



Councillor Judy Bax is under fire from Broadway readers after accusing Crouch End For People of working against Haringey Council in last week's edition.

Decision on town hall made to seem like a foregone conclusion

COLLABORATION is a two-way process. If Cllr Judy Bax and her fellow councillors are keen to work together with Crouch End For People, then she needs to give CEFp access to documents with details of the site that they need to develop their proposal for Hornsey Town Hall.

The council has claimed that these documents are open, although access to them has consistently been denied. This would be far more collaborative and to the point than the offer of an 'olive branch' made in the Broadway edition of June 18.

Furthermore, how does Cllr Bax know already that the council is not in a position 'to give CEFp everything'? Since CEFp's proposal has not yet been fully developed and presented to the council, the article makes the council's decision on Hornsey Town Hall sound like a foregone conclusion. Does this assumption not make a mockery of the Advisory Panel she claims is considering all the options?

I think Haringey Council should be grateful to CEFp for holding public meetings, bringing people to visit the town hall on its open day and virtually consulting the public on their behalf. However, if members of Crouch End For People feel their contribution is being met with a lack of trust, willingness to listen and to collaborate, it is their duty to make this known. This does not constitute a war nor a lack of collaboration on their part.

SARAH MONTGOMERY
Haslemere Road, 1

Council is driving the people away

SHOP keepers are struggling, rents are spiralling, the council has allowed parts of Crouch End to become a great big eatery, there is insufficient passing trade and insufficient parking spaces. So what do councillors do to encourage people into Crouch End? Send out the parking wardens to ticket every car they can, and drive trade away.

And refuse to open up the public car parks behind the Town Hall as Crouch End for People has been demanding for the last 18 months. Just what did the council do with the £112,500 given to them by Berkley Homes to help sort out parking issues? Charles Adje should tell us what happened to the money, and David Winksill should support opening the town hall car parks.

J. ROWE
Stapleton Hall Road, N4

HARINGEY claims it is offering Crouch End for People an olive branch. All I can say is Crouch End for People is offering the council a gift horse.

The community has mobilised a wealth of talented residents, skilled in every conceivable aspect of turning the town hall into a major community asset, and all Haringey Council can do is smear them!

MARIA-LUIZA M CARVALHO
Onslow Gardens, N10

Appeal is more like a fig leaf than an olive branch

CLLR Judy Bax may be under attack but it is the council who chose to declare war and now she is appealing for a ceasefire. But, this is no olive branch, more a fig leaf to hide the reality of the situation.

We are not at war. We seek peaceful and honest negotiations with the council. Indeed, we have always strived for this – for the council to work with us.

It is the council that continually rejects CEFp as an organisation, mocks our petition, and refuses to give us the information we need. We are willing to work with the council, anytime, anywhere.

Cllr Bax wants our campaign to slow down! Why? Is it really that difficult to keep up? The momentum of the campaign and swell of emotion that this issue has raised can be neither suppressed nor ignored.

The parallel of this campaign to the hare and tortoise fable is rich. She likens herself (on behalf of the council) to the tortoise – slow and deliberate.

Yes, the council is deliberate, but only in its intention to withhold and mislead. Back in February, the council was ready to sell off the site – was that not an attempt to cross the finishing line before the race had even begun?

She says "CEFp are determined to work against the council." This is untrue. CEFp sits on the advisory panel, made up of council and ex-council members, and

assists with discussions on the future of Hornsey Town Hall. We have been meeting with the council since October and all meetings are good natured, though we are not willing to compromise on the mandate.

Cllr Bax claims that "council officers have been very helpful to CEFp" but not all council officers have been helpful, and despite Charles Adje's public commitment to making the books open to our professional team, they remain closed. This means CEFp cannot provide accurately costed alternative plans.

They also failed to issue a license for the Party in the Piazza until two days before the event.

It has become clear that whilst Cllr Bax claims the council is interested in the views of the people and committed to a sustainable future for the town hall, they have already made one very important decision; she says "the council is not in a position to give the community everything."

Does she mean the whole site? The entire site, including the car park, is necessary to provide the income and ensure sustainability.

The neglect of the building is a testament to the council's financial mismanagement.

The neglect of other town halls is not an excuse for Haringey to have left Hornsey Town Hall to rot.

There are many examples of beautifully maintained town halls throughout the country, including

Wandsworth, Tunbridge Wells and Southampton.

