COUNCILLORS IGNORE PUBLIC OBJECTIONS

- Disastrous Riverside Road Project to go Ahead
- Serious Questions Remain Unanswered

On Wednesday 30 January Lowestoft Coalition Against the Cuts had the chance to put the concerns about the Riverside Road accommodation Project to Waveney District Council. LCAC thanks all those who made this possible by signing our petition either online or in the precinct.

Unfortunately councillors were unable or unwilling to provide any answers. Here is how it went:

LCAC: You have halved WDC staff numbers in the last five years and more redundancies are to come. Why does the business plan contain no assessment of future staff numbers? How do you know what to build? No answer.

LCAC: Are the Riverside Road offices being built for the private and outsourced partners who will contribute nothing? No answer.

LCAC: The plan, co-written by Norfolk Property Services, involves selling off about ten properties. NPS stands to collect a commission when it sells them. Is this right? No answer. (LCAC has found out that NPS does stand to profit in this way.)

LCAC: If you are centralising services why have you got two centres, the Marina and Riverside Road Offices? Doesn’t this defeat the object? No answer.

LCAC: Whose bright idea was it build on Riverside Road and to shift five hundred jobs away from the High Street and town centre shopping areas? “Riverside Road is in the centre. It is the centre.” (Colin Law, Tory, Council Leader. Laughter in the Chamber followed.)

LCAC: Have you made an impact assessment of the effect on shops and other businesses of moving five hundred jobs out of town? No answer. (LCAC has found out that no impact assessment has been made.)

LCAC: Why was the redevelopment of the Town Hall site not considered as an option? No answer.

LCAC: Why was the site occupied by the old WDC Housing Offices not considered? It is central, is owned by the Council and could contain all Council departments. No answer.

Green Councillor Graham Elliot pointed out that building offices outside the Town Centre broke Waveney’s own planning guidelines. Curiously, he got no answer either. On the fate of the Town Hall there was much waffle, Tory Councillor Martin Parsons entered fantasy land with the building becoming the centre of a “erm, cafe, artistic quarter”. The people are to be “engaged” about its future. And then the project was voted through. Only five voted against, four Labour and one Green.

The campaign to stop the Riverside Road Project goes on. You can write to the Lowestoft Journal with your views or lodge a complaint with WDC Monitoring Officer, Arthur Charvonia.

WHAT YOU CAN DO...

- Support LCAC by joining our leafleting every Saturday, 11-1pm, in the town centre precinct, outside the Britten Centre.
- Join our email list - keep up to date with activity in your area.
- Photocopy this leaflet and pass onto friends and workmates.
- Support the local libraries campaign - contact Pauline on 01502 586412.
- Want to know more? We can supply a speaker for your group or trade union branch.

Contact us
lowestoftagainstthecuts@hotmail.co.uk
01502 568684 / 569174 / 574010

RESIDENTS JOIN THE FIGHTBACK

Waveney District Council and Suffolk County Council, HealthEast, the mental health trust, the James Paget Hospital – they are all cutting and closing. The historic Town Hall is to close. Lowestoft Hospital is to close. Carlton Court Hospital’s services are being decimated. The James Paget Hospital is “not clinically viable”.

Blundeston Prison is to close and, on the horizon, the hugely important CEFAS operation is planning to move out of town.

Everyone but the councillors sitting in the chamber and the officers, soon to be rehoused in “a box surrounded by a car park”, can see it. Many who were at the meeting had also been to the Town Hall when the ridiculous Riverside Road Office Project was discussed. They were appalled by the standard of debate. Most councillors, who draw thousands of pounds in expenses, said nothing. Councillors and officers alike were described as “hopeless” and “clueless”.

IS LOWESTOFT AT CRISIS POINT?

HealthEast’s consultation on the future of Lowestoft Hospital was a sham. Faced with the alternatives of an apparent offer to spend millions on new premises and services or to keep Lowestoft Hospital and “do nothing” (their words) it is surprising that so many voted to keep the hospital.

WHY NOT JOIN US?

