

Camden Together

West Hampstead and Fortune Green Wards Community Strategy Consultation Meeting

**Notes of a meeting held on 31 October 2006 at 7.30pm 23 November
2006 at 7.30pm at West Hampstead Library, Dennington Park Road, NW6**

Camden Council councillors and officers present:

Cllr John Bryant
Cllr Russell Eagling
Cllr Duncan Greenland
Cllr Keith Moffitt
Cllr Flick Rea
Cllr Jane Schopflin
Anne Doherty, Assistant Director Planning
Beth Wainwright, Executive Assistant, Leader's Office.

Members of public present:

Jeremy Allen
Virginia Berridge WHAT
Geoff Berridge
Mr Betts Abbey Tenant Resident Association
Eleanor Burke
Heather Downham
Charles Duncan
Z Eila
Angela Ellison
Jackie Erkus Lithos Road Action Group
Anne Gold
Jody Graham WHCA Trustee
Anthony Graham WHCA Trustee
Jon Harris
Katy Harris
Bernard Heyman Friends of Hampstead Cemetery
Anne Heyman LCG/Fortune Green Safer Neighbourhoods
Liz Johnson
Mike Katz
Gwen Le Cren
Penny Leichti
Olivia M Lyons
Christine Marchant
J Nathan
Eddy Newman Hampstead DMP
Yiannis Pareas Mill Lane Traders Association
Suzette Raymond

D	Robin	WHEART
Andrea	Sarner	
John	Saynor	WHAT
Barbara	Simon	Fortune Green Safer Neighbourhoods
David	Spiers	
Ann	Sprinz	
Peter	Sprinz	Gala
Mark	Stonebanks	Hillfield and Aldred Roads Residents' Association
Ann	Sutcliffe	
Pauline	Swindell	WHAT
Candice	Temple	

Welcome and introduction

Councillor John Bryant introduced himself as chair of the meeting and introduced his fellow West Hampstead and Fortune Green councillors.

The Chair introduced Anne Doherty who attended on behalf of Camden Council's Senior Leadership Group and explained that she was present to advise on matters of process.

The Chair indicated that a journalist from the Camden New Journal was present and stressed that those who did not wish to have their views reported in the press should make this clear before speaking. He addressed routine housekeeping matters and outlined the structure of the meeting.

The Chair emphasised that the councillors' role for the meeting was to listen to the views of local residents, not to interrupt with their own views.

Presentation

Councillor Keith Moffitt presented a brief powerpoint presentation. He outlined the background to the community strategy and talked through the four main areas of the Council's vision for 2012. He explained that local authorities are legally required to lead the development of a community strategy with key partners. The first strategy covered 2001 to 2006.

Councillor Moffitt explained that the Camden Together document was purposefully designed to trigger debate within the local community and capture the views of people who live in Camden in order to feed into the final strategy.

Councillor Moffitt commented on the tension between the need for growth and the desire to preserve the character of the area and, in this context, asked for views about the potential development around the West Hampstead interchange to initiate discussion.

Open discussion

There was a broad discussion touching on a variety of issues.

Planning and development issues

The following points were made relating to planning and development issues and exploring the dilemma that Councillor Moffitt had outlined:

- Brown field sites, for example the land between the West Hampstead stations, should be used for development and green field sites should be preserved. Development should improve services. The area needs to be equipped to cope with the extra pressure.
- A resident referred to the Paramount building. They expressed the view that the development is illegal and the Council should have been strong in resisting it as it restricts pedestrian movement.

The Chair commented that the Council had limited powers in this case due to planning legislation and the particular circumstances.

- Another resident asked what “listening” means in this context. He stated residents were not listened to about the Sager development at Fortune Green.

The Chair explained that the Council had been sympathetic to the public objection to the Sager development and had refused planning permission, but the applicants successfully appealed within the national planning system. He stressed that views put forward at the meeting were being noted and will be analysed.

- Comments were made about the narrow pavement on West End Lane.

Councillor Moffitt explained that the most recent plans for development by Chiltern railways were on the west side of West End Lane.

- In response to Councillor Moffitt’s question about potential development on the 02 carpark site, a resident stated that it should be built on and said there was not enough reference to building in the Camden Together document.
- It was suggested that leaving space for bus and taxi stops should be incorporated into any supplementary planning guidance.
- A resident raised the issue of affordable housing in West Hampstead, describing two distinct groups in the area: long standing residents and young professionals who cannot afford to buy. This resident wanted more commitment to affordable housing.
- A resident commented that the Council had broken its promises about the 02 development. She said there is wasted space between Finchley Road and Medley Road. Planning briefs must be developed properly

with an eye to ensuring local needs are met; they must include local amenities such as walk-in surgeries, for example. Paramount should be used as a warning.

