

Fortune Green & West Hampstead Neighbourhood Development Forum

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 26th July at 7.30pm at WHCC

Present: James Earl (Chair), Cllr Keith Moffitt (Vice-chair), Mark Stonebanks (Treasurer), David Richards, Linda Sluys, Jane Evans, Heather Downham, Cllr Flick Rea, Angela Ellison, Patricia Cook, Sue Measures.

1. Welcome & apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Nick Jackson, Virginia Berridge, Mark Hutton, Joan Moffatt, Stephen Nathan, Cllr John Bryant & Cllr Gillian Risso-Gill.

2. Minutes of the last meeting – 31st May:

There were no corrections; other items dealt with below.

3. Initial consultation:

James said the initial period of consultation, during June & July, had been successful. The stall at the Jester Festival had proved to be popular and the results of the ticks/comments on the photographs had been circulated. The survey (both online & paper) has received more than 150 responses; the results will be collated during August and circulated to members of the Forum.

4. Update on events attended:

Keith had attended a meeting to discuss the 'Camden Plan'. This is the council's strategy for the next four years. It goes wider than planning issues and covers the whole borough.

5. Update on NDF application:

James said an initial application had been submitted and then amended following feedback from planning officers. The initial response was positive, but in mid-June there was a request for more consultation with a long list of groups (including young people, minority ethnic groups, older people, disabled people, faith groups, local businesses, landowners, councillors, community groups – and somewhat bizarrely – West Hampstead's Ethiopian community). James said he had been disappointed and frustrated by this response and felt the Council were discouraging rather than encouraging the application.

However, after the positive feedback received during the initial consultation James proposed going ahead with a second application, which was agreed. Sue Measures has been working on a 'community involvement strategy' for the Forum, which will be part of the second application. A draft will be circulated with the minutes for comments.

Flick said there was 'consultation fatigue' in our area and some suspicion about whether views are listened to. It was noted that the Council appeared to be giving minority groups preferential treatment in terms of seeking their views; it didn't seem to value the views of individuals. It was asked whether Camden Council has to go through these hoops when compiling their planning documents. Keith said the need for widespread consultation was part of the government legislation establishing neighbourhood planning.

Sue said meetings generally don't involve certain sections of the community and that the Forum needs to demonstrate its commitment to community involvement. This will need commitment and time. It was suggested the Forum work with existing groups such as community centres, schools, the library, friends of parks groups etc. This can be done during the process of writing the Plan. Members of the Forum can act as 'ambassadors' for the Plan to community groups/bodies.

6. First draft of the Plan:

James had circulated a first draft of the Plan before the meeting. He had been working on this for the past month. He stressed it was a preliminary document and was all up for debate.

Linda said there seemed to be a large amount of changes in the area which was changing its character. She felt there was a loss of community feeling and the village feel of the area.

It was also noted that new developments appear to be mainly housing and there was a loss of land available for business and employment use. The example of the proposed school development on Liddell Road was raised, as was the developments on Maygrove Road; Flick raised concern about possible developments on Iverson Road.

There were many complaints about the height of new buildings; 9 and 12 storeys were felt to be excessively high. There were also complaints about the use of grey brick in new developments. It was suggested a balance needed to be struck between traditional areas and new buildings. Flick said the 'presumption in favour of development' made some proposed developments hard to stop.

It was pointed out that the Plan is trying to have a positive influence, and give a voice to local views in the planning process. Flick said the Plan could head off the worse of planning applications/developments; it could also improve the dialogue between planners and developers. There would also be a need to manage expectations in terms of the Forum and Plan, as it's a long term process.

Mark said the lesson of the new Emmanuel School building was that it was easy to get caught up opposing an application without looking at the details of the plans, as they could be approved.

Flick said the Plan should seek to set out the underlining principles for the development of the area. The Plan should aim to give strength to residents' comments on planning applications.

Mark said the final version of the Plan needed to be more visual, with more pictures, maps and diagrams.

In terms of omissions:

Flick said she would like Gondar Gardens & Hillfield Road added to the proposed area of a new Fortune Green Conservation Area.

The Emmanuel school extension should be quoted as an example of bad design not in keeping with the area. Some additions were suggested to the list of green spaces.

7. Future plans:

James said a second period of consultation will take place during August, September & October. Although there will be no meeting in August, work will start on a second draft. James (or other officers) will be available to attend meetings of other groups to discuss the work of the Forum and the draft Plan. The next meeting will be in September, followed by a public meeting – jointly organised with WHAT – in October.

Sue suggested there needed to be an Action Plan to progress the work of the Forum for the rest of the year. The officers will meet in August to discuss this.

It was suggested the Forum should try to contact schools via parents associations.

The Forum should put together a powerpoint presentation to explain the work of the Forum/Plan, which can be the template for group meetings; James said he will ask Nick to do this. The Forum could also put together a video of its work; Flick said there might be an opportunity to apply for funding from the Camden Innovation Fund.

8. Any other business:

Mark said the forms had been signed for a bank account; he will chase Barclays to process the application.

9. Next meeting:

The next meeting will be on **Tuesday 18th September** at 7.30pm – venue tbc.

A public meeting will be held on **Monday 22nd October** at 7.30pm – probably at the library.