

Camden Together

Summary of Consultation Responses

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January 2007

Summary of consultation responses

Executive summary

- The consultation on Camden's new community strategy – Camden Together - occurred between September and November 2006.
- Over 1,200 people were actively involved in the consultation process. 263 written and emailed responses were received from individuals. There were 51 responses from organisations and 374 people attended councillor-led ward meetings.
- A range of consultation activities were held including ward meetings, meeting with specific groups of residents, consultation on sustainability and business issues, work with schools and a civic forum held at Haverstock School.
- There is also a website – www.camdentogether.org.uk - which will be an on-going source of information about Camden's new community strategy.
- A range of views were expressed during the consultation process and people were clear on their major concerns and their priorities for the future of Camden. Some messages that came through particularly strongly were:
 - **Drugs and other crime:** people felt that the use and visible selling of drugs in the borough seriously undermines quality of life. Overall, tackling safety and crime issues were a key priority for residents to improve Camden in the future.
 - **Housing:** many people thought that housing in the borough was an important issue. In particular, people felt there was a lack of housing that was affordable or which was appropriate for their needs.
 - **Local, independent shops and businesses:** people valued the diversity of local business - particularly local, independent shops - and wanted this diversity to be preserved.
 - **Green issues:** there was strong support for a proactive approach to protecting the environment and tackling climate change. People wanted it to be easier for them to make their contribution.
 - **Managing growth:** a large number of respondents feel that Camden will have difficulty dealing with an increasing population and some argued that existing residents should be prioritised.

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- **Diversity:** there was a great deal of support for Camden's diversity and, in particular, many people liked living alongside people from a range of different backgrounds. However there were a few responses that disagreed with this. Many people argued that the English language is important to hold our diverse community together.
- **Encouraging personal responsibility:** people supported the idea that everyone had a role to play to make Camden a better place to live. Many said that they looked to the Council for leadership but also recognised that there is only so much the Council can do. It was also argued that people needed support and encouragement to be able to take responsibility themselves.
- Overall, respondents welcomed the draft vision in the consultation document.
- The final community strategy is due to be launched in Spring 2007 and the view of residents and other stakeholders are an important part of how the final strategy will be developed.

1. Outline of the consultation process

Introduction

- 1.1 Between 5th September and 30th November 2006 Camden Council and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) consulted on its second community strategy – Camden Together. This strategy, to be launched later in Spring 2007, will run from 2007 to 2012. This report presents a summary of the main points that were raised during the consultation period.
- 1.2 Camden's LSP has been clear from the start that it wants a different kind of community strategy. The aim of the consultation process has therefore been to draw out the dilemmas and challenges facing Camden over the next five years and beyond, and to discuss these with residents, businesses and other organisations in the borough. The LSP also wanted an open-ended consultation process and not just a tick or cross against a draft strategy. For this reason, the consultation document launched in September 2006 raised a number of different ideas and questions, rather than setting out what we thought should be the answers.
- 1.3 The response from the public and other stakeholders has been overwhelming and we would like to thank all those – over 1,200 – who have taken the time to contribute to the consultation process.

What happened during the consultation?

- 1.4 We were keen to reach as many people as possible during the consultation and used several different strands of activity, including:
 - **Councillor-led ward meetings** – Every ward held a public meeting to discuss the community strategy. These meetings were led by ward councillors and enabled residents to discuss the issues in the community strategy consultation directly with their elected representatives. The exception was Kentish Town which was ineligible for a meeting due to a by-election at the time. Fortune Green and West Hampstead wards held a joint meeting. In total 374 people attended these councillor-led ward meetings. The minutes of these meetings are available at www.camdentogether.org.uk.
 - **Partnership, residents, VCS and community based meetings** – a wide range of existing meetings and partnerships discussed the community strategy. Some examples include the Neighbourhood Partnerships, Community Safety Partnership, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and

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Transgender (LGBT) Forum and District Management Committees on housing issues.

