

Caroline McClatchey

IT HAD to be the biggest public meeting in the recent history of Crouch End.

TV actors, councillors and campaigners were among the 650 people who squeezed into Christ Church, Crouch End Hill last week to discuss the future of Hornsey Town Hall.

Among the mud slinging and rabble rousing came a host of daft suggestions for the historic building – including a congestion charge in Crouch End to pay for its renovation.

But the group which emerged victorious from the shouting match was pressure group Crouch End for People, which is opposed to Haringey Council's plans to sell off the town hall to a developer.

Its plan for a cultural and community centre run by a resi-

FACTFILE

Haringey Council wants to:

- ❑ Transfer the Town Hall complex to a developer for a long lease – the council would keep the freehold
- ❑ Create a mixed-use development including housing, shops and other facilities
- ❑ Put high density housing – 55 flats and four town houses – on the car park to pay for the refurbishment
- ❑ And it is insisting Hornsey Town Hall will not become a burden on local tax payers, like Alexandra Palace.

'This is our Town Hall and we want it back'

Impassioned meeting slates sell-off plans for historic building

denis' trust earned the support of the impassioned crowd.

Hornsey and Wood Green MP Barbara Roche, who ran the meeting, told the crowd: "Never let people tell you community is dead. If it's a subject people feel passionate about, they will come out in force."

Campaigner Stephen Hoyle questioned the council's estimate of £15 million to repair the dilapidated Grade II-listed building. He said it was not likely to be more than £5 million.

He told the meeting: "I want you to be in no doubt that there's a battle to be fought over the future of the Town Hall. And it's between the money men at the council and the community."

The council set out its controversial proposal to lease the town hall in February, sparking a public outcry. It was forced to delay a decision for six months to allow for more consultation.

An advisory panel consisting of councillors, residents and other stakeholders, was set up



Around 650 people attended the meeting at Christ Church.

but Crouch End for People is angry about only being allowed one representative.

Councillor Judy Bax said: "I'm concerned that the council seems to be painted in a very unfavourable light. We have to find a way forward where we work together."

"The advisory panel has been set up to keep it very open.

left us with a Town Hall to be ashamed of. This is our Town Hall and we want it back."

Bad Girls actor Jack Ellis said: "I think we could have a very exciting Crouch End theatre down there to rival the Almeida or Royal Court. It could almost finance itself with careful management."

❑ An open day will be held at the Town Hall for the first time in 15 years tomorrow from noon to 5pm. The council has said it will be another chance for people to air their views.

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Somehow or other we have to find a way to pay for the refurbishment and the council doesn't have the money."

Ex-Casualty actress Annie Miles said: "We think Haringey Council has had it long enough. They haven't cared for it and



Campaigners gathered support for their plan.
Pictures by Mark Hakansson

FACTFILE

Crouch End for People wants to:

- ❑ Install cinemas, a 900-seat theatre and art gallery. The group has received offers from two independent cinemas and an international dance company.
- ❑ Retain the car park at the rear of the Town Hall
- ❑ Develop the forecourt into a piazza
- ❑ Set up a residents' trust to manage the Town Hall
- ❑ Sell off part of the complex for low-density housing (29 units in Hatherley Gardens and at the rear of the Town Hall)
- ❑ Seek funding from heritage and arts groups.

Supermarket staff get hands dirty for charity

Bosses say extra bus stop will plug hill gap

Law body grants award to council department

HARINGEY'S local centres have scooped a £100,000 award

COMMENT

Compelling case for putting trust in the people

THE CASE made by Crouch End for People for the transfer of Hornsey Town Hall to a community-based trust at last week's public meeting was not only passionate, it was utterly compelling.

If there was any doubt before the meeting that the people of Crouch End are capable of running the town hall successfully for the benefit of the whole community, that doubt disappeared as a succession of speakers impressively covered all the bases and built up a thoroughly convincing case.

Haringey's new chief executive, Charlie Hedges, who attended the meeting, now knows that he has one hell of a battle on his hands over the fate of a site that his council has shamefully neglected.

As it stands, the town hall is a dismal, dreary and depressing edifice but to anyone with a vestige of imagination, it could be so much more.

The council, quite rightly, has been asked why it has allowed the building to deteriorate to the extent where it apparently needs millions of pounds of renovations.

The answer is quite simple: if ever there was a case of out of sight, out of mind, this is it. Now that Crouch End has become a magnet for developers, the council has woken up to the site's commercial potential, and like a greedy landlord, wants to cash in.

But if Haringey Council has any regard for what people really want, it will now be thinking seriously about enabling the people of Crouch End to do what it has failed to achieve, for so many years: that is, putting the town hall back at the heart of this growing, capable and increasingly vibrant community.

And anyone interested in the fate of the town hall should certainly make a point of touring the listed building when it opens to the public for the first time in years tomorrow. Think not what it is, but what it could be, and in whose hands its future should rightly rest.

Town Hall car park could house new school

THE excellent meeting to discuss the development of Hornsey Town Hall enabled local residents to hear the views of the campaigning group and the council.

Many of the proposals of Crouch End For People look exciting and would lead to an improvement of arts facilities. However, I question the reliance on using cars as the main means of transport and keeping the large parking space that goes with the council buildings. Surely we should be discouraging car use particularly as this is supposed to be a communi-

ty facility so we should all live relatively close by and be able to find other modes of transport.

The parking space may well be needed for some modest development to help contribute to the costs of renovation and running the Town Hall, but there should be plenty left over for green space. Maybe some of it could be used for the new school that is so desperately needed for the area.

JAYNE FORBES

Green Party GLA Candidate for Haringey and Enfield