She says a grant dependent body is unreliable. Trusts are very efficient and workable ways of running this type of venture and are dedicated to the community. Developers are dedicated only to their own profit. And it's not a resident's trust, the people running the new venture will be the same councillors who allowed the town hall to fall into such neglect in the first place.

As the council has 4,000 families on its housing waiting list, does it propose to build a block of council flats? Of course not. These flats will be luxury apartments and unavailable to the families on the council waiting list.

To say that 3,000 supporters of CEFp is not the same as being part of an organisation, devaluing the commitment of everyone who gives of their time voluntarily, who have signed the petition.

Cllr Bax is intent on relegating us to the insignificant. Her closing comment that the final decision will "lie with the council executive. It is council property after all" is actually declaring the opinion of local residents worthless. The council will tolerate these views (because they are obliged to) but will do whatever they want in the end because the building is theirs.

NIR WEGRYZ
Chair, Crouch End for People
Wolsley Road, 1

Proof that success has many fathers

SO Cllr Judy Bax has announced that their town hall open day was such a success that Haringey Council is holding another one. It was their success, was it?

Let's shine the light of truth once and for all on who was responsible for the success.

It took six months and two packed public meetings for Crouch End for People, together with a multitude of supporters, to even persuade Haringey Council to open its doors to the town hall.

The open day was not once advertised by the council. All the advertising was done free of charge by Crouch End for People volunteers working tirelessly to promote the day. The licence for the Party in the Piazza, designed by Crouch End for People, was withheld until two days before the event. Haringey Council made it as difficult as they could for Crouch End for People.

When community pressure became overwhelming and the council realised there was no option but to go ahead, what a transformation Crouch End witnessed. Flower boxes were stocked, the fountain restored and



Who deserves the credit for Town Hall open day?

switched on, the grass area tidied up. Drunks who had fallen asleep on their usual benches were seen to rub their eyes in disbelief when they awoke!

The Party in the Piazza, to which thousands flocked, was organised flawlessly by Crouch End for People in very difficult circumstances. Sponsored by local businesses – Budgens, Winkworths and Dunns – it was a radiant day. Crouch End for People demonstrated that, with

organisation and spirit, the Town Hall frontage could indeed very easily become a piazza.

The point is this. If Haringey Council is already pledging that the Town Hall Theatre is to be returned to community use, and there is now a serious case for the entire site to be given back to the community, then it is imperative that the community organisation that runs it is competent or we will be back to square one.

It would be a nightmare for Haringey to retain organisation and ownership of the town hall. They are not to be trusted and they have no organisational skills.

Neither do they have the support of local people.

Crouch End for People, on the other hand, have shown time and again that they deliver and they have both the organisational skills and support of local people – 3500 at the last count – far more than the total number of people who voted in Crouch End at the last election!

KRIS WATSON
Shanklin Road, N8

Serving the community?

HARINGEY Council seems determined to carry out their plans to redevelop the town hall, in the face of overwhelming opposition.

What is hard to fathom, is why one would want to go into local politics, if not to carry out the wishes of those one purports to represent?

GREG FOXSMITH
Hornsey Rise Gardens, N19

YOU report Cllr Judy Bax as saying: "Crouch End for People is determined to work against the council." Why is this a surprise to her? It is the inevitable consequence of having a council that is determined to work against the people.

BRIAN SIMPSON
Milton Park, N6

Town hall panel is unrepresentative

I read the interview with Councillor Judy Bax about Hornsey Town Hall with a sense of dismay. It appears that she doesn't consider Crouch End for People a valid organisation that represents local interest. I have lived in Crouch End for over 20 years and the town hall campaign organised by CEfP has generated more genuine interest and concern than any other issue I can remember.

CEfP is the only organisation that has presented proposals to the local population, with open meetings inviting discussion.

Clearly, having more than one CEfP member appears threatening to the council. Such an attitude can only raise the suspicion that the council is keen to dispose of the town hall to the highest bidder with scant regard for the wishes of the local population. That the future of the town hall remains in the hands of this unrepresentative panel is an affront.

Council leader Charles Adje has stated that it isn't the intention to sell the site to a developer, but to lease it for 125 years. Does he really think we are so stupid as to think this is not a sale? At the recent CEfP meeting he also stated his willingness to open the books, in order for CEfP to better understand the renovation costs involved. That he has failed to honour this agreement can only sow deeper suspicion that the council has no serious wish to take local opinion into account.