- **Meeting with specific groups** – meetings were set up to include particular groups of residents and communities who may not have had the opportunity to contribute to the consultation otherwise. Additional language and other support was provided where necessary. For example, meetings were held with the Somali and Bangladeshi communities and with disabled residents.
- **Sustainability strand** – the Council’s Sustainability Taskforce, made up of 9 councillors, led a range of meetings on sustainability issues in the community strategy. This included work in schools, a business breakfast hosted by Arup and a public meeting in the Town Hall chamber. A write-up of this strand will be available at www.camdentogether.org.uk.
- **Schools** – there was a stream of work on the strategy with schools including a discussion at Youth Question Time in the Council Chambers. School councils also had the opportunity of discussing the strategy. There was also a dedicated Young Person’s postcard asking for young people’s views on the future of Camden, 91 of which were completed and returned.
- **Scrutiny committees** – all scrutiny committees considered the consultation document: Children, Schools and Families; Health, Housing and Adult Social Care; Culture and Environment; and Resources and Corporate Performance. These reports are available online at www.camden.gov.uk.
- **Partners** – partner organisations have discussed the consultation, for example, the PCT Board and by Safer Neighbourhoods Panels.
- **Business** – there was a number of activities with business including a business-focused questionnaire. Full responses were received from both of the borough’s Business Improvement Districts: Camden Town Unlimited and the Holborn Partnership. The sustainability strand of the consultation included a dedicated business event.
- **Civic Forum** – the LSP hosted a one day civic forum on the 25th November to conclude the consultation phase and draw together the main themes raised. The event was attended by 160 members of the public, including members of Camden’s citizens panel Camden Talks and students from Haverstock School. The day gave people the opportunity to meet the LSP and discuss some of the key issues raised

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during the consultation. Activities included group discussions, interactive electronic voting, question and answer sessions and information stalls. Feedback from the day was very positive and a separate report of the day will be available. A write up of the day will be available at www.camdentogether.org.uk.

- 1.5 We also publicised the consultation through public libraries, community centres, voluntary sector newsletters, council press and public reception points around the borough.
- 1.6 There is also a dedicated community strategy website - www.camdentogether.org.uk. People have been able to email the website directly and read consultation information online. We also produced a full length consultation document, a summary document in a range of accessible formats and postcards – many of which have been returned to us directly from residents with comments written on. A number of respondents also took the trouble to write bespoke letters.
- 1.7 In total, over 1,200 people were actively involved in the consultation process. 263 written and emailed responses were received from individuals. There were 51 responses from organisations and 374 people attended member-led ward meetings.

Summarising the consultation responses

- 1.8 Throughout the consultation process each of the comments received has been recorded and analysed on an ongoing basis. This report is based on a qualitative review of all of the responses that were received during the consultation process. It has obviously not been possible to reflect the individual content of each of the hundreds of responses received. Instead, this summary reflects the main issues raised during the consultation process, focusing on the overall tone and strength of the responses received. Quotes from individual responses are used throughout the document to illustrate what people have told us.

This report is not a statement of Council policy.

It reports the messages heard through the consultation, regardless of any inaccuracies that may be contained within them.

2. Overview of what people told us

- 2.1 The comments received were insightful, constructive and future orientated. We were delighted by the breadth and depth of response on a whole range of different issues. Respondents generally commented on the parts of the strategy that were of most interest to them and they often gave specific ideas for how things could be improved or done differently. We were pleased that respondents did not feel constrained by the questions posed and instead made their points strongly and effectively on their areas of greatest concern.
- 2.2 At the same time, some members of the public seemed to have been deterred by the volume of information presented in the consultation document. And it was not clear to a small number of respondents how their answers should be framed. A number of respondents felt the document needed to include specific aims and objectives that outline what it is hoped will be achieved by 2012. These specific commitments will be included in the final community strategy.

