

Minutes of NDF Annual General Meeting, 26 February 2018

Present: Nick Jackson, Keith Moffitt, Guy Shackle, Linda Sluys, David Brescia (taking minutes), Ian Cohen, Alan Watson, Juan José Jaramillo, Sue Measures, Carolyn Connor, Davi Kothari, Eugene Regis, Peter Taheri, Adrian Bridge, Sorin Floti, Helena Paul, T. Shackle, J Roberts, Roger Fox, Wayne Stalley, Gregg Kohansky, John Saynor, Nancy Jirira

(Risk assessment: In compliance with insurance obligations, the attendees were informed of the fire exit, and what to do if someone had a heart attack.)

1. Welcome & apologies for absence

Keith (Co-Chair) thanked everyone for attending. He explained that this was an Annual General Meeting, but would also have normal items of business.

He explained that due to an unfortunate clash with a full meeting of Camden Council, no councillors were able to make it, and he had written a letter of apology to them. However, he pointed out the NDF and WHAT would be holding a hustings nearer to the council elections, to allow all candidates to be seen by the public.

Apologies were received from Mark Hutton of WHAT, Mary Murphy of Crediton Hill, Angela Ellison, Mark Stonebanks, James Earl, Tulip Siddiq MP, and Stuart Drummond (public affairs consultant representing Travis Perkins re: 156 West End Lane).

2. Minutes of last meeting: 4 December 2017

The minutes of the previous meeting (4 December 2017) were formally approved for accuracy. Minutes of the previous AGM were also provided for information.

It was mentioned that all previous minutes are available on the NDF website, along with the Neighbourhood Plan and all our other documents.

3. Update on recent planning applications

Nick (Co-Chair) recounted how the NDF had received just under 36 applications recently, some carried over from before Christmas. He described several he was thinking of commenting on or objecting to on the NDF's behalf:

- An advertising company is looking to put a 7m by 3.5m **illuminated hoarding on the JW3 building on Finchley Road**. The NDF will probably object.
- A proposal has been submitted to instal a **15-metre mast with 6 antennae on Blackburn Road (2016/7123/P)**, across from the Nido student building. As we did to a similar previous application, the NDF and probably Nido will both be objecting. [Application subsequently approved.]
- Companies wish to install **telephone kiosks**, primarily for advertising revenue, at various locations on the pavement along West End Green. The NDF opposed previous applications for 4 kiosks, and – with the Met police – will be opposing another 3 new applications. Nick is checking to ensure our objection has gone in.
- **22 Hillfield Road wants to build a new house in its garden** (fronting onto Mill Lane), (2017/4298/P). The NDF wants to make sure the pavement is improved, but will not object if it's not too tall.

- Application for a mansard roof extension to build a new **two-bedroom flat on top of 72 Cricklewood Broadway (2017/6926/P)**. The NDF objected, and the application was refused by the planning officer.

Alan expressed regret that the redevelopment of 317 Finchley Road into a 10-storey building had been approved by Camden Council in spite of the NDF's objection. Alan was also disappointed that the development had 22 flats but no 'affordable' housing. Nick said the NDF had also been concerned that the building's height, added to by its situation at the top of a hill, would set a precedent for any eventual development of flats on the on the current site of the Sainsburys / O2 Centre car park.

Nick recounted a recent failure: both the NDF and the Met Police had objected to an application by the food shop at 124 West End Lane to install an ATM in the shopfront – on the grounds that it would cause congestion on the high street and could easily be put around the corner instead – but the planner had decided it should go ahead, so it did.

A resident asked about the status of an application concerning 63 Hillfield Road. Nick replied that the NDF, prompted by local residents, had objected originally, on the basis of the loss of green space; the original application had not gone to the planning committee, and a revised scheme had now been put forward which the NDF considered better, so had not objected again. Nick added that caution would be needed to ensure the basement works did not harm the house next door.

Another member of the public asked about an application regarding the Cricklewood Aggregates site. Nick said the NDF had looked at it, but it was 500 yards outside the area covered by the NDF's remit. Keith added that the NDF commented sparingly on applications outside its remitted area: only when the application might set a precedent or have a serious impact on West Hampstead and Fortune Green. Nick stressed that the NDF does object where we can cite a breach of the West Hampstead and Fortune Green Neighbourhood Plan.

