



Old Barn neighbours not forgotten

By Janet Maitland

Local residents will be able to let Barnet Council know what they think about the plans for the Old Barn community centre in Tarling Road even after the planning application is submitted in April.

As we reported in our last issue, the proposals include building a new wing primarily for the local Bravanese community, whose centre on Coppetts Road, Muswell Hill, was burnt down in a racist arson attack in June 2013.

After the submission, there will be a four-week consultation period. The council will write to residents' associations and residents living within a 100-metre radius of the Old Barn, and public notices will be put up round the centre. Even if you don't live close by, you can still participate.

"All residents interested in the planning application can make representations even if they have not been formally written to," said Lesley Meeks, the council officer responsible for the project, adding: "After the four-week statutory consultation, anyone who has written in requesting to speak at the Planning Committee will be invited to this meeting to address members."

Letter to the editor: Neighbours must be heard Dear Editor

I'm writing in relation to the proposed re-development of the Old Barn Community Centre and adjoining land. For the benefit of your readers who are not familiar with the area, the Old Barn Community Centre is located in Tarling Road and is abutted on three sides by Brownswell Road, Fallows Close and Vanderville Gardens.

I am a resident of Vanderville Gardens, so obviously have a strong interest in what happens to the Old Barn and the adjacent land as the area is effectively the 'back garden' for these three roads. I'm sure my fellow residents will agree that we very much cherish having an area of green open space, with plenty of mature trees, in what is otherwise a very densely built up area.

I read with interest the various features on page 5 of the March edition of The Archer. Unfortunately, due to an administrative error, mobilise.org neglected to invite any of the residents in the 24 flats in Vanderville Gardens to the public meeting held on 11 February so we were unable to express our views at that meeting, which has prompted me to write now.

Whilst I am fully supportive of the Old Barn being brought back into use for the local community, I (together with many of my neighbours) am completely against the erection of a further community facility on the protected green space. In the immediate vicinity, we already have the Newstead Children's Centre, the Ann Owens Centre and the Oak Lane Clinic, in addition to the Old Barn. Surely all these Council facilities between them offer more than adequate space for use by the local community without the need to put up yet another building at public expense?

I am also totally against any public building being set aside solely for the use of any single community. All community facilities should be available to the whole community. I may be mistaken, but I'm not aware of a large Bravanese community within walking distance of the Old Barn area which, should the Council bulldoze through the proposed development regardless of local opinion, would cause an issue in itself from a traffic perspective.

I'm aware that the proposed development would come with some parking spaces, but when the Old Barn was in full use before, that in itself resulted in cars being parked around the local streets, preventing residents from being able to park outside their own homes.

As a resident in the immediate vicinity, I also have concerns over potential safety. As highlighted in last month's Archer, the former Bravanese Community Centre in Coppetts Road was sadly the subject of an arson attack. What security measures would be taken to ensure that this is not repeated, and who would fund them? The proposed building is slap bang in the middle of a heavily populated residential area!

I would strongly urge those individuals who are making decisions about the project and the future use of the Old Barn to take into full consideration the views of those local residents who will have to live with the consequences of those decisions on a day-to-day basis. Local residents still have memories of the social gatherings with loud music until midnight (pre-2010), not to mention the particular problems on Youth Club nights when groups of rowdy teenagers regularly messed about on the blind bend of Tarling Road (endangering road users and also themselves) and the throwing of stones at our windows!

The local community doesn't just consist of children and their needs. We have an ever increasing aging population, many of whom will be living in flats in the area without their own outdoor space. Can the open space not just be developed into a small park for the benefit of all local residents?

I did attend the previous public meeting held at Martin School (which I found out about by accident) when the Council's plans were first put forward, and when I asked a member of Capita (representing Barnet Council) if he would want such a development in his back garden, I received a resounding "no", which I think says it all!

**Yours faithfully,
Sue Steven,
Vanderville Gardens, N2.**



'Vote for my party' say the children with MP Mike Freer, headteacher Denise Drinkwater and deputy head Jayne Tarbuck. Photo Diana Cormack

Limespring pupils learn about voting

Limespring is an independent junior school for children with dyslexia and dyspraxia, situated opposite East Finchley station. Pupils there have been learning about the role of parliament and our voting system as part of their 'Britain' topic. On 12 March Mike Freer MP joined in their mock election and the pupils reported on this:

Cassy and Osaro explained that we had made our own political parties, written our manifestos and had slogans and logos. Another child described how we each told him of the issues that are important to us and then he had to choose which team to vote for. Daniel enjoyed standing to say our slogans and snappy moves. Mr Freer said he would ask David Cameron and other leaders to do snappy moves in the House of Commons as it would make things more interesting!

Joe asked how Mr Freer had become an MP and learnt that it had taken him seven years to get voted in. Another child was told that he needs to knock on around 35,000 doors before the election. The children wondered how many bills he had passed this week and if it was

scary being an MP.

They were surprised to hear that Mr Speaker in the House of Commons was like Ms Drinkwater, our headteacher, and he told them off when they

were being naughty. They were also told that an MP would be remembered if they screwed their face up or sent a text message when the TV cameras were on them.

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