

West Hampstead & Fortune Green Neighbourhood Development Forum meeting, 10th May 2017

Present: Nick Jackson, Keith Moffitt, David Brescia (taking minutes), Linda Sluys, Alan Watson, Guy Shackle, C de Poortere, Sue Spreckley, Terry Daly, Marcel Maag, Hazel Finn, John Eastwood, Alan Watson, Mike Borgeaud, Reneé Banoun, Stella Tysall, Anna Franklin, Janice Gayle-Farlow, Maire Lowe, Clarence Jackman, Mark Stonebanks, Mark Huld, Enyd Norman, Robert Lastman.

1. Welcome & apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from: Mary Murphy, Cllr Phil Rosenberg, Angela Ellison, Cllr Flick Rea, Ian Cohen, James Earl, Sue Measures.

2. Introduction of the committee

Members (in attendance) of the committee elected at the recent AGM (6th March 2017) were introduced:

- Joint Chairs: Nick Jackson and Keith Moffitt
- Secretary: David Brescia
- Membership Secretary: Linda Sluys
- Committee: Alan Watson [others being Guy Shackle, Cllr Phil Rosenberg, Sue Measures, Ian Cohen]

3. Minutes of last meeting / AGM

The minutes were approved, with no objections.

4. Current Planning Applications

The Camden Council **planning applications email notification system** was discussed:

- Problems previously reported with the system in January seem to have now been resolved.
- Thus far sign-up by the public appears to have been relatively low. The NDF will put out a link to the service on its Twitter account and to its mailing list, reminding people how to sign up.
- Many feel the system of notifications is cumbersome: currently subscribers can only filter the notifications they receive by ward or by distance from their address, therefore it is difficult to work out efficiently which applications are important and which are not. (Nick however reads the summaries of all of them for West Hampstead and Fortune Green and circulates the important ones to the NDF committee.) The NDF will ask Camden Council if the system can be improved so that subscribers are given more options to filter out categories of application that are unimportant to them: e.g. to choose only be informed when new residential or commercial units are proposed, but to opt out of receiving notification of minor extensions or alterations.
- The NDF objected to the **Blackburn Road mobile phone mast application** (2016/7123/P), but although the Council refused approval for it, the matter is purportedly 'not dead'. Nick is investigating.

5. Bin Collections impact on streetscapes

Many attendees expressed anger at Camden Council's decision to reduce general rubbish collections from weekly to fortnightly for most streets in West Hampstead & Fortune Green.

- Residents complained of unsightly overflowing bins, potential health hazards, increased fly-tipping, and that fact that the new black bins supplied by Camden Council are too large to fit in the purpose-built bin storage areas built in front of many former houses converted into flats.
- It was explained that the NDF's remit is primarily to comment on planning issues, and the compliance of planning applications with the Neighbourhood Development Plan. Camden Council's policy priorities with regards to rubbish collection were arguably not a planning issue, and therefore not an NDF issue.
- Residents suggested nonetheless that elements of the bin issue may be considered to fall within the NDF's remit, insofar as Camden Council's rubbish collection policy was causing a deterioration of the 'streetscape' [i.e. the Neighbourhood Plan calls for 'Development which positively interfaces with the street and streetscape in which it is located' (p.16)]. It was agreed that the NDF's assessment of individual planning applications should be informed by consideration of the current rubbish collection policy of Camden Council – e.g.
 - Do the architectural designs of new proposed developments include enough space to store all the types of bin mandated by Camden Council?
 - Will prospective property designs allow residents to comply with Camden's new requirement to place bins 'within one metre of your property boundary' on collection day?
 - Will new developments which further increase the population of West Hampstead and Fortune Green add to fly-tipping problems?
 - The NDF Committee will consider drafting a letter to Camden Council, setting out its general position with regards to the above.

