

News from 104

Our Alderman for the Ward of Aldersgate updates us on some surprising news.



Under threat

The Barbican Arts Centre has revealed its '2040 aspiration' to evict residents from their car park that serves Defoe House and Shakespeare Tower. It would then seek planning permission to rip the roof off the section closest to Defoe House, creating an open air pedestrian route from Beech Street through to the lakeside terrace.

The artist's impression, which the Arts Centre refused to share with me, shows the area which residents rely on for ambulance access and parcel collection as well as to park bikes and cars filled with cafes and shops. And the noise from those retail units was directly below the bedroom windows of 170 flats in Defoe House alone.

The rationale for 'The Defoe Cut', as the Arts Centre terms this trench through the Barbican's Grade II* listed landscape, is that it would make the Arts Centre easier to find. My observation is that visitors are quite capable of finding the Arts Centre when it has productions people want to see. Its popular shows sell out.

So is the problem route finding? Or arts programming?

Further, the Arts Centre wishes to transform the empty exhibition hall in the centre of Beech Street in a similar manner to the cinemas and Cote restaurant in the eastern exhibition hall. Residents have experienced problems due to noise from the servicing of the latter facilities. As such any changes, which would be subject to planning permission, need to be carried out with care.

Outnumbered

My colleagues Sue Pearson, Martha Grekos and I were outnumbered when the Court of Aldermen voted to approve a convention that can allow some members of the Court to stay in office for an additional six months after their six year term.

The Court now can now extend a member's term of office for undefined 'reasonable circumstances', which I understand is to allow some flexibility around the election of a new Lord Mayor or Sheriff. As a core function of the Court of Aldermen is to ensure the smooth transition of these ancient roles, we should be able to do that within our six year terms rather than extending them without reference to our electorate.

Planning

The Planning Applications to build two huge office blocks on the site of the Museum of London are still pending as I write. It was heartening to see 25 pages of Objections to this scheme. These came from neighbouring institutions and members of the public concerned about a building on the 20th Century Society's At Risk List, as well as local residents including me.

Just south of the former Museum of London are St Martin's Le Grand and King Edward Street. These busy one-way streets form the south and north arms of the 1970's 'St Paul's gyratory'. Hopefully you will have participated in the public consultations into a proposal that aims to make these streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists and create a greener, more pleasant environment. If approved, work will take place during the next two years.

Governance

It's good to report that the Corporation of London has recommended that the Barbican Residential Committee and the



Barbican Residents' Consultation Committee (RCC) should be retained. A view supported by both committees.

As the immediate-past Chair of the RCC I know it can do more and better. I also know that the current arrangements enable far more transparency about the management of the Barbican Estate, with all the papers and meetings available online, than for most blocks of flats.

Meetings

Next up is the annual meeting for voters in the Ward, the Wardmote. This will be held at Ironmongers' Hall, off Aldersgate Street, at 7pm on March 20th. It is an opportunity to ask me and your Aldersgate councillors the questions that are on your mind. In addition, we will be launching regular Ward surgeries where you can meet us, on a rota basis, to discuss the issues that matter to you.

As always, if you have any questions about my work as your Alderman, just drop me a line at christopher.makin@cityoflondon.gov.uk and I'll try my best to provide some answers.

Christopher Makin

104th Alderman for the Ward of Aldersgate



Your Aldersgate Councillors. Left to right, Christopher Makin, Anett Rideg, Steve Goodman, Randall Anderson, Deborah Oliver, Naresh Sonpar and Helen Fentimen