- In response to a question from the Chair, a resident commented that there should be more amenities for young people.
- A resident said local people are looking to the Council for leadership and vision. Residents can provide a list of services they require but they are looking to councillors to draw up clear strategies and plans to implement these changes.
- The Chair mentioned that the need for another primary school in the area, had also been mentioned especially in the context of a growing population.
- It was suggested that residents want an integrated approach to leadership. They want a balanced mix of services. Councillors need to take a bold decision about the West Hampstead interchange that fits into a broader vision.
- A resident stated that councillors have asked residents about what they want many times; they are now looking for councillors to take issues forward, for example, the interchange.

The Chair said that private money would be needed and the various elements had to be weighed against public benefits. However, councillors did not know what any final application would look like, and could not dictate that.

Councillor Moffitt commented that an integrated interchange if it was achievable at all would only come about through commercial development but it is possible that the scale that might be necessary would be unacceptable to residents of West Hampstead. Producing a fully integrated interchange is a very expensive project.

- A resident commented that they do not want a mediocre interchange.
- Another resident asked if the interchange would bring any benefits to the local residents. It was suggested that the interchange would benefit people travelling across greater London at the expense of the local community.
- A resident suggested building above railway lines. Cllr Moffitt remarked that this had been discussed and was an expensive process but it may become worthwhile in the future.
- It was suggested public safety would be improved by the proposed interchange. Cllr Moffitt made the point that public safety could be

improved by the introduction of rails and pavement widening without a commitment to a new interchange.

- The issue of enforcement was raised. Some people perceive that the Council is currently failing to take enforcement action and this is undermining its planning position.
- A resident stressed the importance of taking enforcement action against smaller properties contravening the regulations as well as big developments.
- A resident asked whether it is sensible to build extra housing if the community will not be able to take the strain.
- It was commented that there is little social housing in West Hampstead. It is difficult to balance the need for housing with the needs of existing residents. An argument was put forward against development especially as the standard of new development is often deemed to be so poor.
- It was put forward that demographic projections for 2012 were needed to plan development.

The Chair described the current population of West Hampstead: the largest group is 25-34 years old; there are less people over 65 than one would expect; and this area has the highest percentage in the borough of people with mortgages.

Councillor Moffitt stated that the Chiltern proposals for an integrated interchange could involve 3000 extra residents in West Hampstead.

A resident stated that a 300% increase in the number of people changing at rush hour is expected if the plans go ahead.

- A resident asked whether the emergency services are equipped to cope with the rising population and asked if the Council could stress the importance of this through the Local Strategic Partnership.

Transport

In addition to the discussion about the proposed interchange, the following issues relating specifically to transport were raised:

- The issue of disabled access to stations was raised. Cllr Moffitt stated that there were plans for a lift at West Hampstead tube station. Others pointed out that access to stations in West Hampstead was even difficult for those with luggage and buggies.

- Councillors were asked who has responsibility for enforcing Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). Cllr Moffitt explained that the Council is not responsible for enforcing DDA and stated that making a complaint is the first step in the process.
- It was suggested the West Hampstead tube exit could be on Blackburn Road. There was also discussion of bus stops on West End Lane. A request was put forward for the 268 bus to come down West End Lane. While Councillor Moffitt pointed out that the Council do not have control over these matters, he suggested that the Council could lobby Transport for London if necessary. Councillor Rea clarified that London Buses had not agreed to a bus stop outside the Thameslink station.

Parking

The need to provide parking was weighed against environmental considerations. The following views were put forward:

- In response to the Chair's request for views on the possibility of restricting car parking for new housing, a resident commented that there should be a minimum of one car parking space per occupier on the site of the development.
- Another resident commented that it is very hard to park in the area.
- A resident proposed that underground parking should be planned.
- There should be focus on public transport not car parks.
- A resident raised the issue of the conflict between concerns about carbon footprint with the need of some people to have a vehicle.
- The Chair commented that less than half the households in Camden have cars. This prompted Councillor Moffitt to ask the meeting how many people present owned or had access to a vehicle. The majority of those present drove a car.
- A resident suggested of those households with a car, the majority are likely to have more than one car.
- The Chair made reference the Hampstead Car Club initiative.

Voluntary sector

The future of the voluntary sector was discussed with a particular focus on youth services and funding cuts:

Funding

- A resident asked about the future of the voluntary sector in Camden. Will it be like Islington in five years time?

Councillor Moffitt responded by saying that the new administration is working to retain a strong voluntary sector but may shift priorities within the sector. For example, there is more emphasis on sustainability so there are plans to build on the work of Camden and Islington Groundwork.

The Chair stated that financial inclusion is a new priority for funding in the borough. There is budget allocation for a credit union.

Councillor Moffitt stressed that voluntary organisations have to demonstrate that they meet the commissioning framework in order to secure continued funding. They must represent value for money.

- It was suggested that the current uncertainty over funding could create problems for voluntary organisations that could threaten their future even if further funding is ultimately secured.
- A resident asked what organisations would be cut and in particular what was the future of the (CAB).

Councillor Moffitt responded using the example of the Citizen's Advice Bureau. He stated that the CAB might not be considered to represent good value for money in Camden as it employed paid staff rather than using volunteers. He argued that the Council needs to consider best practice but did not specify which organisations might be cut.