4. Redesignation

Keith explained that the Neighbourhood Plan itself is still designated for a considerable period; but the body that administers it (the Forum) needs to be re-designated every 5 years. The NDF was designated in May 2013, and now needs to go through the formal re-designation process. The Highgate Neighbourhood Forum, which was approved by Camden before the West Hampstead & Fortune Green Neighbourhood Development Forum, has already successfully gone through this re-designation process. Keith said that as part of this process the NDF would be writing to everybody on our mailing list, and to residents' groups, to seek their continued backing. He added that Camden Council had told us they would adopt a fairly light touch in assessing the re-designation application, and in terms of deadlines.

Keith mentioned that the NDF would be submitting its new Community Engagement Strategy: Sue had done the lion's share of work on the previous version, and was now updating it with Juan José. Sue recounted how the original Community Engagement Strategy was drawn up in 2012 in the early days of the NDF, geared towards making people aware of the Neighbourhood Plan they would be asked to vote for in the July 2015 referendum, and to involve them in the concept of planning and how it would impact their daily lives. The engagement strategy had included stalls, workshops, and surveys, and had been positively commented on by the Camden inspector. Sue said West Hampstead and Fortune Green had changed massively over the last six years, with a lot of new developments such West Hampstead Square, new buildings at the top Iverson Road, the ongoing Liddell Road development of which 'phase one' is a school but high-density residential apartments will follow, 65-67 Maygrove Road, and the 156 West End Lane redevelopment which was approved

by Camden Council despite objections from over 1,000 local residents. Sue continued that many new residents had moved to this area since 2012, and an updated strategy was needed to involve them in consultations on future planning applications, and in community liaison during the subsequent construction phase (when neighbours of the site should be able to give their feedback on resulting issues such as the building contractors' traffic plans).

Sue mentioned that residents acting on their own initiative, or through residents' associations, were able to quote breaches of the Neighbourhood Plan – available on the NDF website – as grounds for their objections to planning applications they opposed, as had been done with the recent (rejected) proposal to build over the Gondar Gardens Reservoir open space. The new Community Engagement Strategy is to make sure residents know how to use the Plan in this way, and a draft of this strategy document will be available on the NDF website for people to view and comment on. Juan José was looking at how to make the NDF website more interactive.

Sue noted that plans to redevelop the O2 Centre car park into hundreds of flats were likely to be brought forward in the medium term.

Keith concluded that the NDF would submit a formal request for re-designation to Camden Council, which would be followed by a 6-week public consultation, probably after the upcoming local elections so as not to clash with the 'purdah' period. Keith urged those in attendance, when they received an email from the NDF asking for an indication of support, to please reply with a "Yes, we support you".

Keith, Ian and Nick mentioned new residents' associations that did not exist five years ago, such as MILAM (Maygrove, Iverson, Loveridge, Ariel, Medley roads) and Sarre Road Residents' Association, from whom the NDF would seek support for its redesignation. [DB note: both of these associations did back the NDF's Neighbourhood Plan in the 2015 referendum.]

5. Priorities for 2018

West Hampstead Underground Station

Nick asked Guy to give a presentation on West Hampstead Underground Station. Guy reported:

- TfL have described West Hampstead as an 'interchange' (between the Underground, Overground and Thameslink stations).
- In the Neighbourhood Plan, the NDF have actively called for improvements to the Underground station: at least a lift, and preferably a second entrance too. The plan was approved by local residents in the 2015 referendum with a 92% 'Yes' vote, so the NDF has been pursuing this goal ever since.
- Step-free access would benefit the elderly, disabled, and parents with small children.
- An expanded entrance would alleviate the growing problems of lots of people – be they residents or commuters getting out of the Overground or Thameslink stations – queuing outside the tube station entrance, and falling off the pavement in the morning from lack of space. (Guy showed slides.) Train carriages on the Overground and Thameslink are becoming bigger, so this problem will get worse.
- Proposals to build a physically linked interchange between these three stations have been discussed in West Hampstead for over 20 years – but the construction of the Paramount Building has scuppered this possibility. Guy characterised the history as "Lots of talk, not a lot of action."
- The Thameslink station was rebuilt with step-free access for the Olympics; a new Overground station is likewise being built with step-free access; but until the Underground

station gets a similar upgrade, people with this requirement debarking in West Hampstead to interchange won't be able to continue their journey on the tube.

