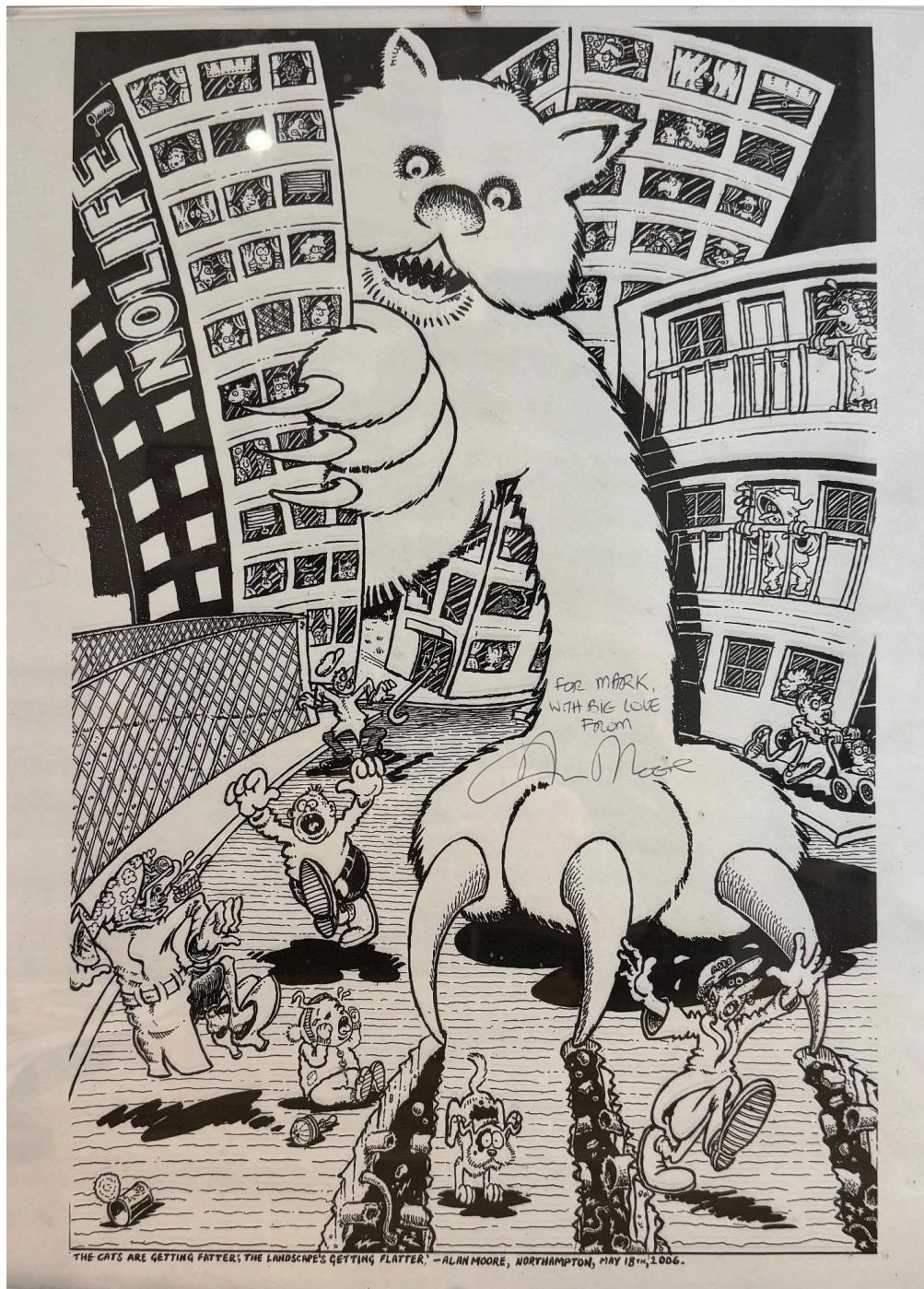


97 Charles Street Heritage Group  
**The Alan Moore Cartoon**

**The 2006 Housing Campaign**

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**The Cartoon**



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## Campaign for council housing

A GROUP of council tenants from Northampton took to the streets of London last week joining thousands of like-minded campaigners.

