



## Duddridge the Traitor

James Duddridge, MP for Southend East and Rochford, has stabbed his constituents in the back with a speech in Parliament requesting that Central Government provide the funding for the dualling of Priory Crescent.

In his speech, Duddridge said:

**“I want to consider infrastructure and Priory Crescent. I would greatly appreciate it if the Under-Secretary updated the House on the dualling of Priory Crescent. The decision about whether we should dual has been controversial in Southend. However, the matter has been through a public consultation and it would be wrong, having gone through it, and given the need to improve east-west communications, for the road building not to go ahead. I look to the Under-Secretary for an update about the funding and some assurance that protesters will not block the democratic right of local people to dual that road.”**

The scheme, which would involve the removal of more than 130 mature trees and cover in concrete the Saxon Burial Ground currently being protected by the residents of Camp Bling, has been massively unpopular amongst local residents ever since it was mooted by the Conservative council in 2001. In the



Duddridge misled the Commons in his speech

Council's own Consultation exercise to gauge the popularity of the scheme, they were humiliated when more than 20,000 people came out against the road scheme yet only 16 - yes, sixteen - supported it.

*The Echo*, who have generally been in favour of the road scheme, recently published the results of a poll that they carried out, showing that 70% are against the widening of Priory Crescent.

The Public rejected the scheme utterly yet Duddridge ignores this whilst implying that the Public Consultation is on his side.

It is even more remarkable that Duddridge has chosen to support this scheme given that he has pledged to support a Climate Change Bill demanding a 3% year-on-year reduction in greenhouse gases. How can any sane person vote for a road scheme which can only increase traffic, and therefore pollution, at the same time as claiming to support Climate Change legislation?

Here is a résumé of the reasons why Priory Crescent should not be dualled:-

- the scheme has always been massively unpopular amongst local residents
- the cost has risen from £3.5 million to £25 million: at over £30,000 per metre, Tom Brake, Lib Dem Shadow Transport Secretary believes it could be the most expensive road in the world
- Southend Borough Council were heavily criticised at the Public Enquiry for their lack of Public Consultation
- there is no evidence that the road would do *anything* to reduce congestion or that journey times would be reduced
- more than 130 mature trees would be removed
- there is evidence, not available at the time of the Public Enquiry, that rising fuel costs are lead to a reduction in traffic
- one of the most important archaeological sites ever discovered would be lost for ever
- the new road would have an unacceptable impact on Priory Park
- any new road must lead to an increase in pollution and an acceleration of Climate Change

If you think that James Duddridge was letting down the People of Southend when he asked the Government to provide the funding for this road, then please write to let him know precisely what you think of him. His address is:

James Duddridge MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA.

You can also telephone his offices on 01702 616135 or email him at [duddridgej@parliament.uk](mailto:duddridgej@parliament.uk).

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PO Box 5818,  
Southend-on-Sea.  
SS1 9EN

<http://www.ppps.org.uk/>

# Happy Birthday, Camp Bling

Congratulations to Parklife, who last month celebrated the first anniversary of the creation of Camp Bling.

Camp Bling was set up by local people and members of the Parklife residents' campaign group, to stop the controversial widening of the A127/A1159 Priory Crescent, felling of 111 trees, concreting of 3000m<sup>2</sup> of public open space, and destruction of the world famous East Saxon king's burial discovered in 2003.

Since then, the campaign has continued in earnest, with regular public meetings, lobbying, petitioning, direct action, and a number of well attended events at the ever growing site, which continues to thrive on a 200m strip of land situated between the existing road and Liverpool Street railway line, in the very heart of town.

In the time the Camp has been running, the official cost of construction of the road scheme has risen to £25 million, which takes no account of the cost of eviction of

Camp Bling, currently estimated at over £1 million. The original price for the road scheme agreed with central Government in December 2000 was £3.5 million.

The Government were expected to make an announcement about the funding of the scheme in July this year, but the more than seven-fold cost increase caused them to think again and put the scheme on ice.

However, no money needs to be spent at all - if the scheme is scrapped, the Camp residents have promised to remove all evidence of their occupation.

Southend Council, however, are still as determined as ever to go ahead with the scheme, with Council leader Murray Foster deluding himself that "there is a clear majority of people who want to see this scheme go ahead." (*Southend Echo*, 26/09/06) When the *Echo* questioned this, he had to admit that this was based on "people I have talked to" and not on any polls, all of which have shown the vast majority to be against the scheme.

## A message from Camp Bling

Both The Ant and I send out our thanks and best wishes to everyone who has joined our cause at Camp Bling over the past twelve amazing months.

If we had set out in advance with the intention of making the camp so successful we would probably still be waiting for all the right ingredients to appear. We simply set out with a two week plan and created an opportunity which people have grasped and made into something so much bigger.

People say that they are behind us and that is great to hear. The reality however is that Camp Bling has been an amazing team effort, with thousands of local people visiting, making donations, offering help and support, and lobbying the decision makers - everyone plays an important part.

Camp Bling has shown quite clearly that local people can be inspired and empowered enough to take action. It has also shown just as clearly that the majority of the local population (plus people from further afield) are still against the controversial F5 road widening.

Please visit us if you can, check out [www.savepriorypark.org](http://www.savepriorypark.org) and tell your friends and family all about the campaign and your impressions of our camp.

The people of Southend have put over five years of combined effort into the campaign, and we will continue to do everything that we can to stop the road widening on your behalf.

*Shaun Qureshi  
Campaigner - Parklife*



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