

So this is what

Crouch End for People is a pressure group fighting to save Hornsey Town Hall. Here, its members tell Broadway why they are so committed to the historic building

OUR vision for the Hornsey Town Hall complex begins and ends with the community.

Haringey Council's priority is maximising revenues but this is the time to put the community first. The vision of the council's money-men has the community as an afterthought – for them there are juicy development receipts to be made. They seem to have convinced themselves that giving a developer a 125 year lease is not really a "sell-off".

This is what they are doing with Tottenham Town Hall. Haringey Council needs the money but when will it ever not need more money? Making £3million or £4million from the town hall will not solve its problems and something precious will have been lost to the community forever.

Hornsey Town Hall must be transferred to a charitable trust, which has the whole site as its endowment.

The thousands who visited the town hall during the open day on Saturday saw the wonderful art deco interiors and the large theatre. The building was the product of a civic vision when it was built and it needs a new civic vision now.

The old council offices should be used by community and cultural groups. There is space for art exhibitions, education and leisure. The splendid council chamber could be a small cinema or used for civic events such as a register office for marriages.

Phil Mitchell from EastEnders was "married" in the town hall; local people could be as well.

The main auditorium is probably too big to be viable as a theatrical or musical venue but the gallery could be converted to a cinema. At other times it could be dance and rehearsal space. Its viability will depend upon a mixture of uses.

Land at the rear of the town hall could be developed in a low-key way to provide commercial workspace for small businesses. That and a small amount of residential development would subsidise the community and arts use we want at the town hall.

Also at the back there should be a landscaped public space. This could switch between pay-and-display parking and a venue for markets and other open-air events in the French provincial manner.

The piazza at the front of the Town Hall will be restored and the



Seen through the ironwork of the old Hornsey insignia, people queue to see parts of the town hall for the first time in 15 years.

Pictures by Rogan Macdonald

creation of new retail units around it will make it a space people are drawn to rather than driven from.

The terms of reference of the council's advisory panel on the future of the town hall specify that any "proposals will not be funded either in capital or revenue terms by the council".

A financially viable plan is not achievable if the people of the old borough of Hornsey have to buy their own town hall back from the council. The Bernie Grant Centre at the Tottenham Town Hall site will receive both capital and revenue subsidies from the council. It is all a matter of the political will. We can have the same if we fight for it.

Charles Adje, now council leader, has said that the site needs £15million spent on it, money the council does not have. CEFp says this is misleading. It is more like the capital cost of an extremely intensive development than the price of

bringing the town hall back into use. At the public meeting about the town hall on April 29 Mr Adje promised to explain his figure of £15m. He said that "the books are open", but the books remain closed. We are still waiting for his explanation of the figures and we will not let him forget his promise.

We estimate it will take £6m in capital costs to bring the town hall back into use, to provide it with an endowment and to use the rest of the site to regenerate the area. Our plan assumes grants from bodies such as Heritage Lottery and others totalling £3million, and the gift of the site by the council will meet the requirement imposed by grant-giving bodies for matched funding.

Our plans do not give the council the juicy development receipts it craves, but it will give the community something to lift its spirits, a new heart and soul, not only for Crouch End but for the whole area.

all the fuss is about

EVEN Crouch End's newest resident, BBC newsreader Dermot Murnaghan, came out to see what all the fuss was about.

The face of BBC Breakfast, who only moved to Crouch End a week ago, brought two of his children along to soak up the carnival atmosphere outside Hornsey Town Hall on Saturday afternoon.

"I'm a bit of a Crouch End virgin and I'm just trying to catch up," Mr Murnaghan said. "I'm a great fan of this kind of '30s architecture. It has a stark beauty.

"It's a pity to have a space like this virtually redundant and to revitalise it would be fantastic. The Brits are hardy people and we love sitting outside in continental-style piazzas pretending it's warm enough. Crouch End has it here on a plate. It could be like Covent Garden."

