



LETTERS

Send your correspondence to: "Letters Page",
The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 8JA

No Loos situation

Dear Editor
Your correspondent Eveline Nicholas asks in your May issue when we are to get a public toilet at East Finchley station. The answer is, I'm afraid that it will not be in the foreseeable future.

The problem is not so much the capital cost (assuming that a suitable site could be found) but the maintaining of the toilets in good order. Diana Cormack's article reports Barnet Council's failure to do so in Cherry Tree Woods. Vandalism is a scourge which has closed public toilets in Barnet and elsewhere. The fact is that public toilets can only be maintained effectively in vulnerable areas if they have attendants on duty throughout the day and are locked at night (as, for example, at rail termini). The cost of such provision is substantial, though reducible in part by charges.

It is not surprising that local councils feel that such expenditure is not a high priority. The only way to get some relief, I suggest, is for Ms Nicholas and other like-minded individuals like Helen Day (same issue) to lobby the council through local representative bodies like Local Agenda 21. Individual letters to the local press will, I fear, achieve little or nothing.

Yours sincerely
John Bagley
Stokes Court, N2

Big Mac

Dear Archer
The April issue of your newspaper contains an article promoting the charity of McDonald's in establishing reading volunteer schemes for local schools ("McDonald's makes a difference", page 8). I wonder what could explain such apparently touching concern for the welfare of Barnet's children! I would like to encourage readers of THE ARCHER to be a little more critical of the company's motives than the author of this article. Could it be that what McDonald's actually want is to sell more burgers by promoting themselves to children? McDonald's provides all sorts of schemes for schools - amongst the more astonishing are good school attendance Big Mac voucher schemes and pupils' visits to local stores.

During the "McLibel" trial in 1997 the company's Head of Marketing admitted in court that children were "virgin ground as far as marketing is concerned". In the official summary of the verdict, Mr Justice Bell stated that "the claim that McDonald's exploit children by using them, as more susceptible subjects of advertising, to pressurise their parents into going to McDonald's

is justified". It is for these reasons that I am saddened that even one East Finchley school has joined this scheme.

Dr Rosie Sharpe
Park Farm Close, N2

Editor's reply:

Whether one approves of fast food from McDonald's or any other purveyor of such, the provision of such voluntary assistance for our children from any source ought to be reported, if not applauded. Hopefully, with this type of work, many children will be able to take part in public debate and have an informed view regarding campaigns such as your own "McLibel" case.

Waitrose

Dear Sir
At the risk of appearing naive, just how did the big Waitrose scare arise?

Like many local residents, despite being a regular John Lewis/Waitrose customer, I am concerned at the appearance of another supermarket in the area and the resulting increase in traffic and refuse it would bring, not forgetting the possible detrimental effect its presence would have on our existing local shopkeepers.

I recently spent a morning searching the records of current and recent Planning Applications at the Borough Planning Department but found no trace of an Application for the construction of a supermarket in the vicinity. A Councillor serving on the Planning Committee subsequently confirmed to me that, as yet, no such application has been received by them.

Have we all been sent on a wild goose chase? I suppose we can console ourselves with the fact that IF Waitrose did have any thoughts of coming into the area it will have an indication of the antipathy of the residents to its presence.

Yours sincerely
Joyce Arram
Summerlee Gardens, N2

Can you recall?

Dear Editor
I have been living at 37 Eastern Road for about ten years and am considering re-building the porch over the front door, which I believe must have existed originally. Do any of your readers recall the shape of the porch, or have an old photograph with this information?
Yours sincerely
Michael Ferenczi
Eastern Rd, N2

Town Square

Dear Editor
With regard to the proposed East Finchley Village Town Square Development, "Oh, heady days of spin and rebranding", I appeal for a simple, natural and easy-to-maintain installation without extraneous features such as canopies and water features, which only serve to break up sightlines thereby increasing the likelihood of muggings and traffic accidents (and isn't it damp enough already for much of the year - this isn't Arizona). And regarding any mural, this would be the imposition of one aesthetic on a whole community - and we already have quite enough unauthorised "street art" as it is.

Finally we don't need any egos at Barnet Council and other bodies piggybacking the project for their own greater glory.

Tony Coren
Leslie Road, N2

Playing politics

The Archer received a message on Saturday 11 May, from an anonymous gentleman who wanted to know why The Archer did not print the election results and also accused us of being left wing.

We would like to thank our anonymous critic for his question, and respond to him by pointing out that The Archer is a monthly publication. At the time of the election the May edition of The Archer had already gone to print, so publishing results would have delayed the newspaper unacceptably.

The Archer has a strict policy of being both secular and non-political, and does not accept any allegations of being otherwise.

Let's get together

Dear Editor
I live along the High Road towards the North Circular, and the 263 is our only bus. A couple of months ago I waited an hour and 20 minutes to get to North Finchley, and twice recently I've waited 40 minutes for a bus to East Finchley station. It is a long walk to the station and a lot of people in

my neighbourhood can't manage it. We are dependent on the 263. I agree with your correspondent last month who said that the buses need inspectors.

Another thing is that quite a few passengers have to stand, because it is so awkward to get in and out of the back seats. You mentioned this in your paper a few months ago, and everyone I've spoken to agrees with you.

I hope we can all get together and get something done.

Rosie Wing
High Road, N2

Be a Bussy Body

The Archer received a message from Paula Sanders, of Golders Green Road, NW11, who tells us she has fought a long battle to get a better 143 service.

She is convinced that the best course of action is for the public to conduct their own surveys. She did this herself a few years ago after waiting nearly two hours at Archway, sending her findings to the then MP, Margaret Thatcher. Shortly afterwards, a ¼-hour hopper was installed along the route, but it lapsed after a while.

Mrs Sanders says that bus companies always insist that they monitor themselves, but that this is clearly not satisfactory. If we want action, we should collect facts and figures to support our case.

Footnote:
At the Finchley Forum in February, Councillor Kathy McGuirk said that the bus issue was about people power, adding, "We always take action with bus companies". (See our April edition).

Any reader who feels strongly about any matter is invited to use this "Soapbox" column.

Please note that opinions expressed are those of the writer alone.

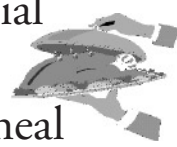


Tangle at the Till

By John Dearing
Queuing for service is not many people's idea of fun, and the supermarket till is no exception. The till operatives know this for the most part and try to expedite the process, but that is no excuse for a particularly annoying practice that often happens at more than one of the supermarkets in the locality.

Generally, the barcode readers used by most supermarkets these days can shift your groceries quicker than you can pack your purchases into plastic bags. As soon as the operative has processed your shopping, they ask you for payment; you pay and then restart packing, only to find the shopping of the next person in line flowing into the remains of yours, and that person fussing around you trying to get a plastic bag and start packing their goods, all the while both sets becoming intermingled, to the embarrassment and annoyance of both parties.

If, on the other hand, you refuse to pay until you have completed packing, everyone glares at you, as though it was your fault because you could not pack your goods quickly enough. One plan seems to be to use a little piece of wood to separate your purchases from the next person, but few people seem to take any notice of this. When I have paid for my goods, they are mine, and I do not want them mixed up with those of somebody else, nobody does and it is time that supermarkets took notice of this.

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