

Fortune Green & West Hampstead Neighbourhood Development Forum

Minutes of meeting held on Monday 25th February 2013 at Emmanuel Church

Present: James Earl (Chair), Cllr Keith Moffitt (Vice-chair), Nick Jackson (Communications officer), Mark Stonebanks (Treasurer), Stephen Nathan, John Eastwood, Carlton Johnson, Bradley Brown, Angela Ellison, Cllr John Bryant, David Richards, Jill Hood, Stuart Drummond, Janet Crawford, Father Jonathan Kestor, Claus Thierbach, Ian Cohen & Sue Measures.

1. Welcome & apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Gillian Risso-Gill, Cllr Flick Rea, Mark Hutton, Virginia Berridge, Mike Bieber, Joan Moffatt, Linda Sluys & Brigid Shaughnessy.

2. Minutes of the last meeting – 28th January:

Funding: James thanked those individuals and groups who had made donations. Further donations are welcome to pay for the Forum's running costs during 2013.

Alfred Court: the school are having another consultation event to discuss their proposals; it's on Thursday 28th February, 4-7pm.

Post Office at St James' Church: proposals are being developed and discussed. There's considerable interest in this. James said he'd arranged a meeting with Father Cain to discuss the plans.

S106 meeting: those who went to the meeting welcomed the discussion, but there was some frustration that there was no real outcome to the meeting. The only firm proposal was a for 'suggestion box' in the Library, however, many people don't use the Library and there was a feeling that comments could be biased towards funding for the Library. It was felt Camden Council had to have a role in drawing up suggestions, although there appear to be different interests within CC. It was acknowledged that there is an urgent need to mitigate the pressures on and around the WH intensification area (WHIA), but the pots of money are not huge. Mark said under s106 the contribution from 187 West End Lane was around a £1m, he suggested under CIL it could have been nearer £4m due to the amount of floor space. It was pointed out that those with the greatest need are not represented at meetings.

3. NDF application & consultation:

Camden Council's consultation on the application to recognise the Forum and proposed area is ongoing; the deadline for comments is Friday 15th March. If you haven't already, please write in to support the application by emailing ldf@camden.gov.uk

4. Workshop with Prince's Foundation – Wednesday 13th March:

James thanked those who had put their names forward for this event. The 15 available places have now been taken, but it's been agreed to increase the number to 20, so additional places are now available if anyone else would like to attend – please contact James.

5. Third draft of the NDP:

The third draft of the Plan had been circulated. Most of the changes were based on comments received on the second draft and focussed on the chapters about future development and site specific policies.

James explained that the Forum had decided early on to move quickly, because of the development pressures on the area. Early feedback also indicated that people wanted to comment on a draft of the plan, rather than a vague set of principles. The drafts had not published on the website to date because the NDF was still not an officially recognised body. If the Forum is recognised by Camden Council, future consultations will become broader and more open.

A number of comments were raised in relation to the third draft:

- WHGARA circulated proposals for changes to the core policies. They are keen that the Plan looks at the Area as a whole. There should also be a focus on the WEL shopping area. Residential areas should have a height limit.
- Height is still a hotly debated issue; there was a suggestion that the Plan could development specific heights for all the streets in the area. We need to define “immediate vicinity”.
- Some felt there was a danger of the Plan becoming a ‘no development document’; things are changing and we need to look to the future.
- The Forum should welcome people’s views on the draft and debate them openly.
- The pressure on the area for more development is not going to go away; we need to decide whether this should be certain areas. Some felt the WHIA should be focussed on business development; housing could be located elsewhere in the area, perhaps via more infill development.
- WHGARA are keen that all future development in the WHIA should be low-rise. The Sidings estate was cited as a successful low-rise development with a reasonable amount of housing density. In general, people favour mixed-use, low-rise development.
- It was pointed out that zoning already affects some of the area, such as the West End Green Conservation Area, which covers a large part of WH ward.
- There was debate around article 6.3 – that most new development should be in the WHIA.
- The Forum needs to take advice on the level of affordable housing in new developments; planners have told us some developments will need to be high to accommodate this; developers will also need to sell more units at higher prices to pay for this subsidy.
- There was a question about social housing (ie council houses); very few of these are currently being built by Camden Council.
- There are plans to build behind the fire station, how high will this development be?
- New developments which mirror old ones can work and are usually popular with buyers.
- There was general agreement on the wording of the business & retail policies (Policy 4,5 &6).
- There was a debate about the range of shops on WEL and what the Plan could say about this. The Mary Portas Review has failed in some areas and we need to take care not to be too prescriptive.
- We will need to define what we mean by “affordable business space”. In future councils will get to keep business rates from new developments, so there’s potential for rate relief.
- Liddell Road: the council want to pay for the proposed new school by re-developing the rest of the site; this could mean a high residential development. Plans have yet to be brought forward; the school is unlikely to open before 2016.
- The site specific policies were broadly welcomed.
- Basement developments (6.7): WHGARA have strong views on this, although there was a comment that basements are preferable to ugly loft conversions. There are concerns about flood risk and ground water displacement.
- Health facilities (13.3): it was suggested the Plan should have some text on primary and community healthcare facilities in the area. There is a move away from hospitals to treatment in smaller units.
- Roofline development: it was suggested there needed to be text in the plan to set out some policies on roof extensions and loft conversions.
- Overall the future provision of housing in the area (and scale of such development) seems to be emerging the main issue for the Forum. It was suggested we could organise a public meeting on this subject later in the year.

6. Next steps:

It was agreed that the third draft of the Plan would be published on the NDF website; it will also be sent to Camden Council planners for their comments.

An information sheet, with a basic Q&A about the NDF had been circulated, and will also be posted on the NDF website.

There was a discussion about how to engage younger people. It was agreed that more thought needs to go into this; what questions should we ask and what sort of engagement should there be. It was suggested working with Hampstead School and having an online survey (apparently, all pupils have their own school email address); PTAs at the primary schools should also be engaged with.

How do we engage young renters, who tend to be quite a transient and unconnected section of the population?

Jonathan had offered to host an event focussed on the 20-40 age group (who make up a majority of the population in the area) via the West Hampstead Life Blog. This is planned for April or May.

Effort is also needed to engage religious groups in the area.

In order to assist with this, James said the Forum would be looking to recruit Engagement Officers in the months ahead – volunteers are welcome.

Information from the 2011 Census is now becoming available and will need to be analysed. Can anyone help with number-crunching the statistics?

7. AOB:

Nick reminded people that the NDF website had a section for people to submit comments – either general points or specifics on the draft plan:

<http://www.ndpwesthampstead.org.uk/onlineforum.htm>

There was a question about whether the Plan could do anything to stop private investors buying up the new housing in the area and letting it out; this is unlikely.

8. Next meeting:

Due to the workshop taking place in March, and Easter falling at the end of the month, the next Forum meeting will be in late April, date & venue tbc.