Young People

- A resident said that tackling crime through voluntary youth services should be a priority.
- In his capacity as Executive Member for Children, the Chair commented that he is working to ensure a better spread of youth services in the borough. In addition, existing services will have an increase in budget.

The Chair revealed that targeting young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) are a priority in Camden and organisations addressing these needs will be allocated money. He also talked about the development of a Youth Council to engage with young people. The 12 month development process will begin in January 2007 at Haverstock school. The possibility of developing a Young Mayor is also being considered.

- A resident commented on the need for services for 19-22 year olds with limited skills, for example, through literacy recovery programmes.
- A resident asked for support for a youth project involving young people receiving football coaching at the new Arsenal stadium. It was suggested that as Camden polices Arsenal matches for free, a system of mutual exchange could be fostered.
- It was commented that initiatives for young people in Camden such as youth forums often focus on the Cantelowes or Somers Town wards rather than West Hampstead and take place in the Town Hall. The view was put forward that there is a need for local ward-based action and young people who are already showing community spirit need to be rewarded and encouraged.
- A resident suggested that special advantages should be given to employers that offer good training programmes.

The Chair said that while training was the responsibility of the Learning and Skills Council, this point could be fed into the strategy, as they are members of the Local Strategic Partnership.

The Chair made the observation that while Camden is a very productive borough there is still a high level of unemployment. Creating local jobs for local people is a challenge facing the borough.

Older people

Cllr Moffitt asked the meeting whether they plan to stay in Camden as they grow old and what services they would like to see in West Hampstead for older people.

- Facilities need to be improved for older people and for the disabled.
- Accessibility of public transport needs to be improved for these groups.

A resident explained that he hoped Camden would continue to be a mixed and adaptable society; he enjoys its rich tapestry.

Education and schools

There was discussion of spending on schools and the concern that children from neighbouring Brent were taking school places from local people in Camden and benefiting from the higher spending in Camden on schools. Cllr Bryant explained that the government introduction of a Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was designed to combat this problem but Camden have continued to argue for a generous spend on schools for fear of being levelled down by the initiative.

It was commented that education should be a bigger part of the community strategy.

Local Area Forums

A resident asked what the function of the proposed Local Area Forums would be and how they would operate alongside the existing police panels and neighbourhood forums.

Councillor Moffitt explained that the partnership administration is currently considering whether there is a way of pulling existing organisations together to form Local Area Forums. He asked the meeting what functions they would like to see Local Area Forums performing.

It was asked if Local Area Forums could influence planning. Anne Doherty, in her capacity as Assistant Director Planning, explained that the Unitary Development Plan had just been adopted in Camden and the Council is in the process of consulting on a new borough wide development framework that will run alongside the community strategy. Any new local forums could input into that. She stated that there are no proposals at the moment to draw up local area plans.

In response to the comment that the open spaces near Hillfield Road are a little neglected and there could be more street trees, the Chair suggested that a modest budget might be allocated to Local Area Forums to carry out local level improvements like this.

Recycling and waste disposal

- A resident asked how effective recycling is in Camden and whether it could be better. It was suggested that there could be tougher enforcement of recycling.
- Councillor Moffitt stated that it was a priority for the partnership administration to improve the level of recycling by businesses.
- A resident suggested that an incentive system should be created to encourage recycling.
- It was stated that contractors carrying out waste and recycling collection on behalf of the Council should be carefully managed.
- Councillor Moffitt explained that the Council would be reviewing the environmental soundness of their recycling practice and looking into additional options such as encouraging reuse.
- It was asked whether the Council could save money by reducing the number of dustbin collections from one to two per week as they personally generated more recycling than general household waste.

- In response to this suggestion, another resident suggested that no changes should be made to refuse and recycling collections until the environmental audit of recycling practice is complete.

Technology

A resident asked where technology fitted into the Camden Together document: is technology being used effectively by the Council to help save money?

Councillor Moffitt said that improvements were being made but more could be done to adapt systems and exploit technology.

Small Businesses

One resident commented that he thinks the survival of small businesses should be left to the market place and that there is little value in Council intervention.

Road Safety

- Road safety should be incorporated into the Community Strategy. The Council is doing good work in this area and this should be maintained.

Dogs

- There should be greater provision of bins and bags for dog waste.
- A resident suggested that dog licensing should be reintroduced and there should be enforcement against owners who do not comply with the rules.
- A resident asked whether pressure could be put on Housing Associations that enforce against tenants who own dogs.

Finance

- A resident asked about the government plans to reform how Council Tax rates are calculated and the impact that this might have.
- The Council should avoid the problem of panic spending of budgets leading up to the end of the financial year.

Some specific casework issues were raised during the meeting; Councillors spoke to residents personally about these matters after the main meeting had finished.

Closing

The Chair thanked everybody for attending and contributing to the meeting. He urged people to continue to feed in their comments before the consultation deadline on 30 November and to attend the special sustainability meeting on Saturday 18th November at the Town Hall if they wished.

The meeting ended at 9.20pm.