- The Underground station now receives over 11 million users a year, which we believe puts it in the top 2% busiest of 2,800 stations on the network. Trip Advisor reviews rate the interchange at only 2 stars.
- There has been lots of high-profile political campaigning in support of step-free access. TfL has previously said installing a lift would be too expensive. TfL has a £200 million budget from the Mayor's office to fund upgrades to stations for step-free access, but has so far chosen to spread this pot amongst lots of smaller stations spread across different parts of London – Guy suggested this approach had been taken for political reasons.
- Thanks to local campaigns, the recent reconfiguration of the ticket barriers to allow one extra gate has made the crowding situation in the station slightly better, but it is still constrained.
- A small lift, with capacity for only 4-6 persons, could be installed in the space of the defunct bathrooms, which would take passengers to a very narrow part of the platform; but this design would require installing an additional barrier on the platform, re-aligning where the trains would stop, and at prohibitive cost craning in components over the existing station at night.
- Alternatively, a more elaborate bridge structure, including a series of lifts, could take users to the platform over Blackburn Road – but such a mediocre solution could still cost £10 million.
- The NDF is therefore suggesting that a brand new, significantly larger, Underground station be built across the street. The old station could continue to operate while the new one is being built over the tracks. The proposed design of this new Underground station could double capacity from 5 regular gates and 1 disabled, to 10 regular and 2 disabled. It would also put all three of West Hampstead's stations on the same side of the road, avoiding traffic risks to pedestrians. This proposal has so far received a cool reception from TfL.
- The successful construction of a huge bridge over the tracks at East Croydon station has demonstrated that the technology proposed to build a new West Hampstead station is entirely feasible. Infrastructure has also been built over lines in other parts of London.
- The NDF achieved publicity from the Camden New Journal and Ham & High local newspapers during the recent mayoral election. With the upcoming local elections, the non-partisan NDF will be lobbying all parties to persuade them that West Hampstead needs this new station for its wider master planning strategy.
- With HS2 coming to Old Oak Common in 2026, trains on the Overground line being enlarged from 5 to 7 carriages, and a proposed 'Dudden Hill Line' that could create a new train line using existing track, West Hampstead Underground Station will only become more crowded.

Alan asked whether funds to improve West Hampstead Underground station could be raised from development on the adjoining Blackburn Road site. Guy answered that the builder's depot on Blackburn Road is privately owned, and has planning permission for residential use; TfL owns the shops attached to its property on West End Lane, and also the air rights above the railway lines.

Guy confirmed that the NDF did not know what a new station would cost (that would be for TfL to calculate), and was just flagging up the possibility. He added that TfL was cash-strapped due to the Mayor's fair-freezes, which raised a question over where the capital would come from to pay for a new station. He suggested that, with HS2 stopping at Old Oak Common and a new line from Hounslow all potentially coming to West Hampstead, the case for an expanded Underground station could be argued as a piece of strategic infrastructure.

Sue added that West Hampstead would feel a major impact from HS2 as the first interchange for people coming into London on it, and should argue for any HS2 spill-off capital.

Ian said he was worried that if we accepted a half-measure, such as a small lift for the existing Underground station, TfL would consider the matter closed and the possibility of any further expansion to the station would disappear. He suggested that every solution the NDF proposes should include both a lift and some sort of increase in station entrance capacity.

A resident asked about the feasibility study TfL is currently undertaking on lift access via Blackburn Road. Guy responded that this option was problematic: it would require the installation of three separate lifts, accessed from a location that does not face a major road. Guy suggested that if one were prepared to spend that much money on Blackburn Road, it might as well be spent on West End Lane instead, which would be more convenient for people in wheelchairs.

