



# Old Barn in the frame to become 'community hub'

By Janet Maitland

**Barnet Council is proposing to spend £1 million on refurbishing and extending the Old Barn community centre on Tarling Road to create a 'community hub'.**

The centre may also benefit from some of the £1 million lottery funding given to the Big Local to spend on the area bounded by Church Lane, the High Road, East End Road and the A406.

"We can fund local projects that will make a lasting difference to the area; youth and community facilities are likely to be a key priority," said local resident Jon Woolfson, a member of the Big Local steering group.

The plans for the Old Barn include a new wing, linked to the main building, for the local Bravanese community, whose centre on Coppetts Road, Muswell Hill, burnt down in June 2013. Barnet also plans to open up the land adjacent to the Old Barn to create a public open space and accommodate the enlarged centre.

### Residents raise concerns

Council officials outlined their plans at a public meeting on 26 November attended by over 100 people. Residents from Brownsell Road expressed their anger that they had not been consulted before and said that the council cannot use the adjacent land to extend the Old Barn because it is protected green space.

"The meeting was the first opportunity for most of us to hear about the council's proposals for the site adjacent to the Old Barn," said local resident Helen Drake. "There needs to be a lot more interaction between the council and local residents, particularly those living in the roads nearest to the site."

"We feel that the way in which the meeting was planned was bound to cause unrest," said

Abubakar Ali from the Bravanese Welfare Association. "Much more time is needed for a dialogue which can allow everyone's interests to be heard and some kind of consensus reached. We haven't had the proper opportunities to build connections and relationships with local people."

### Council response

A spokesperson for the council said the land adjacent to the Old Barn was not protected green space, adding: "Historically it was to be laid out for community use. It is currently unusable and we hope that the proposals will bring it back into community use. We've taken into account the feedback from the public meeting. Meetings and consultation will be arranged with local residents and all interested parties during the coming months."

Local resident Will Hudson, who has been an advisor to the Bravanese Community for several years, warned that if council decisions were made before the consultation is complete, this would be a disaster for local relationships and acutely serious for the Bravanese in particular.

The Old Barn was a thriving community centre for over 25 years until it was taken over in 2010 by a group of 'trustees' who discontinued all the services. The centre was finally reclaimed last October by the social and community group Mobilise who have been appointed as interim trustees by the Charity Commission. Anyone interested in getting involved in the Old Barn's future should contact oldbarn@mobilise.org



La Torre visits the Tower. Photo John Lindsay

## All the local news (in Italy)

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