



Ambition: Aminata Gassama in front of the overgrown land she wants to see transformed.

Residents want to adopt abandoned green space

By John Lawrence

A nine-year-old girl is heading up a project to reclaim an unloved patch of land near her home and turn it into an open space that the whole community can use.

Aminata Gassama, of Sylvester Road, N2, created a design featuring benches, grass, flowers, shrubs and a centre-piece tree to transform the green triangle that is currently covered by brambles and nettles.

Local backing

Tarling and Sylvester Road Residents' Association is asking for permission to adopt the patch, which is owned by Barnet Council, and has already secured £5,000 from Grange Big Local to cover some of the cost of clearing and planting.

It sits on Tarling Road, in between the entrances to Vale Farm Allotments and sheltered housing run by The Finchley Charities. Both those organisations are backing the project.

Aminata says she passes the



Vision: Aminata with her drawing that is inspiring the redevelopment project.

spot twice a day on her way to and from Tudor Primary School. "It looks ugly and you

can't walk on it," she says. "You get stung and there's nowhere to sit. When it's done, it will be nice and somewhere to talk to your friends or play."

Third time lucky

Two previous attempts to reclaim the land came to nothing. Ten years ago, three freshly planted trees were uprooted and never seen again. More recently, 40 lavender plants planted by residents were accidentally strimmed away by a council clearance team.

Iayn Clark, from the residents' association, says once the money and permission are in place this latest replanting work will be a community effort and everyone living nearby will look after the adopted space.

"At the moment, we have one single bench set into a fence on Tarling Road," he says. "That is the only place where young people can sit together outside and it's very well used. A bigger space for people to enjoy will be a great benefit and smarten up the whole area."

'Hive of activity' hopes after circus classes close down

By Diana Cormack

The sudden cancellation of a successful and popular activity at Finchley Youth Theatre has upset parents and children alike. For almost ten years Airborne Circus had presented their unique style of Circus Skills at the High Road venue, where the activities provided an alternative way of developing physical, mental and social skills.

Hundreds of young students have benefitted from them, with some going on to be professional performers. Parents were told in an email from Airborne shortly before the start of the term that negotiations for a new contract to continue running the classes had failed.

Hope follows disappointment

A council spokesperson has told *The Archer* that an alternative provider to Airborne, which could run the same activities or a similar experience, was currently being sought.

"First and foremost, we were disappointed to see Airborne leave Finchley Youth Centre," said the spokesperson. "We know how much enjoyment children and young people gained from this particular class. That is mainly why we recently ran a circus skills summer programme with Jacksons Lane, which proved very popular with

young people."

The council says its aspiration is for Finchley Youth Centre to be a hive of activity at the centre of the community and one that offers a wide range of stimulating and rewarding activities for young people.

"We are currently considering introducing other classes, such as art, painting, art therapy, life drawing and gymnastics," continued the spokesperson. "We're also pleased to report that other providers are making approaches for hiring space in Finchley Youth Centre. This will mean the delivery of a more varied and structured activity programme there."

Ideas welcome

In the meantime, the Children and Family Service welcomes suggestions for classes that could be of interest to young people and families. You can contact the team by email at BYTES@Barnet.gov.uk.

New faces for old rocks

New members are welcome to join the Finchley branch of the Amateur Geological Society, a friendly group of enthusiasts who meet on the second Tuesday of each month at Finchley Baptist Church, East End Road, N3, at 7.30pm.

A guest speaker is invited to give an illustrated talk on a topical geological subject. Talks have ranged from Essex geology, Darwin as a geologist, minerals of the Natural History Museum through to One Million Years of the Human Story. Guests are welcome with a small charge of £2 per adult.

The Society also organises geological field trips and holds an annual Mineral, Gem and Fossil Show, this year on Saturday 7 December at Trinity Church, Nether Street, N12, from 10am to 4pm.

Membership of the society is £15 a year for ordinary members, £20 for a family and £10 for a student. Details are available at: www.amgeosoc.wordpress.com

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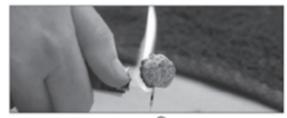
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