

# GREEN NEWS

## NORTH WALWORTH



Peter Baffoe



Guy Mannes-Abbott



Lina Usma

## WALWORTH TOWN HALL IS BEING SOLD OFF BY SOUTHWARK LABOUR

### Commercial “opportunity” pitched to investors and developers

Historic **Walworth Town Hall**, and **Newington Library** next door which houses the **Cuming Museum**, suffered significant **damage in a fire in 2013**. Southwark Council paused plans for redevelopment of the buildings after estimated costs rose. Evidently there was **no adequate fire insurance policy** in place despite both these Edwardian buildings being Grade 2 listed.



Labour-run Southwark Council has published a glossy website [walworthtownhall.com](http://walworthtownhall.com) proclaiming an “**opportunity**” for “**investors, developers, businesses, organisations or other consortia**” to express interest in “play[ing] their part in reviving this historic gem”. The council proclaims willingness to consider “**ancillary and complementary commercial uses**” alongside arts and culture uses retaining “some genuine public access to... parts of the site”.

Southwark Council will retain the freehold but the leasehold may run for up to 250 years. The community is concerned that with such a long lease, **a community asset** is in effect **being sold off** to a private enterprise. The council has already sold off Southwark’s other town halls to private developers. Bermondsey Town Hall has had 41 luxury flats carved out of it, each selling for over £1m, while the Peckham Town Hall complex now features 149 student flats. Both contain **zero affordable housing**.



Peter and Lina: Standing up for restoration of Newington Library

In July 2017, the politically independent Walworth Society surveyed 265 local people about the plans for Walworth Town Hall. The majority agreed that Walworth needs these buildings to **remain in public use**, even if it takes a long time to raise the money. Respondents also want **a library and a heritage hub** included.

Community newspaper editor Lina Usma said: “The Library was appreciated by the Latin American community and other diverse communities in Walworth. We very much miss it, and it’s **important that a library remains** in this area, ideally in the Town Hall itself.”

## SCHOOL BUDGET CUTS ARE HARMING OUR CHILDREN’S EDUCATION

### Curriculum narrowing; cuts to fall hardest on pupils most in need

It appears very likely there will be a big reduction in school budgets in Southwark this year, and possibly **further cuts in future years**. Despite some careful budgeting by schools aiming to protect excellence in teaching and learning, with the expected decrease in Pupil Premium it looks likely that **children from poorer families** are going to **lose much-needed support**. Many schools are already finding it **difficult to cater for the significant rise in Special Educational Needs**, particularly autism.

The **curriculum is being reduced** to a narrow number of core subjects, and **arts and creative subjects are being squeezed out**, to the detriment of a well-rounded education. Many respected organisations have commented on **how often our children are tested**, without any significant improvement in results, putting much **unnecessary stress on pupils and teachers**.

School governor and father of three Peter Baffoe said: “Local **Greens see the big picture**, and the **impact that poorly funded schools** will have not just on the life of individuals but also on the **wider community**.”



School governor Peter stands for investing in our children and young people

**IF ELECTED ON 3<sup>RD</sup> MAY, PETER, GUY AND LINA WILL HOLD THE COUNCIL TO ACCOUNT**

# ELEPHANT & CASTLE: DECISION DELAYED UNTIL AFTER ELECTION

Following ongoing community pressure, the planning application to demolish Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre and London College of Communication will now **not be reconsidered** by councillors **until after the local election** on 3<sup>rd</sup> May.

Southwark Labour pushed through the previous controversial demolition of the Heygate Estate **two months after winning a council election**.

Latin American community newspaper editor Lina Usma said: "There have not been any concrete plans for **Elephant's small**

**businesses**. We are worried that we are going to **lose the area's fantastic diversity**, the reason why we love Southwark."



**Lina: Standing up for diverse local traders**

• [Read the backstory at southwarkgreenparty.org.uk/elephant](http://southwarkgreenparty.org.uk/elephant)

## VICTORY PARK PROGRESS

As previously reported by *Green News*, local Green activist Peter Baffoe has been **pushing Southwark Council** for action on **Victory Community Park's unsafe bridge**. The council have now safely sealed off the structure. Peter adds: "They're now at least talking about allocating the repair budget to bring the bridge back into safe use."

### CAN WE HELP?

If you have a comment or query about our area, Peter, Guy and Lina would love to hear from you:

[walworth@southwark.greenparty.org.uk](mailto:walworth@southwark.greenparty.org.uk)

[southwarkgreenparty.org.uk/walworth](http://southwarkgreenparty.org.uk/walworth)

Walworth Green Party  
Southwark Green Party

@Walworth\_Greens / @SouthwarkGP

**Want to meet?**

We're happy to arrange a time.

**Become a member of the Green Party:**  
[join.greenparty.org.uk](http://join.greenparty.org.uk)

# PUT AN END TO COUNCILLORS' CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

## Many Southwark councillors connected to profit-making industry demolishing our communities

Nearly 20% of Southwark's 63 **councillors work as lobbyists**, found 2013 research. One of these is **local Labour councillor Rebecca Lury**, who works as a managing director for public relations (PR) firm GK Strategy. Her firm has a specialism in **advising development corporations** seeking contentious planning permission from local councils. Councillor Lury **volunteered support** for planning permission for Trafalgar Place (Elephant Park phase 1) with **social housing quotas slashed** in favour of **fat profits**. Two former leaders of Southwark Council (one Labour, one Lib Dem) went on to similar lobbying/PR careers. Independent local group The 35% Campaign has collated **numerous similar examples** at [35percent.org/revolving-doors](http://35percent.org/revolving-doors).

*Private Eye* magazine reported that **many companies** have **wined and dined** Peter John, **current Labour leader** of Southwark Council. **Freebies** accepted from developers Lendlease include **two £1,600 tickets** to the London Olympics opening ceremony, and an expenses-paid **trip to Cannes** for a property show. Lendlease are **building £2.5m penthouses** on the site of the demolished Heygate Estate.

Addressing the general issue, Green Party candidate Guy Mannes-Abbott said: "Councillors bringing expertise to the role is welcome and needed. However in this era of major development in London, **local councillors must foreswear any development or construction industry role**, or related consultancy or communications role – during their term as councillor and for at least one term afterwards. The **impression of blatant sleaze** it creates is **completely untenable**, and the reality is hardly different, as demonstrated by the revolving doors between Southwark Council and developers. Our councillors are still **delivering priorities of multinational development corporations** above those of our local community. **Green councillors are independent**. If elected on 3<sup>rd</sup> May we will hold the council to account."

• [Sources at southwarkgreenparty.org.uk/southwarkcouncil](http://southwarkgreenparty.org.uk/southwarkcouncil)

## WE NEED A GREEN ECONOMIC ZONE

Writer **Guy Mannes-Abbott** on a local economic alternative

Southwark Council leader Peter John stated there was **"no alternative"** to **displacing existing communities** and **building only 3% social rented housing** units throughout the Elephant & Castle Opportunity Area (OA). **He was wrong** in principle and in fact.

I would counter this regressive OA model with a **Green Economic Zone**. "We need local economies that **put communities first**, and provide **opportunity, dignity** and **well-being**. Whole **rivers of wealth** run through local places. We need to capture it, because it **already belongs to us**," say progressive economic thinkers CLES.

In Preston, the city council has set up **co-ops** for everyday goods and services. School meals are now **supplied by local businesses** instead of big corporations, giving the local economy an estimated **£2 million boost**.



**CHOOSE INDEPENDENT VOICES FOR WALWORTH — VOTE GREEN ON THURS 3<sup>RD</sup> MAY**