



RECTORY NEWS

FOR THE SUPPORTERS OF CARSHALTON OLD RECTORY

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The Tale of Two Star Listed Buildings: Whitehall, Cheam and the Old Rectory, Carshalton



Sutton has 14 Grade II* buildings, three of which the Council is responsible for. They are all very different yet each is considered to be architecturally important enough to warrant a higher level of protection.

Grade II* has been awarded to less than 10% of the country's listed buildings.

Seven of the star buildings in the borough are churches, two are garden buildings within the Carshalton House estate and maintained by a Trust, one is the Carew pigeon house (owned by Sutton Council), Carshalton House is a school and there is one private house. Whitehall in Cheam, Grade II*, is a museum also owned by Sutton, which has recently re-opened after a £1.8 million Heritage Lottery Fund grant. It is a delightful building that has been sensitively restored and improved, a building of which Sutton Council and the residents of Cheam can be proud.

And then there is the Grade II* Old Rectory in Carshalton which Sutton doesn't really want.

It is interesting to read the information on the Whitehall website about the restoration project:

'Saving Whitehall' secures a sustainable future for Whitehall, ensuring the building is well managed and maintained and that it attracts regular visitors and tourists....Initial works will tackle a damp problem in the building and remove intrusive 20th-century fixtures while original features are restored. The renovations will also see the opening of additional spaces....[which] will allow more space for....increasingly involved volunteer and comprehensive community programmes. These internal adaptations not only increase the utility of the building, but also provide greater and more sustainable opportunities for visitors to

learn about and explore heritage through newly developed permanent and temporary exhibitions.'

The Whitehall project sounds a lot like the proposals we put forward to the Council in 2016: restoring the Old Rectory to its 18th century design, encouraging local people to become involved with the restoration, delivering community programmes and providing exhibition space. Just imagine if the Council had supported us in 2016, what a difference it would have made. With their backing, we could have applied for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant and begun the restoration of the Old Rectory. Instead, despite the new star listing, Sutton still propose to convert the Old Rectory into flats.

Imagine the uproar if they planned the same fate for Whitehall.

MORE FROM THE WHITEHALL WEBSITE:

'The Grade II* listed building.....is part of the identity of Cheam Village, providing a rare and unrivalled glimpse of life in the local area over the past 500 years. As such, Sutton Council was keen to renovate the building, increasing accessibility to promote Whitehall as a destination for heritage tourism and the surrounding community.'

Change Cheam for Carshalton, 500 for 300, Whitehall for the Old Rectory. Brilliant!

AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE?

In 2016, the Council assured CORA that they would not sell the Old Rectory but would keep control of the building through Sutton Living Ltd. However, as recent experience has shown, can we now rely on this pledge? Without your quick response to our last emergency bulletin, it's possible that an officer of the Council, under delegated powers, would now have the authority to negotiate the transfer of the Old Rectory to a commercial developer.

At the same Strategy and Resources committee meeting it was agreed to transfer the Old Rectory to Sutton Living Ltd (SLL) on a long lease and at zero cost. SLL, as the commercial branch of the Council, is responsible for delivering new affordable rented housing within the borough. It was clear from the report before the committee that SLL was very concerned about the spiralling cost of the Old Rectory scheme and their ability to deliver it.

Originally, the transfer of the Old Rectory to SLL was intended to secure the future of the building, keeping it within the control of the council. Now all this is in doubt. It was made very clear in the report that SLL may still walk away from the project. There are so many hurdles to jump, not least at the point at which their plans for the house are submitted to the planning process.

Let us suppose that SLL get planning permission and proceed. How secure will the Council's hold on the building be? To circumvent any future Old Rectory tenants applying for the right to buy, the flats would be let on **assured shorthold tenancies**

Council tenancies: These range from: Introductory, Secure, Flexible and Joint.

Right to buy: This allows most council tenants to buy their council home at a discount.

Council Flats: There is a 50% discount if the occupant has been a public sector tenant for between 3 and 5 years. After 5 years, the discount goes up by 2% for every extra year to a maximum of 70% or £110,500 in London boroughs (whichever is lower).

Tenants can apply to buy their council home if they are secure tenants or have had a public sector landlord such as a council, housing association or NHS trust for 3 years - it does not have to be 3 years in a row.

(AST). AST is the most common type of tenancy if you rent from a private landlord or letting agent.

Inevitably though, changes are coming. The government is proposing a shake-up of the private rental sector to give such tenants greater protection. The move would end “no-fault” evictions, which give tenants as little as eight weeks’ notice after a fixed-term contract has come to an end. Jeremy Corbyn, when he was standing as prospective labour leader, suggested a private sector ‘Right to Buy’ scheme. This was taken up by Civitas in 2016, while in 2018, the Conservative think tank, Onward, suggested a similar policy, with landlords compensated through Capital Gains Tax concessions.

Private rented sector:

The number of households in the private rented sector was 4.5 million in 2017.

35% of these renters were between 25 and 34 years of age, 16% aged 45 to 54, whilst the proportion of 16 to 24 dropped to 12%.

62% had spent under 3 years in the same accommodation.

NOT THE RIGHT PROPERTY

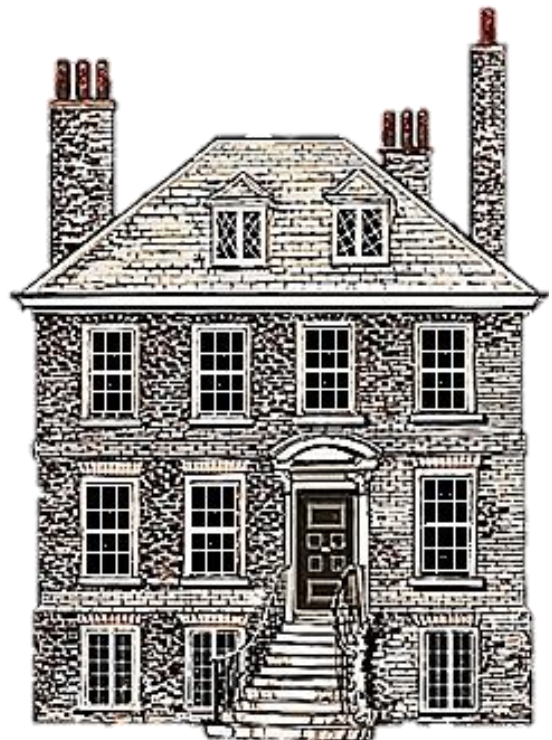
Of course the question that should be asked is whether the Grade II* Old Rectory is a suitable building for the purposes the Council propose? We have always thought not. Whilst we are buoyed up by the new star listing there is no denying it will make conversion all the more difficult and expensive. Will this be the excuse used to finally be rid of the building? We hope not. The Old Rectory is an asset just as important as Whitehall, Cheam. Surely there are much more imaginative ways in which the building can be utilised. We know the Council can do it, as Whitehall shows us. Come on Sutton, be pleased with your new Grade II* building and come up with a better scheme.

CORA

Annual General Meeting

Our third AGM is on 14th June 7.30pm at the Carshalton Water Tower. Entrance is via the gate on West Street and cars can be parked in Festival Walk, a short stroll away. This will be an opportunity to find out the current state of play with regards to Sutton Council’s plans and what CORA intend to do.

After the meeting there will be refreshments followed by a short talk: ‘Falling off the Page’ – enigmatic portraits, personalities and information edited out of the CORA book.



KEEPING IN TOUCH

We’d like to hear from you. Your comments and suggestions would be very welcome.

Email: savetheoldrectory@gmail.com



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