Their aim was to lobby the Government to give local councils a fair crack of the whip in maintaining their housing stock.

But they were disappointed with their reception from Northampton North MP Sally Keeble who chose not to back their crusade.

All local authorities must bring their housing stock up to a standard set by the Government by 2010.

Northampton Borough Council has chosen to retain its stock rather than hive it off to a housing association.

But the Government has decided to give housing associations far more flexibility and access to more funding for the work.

Defend Council Housing Northampton branch chairman Norman Adams said: "Tenants have shown in ballots around the country that they don't want private landlords to take over their homes which were only built because the private market failed to provide decent housing for all in the past."

Their campaign is for a fourth option which would give Northampton Borough Council a chance to borrow more money.

This would mean the housing stock could be brought up to the aspirational Northampton standard which exceeds the Government requirement.

"After speaking to Sally Keeble (MP, Northampton North) we were very disappointed by her attitude in refusing to support fairness for tenants and councils when so many MPs and the public see the sense and justice of this campaign," added Mr Norman.

"Increasing numbers of MP's see that the only way forward to ease the housing shortage in this country is to allow councils the right to build and repair and to have a level playing field in housing finance between the public and private sector.

"Only then can the 7,000 waiting list in Northampton be addressed and decent homes for all be provided.

"We don't think Sally Keeble has any answers to this problem beyond supporting the Government dogma that privatisation is good and public services provided by democratic accountable local councils are bad, especially when it comes to housing provision for all sectors of society."

■ In reply Mrs Keeble said: "This was not a mass lobby."

"Two people from Northampton north came to speak to me - this is one of the smallest lobbies I have ever known."

"It is also not true that thousands of people came from all over the country."

"If they did they were in deep hiding, as I was over in Westminster Hall where they were also meeting during the day, and I didn't see thousands of people."

"In fact I didn't even see hundreds. In fact I didn't even see one hundred."

"Council housing in Northampton is the responsibility of Northampton Borough Council which decided not to go for stock transfer, but to retain its ownership of the housing stock."

"That is the decision made by locally elected councillors who are accountable to the local electorate for the decision."

"I think the people who came to see me supported the Council in its decision."

"So I don't really know why they came to see me."

# CHAMPION OF THE BURROWS

Herald & Post: 1 of 2 30/3/2006

WHEN seeking a suitable advocate, Northampton's movers and shakers would do well to seek the approval of comic book eccentric Alan Moore.

The bearded "magician" with flowing locks has jump-started the imaginations of at least two generations with his tales of fantastical places and outrageous beings, writes *Craig Orsby*.

He was at the vanguard of British comic book writers to take the United States by storm in the 1980s and yet he holds onto his earthiness by clinging to his roots.

Moore was born on November 18, 1953, in Spring Boroughs, Northampton. He was the oldest son of brewery worker Ernest Moore and writer Sylvia Doreen and spent much of his youth in poverty.

But his involvement with amateur magazine *Embryo* and the Northampton Art Lab in the early 1970s eventually led to a career in comic strip production with *Sounds* magazine.

While there he created detective tales under the pseudonym Curt Vile with Roscoe Moscow as the central character.

Later he would write for *Doctor Who Weekly* and *2000AD* and eventually *Warrior* magazine, the first platform for his dystopian tale *V for Vendetta* which has been transformed into a major film.

Eventually the big American comic companies came calling and he was persuaded to take the helm on the *Saga of Swamp Thing* series.

But now with several other classics under his belt including *Watchmen*, *From Hell* and *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* – two of which he is now trying to disown after their mistreatment by

***"It is a joy, having written about fantastic cities, to write about all those familiar landmarks where I grew up – Bath Street, Castle Street, Doddridge Church."***

Hollywood – he is returning to his roots.