Headline messages

- 2.3 A great number of different issues were raised during the consultation. However, there were a number of themes that were repeatedly referred to by all respondents. These headline messages included:
- **Drugs and other crime:** people felt that the use and visible selling of drugs in the borough seriously undermines quality of life. Overall, tackling safety and crime issues were a key priority for residents to improve Camden in the future.
 - **Housing:** many people thought that housing in the borough was an important issue. In particular, people felt there was a lack of housing that was affordable or which was appropriate for their needs.
 - **Local, independent shops and businesses:** people valued the diversity of local business - particularly local, independent shops - and wanted this diversity to be preserved.
 - **Green issues:** there was strong support for a proactive approach to protecting the environment and tackling climate change. People wanted it to be easier for them to make their contribution.
 - **Managing growth:** a large number of respondents feel that Camden will have difficulty dealing with an increasing population and some argued that existing residents should be prioritised.

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- **Diversity:** there was a great deal of support for Camden's diversity and, in particular, many people liked living alongside people from a range of different backgrounds. However there were a few responses that disagreed with this. Many people argued that the English language is important to hold our diverse community together.
- **Encouraging personal responsibility:** people supported the idea that everyone had a role to play to make Camden a better place to live. Many said that they looked to the Council for leadership but also recognised that there was only so much the Council can do. It was also argued that people needed support and encouragement to be able to take responsibility themselves.

3. The vision

- 3.1 The vision resonated with most respondents and the consultation response overall reinforced that the four themes are a valid way of representing the main aims that the borough should be working towards. Individuals and organisations were positive about the vision and thought it was comprehensive and covered the right issues. Among the many positive comments received was:

"I am delighted that Camden has taken this initiative and is planning ahead for the future."

- 3.2 There were critical comments from some respondents who thought it was vague and found the present tense confusing. But, overall, the response to the vision was very positive.

4. Creating a Borough of Opportunity

"Camden in 2012: We have a strong local economy that adapts well to future change and where more people, especially young people, can acquire skills and access education training and jobs."

- 4.1 This part of the vision promoted widespread discussion among respondents possibly because it was an area many could relate to directly as it had a visible impact on their general wellbeing.
- 4.2 It was stressed by a number of respondents that a 'strong local economy' needed to take account of social and local needs, not just financial ones, as people saw the issues not only about business and wealth. As one individual commented:

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'many things in life that are precious are not quantifiable and do not appear on balance sheets'.

Business needs

4.3 A lot of comments were raised about the needs of small, local and independent businesses and the impact of the current business environment on them. Many argued that the fate of small businesses should not be left to market forces alone and that intervention by the Council or other organisations is appropriate.

4.4 A large number of respondents pointed to the problems faced by small businesses and in particular the problems posed by business rates and rent levels in the borough. Many felt these were too high, and that in view of this the Council should do more to support small businesses.

4.5 People also highlighted what was perceived to be an increasing lack of diversity on the high street. As one individual observed:

'it is Camden's diversity that makes it special...we should be encouraging small local businesses, and Camden should use its powers to control rents and stop the pushing out of independent retailers'.

4.6 There was widespread support among residents and businesses alike for initiatives to encourage and promote diversity of retail and entrepreneurialism. A suggestion put forward by Kentish Town Road Action was that the Council should facilitate Business Improvement Districts on all high streets in the Borough. Marylebone High Street was referred to by a number of people as an example of where independent shops have been successfully supported.

4.7 This point related not only to the presence of multi-nationals and chains, but also the increasing prominence of particular businesses such as estate agents and stores selling what people described as 'cheap tat' in certain areas of the borough. A number of respondents pointed to the recent regeneration of Bloomsbury and in particular the Brunswick Centre. Although the positive effects this development has had on the local area were recognised, many felt that local people had been excluded from the benefits of this. The presence of small, local, independent shops in Hampstead was highlighted as particularly important to people and their decline was a concern for many.

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- 4.8 However, others questioned whether the Council has a responsibility here, and instead argued that the situation should be left to market forces and consumer demand.
- 4.9 Another theme within the business-related responses was about reducing regulation. This was often discussed in relation to planning policy and the effect that planning processes have on business decisions.