Nick elaborated that the Mayor's office and TfL had agreed to undertake a feasibility study in West Hampstead this summer, but that it was up to the NDF and other groups such as WHAT to put our ideas in, organise a public workshop to promote it, and call for decent solution. The NDF would continue to push this agenda.

A resident asked whether any redevelopment would include the opportunity to widen the pavement used by passengers interchanging. Guy confirmed that in the NDF's suggested plan, the prow of the new station was set back, so that the pavement would indeed be much wider in front of the station.

Nick and the audience thanked Guy for his presentation.

Other NDF priorities

- Nick explained that area master planning had identified the **O2 Centre car park**, and the adjoining car show rooms, as space where more intensive development is likely. A workshop had already been held on this topic, and the NDF was keen to ensure that any development was planned in co-ordination with the redesign and expansion of West Hampstead Underground Station. The NDF would require money to pay for a future workshop – ideally in advance of the conclusion of TfL's own viability study.
- The '**London Plan**' – a regional planning document re-published and updated every few years by the Mayor and the Greater London Authority – had been received in draft form. Nick noted that West Hampstead was only mentioned once in 500 pages comments. He said he would read it and make some comments before the deadline.
- A new public consultation has been launched on the possibility of extending the **Ultra-Low Emission Zone** up to the north and south circular roads. All residents are able to make personal representations.

Houses for Multiple Occupation / HMOs

Alan asked about how planning regulations prevented the conversion of terrace houses into houses for multiple occupation (HMOs). Sue replied that there seemed to be a difference between the required standards of planning permission regulations, and building regulations. Guy elaborated that one needed to register as a landlord to create an HMO, and that strict fire regulations needed to be adhered to for example, but that the planning regime had become quite liberal.

Sue mentioned an instance where neighbours had persuaded a planning officer to investigate a development, which had revealed that what was actually being built (an HMO) was not the same as what permission had been granted for. Ian expressed concern over a general lack of enforcement by Camden Council for failure by landlords to adhere to planning permissions; a resident cited recent

raids he believed to be targeted at rogue landlords on Fordwych Road and Maygrove Road as an example of enforcement – but Ian queried whether those raids had in fact been drug-related.

Keith recalled how he had received a letter investigating whether his home was an illegal HMO, on the basis that he, his partner, and their lodger, had three different surnames for one address. He advised residents to report any suspicions to the Council.

Keith said that flats being turned into HMOs was more of a problem than houses turning into flats. Ian mentioned the case of 10-12 Lymington Road being converted into 35 flats. Keith commented that Camden was keen to create affordable housing, and some people can only afford small units.

Overseas buyers of London homes

Another resident asked if the national government would do anything to crack down on overseas funds, predominantly from East Asia, investing in the London property market and buying new-build residential apartments for the purpose of letting them out or holding as an asset. David relayed a conversation he'd had with an estate agent who acts for such funds, who had complained that actions by the Chancellor (new taxes on the special companies and trusts established for this purpose) were indeed making it more difficult. Another resident referred to the recent news that a number of London developers, after a speech from the Mayor, had 'voluntarily' offered to market new cheaper homes exclusively to UK-based buyers for three months before they were then marketed to overseas investors.

6. Financial Reports & Accounts.

Nick distributed copies to audience, comparing this year's accounts to last years. Expenses included insurance for the NDF against possible risks, booking 4 public meetings in West Hampstead Library at £50 each, printing. Keith had been paid a fee for speaking at another association event on the subject of the NDF, and had donated the money to the NDF.

The NDF's bank balance stood at £2,215, less £76 that still needed to be deducted to compensate Nick for some printing. Nick explained that membership of the NDF was free, but money was required for expenses – particularly to hold public consultation workshops. A hat was passed round soliciting donations: £53.85 was collected.

7. Chair's report

Keith remarked that the NDF's previous Chairman, James Earl, had done so much work it now took four people to do the same amount. He expressed thanks to James. Keith said everybody on the Committee pulls their weight and he was thankful to have them. He mentioned that Guy Shackle, and David Brescia as Secretary taking minutes, had joined the Committee at the start of 2017, and Juan José, a resident from one of the area's new developments, had been co-opted in course of the year.

