

# Gazette COMMENT Circus vow could be silver lining

ASK anyone on the streets of Colchester if they want more houses built and the vast majority would answer with a resounding 'no'.

The borough has grown at an exponential rate and now hosts a population of about 190,000 people.

So the prospect of another 200 homes in south Colchester near Abbey Field might be met with anguish by anyone who drives on the roads or who tries to get a GP appointment.

But there might be a silver lining to this housing shaped cloud.

Developers behind the proposed ABRO development say they will invest to make the Roman circus into more of a tourist attraction...and that has been a long time coming.

The chariot circus, the only one of its kind discovered in Britain, was found 15 years ago.

Residents know about it and many have visited.

But put a tourist in the centre of Colchester and ask them to find it and you would have to wish them an enormous amount of luck.

It has been an enduring complaint that not enough has been done to celebrate this amazing archaeological discovery.

Colchester is often compared to York, which has made the most of its history, and does not come across in a good light.

But new promises are being made that the circus remains will be made into a "significant" tourist attraction.

We will watch and wait. It certainly would make the prospect of yet more houses a less bitter pill to swallow.

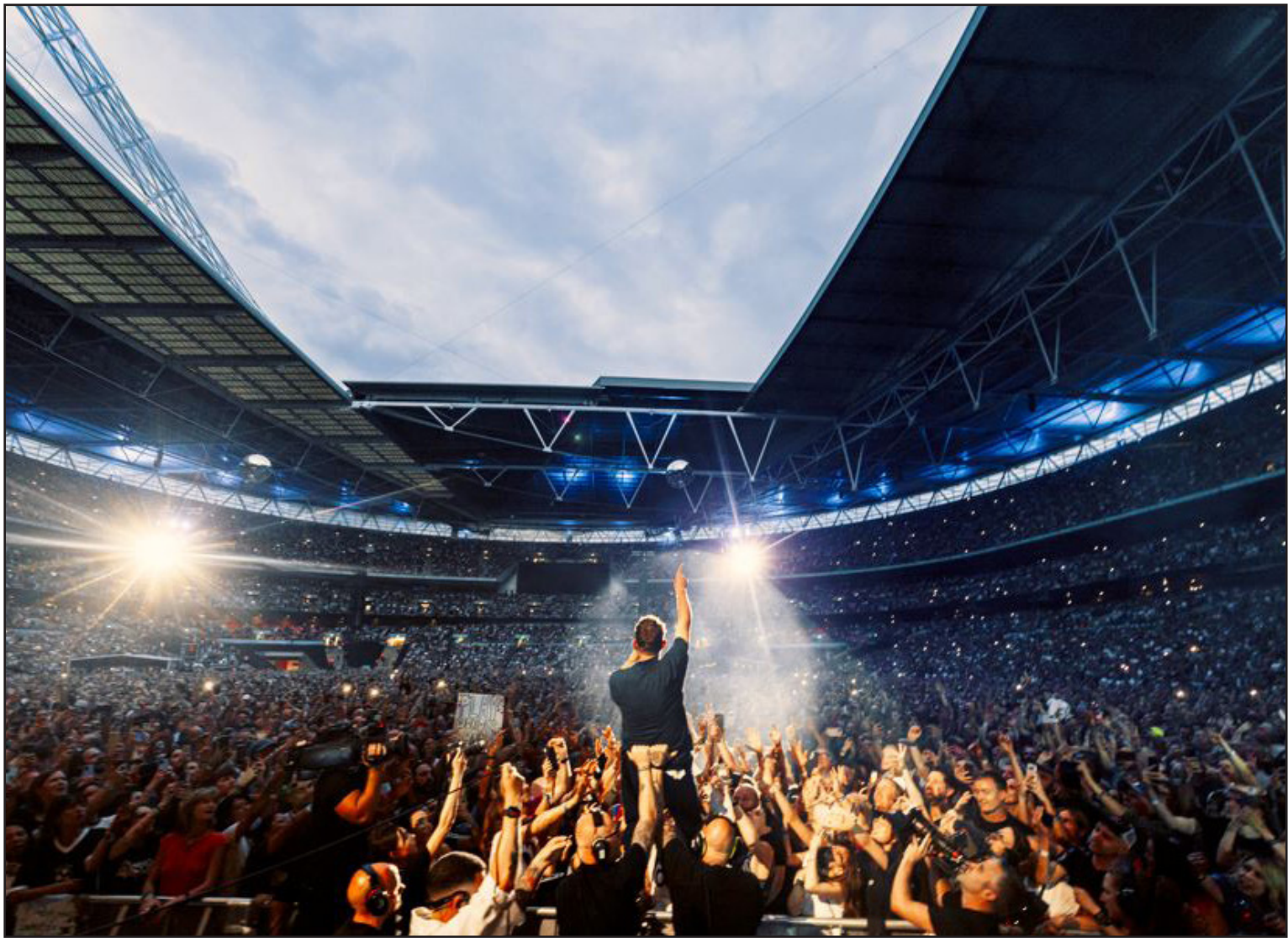
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# Blur conquer colossal Wembley Stadium gig