His first novel *The Voice of the Fire* was published in 1996 and each of the twelve interconnected tales spanning 6,000 years takes place within ten miles of Northampton.

Then we have the novel he is currently penning – *Jerusalem* – which is also about Northampton.

"*Voice of the Fire*," Moore told the Herald and Post, "all took place within a few miles of Northampton and was about 320 pages long."

"My next novel, which will take me another couple of years at least, will be close to 1,000 pages and is also about Northampton but a much smaller part of it."

"The next will probably be well over a thousand pages and take place in the back half of my kitchen."

Despite his success and every opportunity for a more opulent lifestyle he eschews the limelight, preferring a reclusive life in his home town.

He has fond memories of his early days, despite its hardships. Those experiences eventually shaped his literary philosophy. He sticks up for the everyman.

This is the reason he chose to back the fight for quality council housing in Northampton. He announced last week he was designing artwork for a poster to raise cash for the Defend Council Housing campaign.

"The Boroughs has been dismantled piece by piece, sold off and degraded. The skeletal remains of it are being auctioned off until I don't know what will be left other than a big urban black hole."

His comments give an idea of his passion for the place. Northampton Borough Council's sale of Beaumont and Claremont Courts for £1 in 2004 caused him great dismay.

"I can remember when those towers went up and at the time we were impressed. It felt like we'd been moved to New York with its skyscrapers."

"They were put there to house some of the people who were being cleared away from what were called the slums of the Boroughs."

In some ways Moore seems to feel a responsibility to educate bureaucrats in the history of the area.

"It is a joy, having written about fantastic cities, to write about all those familiar landmarks where I grew up – Bath Street, Castle Street, Doddridge Church."

"It is an incredibly important area historically. The opening



## CHAMPION OF THE BURROWS

Herald & Post: 2 of 2 30/3/2006

scene of Shakespeare's King John takes place at Northampton Castle, three crusades were raised here, Charlie Chaplin did some of his first performances at the age of seven in Gold Street and Horseshoe Street and Oliver Cromwell and (Sir Thomas) Fairfax were billeted in Northampton's Marygate before going out to final battle."

According to Moore, the town's rich history is no coincidence. "An almost suspicious number of things have happened within this one-mile square of dirt."

"An eighth century monk went on a visit to Golgotha in Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified.

There he found a cross and God told him to take it and bury it in the centre of his land." Which turned out to be Northampton. Or more specifically, Spring Boroughs.

"So it's not just me saying Northampton is the centre of the universe," he added, somewhat tongue in cheek. "God says so as well."

## COMIC book marvel Alan Moore is backing the campaign to save council housing in Northamptonshire.

The 52-year-old grew up in Northampton's Spring Boroughs and despite living in poverty for much of his early life, still holds a great love and respect for the area. For this reason he has thrown his weight behind the county's Defend Council Housing campaign.

He is currently designing the artwork for a run of 100 posters which will raise funds for the pressure group. The original will then be put on Ebay for Moore fans the world over to bid for.