Keith reported the NDF had held three public meetings since its previous AGM; one had included a presentation from NIDO developers on their proposals to enlarge the student accommodation building on Blackburn Road. He cited how he and Nick had met twice with developers on the corner of Lithos Road and Finchley Road (where 'Secrets' club had closed and was being redeveloped), as an example of developers wanting to talk to the NDF. He said it had taken Camden Council officers a little while to realise the NDF exists, and that as a statutory consultee they have an obligation to consult us on planning applications, but this has improved greatly over the course of the year and

now they do. The NDF's presence at Jester Festival is a good opportunity to get new members and raise awareness, and Keith thanked those who help man the stall over a 2-day period. Keith recounted how the NDF had also given support to other residents' associations who want to learn from our experience, and he had even talked to a number of students doing their dissertations on neighbourhood planning – some of whom also had good suggestions of their own.

Nick described several recent major applications:

- The **156 West End Lane** redevelopment scheme, though still bigger than the NDF and local residents wanted, had improved a lot architecturally during the consultation period, thanks to the influence of the NDF.
- The proposed development on **Gondar Gardens Reservoir** open space would have been enormous: three times bigger than any previous application for the site. It had been universally condemned, and was turned down by Camden, although the developers would probably appeal.
- An application to massively expand the Iverson Road '**Farmer's Market**' to include non-food stalls and run seven days a week had been withdrawn after successful opposition by the NDF and other concerned residents.
- The NDF has successfully opposed several applications to install additional **phone kiosks** on West End Lane, which generate their revenue as advertising space.
- Nick also gave an example of a residential application where a homeowner had wanted to do a roof extension which raised their roof higher than any other house on the street; the NDF had pointed out that this violated the Neighbourhood Plan, and the application was withdrawn and resubmitted with a redesign keeping to the proper height.

Ian and Nick mentioned that the NDF's Neighbourhood Plan is now frequently mentioned in planning applications, which is good progress.

8. Elections

Keith announced that no nominations had been received for election this time from anyone apart from those individuals already in their current posts.

- **Chair:** Keith Moffit and Nick Jackson to be re-elected as Co-Chairs. Linda Sluys proposed, Ian Cohen seconded. Approved.
- **Treasurer:** Nick said there should normally be a separate treasurer, but that he was prepared to continue acting in this capacity if approved. Nancy Jarira proposed, Tracy Shackle seconded. Approved.
- **Secretary:** David Brescia. Nick Jackson proposed, Davi Kothari seconded. Approved.
- **Membership Secretary:** Linda Sluys. Alan Watson proposed, David Brescia seconded. Approved.
- **Communications Officer:** Juan José Jaramillo. Keith Moffit proposed, Guy Shackle seconded. Approved.
- **Committee Members (without portfolio):** Sue Measures, Ian Cohen, Alan Watson and Guy Shackle - all proposed by Nick Jackson and seconded by Keith Moffit. Approved.

Keith announced that one member of the committee, Cllr Phil Rosenberg, would not be standing again, but since it was useful to have a sitting councillor on the NDF Committee his position would be kept vacant until after the 3rd May local elections, and at least one new councillor would be invited to join once it was known who had been elected.

Keith asked if anyone else in the room, apart from the aforementioned council candidates, wished to join the Committee. No one did. He said that if in the course of the year believed they would have time to make a useful contribution, they were welcome to talk to us.

Sue requested consideration for more women to volunteer. A resident suggested that someone from the 'lower end' of West Hampstead should be invited, to ensure that area was fully represented. David said he would speak to the organisers of MILAM residents' association about someone becoming more involved.

9./10. Next Steps / Any Other Business

Alan said he believed developers were buying land in the vicinity of 53-63 Broadhurst Gardens, for a larger building project.

Keith said Travis Perkins was still battling Camden Council over the lease to 156 West End Lane, and the case would be coming to court in July. Camden had now sold the property to A2 Dominion. Ian said it had been costing Camden Council £250k per year to keep the building lit, heated and empty.

11. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is to be confirmed, but care will be taken to ensure it is on a day when new councillors can attend.