



Letters to the Editor

Send your correspondence to: "Letters Page" The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 2DE or e-mail the-archer@lineone.net.

Letters without verifiable contact addresses will not be printed. Contact details can be withheld on request at publication. We reserve the right to abridge letters for reasons of space.

Library switcheroo Dear Editor,

I discovered and joined both East Finchley and Muswell Hill libraries in the early 1990s after arriving to live in Fortis Green. At that time, the East Finchley service was far superior, fully open six days a week with a larger book stock and newly installed computers for public use.

Muswell Hill, by contrast, was in a sorry state, partially open three days a week, shut for lunch, no computers and under threat of complete closure by Haringey Council.

It is interesting that nearly 25 years later, the situation has almost completely reversed, with Muswell Hill now fully open until 7pm every weekday, until 5pm on Saturdays, with an expanding book stock and a better computer system than East Finchley.

So, what is the reason behind this? Barnet and Haringey boroughs are alike in many respects, with similar public services to deliver whilst enduring the same recessions and spending cuts over the years.

Therefore, it seems that a borough's library provision depends upon the prevailing attitude of a small number of council officials, who may not even live in the area involved.

I wonder whether East Finchley councillors might consider contacting their comrades in Haringey to determine how they succeeded in making their libraries amongst the best in London, and why Barnet has failed by allowing its libraries to feature amongst the worst.

**Yours faithfully,
Malcolm Griffiths
Midhurst Avenue, N10.**

Library neglect Dear Editor

The truth is Barnet Council does not care much about public libraries. As a person of 80 years of age I can remember the period after 1945 following the Second World War. Despite the fact that the country was close to bankruptcy public library provision continued and gradually expanded.

It is a shame that the present financial position is used as a justification for cuts which will bear hard on the imaginative youngster who wants to expand his or her knowledge of our literature, and the ambitious one who needs support in his or her college and polytechnic course.

**Yours faithfully,
Jeffery Turner
Brookland Rise, NW11.**

Are admissions fair? Dear Editor,

I write in response to your Archer Academy correction in the December issue. It is important that your readers are aware that the Adjudicator determined the policy was fair to N2 because in the Archer Academy modelling they were receiving 50% of the places, which was in line with first preference applications.

However, their modelling only allowed for 50 siblings. Despite the school having only three year groups for September 2016, 55 places were allocated to siblings and

as 58 siblings have already applied for September 2017 this number is likely to rise. There are big bulge classes for the next four years.

The Adjudicator commented: "If, as some objectors have suggested, the trust has underestimated the number of siblings, then unfairness could be claimed for children in N2."

Is it fair that the places to N2 are subject to such variations whilst places are being guaranteed for feeder schools? Surely, as the council suggested, a postcode allocation would be fairer.

**Yours faithfully,
Ms T Evans,
Address supplied.**

Never had it so good Dear Editor

I'm afraid the letters in last month's ARCHER about the Archer Academy admissions policy do not take account of the full background.

The Archer Academy was specifically set up as a contribution to addressing the ongoing lack of secondary school places, particularly for girls, not only in N2 but also N3 and NW11. It was never going to be a complete solution on its own.

Several years on the picture looks very different. Where once a significant proportion of N2 families had no realistic secondary school options, they now have the option of at least one good or outstanding comprehensive school. Some families now have a choice of two or even three excellent local comprehensive schools.

Fortismere School, the 12th best comprehensive in the country according to the Sunday Times in November, which borders N2, has significantly increased its year 7 intake from 243 to 270 places. I understand its catchment area this year went into NW11. This greatly enhances the chances of families in N2 securing a place for their child.

The planned expansion at The Compton School may further improve the position for families in N2, and of course Martin and Manorside both presently have some feeder places at the current Compton School.

In short, parents of children approaching secondary school age living in N2 have never had it so good.

**Yours faithfully,
Helen Drake,
Address supplied.**

Sorry state of affairs Dear Editor,

There has been so much said regarding the revised Archer Academy admissions policy and the injustice towards the children living in N2, that as an NW11 parent, I felt compelled to reply.

The children from NW11 do not count above all of the other children, as was stated in your last issue by one parent, but they are also suffering from a lack of secondary schools.

The Archer Academy was established to provide secondary education for children living in three postcodes, N2, N3 and NW11 (this had been decided before a site had been secured). There was such a great need for a local co-educational, non-selective

and non-denominational school in the area that the opening of the academy was met with enormous gratitude and relief. Much like many other parents and despite living in NW11, I am not in a privileged position of considering a private school option.

By reviewing the admissions policy, it does allow some hope for the residents of NW11 as it has become apparent that places will not be granted on proximity, therefore ruling out one of the postcodes that the school was originally set up for. I feel that this revised policy is redressing the balance so that due to oversubscription, NW11 is not excluded.

The Archer Academy cannot possibly provide enough places for all three postcodes, but the school in my mind is trying to accommodate and serve the whole community in a fair and reasonable way.

At the end of the day it is a sorry state of affairs that parents who naturally wish for the best for their children, should be fighting each other over who is more deserving of a school place.

Many of us parents are having sleepless nights over this matter but maybe better use of time could be put towards starting the process for opening another much needed school rather than trying to pull apart the admissions policy.

**Yours faithfully,
A concerned NW11 parent.
Address supplied**

Archie stands proud Dear Editor,

I wonder whether any other readers spotted our own Archer in Transport for London's Art on the Underground brochure. For those that missed it I quote:

"Eric Aumonier's 'The Archer' links East Finchley station to its historic surroundings as an ancient hunting area, with the archer's bow pointing towards the growing metropolis of London. The sculpture formed part of a wider initiative to link stations to their local area, stopped short by the Second World War, leaving 'The Archer' as the only completed work. The sculpture is made of beech over a steel support, covered with lead.

"Aumonier's other work for

London Transport is the sculpture 'South Wind', on 55 Broadway, London Underground's historic headquarters."

It is encouraging to see that East Finchley is noted for artistic contributions and not merely local murders, housing paucity, etc.

**Yours faithfully,
Carmen Stevens,
Fairlawn Avenue, N2.**

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.



Leaves left to clog our pavements

By LC Ward

Though street cleaning teams have been seen clearing up fallen leaves in the High Road, at the time of writing in mid-December many side roads and pavements in N2 are yet to be dealt with. Could it be that Barnet Council is waiting for every leaf to have fallen off every tree before disposing of them in one fell swoop?

Piles of leaves which are wet or frozen are an obvious danger underfoot. With councils having to save money under present cuts, it is surely not too much to expect residents to brush up and bin leaves which are affecting their own premises.

However, there are some who will not be capable of this or who have too many leaves for the capacity of their green bins. And there are areas for which only the council is responsible.

Barnet Council told *The Archer* that it provided a proactive and reactive leaf clearance programme during peak times of the year where additional resources were designated to priority locations.

A spokesperson said: "These include main roads and high streets, which are a higher priority than residential roads because of the increased footfall, so we work to ensure they are cleared to keep them safe for our residents and visitors. We aim to respond to all complaints of leaf fall within a fortnight and when doing so, we also make a list of other areas that need leaf removal."

Street services

The council is asking for residents' views on the way it delivers its street scene services in the future. These include waste and recycling collection, street cleaning, and litter bin emptying as well as looking after nearly 200 parks and open spaces.

The council says street scene services need to make significant savings to help reduce the £61.5 million deficit gap between 2016 and 2020.

The online consultation at engage.barnet.gov.uk runs until 15 January 2017. The findings will help the council assess the proposed shortlist of four options and a final recommendation will be made in March.

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