Mr Murnaghan was just one of the many celebrities spotted among the stilt walkers and clowns at the open day held by Haringey Council and the party in the piazza run by pressure group Crouch End for People.

Bad Girls actor Jack Ellis worked the crowd as MC and novelist Arabella Weir was seen enjoying the music. And although Men Behaving Badly star Neil Morrissey couldn't make it, he sent a message of support to campaigners.

He said: "It was a building for people when the area was booming. The area is now booming again. The Town Hall is the heritage of the people of Crouch End."

Built in 1935, it was considered ahead of its time. As a town hall for the old borough of

Hundreds flocked to Hornsey Town Hall on Saturday as it opened for the first time in 15 years. **Caroline McClatchey reports**

Dermot Murnaghan and his son join the crowds waiting to take a look inside Hornsey Town Hall on Saturday.

Picture by
Clare Spurrell



Hornsey, it served the community for more than 50 years but since the late 1980s has been stripped of all its civic duties and left to rot.

A spokesman from Piers Ford Architects in Muswell Hill said: "It not intense enough to be classed as art deco. It's very Scandinavian, very clean in appearance and it's actually quite an attractive building.

"The only problem is its tucked away and not in use, and that's why some people may see it as ugly."

Ian Sang lives in Crouch End and works for Sprunt Architects.

He said: "It actually won an award in its day. It's based on a style that was popular in the '20s and '30s, pioneered in Holland by a guy called Dudok. That's why it has these unusually long and thin bricks."

Since much of the town hall has been out of bounds for 15 years, more than 1,000 people queued for a peek inside. Small groups were given guided tours of the damp 1,200-seater theatre and although the door to the asbestos-soaked council chamber was open, it was covered by a protective plastic cover.

Mic Jeeves, 53, from Stroud Green, told Broadway: "I have lived in the area for 25 years and have never seen inside this building.

"It's a very special place but clearly in need of a lot of work.

Ken Runciman, 40, from Hornsey Lane, said: "I like the style. It's of an era and it's the symbol of Crouch End. The potential for the community is huge and if done properly, the whole of north London could be proud of it."

HISTORY FILE

▣ The Town Hall was designed by New Zealander Reginald H Uren.

▣ It took 15 months to build, at a cost of £103,000.

▣ The finished product represented a radical departure from the town halls of the Victorian and Edwardian period which were usually grand buildings adorned with the trappings of classical architecture.

▣ Now a Grade II-listed building, it is said to reflect the emerging European Modern Movement in architecture at the time of its construction.

COUNCIL SAYS...

The open day was so popular, that Haringey Council is considering holding another one.

After the tour, visitors were given a questionnaire to have their say on what should become of Hornsey Town Hall.

Newly elected council leader Charles Adje told Broadway: "We accept that people are concerned but it has been blown out of proportion.

"There aren't any proposals to flog off the Town Hall. Crouch End for People is on a mission and the only way to attract people is to have these headlines. We have set up an advisory panel so people can air their views. We are consulting the public – what more can anyone ask for?"



Charles Adje at last week's open day.

Car park needed in new plan

JAYNE Forbes' letter (H&H May 7) about community proposals for the Town Hall site questioned the reliance of using cars as the main form of transport and keeping the large parking space that goes with the council buildings. She goes on to say that some of the space could be used for a new school.

The public hall is a magnificent space in a magnificent building and seats up to 600 people. It has fine acoustics and will be suitable for large orchestras.

As a Crouch Ender for 20 years, I believe we should "think big" and be looking for a full programme to include the community events we both value as well as internationally famous performers, for this is the best way of attracting the grants needed for the building's restoration.

Crouch End has a low to medium public transport accessibility rating. Retaining the car park is vital if the money to be spent on the restoration project is not to be wasted. It will also contribute life blood to the shops (both existing and proposed) during the day by enabling shoppers to buy more goods without having to struggle back with them on the bus.

I really hope that all members of the community can join together to back these exciting proposals.

