

## HOMES V OFFICES FOR TOLMERS

EIGHTEEN MONTHS after announcing their plans to build 300,000 sq.ft. of offices in the Tolmers area, the council have finally got cold feet. In face of bitter opposition from Tolmers Village Action Group's campaign to stop the offices and get something useful built, and perhaps because elections are only six months away, the council's plan is now being reconsidered, "in environmental and political", rather than "purely financial terms"

The Council's plans to date include the destruction of Tolmers Square to make way for an office block [300,000 sq.ft.], the loss of shops, restaurants, light industry, provision of an underground car park and a minimum of 55,000 sq.ft. of housing, which, given an existing housing stock of 100,000 sq. ft., means that they promise to destroy, at most, 45% of the area's houses!

A change in plans is envisaged by the Planning and Communications committee, but will almost certainly be limited to modifying the "balance" between offices and houses, which may be enough to satisfy some of the less determined of the council's critics, but not enough for the locals, who are busy consolidating support for the campaign.

However, the lull is only temporary, and the Council are anxious to push ahead with some form of development, perhaps because it cannot afford to pay the current £1/2m per annum interest charges it has amassed in trying to buy the site. And this is the crux of the argument: the council insists that it is necessary to build offices to re-coup the money spent buying the site, in order to subsidise the housing content. What's more they say, if you want a marvellous scheme with no offices, car parks etc. where is the money going to come from?

But hold on a minute! Why didn't they ask us about money when they decided to give away all the rates we pay to property speculator Joe Levy when they bought him out at 3 times market value? And for what? —for this marvellous scheme with more offices and less houses than we've got at present? If the council's going to spend our money like it was confetti anyway, why shouldn't we at least get decent houses and jobs at the end of it? Is this what the council means by public participation?

The campaign being conducted by T.V.A.G. continues to attract support from tenants groups, TU branches and other organisations in the borough. The next step is a delegate meeting of all interested groups to be held on December 9th at 8pm at Transport and General Workers Union, Drummond Street, NW1.

This will be a planning meeting, where groups can put forward their views and special needs for inclusion in the alternative plan which is being drawn up. The plan which appears will then be put forward to the council for their *serious* consideration, instead of the usual round of public meetings which do nothing except advertise the council's plans.

News that one of the main tenders for the council contract to build the office block comes from one of Joe Levy's firms just adds fuel to the fire. It was his Stock Conversion which waged war against the people of Tolmers before selling out to Camden Council for a fat profit. Please help us to end speculation—NOW!

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