



Old Barn: what about young people?

Maureen Clemetson is worried about the lack of outdoor facilities for children and young people in the council's plans for the Old Barn. Maureen ran the Monday Youth Club at the community centre before it was taken over by a group of 'trustees' in 2010. Here she expresses her concerns:

The focal point of the Old Barn should be children and young people. The piece of land earmarked for the Bravanese building should be turned into a supervised football pitch with high fencing, gated, with a padlock. The little play area at the side of the Old Barn should be refurbished with swings and slides for the younger children so that they can play at any time of the day under supervision. These areas should be for the whole community.

I feel that the young people of East Finchley should be consulted about the Old Barn and taken seriously. For too long they have been pushed to the back and made to feel that they are not part of the community.



Maureen Clemetson

I speak from my experience of dealing with young people from the Grange, Strawberry Vale and the surrounding areas. I've been running the Monday Youth Club for the past 10 years and we have been pulled from pillar to post since departing the Old Barn in 2010.

I am in no way against diversity and letting everyone integrate and creating one community, but I am unsure where all this is going.

What are your views about the future of the Old Barn? Email us at the-archer@lineone.net or write to The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 2DE

Campaigners and Mobilise staff walk in to reclaim the Old Barn last October. Photo Mike Coles

How will the Old Barn be funded?

By Janet Maitland

As the next chapter in the history of the Old Barn community centre unfolds, THE ARCHER asked Lesley Meeks, the council officer responsible for the project, some questions about funding.

THE ARCHER: Is it correct that:

- the council committed £1m to replace the Bravanese centre after it was burnt down in 2013?
- the cost of building the extension for the Bravanese community is estimated at £1.7m, which will be funded by the insurance claim (£600,000, of which £97,000 has already been committed to demolish the Coppetts Road building) and the Forward Capital Plan (£1.1m)?
- the cost of refurbishing the Old Barn building is estimated at £200,000, which the council plans to meet from existing budgets?

Lesley Meeks: The total funding currently allocated to the project [£1.7million] was agreed to re-house the Somali Bravanese community, who previously leased a council-owned building that was destroyed by fire. £97,000 has already been spent on demolishing this building and the council currently proposes to use the remainder of this specifically allocated funding to refurbish the existing Old Barn building and construct an additional structure, in order to provide enough space for both the Somali Bravanese and the local community to utilise the facilities.

If the allocated budget proves insufficient to complete all the work required, the council will consider meeting the short-fall but this will need to be properly justified before any additional funds are provided.

THE ARCHER: If it were decided not to go ahead with building the extension for the Bravanese community, would the refurbishment of the Old Barn still go ahead?

Lesley Meeks: If construction of a new structure on site proves not to be possible, for instance where the ground conditions or environmental conditions preclude it, then an alternative site / existing facility would need to be found for the Bravanese Community. The existing allocated budget would then be used to refurbish or build for the Bravanese in that new location.

Under those circumstances, the future of the Old Barn building would have to be separately reviewed and a decision made in collaboration with the local community as to the best arrangements, both financial and managerial, to deal with the building.

'Two communities could benefit' from Old Barn rebuild

By Janet Maitland

More than 200 people attended a public meeting on 11 February about Barnet Council's plans to refurbish and extend the Old Barn in Tarling Road, N2. 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.

"The fire was a vicious attack on a centre used for ten years by people already displaced as refugees," said Councillor Alison Moore to the packed hall in Martin Primary School.

Lesley Meeks, the council official responsible for the Old Barn project, said there were practical difficulties in rebuilding the centre on Coppetts Road, adding: "As many Bravanese live locally, it makes sense to bring the two centres together on the same site."

Concerns and queries

Some residents were frustrated that the council could find money for the extension, but not for local services under threat of closure, such as the Ann Owens Centre in Oak Lane.

Lesley Meeks replied that some of the money comes from the insurance on the burned-down building; the rest was allocated after the fire and can't be used for anything else. "Without this funding," she said, "we'd have had to make the Old Barn building compliant with Health and Safety standards, but by joining with the Bravanese community,

we've a chance to benefit both communities."

One resident disputed whether the council had the right to build on the land adjacent to the Old Barn, given its history as protected green space. Planning officer Martin Cowell replied: "Things can change, if it's of benefit of the community, and some of the land will still be open space."

The council will submit a planning application shortly, after which there will be a formal planning consultation process.

The Big Local project has £1 million of lottery money to spend on improving the area bounded by Church Lane, the High Road, East End Road and the A406. Chair Pat Murphy and vice chair Dinah Beamish said: "It's clear from the meeting that more consultation on the plans would be valuable. We look forward to meeting with the local Bravanese community to better understand their aspirations for the proposed new build."

Anyone interested in the Old Barn's future should contact oldbarn@mobilise.org

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If your computer is a few years old you might be thinking it is already past its sell-by date.

- 1) Reload the operating system from scratch**
Some computers have a recovery partition - CAUTION Make sure you have great backups.
- 2) Increase the RAM.**
This is the usable memory and if you are running with less than 4GB on Windows 7, it will make a big difference for a small cost.
- 3) Upgrade to Solid State Hard Drive (SSD).**
This will make your machine purr and breathe fresh life as a SSD can be 10 times faster to access.

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