PADDY JOHNSTON
Middle Lane, N8

Why was Judy Bax so critical?

I WONDER what in particular provoked Cllr Judy Bax's intemperate remarks about

Crouch End for People (Olive branch offered in battle for town hall, H&H Broadway, June 18).

Crouch End for People is not working against the council, nor criticising it for the sake of criticising. Indeed, we want very much to work with the council.

What I think she hasn't quite accepted is that Crouch End for People is putting forward a coherent, holistic and professional plan for the development of the site, one which is tailor-made to fit the needs of the community, the people of the borough and of London as a whole. I urge her to read the plan, which is available at www.crouchendforpeople.org/docs/development%20Brief.pdf.

Her remarks show a regrettable lack of knowledge of Crouch End for People's proposals. Crucially, she mentions that the town hall site might be administered by a trust. Crouch End for People has already set up a trust for the funding and management of the site, Hornsey Town Hall Trust Ltd.

She seems immovably fixed in the belief that the site should be entrusted to a commercial developer. I sincerely hope she can be persuaded to change her mind.

I strongly disagree with her that in the present deliberations over the future of the town hall, "the only argument was about funding." There is a clear difference between Crouch End for People's tailor-made plan and the council proposals, which favour intensive development with no consideration of the full spectrum of social needs in and around Crouch End.

EDWARD FOE
Bedford Road, N

I RECOMMEND to the advisory panel on the future of Hornsey Town Hall that this once grand but now crumbling edifice be kept empty and allowed to rot away.

As a towering symbol of incompetence, neglect, disdain for local people and lost opportunity, it is the perfect monument to local government in Haringey.

Q B HAFTUN
Shepherds Hill, F

IT'S BEEN A BAX LASH

Councillor manages to upset
just about everyone: Letters



Let's be open about future of town hall

WE hear from Judy Bax that Haringey Council is at last committed to a sustainable future for Hornsey Town Hall. But we know Haringey Council is not playing fair.

We suspect the advisory panel has set out the criteria against which all possible solutions for the Town Hall will be assessed. There are strict limitations already set out that discount certain propositions for the site and we are not being allowed access to this information.

Our council leader, Charles Adje, has stated that "the books are open" but council officers are actively withholding documents from Crouch End for People. How are we to trust that these reports do not contain critical details of the building and site as a whole that may have an impact on our calculations for refurbishment and restoration? How are we to know that they will not be made public at the 11th hour, when it would be too late for us to make alterations to our financial proposals?

If this was the case, it could render our brief inaccurate and hopes for our community vision would be dashed.

Crouch End for People represents well over 3,500 residents who are united in the same vision. We have been working on this vision for 10 months. Our team is made up entirely of residents who are volunteering their services for one purpose only – the benefit of the community. – Nir Wegrzyn, Chairman, Crouch End for People, Wolseley Road, N8.

seen anything like it?"

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COMMENT

Crouch End tigers hit on 'dragon'

THE Broadway postbag took a pounding this week as supporters of Crouch End for People reacted angrily to an intended 'olive branch' approach from Cllr Judy Bax, who heads up the advisory panel discussing the future of Hornsey Town Hall.

In dozens of letters, not all of which could be printed, they have been crying 'foul' over her suggestion that the organisation seems determined to work against Haringey Council. It was an unwise allegation which has served only to confirm Cllr Bax as their 'bete noire'.

Small wonder that she and other members of the advisory panel decided to take a night off and watch the decisive England v Croatia football match on Monday.

In Portugal, disputes were settled in a little over 90 minutes: it will take much longer to unravel the complexity of the town hall negotiations. And time is running out.

It is unfortunate that the debate is now taking place against a background of hostility and animosity.

Trust, that essential ingredient for meaningful discussion, has gone absent – if it was ever present in the first place.

Cllr Bax has become the archetypal dragon in what CEfP see as the battle between what is good and what is bad for Crouch End. But it is in everyone's interest that fences are mended and that constructive debate re-emerges from the acrimony.

The same could be said of the traffic calming battle in Muswell Hill, where residents in adjoining streets are at war with each other, instead of concentrating on dissecting Haringey Council's flawed proposals.

The two options seem designed to pit resident against resident, and if the council's intention is to "divide and conquer" it must be delighted by its success.

Neither of the council's options will solve problems in one area without transferring them elsewhere. The residents should say an emphatic 'no' to both, and send the traffic mandarins back to the drawing board.