



We care, we inform

Wickford Action Group

People before Profit

Newsletter No 4 – Summer 2008

The Wickford Action Group is a non-political group of concerned Wickford residents who want to see the town we love improved and regenerated to the benefit of existing and future residents, which means more housing for our children, and proper infrastructure investment in roads, schools, doctors and dentists. What we **don't** want, are the monstrous blocks of flats, which the Council are telling us is the only way forward.

Basildon Council Elections, May 2008

This year only one Wickford Seat out of the three was up for election, Wickford North. This ward covers everything from Barn Hall to Shotgate, north of the railway line. The Wickford Action Group candidate, David Harrison, standing as an Independent, polled 974 votes (34%), and came second to Carole Morris, Conservative, who polled 1250 (43%). Wickford is still represented by Conservative councillors, but they now have a minority vote! We would like to thank those people in Wickford who supported our campaign, and we assure you that we will not give up the fight to save our town from the over-development being relentlessly perpetrated by this Council!

What have we achieved so far?

While you may not have heard from our group lately it does not mean we have not been working hard on your behalf behind the scenes.

- We've tried to tell it like it is, and in many cases opened residents eyes to changes the Council would like to keep under wraps.
- We are widening the scope, see overleaf for some of the projects we are currently working on with local residents
- We have been attending Planning meetings and we had representation everyday at the Appeal on Barn Hall in late June (even your local councillors cannot claim this!). We are always asking questions of Councillors actions, keeping them on their toes, so to speak, we constantly ask freedom of Information questions as and when needed to both Basildon District council and Essex County Council. The Council's performance at the recent 4-day Barn Hall appeal was an eye opener, they were torn to shreds by the developer's QC in their incompetent handling of planning regulations over the last 10 years: failure to introduce a Local Development Framework, failure to meet housing targets, mis-management in the supply of affordable homes, S106 agreements not fit for purpose – the list goes on. Our mission is to make sure you are informed about these issues - see our website.
- We are in constant touch with the local press so that our opinions and yours are heard regardless of politics.

The results of the 'Call for Sites', which all Councils have to do, has now been published, albeit very late. The reluctance of the council to publish this appeared devious, and now it has been published we can see why. 270 sites are on it, some put forward by the Council. Some community halls in the district are on the list as well as the parade of shops in Nevendon Road. If you want to see the full list, please contact WAG, details below.

We are doing all of this using our own funds, with some very welcome contributions from our generous supporters – a very grateful thank you to those who have contributed, and if anyone would like to help please send contributions to Alan Ball, Chairman, Wickford Action Group, 20 Cedar Avenue, Wickford, SS12 9DT.

Our website www.wickfordactiongroup.org.uk is continually updated with the latest information and this is the best way to keep up to date. If you do not have internet access, the library in Wickford offers a free service. Please email us at mail@WickfordActionGroup.org.uk with any questions or suggestions you may have.

Please keep up to date as ONLY the Wickford Action group will tell the truth in plain English with no political spin.



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These are some of the other projects we are involved in

BEAUCHAMPS ESTATE

In recent months the **WICKFORD ACTION GROUP** have been in consultation with some residents of the Beauchamps Estate in connection with the parking and traffic congestion in the area.

We are pressing for the return of the high profile scheme of a few years ago to control the problem, particularly when parents are dropping off, or picking up their children at the three schools in the area. We are also engaging with Essex County Council Highways in the best way forward to address the problem.

PARK LODGE & NEVENDON SHOPS

Basildon Council have now confirmed that plans are underway to redevelop this area and 'reprovision' the shops. This was decided at the Council meeting on 17 July 2008, and when this item was discussed, the public and press had to leave. So much for accountability and public consultation! The Wickford Action group is helping the shopkeepers and meeting hall users to set up a petition against this development. We call on the Local Council to consult and meet with local residents before making a final decision, after all it is the local residents vote that determines who represents them in the council. The Petition is available to sign in the newsagents, Double diamond, Steven's Fish and Chips and the hairdressers at Nevendon Parade.

WICKFORD TOWN CENTRE

The 5 storey blocks of flats on Runwell Road and London Road, and the 6 storey block next to the old Post Office are now well underway, and the flats on the site of the Toyota garage on the main roundabout have now been given the go ahead on appeal, but there is no sign of any improvements to the road system in the area. All of the Council's and Councillors promises when the Master Plan was in 'consultation' are not being met – no improvements to the infrastructure are being provided.

We **do** want to see the town improved, and the regeneration of derelict sites is a great idea, but from these and other plans so far approved, we can't see how 5 and 6 storey blocks of flats will make things better, in fact it looks like they will get worse it terms of the **support infrastructure!**

- bus services are not adequate
- trains are already packed at rush hour times
- the roads into and out of Wickford are gridlocked during peak times
- more doctors and dentists are needed even now
- poor range of shops
- insufficient public parking at a reasonable price, leading to anti-social parking in high street, with poor or non-existent policing.

SHOTGATE

As a Shotgate Parish Councillor, WAG Committee member, David Harrison, has campaigned for an improvement in the bus service serving the area. Although the campaign to date has been unsuccessful, he will continue to press the matter. The Shotgate Farm plan for football pitches and a pavilion was approved by the Council, despite objections from local people and the Wickford Action Group, but now that this section is lost, we fear that the adjacent plot could follow. The **WICKFORD ACTION GROUP** will continue to monitor planning applications in this area to ensure that it remains in the Green Belt.

BARN HALL

The **WICKFORD ACTION GROUP** have continued their opposition to the proposed development of the land to the north of Barn Hall. Only the WICKFORD ACTION GROUP will tell you the fact that keeps being forgotten, that the Council should have put this land into green belt. If they had this application would never have materialised. We are also monitoring any proposals for development that is in the Chelmsford Council area. The current application from Gleasons was turned down by the council, and an appeal is now awaiting a decision from the Secretary of State for Communities, due in October 2008.