**PECKHAM**

**Council’s Peckham plans ‘are pants’!**

Protestors strip to undies over plan to move businesses

By Aoife Moriarty
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COUNCIL WORKERS were rubbing their eyes in disbelief last week as three daring Peckham dwellers stripped off in the council’s lobby to protest against its plans to uproot businesses surrounding Peckham Rye station.

Artists Sophie Lee, 24, Bayly Shelton, 25 and Umi Baden-Powell, 22, are part of a collective of local creatives opposed to the council’s Peckham plans.

Arriving at council headquarters shortly before members of residents’ group Peckham Vision were due to speak at a Cabinet meeting about their concerns, the three removed all but their beige skin-coloured underwear and placards bearing the words ‘Hands Off Peckham’.

They struck the classical pose of ‘The Three Graces’ - as depicted in the famous sixteenth century oil painting by Italian artist Raphael - with forty-odd supporters participating in an impromptu ‘life drawing class’ for ten minutes until the stunt was called to a halt by a council official.

“If it was quite daunting because there was a relatively heavy security presence,” said Bayly. “There were a good four or five generic... there are about two or three art galleries or complexes that would’ve been removed,” said Bayly.

“I feel like there’s a sense of people making decisions who aren’t living here or invested in the area,” explained Sophie, a Peckham native who grew up on the border with Honor Oak. "A lot of artists are invested in the area," she added.

“I feel like there’s a sense of people making decisions who aren’t living here or invested in the area” about the council’s plans to uproot local businesses at an emergency meeting called by Peckham Vision the previous night, where attendees were asked to come up with an idea that would “illustrate a point without being too disruptive”.

“We really don’t want and what we really feared was these businesses would go and they would replace it with a Starbucks or something that’s really generic... there are about two or three art galleries or complexes that would’ve been removed,” said Bayly.

“I feel like there’s a sense of people making decisions who aren’t living here or invested in the area,” explained Sophie, a Peckham native who grew up on the border with Honor Oak. "A lot of artists are invested in this area," she added.

“We’re trying to safeguard the spaces that exist already and have been invested in.”

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**At the meeting:**

MEANWHILE, INSIDE the cabinet meeting last week, fears were raised by Peckham Vision about the latest council report on the Gateway to Peckham station regeneration project.

Concerns stemmed from a line in which the council said it was looking to acquire ‘vacant possession’ of all businesses surrounding Peckham Rye station, which has since been amended. Meeting attendees were reassured that only the building units at the front of the station on Rye Lane would need to be knocked down and that negotiations would be “more fluid” with businesses at the rear of the station - including art groups and artist studios - where a ‘market courtyard’ is to be created.

Ok Fiona Golley Cabinet Member for Regeneration, explained to the News: “The report that went out was very broad-brushstroke about an issue that’s very complicated. However what the report hadn’t expressed correctly was our aspiration for the rear of the station. What we want is to create a sort of market area and for the artists to still be there,” she added.

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**Strike a pose: the artists make protesting at the council’s Tooley Street HQ (main and inset); the group outside Rye Lane station this week (right); and how the News broke the story on the council’s plans to move businesses last week (inset).**