Former Colchester schoolboys delight 90,000 fans with magical gig



■ Sensational - Damon Albarn in front of 90,000 adoring fans during Blur's huge Wembley concert    Picture: Blair Brown

By **GEORGE KING**  
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"WE have been waiting for this moment our whole lives," proclaimed a humbled, yet ever-charismatic Damon Albarn, moments into Blur's colossal first night at Wembley Stadium.

Such an admission initially seemed a little at odds with the reality of the group's decades-long success and popularity, not least given the huge concerts they have conquered previously.

But what became clear over the next two hours is a performance such as this one - as electric and brutal as it was heartfelt and emotional - is only achieved if a lifetime has been spent working towards it - or indeed, waiting for it.

That's not to say the tracks which made-up tonight's setlist felt in any way tired or that Damon, Graham Coxon, Alex James and Dave Rowntree seemed as if they were just going through the motions when playing them. On the contrary.

Latest singles St Charles Square



and The Narcissist, which as good as bookended the set, kept things fresh, ensuring tonight's gig was as much a celebration of the new - be that new songs or a new love for performing

onstage together again - as it was the old.

Every song was delivered with all the vigour and energy of four young boys smashing them out for the first

time in their parent's living room, but also the cocksurety of the seasoned professionals Blur now are.

The mid-set, back-to-back double-whammy of Country House and

■ Moving - Blur take in the moment at Wembley Stadium    Picture: Blair Brown



■ Rocker - Graham Coxon onstage at Wembley Stadium    Picture: Phoebe Fox

Parklife (featuring a fantastic guest appearance from Phil Daniels), for example, sucker-punched relentless ripples through the entire stadium, and shockwaves through wider London, while Song 2 shook the foundations to its core.

For the latter, former Colchester schoolboy Damon told the audience he wanted to see everyone in the stadium bouncing.

He got what he asked for and then some, with 90,000 fans reciprocating the songwriter's own onstage tenacity.

The ping-ponging ricochet of delirium between band and crowd made for a relationship which - despite the energy-sapping heat - never really let up throughout the gig.

Everything from There's No Other Way Popsene and Tracy Jacks to Beetlebum, Girls and Boys and Coffee and TV were as excitedly received as you'd expect, while deep cuts, such as Trimm Trabb, Oily Water, and Stereotypes, made for pleasant surprises.

The more wistful and emotive moments, meanwhile, including the rarely-performed Under The Westway and To The End, were pure magic, and tear-inducing for some.

Tender on the other hand - elevated to a place of transcendence this evening by the accompanying London Community Gospel Choir - put its arm around our shoulder and swayed with us side-to-side. It's a home comfort, like your favourite cake-baking granny.

And bringing it home on night one of two for the band, as it always does so superbly was The Universal in all its spellbinding and ethereal glory - an eternally special, special track which moves you in ways which are fleeting but all the more perfect as a result.

Admittedly, I've only ever seen Blur twice, my first experience being their extremely intimate homecoming show for just 400 lucky gig-goers at Colchester Arts Centre.

But I have every confidence the more seasoned gig-going fans of the band will not hesitate in crowning tonight's show one of their best ever.

As Damon said at the start, the four-piece had waited for this moment their entire lives. Well, if Blur's first Wembley Stadium headline gig is anything to go by, it really looks like they might have made it.



■ Icon - Colchester school boy Damon    Picture: Phoebe Fox



■ Special - Blur headlining Wembley    Picture: Tom Pallant

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