6. 168 West End Lane (Lola's Cupcakes)

The forum discussed application (2017/0631/P) to allow a branch of Lola's Cupcakes to move into the site of the former Colour Division shop on West End Lane, through change of the building's permitted use class to A3 (restaurants and cafés):

- Some bemoaned the loss of retail space on West End Lane to yet another café, while others stated that the site in question falls just outside the zone of West End Lane where Camden planners have previously committed not to allow further increase in class A3.
- It was debated whether the property would have remained empty were A3 permission not granted.
- It was noted that Lola's Cupcakes has applied for an alcohol license for the site (e.g. to serve wine and salad).
- Lola's Cupcakes has applied to put tables on their forecourt. While the forecourt is part of their property, such permission has the potential to narrow the pavement of West End Lane, which is increasingly congested due to the local population increase. The NDF will examine the application to see if Lola's Cupcakes are applying to put chairs and tables beyond their forecourt – if they are, we shall object, and ask for a clear delineation of the forecourt from the public highway.

7. 86 Mill Lane ('Bake-a-Boo')

The NDF has submitted an objection to application (2016/6359/P) where the landlord seeks to convert a large portion of the ground floor of the former 'Bake-a-Boo' cake shop into a

residential flat. The Neighbourhood Plan (page 55) expressly opposes any conversion of ground floor business space on Mill Lane into residential use. Only two other objections have been submitted so far, by members of the public. Camden Council has yet to make its decision on the application.

8. 23 Ravenshaw Street

Application (2017/0911/P) for a large infill of 8 flats including basement on Ravenshaw had attracted 16 objections including one from the NDF. The NDF objection argues that the development is overly dense (8 flats in the space currently occupied by one house), that the façade is ugly and out of step with the character of the local area, and that the road has no history of basement development. The NDF objection also notes Camden's new rubbish collection policy, and suggests that the development as currently designed allows insufficient space to store two weeks' worth of waste for 8 flats.

A local resident has leafleted 150 addresses on the street to alert additional potential objectors. Nick is trying to get hold of the planning officer to discuss the NDF's concerns further.

9. Steel wall for Beckford School

Beckford School had proposed to construct a black steel wall in front of its dustbins. Nick had met with the school and the planning officers, and persuaded the school that this was not a good idea. The planning officer had confirmed the proposal would not be approved in its current form. The NDF will submit an objection stating that we understand this application is being withdrawn, but are objecting anyway for the record.

10. Smaller applications

The forum discussed whether certain applications should be considered too small for the NDF to involve itself in:

- Everything would have to be considered on a case-by-case basis, but hypothetically the NDF would not propose to get involved in a dispute between two neighbours over a garden extension.
- However, where a small application has the potential to start a harmful trend, this would be worthy of involvement by the NDF. For example, application (2017/2062/P) proposes to build a mansard roof extension on 36 Mill Lane, which would set a precedent prompting neighbouring properties to propose the same thing, ultimately raising roofline of the entire street. The Neighbourhood Plan policy A.14 does state "Roof extensions and loft conversions should fit in with existing roofline". The conversion of numerous garages along Mill Lane to 2-3 storey houses was cited as another example of individual applications setting precedents rapidly followed by neighbouring landowners.

11. O2 Centre Car Park

Land Securities stated on a previous occasion that they would develop the O2 Centre car park at some point (e.g. into hundreds of apartments), but that this project was not a priority for them. (Sainsbury's and Homebase pay good rent on a long lease.) The NDF has been keen to engage with Land Securities to learn more about their plans from the outset, but at the same time we do not want to inadvertently prompt Land Securities to hasten the redevelopment, as it will ultimately add to the population and crowding of West Hampstead.

12. 317 Finchley Road

Permission has been granted (2016/2910/P) for a ten-storey building on 317 Finchley Road, comprising 22 flats. A number of nearby residents objected, while letters of support came from nearby business owners. The development sets a precedent that will doubtless be cited by owners of other properties along Finchley Road seeking to raise their height to ten storeys in the future.

13. West Hampstead underground station

The NDF has been campaigning for West Hampstead underground station to receive funding from the Mayor of London / TFL pot for step-free access.

