

Some Notes on the Open meeting on 22 October 2012 to Discuss the West Hampstead and Fortune Green Neighbourhood Development Plan

Chair: Mary Tucker

The Panel:

James Earl - Chair of West Hampstead and Fortune Green NDF

Brian O'Donnell - LB Camden Planning Dept

Paul Lavell - Urban Design Ltd

Virginia Berridge - Chair of WHAT

James Earl, Chair of West Hampstead and Fortune Green NDF

James introduced the concept of a Neighbour Development Forum(NDF) and the Plan(NDP) that a forum could produce. He described the limitations of the forum and its strengths, the major one being that when the Plan was finally accepted after a referendum it would become part of planning policy for the area, having weight similar to LB Camden policies although being subordinate to them.

The full presentation is available in Powerpoint at:

<http://www.ndpwesthampstead.org.uk/5NDFpresentation22oct12.ppt>

Brian O'Donnell, Planning Department LB Camden (LBC)

Brian described the high level of interest in Camden in NDPs, 15 areas have registered interest. Those which have made the most progress are Highgate, Kentish Town, West Hampstead, Kings Cross, Summers Town, Bloomsbury Village.

LBC wants to ensure that the applications for establishing an NDF are successful and is demanding consultation to ensure inclusiveness and representation throughout the designated area. This will involve careful selection and agreement on the selected area. After the initial application is submitted there will be a period of consultation in the area before the NDF is confirmed. LBC has a website explaining the background to NDFs at <http://camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/environment/planning-and-built-environment/two/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-planning.en>

Paul Lavelle, Urban Design London, part of Transport for London

Paul's presentation focussed on what other organisations were doing to prepare their NDPs. Several are well advanced. There is no single way to proceed although there is some necessary content. He described three well advanced plans from Norland Conservation area in London (single issue) , Upper Eden in Cumbria (seven policies including housing), and Thame. He felt the maps in the Thame plan were important and should be copied by others. His presentation, <http://www.ndpwesthampstead.org.uk/5UDLpresentation22oct12.ppt>, listed seven key topics required in a plan, and six big decisions. Examples of focus; affordable housing, public realm and town centre regeneration. Different type of plan - mini-local plans, policy plans (no site allocation), policy and allocation plans, single policy document and development orders.

visual and spacial strategy for an area, what is locally valued - local character, policies to improve existing places or influence new developments, influence how investment is used locally, allocate sites, or specific projects.

Virginia Berridge, Chair of WHAT

Virginia presented WHAT's views on what should be in a plan. It should be short but with appendices, it must look forward as the plan will take time to prepare and we don't want to be discussing developments that will be complete before the plan is prepared. The plan will also need to evolve over time. Significant issues are:

- The predicted change in demographics in the area. More teenage children and more over 65s in the next ten years.
- The interchange area. Should development be contained within this area
- Local facilities are deficient, and need integration. More open space.
- Is West Hampstead being split into upper and lower WH. Where is the town centre?
- What sort of place do we want?

Questions and comments from the floor (*Responses by the panel are in italics*)

- Its difficult to find the members of the forum on the website. How does one join? Are members representative? *Yes we have members from across the area. We have a duty to ensure all groups are represented.*
- It appears that West Hampstead is splitting into two zones, Upper WH and Lower WH. Where all the development is taking place. How do we get a better blend. How can the NDF have any impact. *For the development at 156 West End lane Camden is proposing mixed use development and more open space. The NDF can address many smaller issues and make suggestions even on developments that have received outline planning permission. On new developments the NDP can control height, as long as the development remains viable. Any policy can go into the plan if there are demonstrable reasons.*
- It won't work *No, we will be able to influence development if we try, and certainly won't if we don't try. We will however have to focus on future developments.*
- Yes I agree we should be positive, but how why are we losing business premises, such as in Mill Lane, at the same time as wanting new businesses to start up. *The policy for more housing is a national policy that we have to deal with.*
- More elderly, more children are predicted, but pavements are disappearing. *The plan can address issues such as pavements*
- Given that housing is national policy, how can we expect to influence housing development. *We can influence location etc*
- Developing a plan is not about individual buildings but about developing a shared vision for infrastructure, doctors etc. We can build on the Space Plan.
- Can we have a forum on the website for people to add comments. *Yes, good idea, we will add something soon.*
- I am interested in the conceit of "zones". There are areas with good facilities. I would endorse the potential of the NDP. Can the plan include detail of retail outlets? *We can define "character" for an area, which does have some weight, if backed by reasoning. Camden does have a policy for retail in West Hampstead with specific weights for type of outlet but a plan cannot specify specific shops etc.*
- The Hampstead Garden Centre Site is a good example of how a plan might help in the future. Strong objections were raised on employment grounds but were ignored because the center wasn't in the "precinct". A plan would help to designate more specific areas.
- Can we have more community facilities and homes for older people. *Yes we can probably raise these issues in the plan. Demographics will be important in a reasoned plan.*
- The southern boundary of the forum area is based on the ward boundaries which are irrelevant. <<There followed discussion on the boundary but with little resolution. A representative from south of the railway line said he wanted the people in the area to decide whether they should be in or out. A show of hands suggested most people at the meeting thought that the WHGARA area " was in West Hampstead". A smaller majority thought that the WHGARA area should be included in the plan.>>
- We should think outside localism. We should also think about visitors to the area, given our good transport links, and encourage visitors.
- The plan will make statements about West End Lane. People in the southern area will be affected. Will we be able to proscribe building heights lower than those existing? Will we be able to specify that certain retail outlets should be small?
- How quickly can the plan be drawn up? *We can't predict at present, there are hurdles to jump, but certainly as quickly as possible as many issues are urgent.*
- What are the growth figures for the development area? *800 new homes*
- Is there funding for the development of the plan? *Not specifically, but central government might give some funding to LB Camden*
- A representative of WHGARA said the NDF will have no impact.
- We need more involvement at all levels and from all sorts of people. We should be looking forward. Even the people moving into the new homes in the development area will want to take part in the WH community.
- Please ensure even those without internet access are consulted.
- Its great to have so many people attending tonight. I am sure that we will be able to influence many things we haven't even thought about yet.