

Fortune Green & West Hampstead Neighbourhood Development Forum

Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 25th April at The Alliance pub

Present: James Earl (Chair), Nick Jackson (Communications officer), Amos Sivan, Cllr Russell Eagling, Jane Evans, David Richards, Cllr Nancy Jirira, Jill Hood, Cllr John Bryant, Sally Hodgson, Patricia Cook, Ian Cohen, Claus Thierback, Cllr Gillian Risso-Gill, Heather Downham.

Apologies: Cllr Keith Moffitt (Vice-chair), Mark Stonebanks (Treasurer), Joan Moffat, Bradley Brown, Stephen Nathan, Cllr Flick Rea, Virginia Berridge, Mark Hutton, Linda Felton, Sue Measures.

1. Welcome & Introductions:

James welcomed Jennifer Walsh & Richard Mileham from Camden Council's planning department.

2. Minutes of the last meeting – 26th March:

The development at 187-199 West End Lane has been approved by the Mayor of London.

The position of Secretary remains unfilled; a volunteer would be welcome.

The Council has no plans to sell the 156 West End Lane building until next year at the earliest.

Following Mark's suggestion, a stall has been booked for the NDF at the Jester Festival on Saturday 30th June & Sunday 1st July. Volunteers will be needed to staff the stall on both days; we will also need a table, display boards etc. This will be on the agenda for the May meeting.

3. Guest Speaker – Camden Council planner:

Jennifer outlined the current council and national government policy on Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs). They were introduced in the Localism Act, November 2011, but the regulations about NDPs only came into force on 6th April 2012, so it's a very new concept. Camden Council (CC) is offering advice and support to groups wanting to draw up NDPs in the borough. So far CC has received 3 applications: Kentish Town, King's Cross and Heath & Hampstead Society.

Groups have to make 2 applications – one for the Area and one for the Forum (these can be submitted at the same time). Applications need the support of at least 21 people who live/work/represent the area; these names need to be representative of the area as a whole. A constitution is also needed. Once CC has received and processed an application for Area/Forum, there is then a consultation period of 6 weeks before it is formally approved.

NDPs have to fit in with Camden planning policy, the London Plan, the national planning framework, plus some aspects of EU legislation.

Once the Plan is submitted to CC, it then goes to an independent planning inspector for approval. If it is found to be sound there is then a referendum in the area covered by a plan; approval is by simple majority of those who vote. The government has yet to publish the rules about the referenda, so the process is not currently clear.

If the NDP is approved in a referendum, it becomes a statutory planning document, sitting alongside the Camden plan.

In response to questions, the following points were raised:

Camden Council will offer NDFs as much assistance as possible; officers will be available to discuss and offer advice on drafts of the plan.

There is no specific timeframe for the stages of writing the NDP, however once a Forum has been accepted by CC it has 5 years to write a plan.

The NDF can make comments on any current planning application, just like any other local group.

CC do not approve the final plan; but can advise on the text and whether it fits in with other plans.

The NDP has to fit into the national planning policy of 'pro-growth'. Questions were asked about the growth predicted in both wards; it's not clear if the Camden plan goes into this much detail for the two wards.

Once the NDP is approved, it will be used as a framework for development by developers.

There were questions about how specific the NDP can be – it can't have a blanket ban on basement conversions; it can mention a general height limit and require new developments are in keeping with existing buildings (the example given was red/grey bricks); it is difficult to be too prescriptive in architectural terms.

The NDF will need to liaise with Conservation Areas in our area.

Questions were asked about high streets/shops – we can't regulate who occupies each shop (eg we can't have a ban on new Tescos); we can have design guidance (eg for shop frontages); we can seek to promote diversification of shops & facilities.

Questions were asked about how we express social provisions – eg for schools, health facilities. We need to get the opinions of schools and health centres/surgeries. We are still awaiting data from the 2011 census;

information from the 2001 census will be circulated, although this may be significantly out of date.

The NDP needs to consider where future S106 payments should be directed; into what services & facilities we would like to see more of.

A new CC initiative is seeking to produce a 'Local List' for the borough. This is a list of undesignated (ie not currently listed) 'heritage assets' – this can be buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes – which merit consideration in the planning process. These can be listed in the NDP. It might be possible to protect certain views.

The NDP can be used to raise issues like the need for a permanent area available for markets.

In terms of the number of licensed premises, licensing is generally separate from planning, but there is some overlap.

There was a question about neglected/redundant spaces, some of which are owned by the council.

Organisations such as Planning Aid can offer assistance in drawing up plans.

Richard said he would soon be starting a project looking at the interchange area and what improvements can be made there and in the surrounding area. He said he was keen to work with the NDF on this.

4. Submission of NDF application:

We are now in a position to submit our application to CC, having met the necessary criteria. The final part is the list of 21 names & addresses. James said several more were needed to get us to this figure. Jennifer said it was important to have a range of people across the area supporting the NDF. James said he would aim to submit the application in early May.

5. Funding and website:

The Treasurer is opening a bank account; details will be circulated at the next meeting.

Thanks to Nick, we now have a website for the Forum: <http://www.ndpwesthampstead.org.uk/>

There's also an email address: ndpwesthampstead@gmail.com

6. Future Plans:

James said the first two meetings had focussed on establishing the Forum. We have now had two meetings hearing from CC officers. The next few months will be spent on a period of initial consultation to find out what local people want from the NDP. This will be discussed further at the May meeting. We will then have an informal meeting in June and the stall at the Jester Festival. After this it is hoped we will be able to produce a first draft of the plan, which will be the focus of a meeting in July.

The following comments were made:

It was pointed out that it would be important to involve local businesses in both the NDP and asking for financial support

There's a need to focus on both an over-arching strategic plan for the area, as well specific detail.

There was a discussion about when to involve schools/doctors etc in our plans now or to go to them once we have a draft plan in place.

There was a request for statistics on new developments – how many people, school-age children etc.

7. Any other business:

None

8. Next meeting:

The next meeting will be on **Thursday 31st May** at 7.30pm – venue tbc.