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The street of the lonely people

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There is a reason they do not want the bins put out too early in Semilong. It is not simply a case of deterring vermin.

It is not even about keeping the Victorian frontages clear of 21st century clutter to preserve the heritage appeal of this historic part of Northampton.

The truth is that every extra hour a recycling box is left unattended and unobserved on the street increases the likelihood of it being turned into a one bedroom "apartment".

The builders round here are going flat crazy (like plain bonkers, only more profitable). Most of the square things in Semilong have been sized up for their potential as bijou living spaces.

There has been a flood of planning applications down our street to create little hives of apartments in various terrace homes.

By my calculation it is something like 15 new flats on the site of three former family houses, to add to the three hostels and several other houses of multiple occupancy that already exist.

One building picked out to be turned into flats started life as a glorified tool store a couple of summers back.

Now it seems destined for a life beyond the wildest dreams of any ordinary shed: a compact town centre residence within walking distance of the compost heap, would suit single lawn mower, non-smoker preferred.

I would like to believe that Semilong (an area that people come from all over the world to live in) is now such a desirable location that we are only letting new people in one by one.

However, Castle Ward independent councillor Tony Clarke has been keeping his eye on the growing number of "single person dwellings" Semilong is attracting.

He recognises that there is a fast buck to be made, where developers are saying to themselves: why sell on one property for £250,000 when you can sell five for £100,000?

You can't blame people for wanting to make money from their investments. But the effect of creating more one-bed flats is to create a more transient and fragmented population in Semilong.

Crime is dropping across Castle Ward, thanks to the community policing team. The red light district seems to be as repressed as it has ever been. Even the drug dens under the arches are being cleared out.

Why, of all times, should we be encouraging an influx of "loners" now? What else do you call someone who lives in a one-bed apartment? People with friends have one bedroom houses, not one-bedroom flats.

The truth is, the best kind of neighbours we can hope for when the apartments are filled are friendly loners without cars (but then you have to ask yourself why they haven't got a car).

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Features



Weekend Life



Term Time

Maybe it doesn't sound so bad, but what would you tell your children to do if they met a friendly loner in the street?

Please forgive me a little paranoia. I am living through a time of change, but let's not pretend it benefits an area to have its housing stock reduced into a dense sauce of overcrowded humanity.

I am sure the planning applications in our street will be decided on their merits but the general trend seems to have been set.

When society's problems seem to be tackled most effectively at the community level, we should do our best to ensure that those communities really do exist and are not just the names of police beats in bedsit-land.

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 1 SCN, Semilong Northampton 06/10/2008 10:36:07

This article, though it raises concerns of worthwhile value is nothing but short sighted and of very blinkered perspectives.

The conclusion "Why, of all times, should we be encouraging an influx of "loners" now? What else do you call someone who lives in a one-bed apartment? People with friends have one bedroom houses, not one-bedroom flats" shows little understanding of the big picture. Branding all residents of these one bedroom homes as friendless loners, prospective child molesters and degenerates is slanderous to the extreme and speaks more of the author of this article than the topic they have written about.

Semilong, despite the Borough Council allowing it to degenerate and add to the areas problems, it continues to be a great place to live for many reasons..the location, shops, transport links etc etc. In addition, there are a whole host of reasons why it is sometimes preferable to live in a one-bed apartment rather than a house. An apartment is easier to maintain, more economical in cost and in heating, more environmentally friendly etc)

Though any area should include a range of different types of property for the health of the community, the author of this article has shown absolutely no understanding of Semilong, its residents and of the nature and value of one bedroom apartments.

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