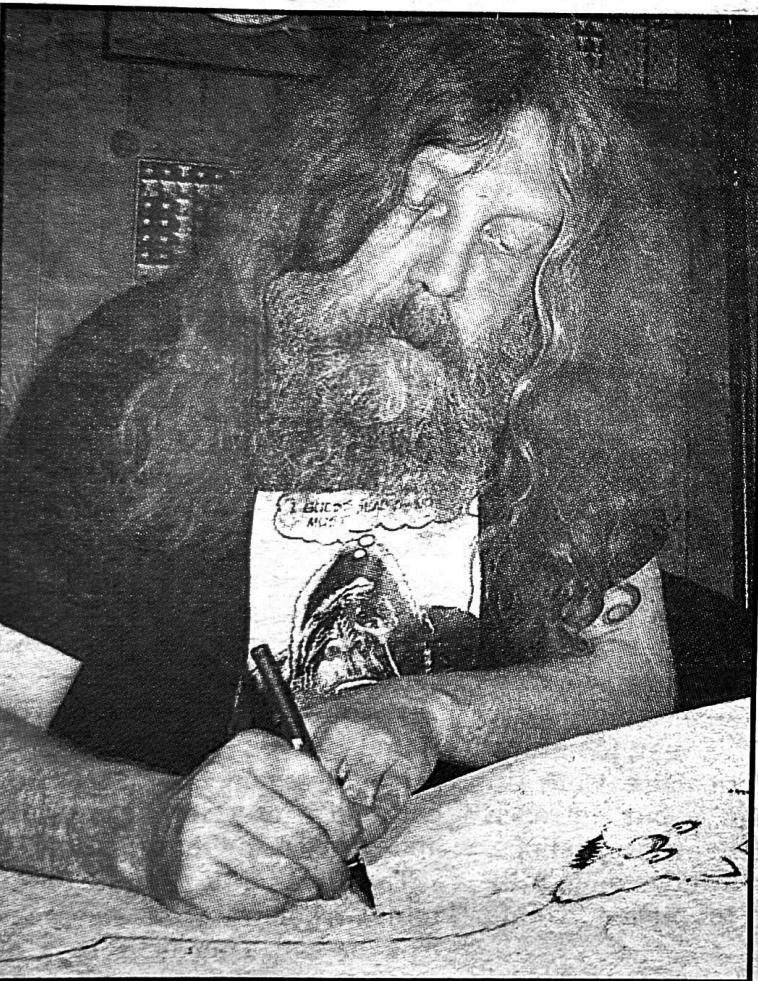
He said: "It's a cartoon that is showing a view not dissimilar to the one from

the top of Scarletwell Street looking up to the tower blocks which is a view I remember very well from my own childhood.

"You're looking up from somewhere around the top end of Spring Lane School and you've got a gigantic, very fat cat that is pulling back one of the skyscrapers and with a look of vicious greed in its eyes is leaning forward to rake its claws across Scarletwell Street."

Moore said his main reason for backing the campaign was that the area had suffered administrative failure for far too long.

He chose the image as a result of Northampton Borough Council selling Beaumont Court and Claremont Court flat



blocks for £1 to Leicester Housing Association in April 2004.

He said: "I think it's disgraceful but on the other hand hardly surprising. The story of the Boroughs as far as I can see is one of criminal neglect going back as far as the First World War. I don't know what I'd propose because the Boroughs could probably never be restored after the ravages that have been visited on it."

"A little bit of genuine investment wouldn't hurt but if they can't manage that, if the council can just restrain themselves from selling off the last morsels of it, that would be a positive."

Northampton Borough Council plans to retain its housing stock as a result of pressure from residents

But DCH is campaigning for a fourth option from the Government which would mean local authorities had ample cash to spend on their housing stock.

The current proposals from deputy prime minister John Prescott's office would leave housing associations reaping the benefits of a stock transfer and better funding arrangements.

DCH spokesman Norman Adams said: "We hope this will send a message to the councils in Northants who are hell bent on conning tenants out of their secure tenancies with the bait of a new bathroom or some other bribe."

"Councils up and down the country have been falsely painting a rosy picture of what tenants will get if they transfer their homes to a housing association." Housing bosses at NBC were delighted to hear of Alan Moore's support for Defend Council Housing.

Spokesman Cllr Yousuf Miah (Cons, Ecton Brook) said: "It's very impressive to have someone as high profile as that supporting them. In the end we want the very best for our tenants which is good, decent homes. As you know we're working on that front to achieve the Government's decent homes standard."

"If Mr Moore wants to help get on board and fight the cause to get more money out of the Government then great."

"If we want decent homes we have to think differently. We have our own decent home aspirations in Northampton which far exceed the Government's."

"On one hand we've got to provide people with decent homes at the Government standard by 2010 but beyond that we will struggle to give people the homes that they want and deserve."

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