



New threats to Newstead Children's Centre

By Diana Cormack and Janet Maitland

Only a year after surviving the threat of closure, parents who use the Newstead Children's Centre are set to start fighting all over again. They fear that the centre, in Fallows Close off Tarling Road, will suffer badly under budget cuts proposed by Barnet and that such amenities will eventually disappear.

Local parent Jenny Borst described the centre as "excellent" and told *THE ARCHER* that it recently came second in a nationwide award for safeguarding children. Previously it was judged as "outstanding" by Ofsted.

Used by all sections of the community, the centre provides a wide range of services for parents and children under five, including those with special needs. Many parents rely on it in order to go out to work and losing the nursery would create major problems, particularly for those in tough circumstances who do not wish to be a burden to the tax payer.

Parents were preparing their protest plans as we went to press towards the end of February, when any cuts to the service were due to be announced.

Commercial competition

Meanwhile parents have been disturbed to hear rumours that a new private nursery could open in the Old Barn Community Centre, a Barnet Council building situated directly opposite Newstead. This is seen as a further threat to the children's centre.

Ruth Mulandi, CEO at Community Barnet, which supports community organisations, said she was concerned to hear that there could be commercial tenants at the Old Barn.

"We feel this is not appropriate for a community centre," she said. "Although there is nothing to stop a community centre having tenants, or partners, delivering services, these services cannot take precedence over other services. They need to complement and not replace existing community services."

Parking campaign lost

By Diana Cormack
At a hearing in the Royal Courts of Justice on 8 February, Summerlee Avenue solicitor David Atfield had his attempt to overturn Barnet Council's CPZ charges rejected.

Crucial to the case was the question of whether a council can set residents' parking charges to raise revenue for things that have nothing to do with residents' parking. Deputy High Court Judge Robin Purchas said: "There is no evidence put before me that the authority has any objectives in mind other than the money should be put towards traffic management purposes under Section 122 of the Road Traffic Act."

Barnet CPZ Action, a group formed to fight against the huge increase in parking permits last April when residents' permits rose from £40 to £100 and visitor vouchers from £1 to £4 each, still firmly believe in their cause.

They relied on two High Court cases which, they say, made it clear that parking charges need to address a parking-related need. They suggest that lawful reasons to increase charges might be the cost of running a CPZ and the need in some areas to dampen demand. This view, they claim, is shared by David Atfield's solicitors, his QC, the RAC Foundation and even Westminster Council.

At the time of writing the group was considering its next steps.



Steph and Caroline ready to work on the land. Photo by David Broome.

Garden girls back on the land

When Caroline Broome was made redundant from her office job at Christmas, the general response from her friends and family was, "So when are you setting up your gardening service, then?"

Caroline had regularly opened her garden to the public as part of the National Gardens Scheme and knew that, while many of her visitors admired large landscaped gardens, their own horticultural needs were less ambitious: a nice neat lawn, well pruned shrubs and weed-free borders, with a succession of flowers throughout the year. To employ professional garden designers would be "overkill" for their suburban plots yet they did not know how to create and maintain an attractive garden without huge expense or upheaval.

Her business The Garden Girls hopes to fill this gap in the market. Along with her apprentice Steph Goldstein, Caroline will provide practical skill and horticultural knowledge for the small urban gardens of busy people and the elderly.

Services will range from one-off spring spruce-ups and autumn tidy-ups, to regular

maintenance, winter and summer container displays, as well as advice on planting schemes and design, leaving larger gardens and hard landscaping to the big boys.

Land Army ladies


Caroline said: "The idea for The Garden Girls was inspired by the Second World War Women's Land Army posters. After 11 years at a desk the idea of kitting oneself up in 1940s gear for a *Healthy Happy Job* in the *Healthy Open Air* was too tempting to pass up."

Later this year, Caroline will introduce a series of "How To..." workshops and her friend Kathryn Gerrard, who sells her Potters Bar honey to Tony's Greengrocers in the High Road, will be invited to instruct on bee-keeping and chicken keeping.

Garden owners can contact Caroline on 020 8444 2329 or email: caroline@thegarden-girls.biz.

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