ANTHONY CHARNLEY
Mount View Road, N4

U-turn on bus route welcomed

WHILE I welcome Haringey Labour's somewhat belated support for the Muswell Hill to Swiss Cottage bus route, can we now expect Labour's new Mayor, Ken Livingstone, to announce a full service?

Ken has said no so far. Perhaps Labour's right arm does not know what its new left arm is doing?

COUNCILLOR MATT DAVIES
Fortis Green Liberal Democrat

Bring your colleagues to book over libraries

IN HER blog (for which, apparently, she is the proud recipient of a runner-up award) Liberal Democrat councillor Lynne Featherstone recently included an entry about a speech she gave on the subject of libraries.

According to Ms Featherstone, she was concerned about "libraries seeming inability to market themselves" and claimed some credit for saving Highgate Library from closure. In her talk, Ms Featherstone attempted to give the Highgate Library AGM "ideas about a marketing group, about the use of email to mem-

bers, about members' skills databases, about using the local cinema to promote them to young people and other ideas".

What a shame, then, that Ms Featherstone didn't deliver this speech to her party colleagues in Islington where, despite strong opposition from local residents and well-known authors, the Lib Dems finally succeeded in closing the much loved Arthur Simpson Library in February this year.

As a Labour councillor said: "The whole community came together to save the Arthur Simpson, but were sadly outnumbered

by the Lib Dems' majority in the council chamber."

Lib Dem Islington Council has now placed this popular library on the market, hoping to sell the site to the highest bidder.

Perhaps Ms Featherstone may like to offer some "marketing strategy" advice to her Islington Lib Dem colleagues that might help them reconsider their policy of stripping the area of community buildings and depriving local residents of much needed facilities.

IAN HUNT
Church Crescent, N10

Community spirit at its best

MAY I through your paper express a huge thank you to the organisers of Crouch End for People campaign for their work on behalf of the whole community.

Along with 700 people, I attended their stunning public meeting a week ago and, along with what must have been thousands of Crouch Enders on Saturday, I joined their Party in the Piazza.

This radiant, good natured community group emerges from within the very heart of Crouch End. It was so evident on Saturday.

All age groups, a complete cross section of people, all united in a belief that the council have overstayed their welcome in Hornsey Town Hall.

And with Hornsey Town

Hall forced to open to the public for the first time in 15 years, they saw with their own eyes that Haringey Council have neither cared for it nor, therefore, for the community the town hall was intended to serve.

But it is in their contrasting proposals for Hornsey Town Hall that Crouch End for People really emerges head and shoulders above Haringey Council.

The council has woken up to the site's commercial potential and, without any real concern as to whether a theatre or whatever is left could still work, it wants to cash in.

It wants to sell the car park site (and as much of the rest as it can) and build high density flats for short term cash with no costing for all the social

infrastructure the new population will require.

However, anyone who lives in and around Crouch End can see that there is a much cleverer solution and Crouch End for People have simply tapped into the wealth of business and arts talent in the area and come up with a commercial plan for the entire Hornsey Town Hall site.

It is a plan that will serve the needs of all, including many community groups.

Finally I would like to thank the Ham&High Broadway for its role in giving coverage to this amazing story of a community that has gathered together to protect its rightful heritage.

Let's make it a success story.

SARAH MONTGOMERY
Haslemere Road, N8

Noticeboards can point the way forward

SINCE most of Haringey's larger parks are currently undergoing improvement works of one type or another, funded by various agencies and the council, I propose that we install exemplary information points by all the main entrances of our parks.

The information points should consist of three boards. The first should be colour coded and show a map of Haringey consisting of the major roads, council buildings and services, recycling centres,

shopping and industrial areas, sites of interest, cultural quarters, health provision including GPs and dental surgeries, police stations etc.

The second should display a map and extensive historical information about the park it is located in.

The third board should be for use by the local community and friends of the park.

ARIO PETROU
Park Road, N8