



Letters to The Editor

Send your correspondence to:
"Letters Page", The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 8JA.
(Due to space restrictions, letters over 200 words will be edited)

Remember the ALMO

Dear Sir,
[I refer to] 'Remember the ALMO' (Archer Jan 2004)

Firstly [John Dearing] refers to a consultation with tenants in 2002, but has ignored the further consultation with tenants in 2003 which confirmed overwhelming support amongst Barnet tenants for the change in management arrangements (not ownership as he implies) of Barnet's housing stock to Barnet Homes (the new Arms Length Management Organization) that has been set up.

He says that there is a need to define:

- 1) the security of tenure.
There is no change to the security of tenure.
- 2) the landlords' rights regarding eviction
There is no change to the landlords right regarding eviction
- 3) the tenants' succession rights
There is no change to the succession rights
- 4) the rules for rent increases
There is no change to the rules for rent increases, which are in effect now fixed by the government.
- 5) standards of repair
There is no change in repair arrangements, but the Council will be looking to Barnet Homes to maintain the present high standards and where possible to improve the repair service.
- 6) rights of consultation before any major changes, including improvements, significant repairs and redevelopment.
These rights are mainly enshrined in statute but the Council will be looking to Barnet Homes to further improve tenant and leaseholder consultation.

Mr Dearing also refers to problems caused in housing transfers by ambiguous tenants' documents. Clearly he has totally misunderstood the creation of Barnet Homes and its purpose which is to manage not own the council stock. This change is not a stock transfer.

Lastly he ends by stating that tenants groups may need to consider pressing for representation on the board of the ALMO. Tenants' groups do not need to press for representation. The shadow board of Barnet Homes has been meeting regularly now for several months and the aim is that they will take full responsibility from 1 April. That board includes five tenant and leaseholder representatives, and that has been a key part of the structure of the board from the day the Council first started consulting residents on whether or not to go down this route.

The creation of Barnet Homes should if all goes well enable the Council to access an additional £88 million to help improve our housing stock between now and 2010.

If any resident requires more information about Barnet Homes and its work, they are more than welcome to write to me c/o Town Hall, Hendon, NW4 4BG
Councillor Brian Salinger
Lead Member for Housing

The Archer replies:

The purpose of the article was simply to suggest that, on such an important matter, tenants would be advised to seek independent advice rather than rely purely on the Council's assurances, and to suggest topics for such advice. It was not intended to promote opposition to 'Barnet Homes' (the ALMO) - Ed.

Thank you for the Music

Dear Editor,
I just want to congratulate the carol singers from East Finchley Baptist Church who braved the cold wet weather

to sing outside Budgens on Saturday 13 December. It was about 4.30 pm, dark, cold and dismal.

Although, like everyone else, I did not pause for long because of the weather, I want them to know that I really appreciated their singing. It gave me that first sense of Christmas cheer which fills the brain with images of warmth and cosiness. They sang in well-rehearsed harmony and were accompanied by the cheerful sound of the accordion.

Thankyou,
Heather Pomroy
Elmfield Road

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.



Well Done!

By John Ashton, High Road, N2
Having heard the results of the library consultation I bet the 'nimby' brigade are celebrating! I bet too that Warning on Waitrose are enthusiastically waiting for Barnet Council to announce that we won't be getting a new supermarket or library.

Let's join the real world for a change and take a cold hard look at both the library and the supermarket.

The Disability Discrimination Act is not unknown, the council will have known for years that libraries like East Finchley's would cost a fortune to modernise and make accessible for the disabled. So, if money's tight, it is common sense to find someone to pay for a new library and if that includes a supermarket then maybe the local people get a decent place to shop as well. To me it makes sense.

It should make sense to all those 'Nimbys' and 'WoWers' as well. Put simply, a new Waitrose would have meant road improvements and helped most local shops by bringing more people into the area. A new library would have conformed to the disability act and offered more modern facilities, more books and more computers.

So what have the moaners achieved? Well, what they'll probably get is Park House sold off for executive flats that no one locally can afford and whose new owners leave the area to shop. They will probably end up without a library: any proceeds from Park House will go back into the kitty, so when it proves expensive to modernise or if there are further cutbacks then our library will be a prime candidate for closure (a modern library at the centre of transport links would probably survive). Maybe then they will wake up and realise that you can't stop progress even in East Finchley.

263 Bus Timekeeping

Dear Sir,
I have been monitoring intervals between successive 263 buses for nearly three years, from the time Arriva operated them. The most detailed data is from the time Metroline took over from First National, on 2 February 2002.

From February to October 2002, 14% of Metroline 263 buses travelled in pairs, or within one minute of each other (i.e. two as a pair in every 14 buses). From mid-January to August 2003, there was an apparent improvement to 9-10% in pairs (two as a pair in every 20 buses).

However, from 25 August 2003, the number of pairs suddenly jumped to 26% (two as a pair in every eight buses), and maintained this poor timekeeping past the end of October, which is worse than it has ever been.

At 26% in pairs, the 263 route is now even more unreliable than the 134 (24%) or the 43 and 143 (13%), and is probably the most unreliable Metroline route in North London.

Although Metroline claim that traffic congestion is the main cause of poor timekeeping, it is worth noting records for the period including August 2002. This was when water main replacements on Barnet Hill caused appalling hold-ups. However, timekeeping has actually been much worse after that particular congestion was removed.

These conclusions are not based on small numbers, as I have around 3,000 records for the 263 route alone, plus some 600 records for other Metroline routes.

Long intervals of around 18 to 25 minutes - some much longer - constitute about 10% of waiting times. These long waits have continued into January 2004.

P.J.W.Crockford.
Leslie Road.

Footnote:

Agenda 21 Traffic Group are continuing discussions with Barnet about the 263.

Hippo home?

Dear Editor,
Need the Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute look any further for a home? The Grade 2 listed Golders Green Hippodrome, a large and distinctive building, is losing the BBC Concert Orchestra and its future is uncertain.

It is well placed for public and private transport and for the suburb residents. Certainly there would be problems over ownership as, according to the Ham and High the BBC believes Barnet Council is the freeholder but the council press office has denied this. A lot of work would be needed to convert the building, no doubt, but surely this superb theatre should at least be considered for use as educational premises?

Yours faithfully,
Dudley Taylor
East Finchley

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