



Hampstead Village Voice

Rantus - Irreverentibus - Orwellius

COUNCIL LOSES CONTROL AS DEVELOPERS RUN RIOT

Apparently, whilst in his 'earth suit' the Hare Krishna prophet, a fellow called *Prabhupada*, once warned George Harrison about some 'morally rotten ultra-materialists' taking over the planet. Well, they certainly seem to have taken over Hampstead...

The fact is you can't walk for two minutes along a Hampstead road these days without some breadhead's basement project in your face. From Arkwright Rd to New End, Prince Arthur Rd to Frognal, Kemplay Road to Admiral's Walk - everyone's seemingly at it.

We've reported on various nightmare developments over previous editions of the *Hampstead Village Voice*. There was the story of the Bryants, the elderly couple forced to live upstairs from a huge basement development in Templewood Avenue; the Cafe Rouge waiter, Farouk, who returned to his flat in Fitzjohn's Avenue to find his ceiling on his bed; the horrific story of the builder killed when a basement project collapsed in Denning Road - a real life tragedy and direct result of these needless basement developments.

No one is immune from über-development-collateral-damage. I myself was unceremoniously bombarded by developer's rubble and forced into temporary exile in the *Soviet Gulag of West Hampstead*.

Now, two years later, having returned to sunny Hampstonia, another breadhead developer has decided to build three houses in the back gardens of Arkwright Road whilst demolishing two garages in Frognal - immediately adjacent - to erect a fourth house. Four houses, all at once, right slap bang in the middle of a conservation area. Naturally, Arkwrightians and Frognalistas are up in arms.

Vandalism of Admiral's Walk

So when will our brave heroes at Camden Planning step in and halt this wanton destruction of our green and pleasant Hampstonia?



Conservation Area: Admiral's Walk closed at behest of developer. Why?

Not any time soon if that pretty little lane, Admirals Walk, which features on the cover of this edition is anything to go by.

It's been closed off at the behest of yet another developer who knocked down a perfectly sound new house to erect, what one of its builders described as: "a really ugly new-build that'll go right up to the pavement, no front garden, and not even slightly in keeping with this lovely neighbourhood". I kid you not dear reader, that's what he said, verbatim.

As builders go, he really was most forthcoming, even explaining why they were drilling. No, it wasn't for oil but "to force the [underground] *River Westbourne*, that flows beneath, to either side of the new basement."

So don't be surprised if Admiral's House and/or Fenton House disappear without a trace into some ghastly little sink-hole in the not too distant future.

Whilst this ridiculous development is underway, Camden Planning is actually pondering on whether to permit a basement extension just a few yards across the road at Grove Lodge. Two basements directly on top of an underground river and both at the same time. Morally rotten ultra-materialists all over the shop.

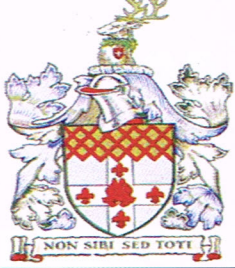
And it's not only Hampstead Village: Swiss Cottage, West Hampstead, South Hampstead and, of course, our dear old Heath have all been turned into indiscriminate cash-cows for architects, developers, civil engineers and construction firms, making them increasingly unpleasant places in which to live and work - unless you're a builder.

The Conservative's current policy to "invest in local planning for a growing and sustainable economy" may sound good on paper, but it's actually destroying people's quality of life.

The solution? A blanket ban on demolition in conservation areas. That's why they're called conservation areas - to stop people destroying them. As for other residential areas, there needs to be an enforceable limit to the amount of construction in a given neighbourhood at any one time. I'd say no more than one per square kilometre sounds reasonable.

Will Scamden Planning ever enforce such a solution? Not in a million years. I'd read the next page if I were you.

Emmanuel Mustafa Goldstein
Editor in industrial ear plugs.



MIGHT IT BE TIME FOR THE BOROUGH OF HAMPSTEAD?



SYRIA



HAMPSTEAD

By Sebastian Whassisname

On a gusty December night in St Stephen's Church on Pond Street, Camden Planning received a bit of a slap on its wrist from the citizens of Hampstonia.

Jessica thingamijig with the double-barrelled surname had organised the evening as a chance for us all to vent our collective spleen at the council's inability to properly protect Hampstead from developers and their battalions of HGVs, bulldozers, cranes, road closures and various manifestations of construction-zone collateral damage.

We were each allowed to ask the planning department a question or just have a good rant and then Cllr. Phil Jones and some fella from the planning department had the chance to defend the council which, under the circumstances, they did as well as could be expected.

Said 'circumstances' being, they were completely slaughtered by a polite yet justifiably angry mob for the granting of too many uncoordinated and indiscriminate planning permissions. Oh, and I think incompetence, negligence and dishonesty were also mentioned a few times.

Not reported in the *Ham & High* was the fellow who stood up and, to rapturous applause, told the Camden Planning people 'their explanations meant nothing because in reality Camden Planning isn't in the least interested in what we

think and that, once this meeting was over, it would just carry on ignoring citizens pleas to halt Hampstead's non-stop orgy of construction' - or words to that effect.

For all Cllr. Phil Jones' attempts at sharing how he feels our pain - that he too has a basement being built in his road - it was clear that he, and most of those loitering around the corridors of Camden Town Hall, either don't get it or simply can't cope with the current volume of developments.

Might not the Borough of Camden simply be too big and its HQ in Judd Street too far away for Hampstead to really matter?

That's why we've been referring to the local council as the *U.S.S.R. (Union of Soviet Scamden Republics)* since publishing the first edition of this magazine in 2007. The sheer size of the thing renders it unmanageable. Camden is by no stretch of the imagination a *local* council: certainly not out here in its satellite cash-cow-state of *Eastern Hampstonia*.

The Faux Localism Act

The *Localism Act* brought in by David Cameron and his short-term Lib Dem associates of five years ago, supposedly changes the powers of local government to "facilitate the devolution of decision-making powers from central government to individuals and communities". But it is, in this observer's view, a bit of a red herring.

Because, even with all the best will in the world, the *Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum* is a colloquium with very little real power.

It might help return our much missed zebra-crossing to Heath Street; assist with the renovation of Burgh House or get some money chucked towards Keats Library - all splendidly good things if they come off - but it certainly can't overrule Camden Council or Government planning inspectors and so is, like the act itself, impotent with regard to the current destruction of Hampstead's conservation areas.

Jessica Learmond-Criqi's idea of a *Hampstead Parish Council* sounds promising but it would also be answerable to Scamden and so unable to stand up to developers intent on destroying the area. But it might be a step in the right direction. That direction being an actual *Borough of Hampstead*.

If ever Hampstead is again to enjoy the quiet, tranquil and pleasant atmosphere it did until quite recently, it will have to divorce itself from Camden Council completely.

Camden could be down sized allowing the likes of St. Pancras, Holborn and Hampstead to again run their own affairs, locally.

In the meantime Camden would benefit from an FBI-FIFA style investigation of what is, in *Private Eye's* words, something of a 'Rotten Borough'.

The return of the *Borough of Hampstead* - might it really be possible? As FIFA's pals at Nike keep reminding us, in thier ugly corporate newspeak: *Impossible Is Nothing!*