

ELEPHANT & CASTLE

Red faces over document blunder

By Emma Ailes

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SECRET INFORMATION accidentally made public by the council has revealed the confidential figures behind the sale of the Heygate Estate.

The papers revealed an agreement to sell the land to developers Lend Lease for £50 million.

Campaigners who discovered the redacted document posted on the council website could be read in full by copying and pasting into a new document dubbed the deal a "rip-off".

Cabinet member for regeneration Fiona Colley said the council was investigating the blunder, but insisted she stood by the deal as "good value for money for Southwark residents".

However, Lib Dem leader Cllr Anood Al-Samerai - who was reprimanded for revealing the controversial £50 million figure during a council meeting in October 2010 - said the leaked information proved that Labour had rushed the deal.

In a joint statement with MP Simon Hughes, she called for the "veil of secrecy" surrounding the Heygate regeneration to be lifted, and full financial viability tests to be published.

"This raises big questions about the low price Lend Lease bought the land for, and why the developers of Southwark's biggest development are being allowed to



Rodney Road site, which was granted planning permission. Secret document (right)

make their profits at the expense of desperately needed local housing at social or affordable rents.

"We will insist that the Labour council now answers the uncomfortable questions which they have ducked so far."

Developer Lend Lease declined to comment on the leak, but Cllr Colley said that it had not jeopardised the deal.

"Obviously it shouldn't have happened," she said. "An error was made, and the Chief Executive is looking into it and will recommend action.

"We are still in a confidential agreement with Lend Lease and we remain committed to working together.

"This is absolutely a good value deal. The regeneration will bring 2,500 new homes, and tremendous benefit to Southwark."

The council has negotiated 25 per cent minimum 'affordable' housing, and will receive a share of any profits after the developer has taken a 20 per cent slice - although Cllr Colley admitted that current viability tests suggested there was unlikely to be any profit.



Stabbed at court

ELEPHANT & CASTLE: A man was stabbed in the stomach on the steps of a court house when a fight involving a gang of youths broke out.

Shocked court staff and lawyers looked on as paramedics treated the 20-year-old victim inside the security entrance of Inner London Crown Court on February 2. Police are looking for a group of four or five youths who were seen running from the court near Elephant and Castle wearing hoods and scarves over their faces.

No arrests have yet been made. The victim remains in hospital in a stable condition. A witness, who did not want to be named, told the Guardian: "I was sitting inside and there was a group of lads standing at the top of the steps. All of a sudden four unknown guys came in from the car park. They came in and one guy got stabbed. They tried to rush through, then stabbed him in the stomach and then ran out."

Delay denied

SOUTHWARK: The council has denied claims that its major works programme is running five years behind schedule.

The £326 million warm safe and dry scheme, which the council initially said would complete by 2015, is running a year behind schedule, but opposition Lib Dem councillors are predicting that work will continue well into 2020.

Ian Wingfield, Cabinet Member for Housing, said: "This programme is very much on track to meet the March 2016 deadline for delivery. I challenge anyone to prove otherwise."

SOUTHWARK COMMERCIAL PROPERTY CURRENT AND FUTURE VALUES OF YOUR BUILDING A PRESENTATION FOR SOUTHWARK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

by Richard Kalmar of KALMARs Commercial Estate Agents

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