

Fortune Green & West Hampstead Neighbourhood Development Forum

Minutes of meeting held on Monday 28th January 2013 at Sidings Community Centre

Present: James Earl (Chair), Cllr Keith Moffitt (Vice-chair), Nick Jackson (Communications officer), Cllr Gillian Risso Gill, Mike Bieber, Stephen Nathan, John Eastwood, Michael Poulard, Carole Burton-Fairweather, Carlton Johnson, Dean Langston, Stuart Drummond, Ian Cohen & Claus Thierbach.

1. Welcome & apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Mark Stonebanks (Treasurer), Cllr Flick Rea, Virginia Berridge, Angela Ellison, Linda Sluys, David Richards, Joan Moffatt, Abi Wood, Cllr John Bryant, Brigid Shaughnessy & Coleen Toomey.

2. Minutes of the last meeting – 29th November:

James said he had submitted comments on behalf of the NDF to Camden Council's consultation on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). He had also made submissions to Camden Council's Local List for West Hampstead Underground station & West End Green.

3. NDF application & consultation:

Following agreement on the boundary at the November meeting, the application to Camden Council to recognise the Forum and the Area was submitted in December. CC had requested a number of technical changes, which were done in early January. The Forum's officers had a meeting with Council planners on 21st January and they are now happy with the application; the statutory 6 week consultation period on the application will start shortly. James said he would circulate the details once the consultation was underway; he said it was important that as many people as possible wrote in to support the application.

Camden Council has already approved one NDF application in Highgate; the second application, for Kentish Town, has run into problems after a number of complaints about the proposed boundary; Fortune Green & West Hampstead will be the third NDF in Camden to go out to consultation. Other areas, such as King's Cross and Sommers Town, are likely to follow.

It was suggested the NDF engage the press to promote its work and make people aware of the application. Camden Council will pay for an advert in the CNJ; we could approach the Ham & High.

4. DCLG event & Prince's Foundation assistance:

James had attended a Neighbourhood Planning event at the Department for Communities & Local Government on 17th December for NDFs in London. A number of Camden NDFs were represented, so it was a good networking opportunity. The Prince's Foundation is already helping the Highgate and Kentish Town NDFs, and has offered to help us. Following discussions with the programme officer, it had been agreed that they would host a workshop which will focus on the policies in our Plan. The proposed date is Wednesday 13th March and will be limited to around 15 people. James will circulate more information and an invitation to join the workshop once the details are finalised.

5. Comments on the second draft of the NDP:

The second draft of the Plan had been circulated in November and discussed at the last meeting. A consultation on the draft runs until the end of January; comments received will be used to inform the third draft. The aim is to have the third draft ready for the next meeting at the end of February. A number of further comments were made on the second draft:

The advice from Council officers is that would it be difficult to get a Plan approved by an inspector that has a maximum height for new buildings. There was a question as to whether existing high buildings, such as Ellerton on Mill Lane, should be classed as 'exceptional' in terms of its height.

Stephen said the Forum should be tough on officers and developers and use the spirit of the Localism Act to use the Plan to propose what residents want. Nick said we could use the plan to set height limits by street or by zone. It was asked if there are sites in the area that could accommodate higher buildings.

Michael raised the issue of infill developments; he said many post WW2 developments were of a poor quality and while of a similar height to neighbouring buildings did not fit in. He said the scale of neighbouring buildings should be an important factor for the plan to consider.

There was a call for site policies for sites outside the Growth Area – for example Hillfield Road gardens/Mill Lane and West Hampstead Police Station.

On design, there was support for high quality design that is in keeping with existing developments and uses high quality materials. Gillian said there was currently a fashion for grey brick among architects and planners; a development had recently been proposed in Holborn using black bricks. There are mixed views on the Emmanuel School extension; the new student block on Blackburn Road has grey brick. It was suggested the Plan could use the design guidance for the Conservation Area and use it for the area as a whole. Sue said new developments could be done sympathetically and imaginatively, saying the architect for the 65 Maygrove Road development had listened to local concerns about brick colour and overall design.

It was agreed that the key to these issues would be the wording of policies in the Plan; James said the workshop would be a good opportunity to discuss this in detail.

