

## Historic home under threat says councillor

A SANDWELL councillor has raised concerns over the future of a well-known listed building in Great Barr.

Councillor Sadie Smith is worried that the grade II listed Red House which is of historic and architectural significance to the area could be discarded by the council and lost to the community.

The area has also been plagued by vandals and litterbugs and the long-term future of the park has now been thrown into doubt as the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) who currently lease the building from Sandwell council are struggling to afford the upkeep.

Discussions are currently underway at the council but Cllr Smith is deeply concerned that community groups will no longer have the opportunity to use the building.

Cllr Smith said the council had expected the primary care trust to move in and allow the Friends of Red House Park to have part of the building but the plans had fallen through.

"I am concerned that we retain the Red House for some form of community activity in an area which has almost no council-provided services," she said.

"The House has great potential. We may need to find someone who is willing to take on the lease and who has the imagination to make the most of its features and work with the Friends.

"The Council seems ready to offload an historic and important piece of Great Barr's heritage," she added.

Sandwell council's cabinet member for culture & leisure Cllr Linda Horton confirmed the long term future of the Red House was under discussion by the council with the BCTV.

"It is a grade II listed building dating from 1841 and obviously we are all keen to protect its historic integrity," said Cllr Horton.

"Currently the house is on long term lease to a trust and therefore the council's powers over repairs are limited.

"However we are satisfied that the leaseholders are keeping to the terms of the lease."

She said they had also worked closely with the police to combat a recent spate of vandalism in the area.

"I believe the police operation has resulted in a number of arrests and we have arranged to put in toughened glass in all the windows," she added.