- Residents are advised to put pressure on local political candidates to support this.
- It is worth pointing out that the population around West Hampstead station has grown far more than many other underground stations under consideration for funds.
- Regular users of the station are concerned that overcrowding at peak times is creating danger – on the station stairs, and crossing the street outside.
- The NDF committee will continue to lobby Camden Council on this subject.

14. 156 West End Lane

Despite objections from over 1,000 local residents (and the NDF), application (2015/6455/P) was approved by a majority of Camden councillors on the planning committee, and has now also passed the Mayor of London. The site's current ground floor tenant, Travis Perkins, is said to be considering whether to contest the lease. The NDF committee has considered whether to attempt a judicial review, but NDF resources are limited.

15. Gondar Gardens

A number of successively larger residential development schemes have been applied for in recent years on the green open space of the grassed over former Gondar Gardens reservoir. All three were rejected by Camden Council; one (for 28 residential units) was granted on appeal but has not been built. Instead, the land was sold to a new owner, who is consulting on a proposal to build a five-storey complex of 108 private serviced retirement homes on the site. This proposal would be three times the size of all the previous applications for this site combined.

- Residents consider the current site a 'green lung', and do not wish to see a large portion of it built over.
- The development would lead to the loss of five existing parking spaces on the street, due to the frontage.
- The proposed development does not include any 'affordable' accommodation: units could be expected to sell for in the region of £750,000 each.
- Sarre Road residents and WHGARA (West Hampstead Gardens & Residents Association) are objecting; they and the NDF have had a meeting with the planning offer to discuss this proposal.
- The NDF intends to object to the proposal, on the basis of its height, massing and overall size, and that importance of the site to nature. Neighbourhood Plan policy C2 states: "Gondar Gardens Reservoir: ...In light of its designation as a Site of Importance to Nature Conservation in existing planning documents, any development should retain as much open space as possible and offer limited, managed public access consistent with maintaining suitable conditions for bio-diversity and wildlife. Due to the significant amount of open space the site provides, views across the site should be protected from significant damage or loss..."

16. Any Other Business

- It was noted that the Pyerford Neighbourhood Forum is basing their constitution on ours.
- Residents observed that getting information from Camden Council about planning proposals can be difficult, but that having an NDF helps.
- Concern was expressed over property extensions into gardens on Kingdon Road, and the potential of such precedents to speed a general trend of the loss of green space throughout London, with negative environmental consequences such as rainwater runoff requiring attenuation. Planning permission is required to pave over more than 5m², but residents do not believe Camden is enforcing this. The NDF committee will research this issue, so that it can be discussed with more knowledge at the next meeting.
- In addition to loss of gardens, residents expressed dismay at other examples of loss of green space, such as developments along the north side of Mill Lane, and loss of trees with various large developments. The Neighbourhood Development Plan (page 62) calls for the protection and maintenance of existing trees, and “provision for the appropriate planting of additional trees, relative to the size of the development.”
- Complaints were expressed about sub-division of terraced houses into multiple-occupancy, adding to the overcrowding of the area.
- A recent decrease in the number of basement applications in this area was noted, ascribed to public objections, and the 2016 Camden Local Plan (which states “The Council will only permit basement development where it is demonstrated to its satisfaction that the proposal would not cause harm to: a. neighbouring properties; b. the structural, ground, or water conditions of the area; c. the character and amenity of the area; d. the architectural character of the building; and e. the significance of heritage assets.”).
- A member of the public suggested the NDF invite a speaker from ‘Architects for Social Housing’ (ASH) to speak to the forum at some point in the future – while noting their controversial political positions.
- It is unknown when the cranes amidst the Ballymore development on ‘West Hampstead Square’ might be coming down.
- The next annual Jester Festival on Fortune Green will be held from 1st-2nd July. The NDF will be running a stall, as in previous years, which will be a good opportunity to publicise the work of the forum, and add more residents to our mailing list.

17. Date of next meeting

The next NDF meeting will be on Wednesday 13th September at 7.30pm at West Hampstead Library.