

Stormy start to Henrietta Barnett School expansion plan

Henrietta Barnett School's main hall was the scene of an Open Meeting on the evening of July 12 to start the debate on the proposal to construct additional buildings to increase pupil numbers. The meeting was opened by the vice-chairman of the school, Peter Cosmetatos, who explained there would be brief presentations by Del Cooke, the school head, and Richard Paynter, architect partner at Barker Associates, before a short Q & A session.



Peter Cosmetatos and Richard Paynter area and a demand from parents for more selective places; and

- schools have ambitious and realistic plans for increasing access for disadvantaged pupils (by which we mean pupils eligible for the pupil premium), and
- they have plans to work with other local schools to increase access for disadvantaged pupils and to raise attainment."

The meeting would be an opportunity to hear some questions and opinions from residents and parents. There was a consultation using an online survey for those who wished to have their opinion taken into account. The school wanted to stress that it was still undertaking a feasibility study on a possible application.

The background is a DfE initiative, the Selective Schools Expansion Fund (SSEF), which was announced in May and asks for applications from grammar schools for a part of a £50 million fund. Bids have to be submitted by August 2, and the results will be announced in the autumn.

The introduction to the government guidelines states, "The purpose of the SSEF is to support the expansion of selective schools where:

- there is a need for additional places, both in terms of a shortfall of secondary places in the local

If the bid for some money from the SSEF is successful and the school can find the additional funds needed, it intends to increase the size of the school by 35% from its present 779 pupils to 1050. To accommodate this increase in numbers the school anticipates building two science labs, one technology lab, one general classroom, an expanded canteen, 22 more toilets and, if possible, additional sports space.

The recent constraints on school funding, the increase in costs and the predicted

continuation of these trends means that the present size school is not sustainable. We were later told that a soon to be announced rise in teachers' pay, if substantial and unfunded, would mean the school, at its present size, going broke within two years.

Richard Paynter explained that any design would respect the original, take account of the heritage status, have a minimal impact and be complementary to what already exists. Some feasible options had been considered and he shared them with those present for some initial comments and observations.

He showed a plan to build on the two undeveloped corners of the site by Bigwood House, and a preferred alternative, which created extensions at the side of Bigwood House leaving the corners open.

Then there was a plan which developed the two courtyards at the back of Bigwood House, and a more innovative design which created a sunken building in the centre of the HBS site with a grass roof so as not to lose the open space.

Time then for questions and it was very clear that for many of those present the lack of places for Suburb (2%), or even Barnet (31%), girls was the main source of concern. It was a concern clearly understood by Del Cooke but one she showed little sign of being able to address; she

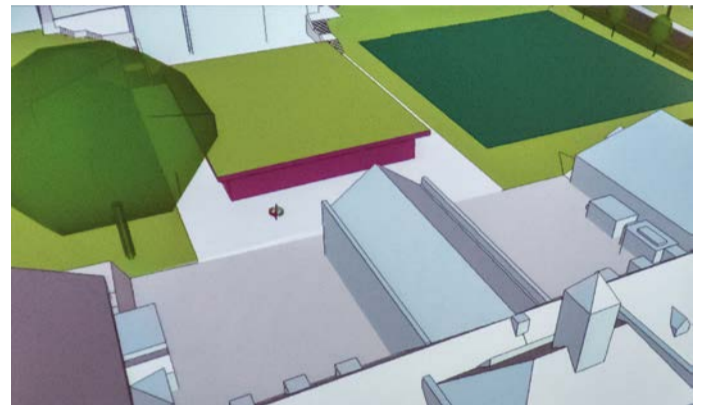
seemed to be a prisoner of the strict criteria laid down in the admissions policy, apparently in stone.

Another point was the effect the increased numbers would have on the already difficult traffic situation around the school. We were told it is hoped that with the help of Barnet, the RA's Roads & Traffic Committee and an increased use of buses the problem could be mitigated. There was no indication of how this would help.

The questions for the architect were focused on the processes of planning and building. The building work should be complete within a year of starting and there would be a plan for managing the disturbance caused.

