
COMMENT

An opportunity not to be squandered

THE IDEA of holding a national, or perhaps international competition, for the Hornsey town hall re-development has much to commend it, assuming that all the interested parties are involved in the judging process and that they can approach the task in an objective manner.

It might even present a rare window of opportunity for Haringey Council and Crouch End for People to set their well-documented differences aside. A thawing of the relationship would be well worthwhile if it contributes towards the regeneration of what is nowadays regarded as a somewhat drab and uninspiring site, albeit with the potential to become a vibrant focal point for Crouch End and further afield.

The arguments are endless as to how this can best be achieved, and it is regrettable that the council has failed to harness the passion, enthusiasm, expertise and commitment shown by campaigners who justifiably fear that developers and the council coffers will gain more from the redevelopment than the residents. After all, the reputation of local authorities in these matters is far from unblemished.

But the arguments cannot go on forever. With the imminent publication of the development brief not far away, it is time for creative minds to re-focus on what can be achieved.

With all due respect to the memory of Reginald Uren, who won the competition to design the town hall site some 75 years ago, a cynic might look at what is already there and suggest that any plan would be an improvement. But even from a purely geographic perspective, it is important to get this right. The town hall is in a great location, and is going to be around in some form or another for at least another 75 years.

This is a wonderful opportunity which must not be squandered. Bringing the best architectural minds to bear on the outcome could result in something of which everyone involved can take considerable pride.