

# Grahame Park Estate Update

Andrew Dismore MP

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I promised to keep you up to date on developments in your area, the Grahame Park Estate. I have just had my annual formal 'walkabout' inspection visit on the estate, with the Council, Barnet Homes and the Police, so I thought I should report back to you on my findings and issues I have taken up.

## Grounds Maintenance

This needed a lot of attention, with uncut grass, unpruned shrubbery and trees, and untreated weeds. The new contractor is supposed to weed spray three times a year, but this clearly had not been done effectively. The Council will investigate and deal with this. It is clear to me though, that much more effective supervision and monitoring of the contract is required. It should be obvious to anyone checking up, that most of the back pathways and car parks were either ignored or given only the quickest, inadequate treatment. The latest excuse was that it was now "too hot". As they can't do spraying when it is "too wet", no doubt we will have to wait for ideal weather conditions.

## Paving

I was concerned to see how much of the brick paving was broken up and loose. Tree roots inevitably create some uneven surfaces, but there were far too many areas where holes had appeared, and also where paving slabs were loose and rocking. There were health and safety hazards as a result. The Council will tend to these.

## Trip Hazards

Apart from the pavements, all over the estate I saw tripping hazards, for example the remains of the bases of disused rubbish bins, old sign posts, and railings. These are particularly dangerous to children, especially in grassed areas, where they are difficult to see. It is not hard to imagine children injuring themselves on these traps. I have asked the Council to attend to them.

## Broken Drains

I spotted quite a few blocked drains that will inevitably cause flooding, if and when we get heavy rain. I asked for them to be cleared.

## Heating Pipes

I was pleased to see the Council were taking action to replace the heating mains pipes (work going on behind the Concourse) for the north side of the estate, and doing the work during the Summer. We do not want a repeat of last year's major burst, which left so many on the south side without heating and hot water!

## Water Leaks

At a time of water shortage, it is very annoying to see so many leaks around the estate. This is especially so, when the water company has apparently started work on some repairs but abandoned their holes for weeks on end. I have asked the Council to look into this.

## Dispersal Zone

I was pleased to see the Dispersal Zone, brought in by the police to enable them to move on large groups, is in force again this Summer. The Safer Neighbourhood Police Team tell me it has been very effective in supporting their effort.

## Mini Motorbikes

The Police tell me this is a growing problem throughout the area, and with the encouragement of the Police Safer Neighbourhood Team, I am starting a campaign about this. These "minimotos" are illegal, in that although marketed as toys, they are anything but! They must comply with the same road safety rules as full sized motorcycles if used anywhere except on privately owned land. They do not usually comply with the Construction and Use Regulations and they are dangerous. If they do comply, then they should be taxed, insured and

riders should hold a licence and wear crash helmets. The police have the power to seize minimotos and prosecute those that do not comply with these rules, especially if they are making a noise nuisance or are causing a danger to pedestrians and other road users. I have started a petition about this, and I enclose a copy – please sign it, encourage friends and neighbours to do so as well, and return it to me FREEPOST, if you agree with my stand!

### **Regeneration**

Although my visit was not specifically about the estate regeneration, I thought you would like to know, briefly, the present position. The pilot phase, to replace the former Harriot and Hawfinch blocks, has begun with the demolition of these properties. The 'S106' agreement, which deals with the community contribution from the developers and the outline (i.e. general) planning approval, is expected within about a month. The detailed design issues are being prepared and considered for the first stage proper, around the park area. The likely start date is at the end of 2007. though like you, I shall believe this when I see it! I find it as frustrating as you do, to see how long the Council's failings have delayed the project, first considered 8 years ago!

### **Leaseholder Issues**

There are specific problems arising from the regeneration for leaseholders, especially those who find that after they are "bought out" by the Council, who will use compulsory purchase powers if necessary, they do not have enough to buy a replacement home on the estate. This is an issue I am raising with the Council but I am not optimistic of an early result.

Service charges are also a key concern. I agree with those who feel they are paying for what in the real world are the same basic services like lights and street cleaning, as are paid through the Council Tax. However, the Council remain immovable on this issue. They say that these charges are in the leases, and therefore have to be paid. I am continuing to pursue this issue, too, but again this is a long battle, with I suspect a very uncertain outcome.