Gillian said there appeared to be less and less employment space available in the area and very few places for new businesses; she said CC didn't appear to be letting all their vacant units. She cited the example of the plot of land behind WH Library, where she said new housing was being proposed instead of small business units. It was pointed out that businesses in the area support local shops and other businesses, as happens in areas such as Queen's Park. Gillian said the business space in the student development on Blackburn Road was too large; she called for smaller units for studios.

156 West End was used as an example of where the NDP could give greater definition to the types of use people want on the site; the wording in the Site Allocations Documents appears quite vague. Dean, who's the manager of the Travis Perkins site, said he wanted to keep the business there; it's an important local business and employer. Sue said the site could accommodate a small market space for arts and crafts. Other suggestions were for a link with the Farmers' Market; pop-up shops and businesses; a cultural centre and an underground car park. Stuart, who's working for TP, said the business had been there for 35 years and wanted to keep a presence on the site; he agreed the site had huge potential. Gillian had asked CC officers why they couldn't use the existing vacant office space on a temporary basis; it's costing the Council £4,000/week to run the empty building. It was asked if the NDP could have policies on vacant office use; this is more one for the WH Place Plan, which is currently being reviewed.

6. Bank account and funding:

Mark had done a basic summary of the NDF accounts for 2012. In all donations to date total £309. Four RAs have donated £50: FRA, GARA, HARRA & BAM. WHAT have made a donation in kind by paying for the public meeting in October. Expenses, mainly room hire and the Jester Festival stall, were £210.50. This gives a current surplus of around £100; however once January and February meeting costs are taken into account, plus other outstanding costs, there isn't a great deal in the account. James said further donations were welcome to fund the running costs of the Forum during 2013.

James said the government was putting in place funding for NDFs from 1st April; groups will be able to bid for up to £7,000. It was agreed to make a bid once the details were known and that such money would be most useful in providing technical and professional advice on final drafts of the Plan.

7. West Hampstead Interchange planning framework:

James said Council officers would be carrying out work on this project; it's mainly a technical piece of work to see how the WH Growth Area can accommodate the extra new homes and jobs as set out in the London Plan.

They will work with the NDF on the detail of their proposals, although the Forum is not obliged to adopt its policies or recommendations. If both documents are approved, the NDP would sit above the framework as a statutory plan; the framework would be classed as 'supplementary planning guidance'.

8. Plans for 2013:

The focus for the first part of the year will be working towards final drafts of the plan and receiving outside help and advice. There had been discussions with officers about the date of any future referendum and whether it should be held on the same day as local or national elections. It was agreed to aim for a referendum on the Plan between May 2014 and May 2015.

9. AOB:

There are proposals for a school in the vacant units at Alfred Court on Fortune Green Road. The plan is for 180 pupils aged 7-13. Residents of the building are concerned about parking, traffic and security. The NDF could make comments on the proposed change of use.

Gillian said the Builder's Depot site on Blackburn Road still had planning permission dating from 2004, renewed in 2009; she was surprised it was still valid and said it didn't fit in with current plans. There is currently a dispute between the owner of the site and the developers of the student block.

The front counter of WH police station is to close; the future of the building is unclear. The NDP should have a policy for the possible future development of this site and a discussion is needed. Should it have retail premises and be class as part of the Fortune Green Road 'neighbourhood centre'?

It's proposed that the Post Office on West End Lane be moved to a new community area at St James' Church. There is also likely to be coffee shop and a Citizen's Advice Bureau there. This will need planning permission for a change of use.

John mentioned 'Boles' Bungs' – this is a proposal from the planning minister, Nick Boles, that in future areas which have approved a NDP will be able to decide how 25% of CIL payments from new housing is spent. James said the details were not yet clear, but it confirmed the decision to go ahead and write a NDP for the area.

The Area Action Group on Monday 11th February has the NDP on the agenda; the Forum has promised to report on its activities to such meetings.

WHAT (West Hampstead Amenity & Transport) has a meeting on Wednesday 30th January to discuss transport issues in WH. It also has a public meeting on Thursday 21st February to discuss how S106 money (payments from developers) should be spent. There were questions about the roles of WHAT and the NDF and how they differed; some felt there was the potential for overlap.

10. Next meeting:

The next Forum meeting will be on **Monday 25th February** at 7.30pm, venue tbc.