Burns Humanitarian Award, Gail said: “For what I do to be seen as of a similar calibre to previous finalists/winners is overwhelming. I just help others where I can, speak out where change is needed and arrange events to provide a little relief and enjoyment.”

2024 marks 50 years of volunteering and helping others for the Queen’s Platinum Champion winner.

Gail founded the Walthamstow Stadium Residents Association and has provided benefit, debt management, budgeting assistance and essential items to those in need across the country.

Gail has also worked to support people with mental health issues since she was a teenager and has organised ‘silent’ funfairs for autistic children who can’t cope with loud noises and crowds. Her achievements also include launching what is the first GP-led gardening welfare group in Waltham Forest.

In her acceptance speech Gail thanked “every council, company, organisation, and individual donor for their trust and generosity” towards her fundraising and gift-giving over the years.

Her brother Nick Lovell told the *Echo*: “Gail has a huge heart and is always ready to help anyone that needs it.

“Throughout her life Gail has shown this through her service as a special constable, the many people she has helped and the time

and effort she has spent with the Stow Residents’ group.”



Gail Penfold with her award
Credit Dr Sarah Cheney

LEYTON

Pub to get £250k facelift

The Pepper’s Ghost pub in Leyton is to undergo a £250,000 refurbishment that will see it revert to its original name of The Prince of Wales.

The pub, which dates back to the 1800s, closed for the works on 30th January and will reopen in late March.

Leyton resident Simon Welch, who will operate the pub, said: “It’s a beautiful old building, it’s been sad to see it lose its way. The area is crying out for a great quality local. I want to make The Prince of Wales somewhere residents are proud of – a community hub that is an asset to Leyton. The atmosphere will be relaxed so that everyone feels at home – whether coming in a group or on their own. There’s been lots of support for the plans and calling it The Prince of Wales again.”

The £250,000 refurbishment comes following investment by Heineken-owned Star Pubs & Bars and Simon, who is leasing



Prince of Wales pub operator Simon Welch Credit Star Pubs & Bar

the pub from Star Pubs & Bars. The project will see the pub gain a beer garden, while its covered all-weather alfresco area at the front will be revamped with new furniture, planters and festoon lighting. A second larger garden will replace part of the car park at the back.

A kitchen refit will mean that homemade food will be on the menu. The Prince of Wales will offer light lunches such as paninis and salads as well as Sunday roasts. The evening menu will include pub classics ranging from scampi to lasagne, while the kitchen will also serve fresh pasta made from scratch on site.

LEYTONSTONE

Boozer bans non-regulars after ‘issues’

A Leytonstone pub has insisted it is open for everyone despite putting up a sign on its door banning non-regulars.

The sign was put up outside The Bell on Leytonstone High Road sometime in January and reads: “Due to on-going issues regulars only”.

The *Echo* visited the pub on a February afternoon without any problems. There, a barlady said the sign was there as a precautionary measure and was aimed at preventing troublemakers from entering.

The worker, who did not want to be named, said the sign had made her feel “safer” since it was put up and insisted that non-regulars were still welcome. She explained the sign was there so

that it could be pointed to when people caused issues but declined to explain what said issues were.

Punters told the *Echo* that the pub was popular with the Traveller community, and said that “Traveller women” had been causing issues, such as by having fights with each other. The barlady insisted that there was no discrimination at play and said other pubs along the High Road had used similar signs to dissuade troublemakers in the past.

Craft Union Pubs, which runs The Bell, also manages The Lord Palmerston in Walthamstow and The Wishing Well in Chingford. The *Echo* understands that those pubs do not have signs banning non-regulars.

The Bell’s operator did not respond to a request for comment.

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LICENSING ACT 2003

Application for the Grant of a Premises Licence

NOTICE IS HEREBY given that **Maiger Ltd** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the grant of a Premises Licence at **Maiger Cafe, 167A, Wood Street, London, E17 3LX**. The nature of the application is as follows:

- To permit the sale of alcohol, Monday to Sunday, 8am – 11pm

The Licensing register listing full details of the application is kept by the Licensing Section, Town Hall, Fellowship Square, Forest Road, 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 Section, London Borough of Waltham Forest, Town Hall, Fellowship Square, Forest Road, Walthamstow, London E17 4JF or via email: Licensing@walthamforest.gov.uk

Representations must be received no later than **29/03/2024**.

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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