

GOING, GOING..... GONE!

44 & 46 Snakes Lane West, 2 lovely Victorian semi-detached houses are to be demolished. Despite the objections of local residents, the Regulatory (Planning) Committee, which met on Wednesday 28th February, decided to approve McCarthy & Stone's revised plans to build a 3 storey development of 21 retirement apartments with 9 parking spaces. Liberal Democrat councillors on the Committee dissented.

Historic houses define the character of our area and are irreplaceable. We have recently lost the oldest surviving house in Woodford, Little Monkhams, to fire damage in the early hours of Monday 8th January, the day before the Planning Inspectorate inquiry was due to decide its future. Now the oldest houses on Snakes Lane West are to be demolished. One of the councillors at the meeting on 28th February admitted that he had not even seen a photograph of the houses!

Local residents had made their objections clear to the Council. 150 Woodford residents had signed a petition organised by Focus editor Anne Crook against the original plans for 28 apartments. In addition 32 residents from Linden Crescent and Snakes Lane, who are immediately affected by the development, had signed a second petition against the revised plans. They objected to the height of the development which will overlook neighbouring properties, the density of the development, the lack of parking spaces, only 9 spaces for 21 apartments including staff and visitors, and the lack of a guarantee from the builders that boundary trees and shrubs would be preserved. Anne also spoke at the meeting

The week before the Regulatory Committee met, Marc Walker wrote an article in the Ilford Recorder saying that Council Officers had already determined that planning permission should be granted provided that a certain conditions were met. He reported that Council Officers had said that the site was not in a Conservation Area and that the plans were sympathetic. So what was the point of the meeting if the fate of the houses had already been decided?

Area 2 Committee has agreed to sponsor an autumn arts festival for Woodford, deferred from last year. The aim is to showcase in various Woodford venues local groups, organisations and individuals involved in all forms of art. So if you are interested in performing and/or displaying your hobbies, paintings and sculptures, please contact Councillors Richard.Hoskins@redbridge.gov.uk or Geoffrey.Hinds@redbridge.gov.uk



Little Monkhams - or what is now left of it!



44-46 Snakes Lane West – for the edification of Tory Councillors on the Planning Committee

We question whether those councillors who approved this planning application have any interest whatsoever in local democracy and the opinions of local residents.

See overleaf for other examples of this asset stripping Tory Council's plans to change the character of Woodford and sign our on-line petition if you want to help retain the best of our built heritage and to prevent claustrophobic high density apartments infilling every site it allows developers to lay their hands on.

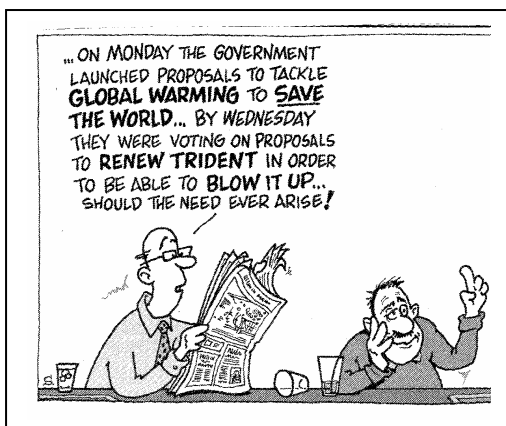
The Big Sell Off

The Tory Council has committed itself to spend over £150 million on capital projects in the next 6 years. That's very exciting you may say - it will create jobs, business opportunities and provide new facilities that will benefit us all. The only small problem is that Redbridge does not have the cash and cannot get it from Central Government. So now the Council is trying to sell off every public asset over which it has control.

First to go will be the car parks at Charteris Road, Derby Road and the Central Line viaduct in South Woodford – which means even more flats! Allotments, public halls and parts of housing estates are all under threat. Together this will have an adverse on impact local shopping areas and cause irreversible environmental damage.

And what are the projects that the Council has in mind? Firstly, there is the proposed £30 million Olympic training pool in Seven Kings. Is this necessary when, apart from the Aquatics Centre for the Olympics, other neighbouring boroughs have plans for such facilities and the borough needs smaller recreational pools? Secondly, the Council intends to redevelop the area around the Ilford Town Hall, the so-called Unity Square project. This grandiose scheme, the purpose of which remains as yet unclear, (the words “elephant” and “white” suggest themselves) will include a cost of £10 million to knock down and replace the much loved Kenneth More theatre.

It all wouldn't be so bad if the plans were transparent and debated openly. The process is being managed by a group of just 5 Tory councillors. No member of the public is allowed to know what they discuss, no reports are given to the press and ordinary councillors have been legally gagged to prevent them from passing on any detailed information.



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Sign our On-Line Petition

Redbridge Liberal Democrats are asking residents to help stop the Council from selling off our assets for development by signing an on-line petition. The petition draws attention to the points raised in this Focus and asks the Prime Minister to condemn the Redbridge Council's land sale programme.

To sign the petition go to www.redbridgelibdems.co.uk and follow the links or go directly to <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/LBRlandsales/>.

AREA COMMITTEE 2 HIGH JINKS

Area Committee 2 encompasses the wards of Monkams, Church End, Roding and Bridge and was set up to deal with matters of specific concern to this part of the borough. The LibDems are represented by their six councillors from Church End and Roding and the Tories by their six from Monkams and Bridge.

At the meeting held in January following a discussion with aggrieved residents on the proposed sale of the Woodford car parks, the three Monkams councillors stormed out like petulant schoolchildren. The next thing we hear is that “the Council has decided” that Area 2 needs to be broken up and Church End will now be joined to Area 1 Committee covering Snaresbrook and Wanstead. In fact on the day before the full Council meeting this decision was rescinded and was replaced with a proposal “for discussion” to remove Roding ward to Area 1!

This is gerrymandering of the worst order with the objective of removing such influence as LibDems have from decisions affecting Woodford residents.

Do you have an idea to improve Monkams, do you want to complain about a Council service or would you like to help with Focus or join our party. Please let us know by jotting a note in this box and/or contacting one of the Focus editors

Your name
Address

e-mail

tel no