



Councillor Andrew Tebbutt & Councillor Joan Tebbutt
15 The Kylins
Morpeth
Northumberland NE61 2DJ

01670 511631

January 28th 2017

Email: Andrew.tebbutt1046@gmail.com Mobile: 07767 338509

Email: Joan.c.tebbutt@gmail.com

Dear Resident

WE SHARE YOUR FRUSTRATION AT THIS POINTLESS & SENSELESS VANDALISIM

Our last FOCUS leaflet highlighted the attack on Morpeth by the Labour Administration through its appalling planning proposals, paying no attention to the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan or even its own Core Strategy, which sets the overall planning & development strategy for the County. Bad enough!

But the actions over the last week beggar belief! Over last weekend, in a covert operation, all the trees in the two inner courtyards were cut down. It was only due to the vigilance of a resident that we heard about it on Saturday afternoon. We went around to County Hall & saw the aftermath. We were told by three different staff "in the know" that they were under threat of dismissal if news of the operation got out! When Andrew challenged the Chief Executive on Tuesday about that threat, he denied all knowledge. He said the trees were overgrown, affecting the building and blocking the light. A resident was told by the team cutting them down they were in poor condition. Total rubbish of course! A report filed with the Planning application says the trees in the north courtyard were in fine condition, whilst the ones in the southern courtyard were in reasonable condition. None needed any work on them, they were not affecting the building. The roots were to be protected during demolition – in 2 years' time. The report concluded the trees should be preserved!! Too late was the cry.



But worse was to follow, and this time in full view of all local people. The trees in front of County Hall started coming down on Tuesday morning; completed on Wednesday, apart from the oak tree set by Liberal Democrat Leader, Jeff Reid, on 1 April 2009, when the new Northumberland County Council came into being (that tree is to be moved and replanted). The reasons given this time might have been reasonable if they had given plenty of notice, consulted with councillors and residents, and not carried out the covert operation two days earlier. The official version, given to Andrew on Tuesday by the Chief Executive, was that, as there appeared to be general support amongst councillors for the school proposal, it was necessary to remove the trees before the bird nesting season starts, because building would start in the latter part of 2017. **But they haven't got planning permission yet!!** No, the trees were not protected; despite Joan having persuaded Morpeth Town Council to submit Tree Preservation Orders requests several months ago so they could be protected, Northumberland County Council has simply not responded. It's overall policy on Tree Preservation Orders is that they are not necessary on Northumberland County Council land – because they are responsible landlords!! The Leadership have also made it clear that the school build is dependent on the other two proposals going ahead. So they appear to be assuming all 3 approvals, despite originally saying the school could be built even if County Hall remained. **Is there any real strategic plan for the site – we don't think so?**

Several residents contacted us saying "please do something" about the destruction of the trees and we shared their frustration, but if the Administration is determined to do something, it can and will do so. We couldn't

physically stop the cutting down & they were impervious to protests, as they have been all along about the future of the County Hall site. Our only hope is that the planning process will hold them up until after the elections on 4th May 2017.

We issued a Press Release over the weekend, and Andrew spoke on Radio Newcastle on Tuesday morning. Joan appeared on Look North on Friday evening. Neither occasions gave us enough time to really expand on the issues.

Joan is an active member of South Morpeth Coalition, although as chair of Goosehill Governors has not taken part in their deliberations on the school application. Goosehill governors support the application, as it is the only site for new build on offer. However they have objected robustly about the proposed drive-through fast food outlet immediately opposite.



Andrew is currently a member of both Northumberland Planning Committees, and as such has been restricted in what he can say publicly. However, as it is now well known that he has total opposition to the Retail & Housing proposals, he knows he cannot take part in the deliberations at Committee. But that means he can be far more vocal about his opposition than previously.

Regarding the destruction of the old Fire Station and now Merley Croft – again all before any planning approval is received. The demolition of Merley Croft is imminent. And we take great exception to the big posters of the Labour Leader saying he is investing in our town! Yes, we want a new Leisure and Culture Centre, and we need more car parking – the idea of a multi-storey car park is attractive given the limited land space. But not at the expense of ruining our town. Morpeth's attraction is that it has successfully brought modern developments into the centre whilst retaining much of its heritage. The Neighbourhood Plan, worked on by many over 3½ years, chaired by Joan, and fully supported by County Planning Officers, was overwhelmingly supported by residents. Over 4000 voted – an astonishing vote & 93% in support. Yet within months this Labour Administration is ignoring it.

We will go on working hard for all the residents in Morpeth. We are both standing for re-election in May. Please contact us if you want to discuss any issues.