Residents were worried about openness and consultation in the planning phase. Although there were details of the proposals posted on the RA's e-mail forum, the HGS List, this is still limited to its subscribers, and a number of people were angry at the lack of publicity. The School would do well to consider using a mail drop of the Suburb before each step to avoid further bad feeling.

The architect said they were not responsible for the previous expansion and wanted to try a different approach – being broad-based, collaborative, open and transparent. They were committed to taking into account the results of their survey.



The low point of the evening was the heckling, to the point of shouting down, the views expressed by a young former pupil of the school, who wished to praise the education she and her fellows had received. The strength of feeling in the audience was evident and the way it was expressed demonstrated how divisive grammar schools can be. The arguments over how the school selects its pupils and the legacy of feeling from the controversial Hopkins extensions 10 years ago persist. These themes will doubtless echo through future

meetings should the feasibility study result in a successful application to the fund being made, and a planning application eventually materialise.

RA Council will be following events, and its Conservation & Amenities Committee will be keeping a very close eye on the situation as it changes. The RA will hold Open Meetings on the subject when it feels it is appropriate.

Suburb News will, as always, attempt to keep residents fully informed as developments occur.

TERRY BROOKS



Hedgehogs on Hampstead Heath

In early June this hedgehog was spotted on the Heath Extension near the play area one afternoon. It is unusual to see hedgehogs during the daytime, so perhaps this was a female going out to find food – becoming scarce in the drought – for her young.

Readers may remember that the Zoological Society of London,

in partnership with the City of London Corporation, have been carrying out a study of the hedgehog population on Hampstead Heath. Hedgehogs have declined by about 30% over the last ten years, particularly in rural areas.

London Zoo are keen to increase their knowledge of the urban hedgehog population so

as to develop a programme to help conserve them. An initial survey in 2016 revealed that hedgehogs were quite widespread across the Heath and a more detailed study was carried out last year in Golders Hill Park. This involved setting up cameras and recording encounters with hedgehogs and other mammals

at night. From this data the population can be estimated. The trial was a success and London Zoo concluded that the area appears to be a significant refuge for hedgehogs in North London.

They are carrying out another survey this year across the whole of the Heath, including the Heath Extension. So far hedgehogs have been sighted at seven of the thirteen locations on the Extension. A report will be produced towards the end of the year.

The City would be very interested in any hedgehog sightings on Hampstead Heath or in neighbouring gardens. They would like to see how well connected the Heath is with other larger open spaces or indeed the wider area and will be doing

further work with London Zoo and other local authorities to improve the scope for hedgehogs to move around.

A key element of this involves homeowners ensuring that their gardens allow the easy passage of hedgehogs: a 13cm x 13cm gap is sufficient. And do put out water for them.

If you spot one, please let Suburb News know (see SN129 winter 2017 for previous hedgehog news).

COLIN GREGORY



PHOTOS: GEORGE JENKINS

Property Lawyers



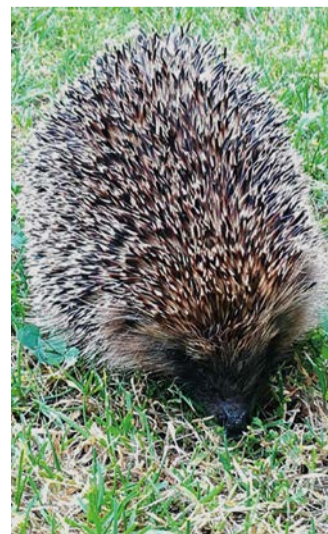
Serving the suburb for 30 years. You'll want us on your side.

For fast and competitive conveyancing, call Oliver Joseph on 020 8209 0166

Email: info@gadlegal.co.uk
www.gadlegal.co.uk

Gregory Abrams Davidson Solicitors is a trading name of National Law Partners Limited

GAD GREGORY ABRAMS
DAVIDSON
SOLICITORS



G Cohen
ANTIQUÉ SILVER

We wish to purchase items of silver in any condition. As a long standing resident of the Suburb, Gideon Cohen is happy to view your silverware at home and will make an offer to purchase, free of any obligation.

17 The London Silver Vaults
53-64 Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1QT
020 7404 1425
enquiries@gcohen.co.uk
www.gcohen.co.uk