The meeting condemned consultations used as a fig leaf for predetermined plans. It determined to pursue its opposition to these cuts and closures. Why not join us? Contact details on back page.
**THE QUESTION THAT WASN’T ASKED:**

**DO YOU WANT TO KEEP LOWESTOFT HOSPITAL?**

- PHONEY CONSULTATION ENDS
- CLOSURE ANNOUNCED

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**LOWESTOFT HOSPITAL CONSULTATION**

HealthEast’s “consultation” offered two alternatives: spend millions on a new health centre in Kirkley and move on one somewhere in north Lowestoft, close Lowestoft Hospital and buy beds in private care homes. Its alternative was to “do nothing”, that is to allow the hospital’s decline to continue. It refused to spend the money raised by the Friends of Lowestoft Hospital. HealthEast got the answer it wanted.

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**THE JAMES PAGET HOSPITAL**

As HealthEast’s consultation exercise ended the James Paget Hospital announced £20m cuts. The hospital is “not clinically viable” says new Chief Executive Christine Allen who intends to cut 600 staff and cut the length of hospital stays. Already emergency re-admissions have doubled in the past ten years. Many services will close. Workers predict “chaos” in A&E this winter yet HealthEast will close Lowestoft Hospital which takes pressure off the Paget. Why?

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**BECCELS, HALESWORTH AND SOUTHWOLD HOSPITALS**

Andy Evans, Chief Executive of HealthEast (pictured), told Lowestoft residents that if his plan to close Lowestoft Hospital goes through then all Waveney’s community hospitals, at Beccles, Halesworth and Southwold will be closed. The decision on Halesworth might already have been made. Do the people of Beccles, Halesworth and Southwold know this?

**WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?**

Local GPs own HealthEast the body which controls most of the NHS budget for Great Yarmouth and Waveney. Do GPs support cuts to NHS services? Do they support hospital closures? Do they support privatisation? Or is Chief Exec Andy Evans out of control? Ask your GP.

**CARLTON COURT HOSPITAL**

Based in Carlton Colville, the hospital provides inpatient and outpatient services for those suffering from mental health and dementia conditions. At a time when need is growing the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Trust is closing Poppies, the day centre, and proposes to replace hospital beds with home visits. Over 400 jobs are to go. Clinicians have labelled the plans “chaotic” and “dangerous”. Last year 161 “serious incidents” including 53 “unexpected deaths” were reported to the Trust. It is a disgrace.

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**LOWESTOFT TOWN HALL – IT’S NOT OVER YET**

The fate of Lowestoft Town Hall and the plan to move most of what will be left of council staff to that “box surrounded by a car park” on Riverside Road is still on the agenda. The councils hoped, yet again, that it was all over. They managed to win the vote in WDC’s Planning Committee but the issue has not gone away. LCAC has lodged a complaint about Head of Planning Phillip Ridleys’s statement that the scheme does not need to conform to planning policy. It does need to conform and it doesn’t conform.

New office buildings should be built in the town centre. Those wishing to build elsewhere must demonstrate that there would be no adverse impact on the town centre. WDC/SCC have not attempted to determine what impact the loss of 500 jobs would have on shops, cafes and other businesses.

**WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?**

With minimum changes and the inevitable contraction of staff numbers it could also house Customer Services thus avoiding the cost and inefficiencies of “two centres” caused by the distance of Riverside Rd from the town centre.

The Town Hall must be kept, for its own value and for the sake of the High Street. The Council Chamber, of course, should be maintained. The building would also be ideal for the Registrar’s Office (the Marina Centre is not) as well as other appropriate services and functions.

The “two centres - no town hall” option is inefficient, expensive and damaging to both the economic health of the town and its heritage.

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**All the hospitals serving the people of Waveney are now under threat of closure. The Coalition government is not protecting the NHS. Yet it proposes to spend billions on Trident and the HS2 railway. It has failed to stop tax dodging by the largest companies whilst cutting the higher tax rate and corporation tax. Did you vote for this?**

LCAC has carried out its own consultation: “Do you want to keep Lowestoft Hospital?” Look out for the result next week.

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**End tax dodging believed to cost £150 billion a year**

**Tax the rich**

**Stop the disastrous foreign wars, expenditure on weapons of mass destruction and invest in green jobs**

**Stop the bankers paying themselves obscene bonuses**

**Levy a Robin Hood tax on bank turnover**

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*Resolution passed at LCAC launch rally - 2 March, 2011*