Transport

- 4.10 It was widely agreed that unnecessary car usage in the borough should be tackled to address environmental concerns and congestion levels. However, it was argued that there is a need to invest to improve existing levels of provision and service first, and one individual commented:

'it would be nice if we could get people out of their cars but we have to invest in the infrastructure to make this possible'.

While another added:

"I think Camden should pursue its very good roads programme, that includes walkers, cyclists, and buses in the road schemes."

- 4.11 Accessibility, reliability, frequency, safety and feasibility were mentioned as reasons that many people use cars instead of public transport. The viability of public transport was a particular issue for parents taking their children to school and those with mobility problems. However, it was acknowledged that the Council could not tackle the problem on its own and it would need to work with Transport for London (TfL) and other partners to meet this challenge.
- 4.12 There was also support for introducing measures, such as those recently discussed in Richmond, to charge high polluting vehicles extra. And support for measures that tackled unnecessary car journeys such as improved facilities for cyclists, car pools and walking clubs for school children. It was also agreed by many that more should be done to clamp down on the use of pedestrian areas by cyclists as this poses a public safety issue.
- 4.13 Indeed pedestrian safety in relation to traffic was another important issue for a lot of people. Many felt that pedestrians are not given enough priority over traffic, which has implications for their safety. The Euston Road and the junction by Holborn tube station were flagged up as particular examples where this is the case.

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- 4.14 Traffic wardens and parking zones attracted criticism. Comments included perceptions of some over-zealous parking attendants, the issuing and size of fines and difficulties with parking in residential and commercial areas. Given this situation one individual stated:

‘what is needed is more flexibility and a system which adheres to the spirit of the law rather than the letter. Otherwise motorists are even more convinced that it’s not about making traffic flow smoothly, it’s about raising revenue’.

Education

- 4.15 A wide range of points were raised by respondents about the educational needs of Camden. There were some comments made about the perceived need for a school in the south of the borough, reflecting the current debate on the subject. The Holborn Neighbourhood partnership commented that the lack of a secondary school in the south of the borough was a major issue that *‘contributes to the fragmentation of the community’.*

- 4.16 The Holborn and Covent Garden ward meeting mirrored these concerns when it commented *‘you can’t have a strong, connected community without there being secondary schools that the primary network can feed into’.*

- 4.17 Other more general concerns about education in Camden and its place in the final community strategy were also discussed. Many stated that higher standards in education and improved attainment among pupils were important. Although this was a general issue for all pupils in Camden, some also noted it is a particular issue among ethnic minority communities.

- 4.18 This issue also links to concerns about community cohesion and encouraging integration. As one respondent commented:

‘everything to do with education must somehow be made to fit in with the community at large, so that children feel they are an important part of the whole, and not some segregated minority’.

- 4.19 A number of suggestions were put forward as to how this might be achieved. A few people pointed to the importance of having positive role models for younger people, and as one individual commented: *‘our future is the good example we inspire in our youths’.*

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- 4.20 Another suggestion was for improving the variety of lessons that are available. As part of this many commented that vocational training rather than academic qualifications were very important to provide 'skills for life'.
- 4.21 Another issue that was raised as a concern, particularly by younger people, concerned the cost of university education. Many said although they wanted to go on to higher education they were put off by the costs involved. Some thought the council should offer support with this, particularly to those from low income families.
- 4.22 Many younger people also wanted stricter rules on attendance managing problems posed by truancy and ASB. As part of this some respondents commented it is important to acknowledge the role of the parent as it is not something schools on their own should be expected to address. As one person stated:
- 'schools work hard to encourage respect and [discourage] ASB. The issue lies with parenting and the need to support parents to better manage children with challenging ASB.'*
- 4.23 The Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee also commented that the draft strategy did not sufficiently address the importance of affordable childcare, education and social leisure, problems of overcrowded accommodation, homelessness and diversionary activities. As a more general point it was also noted that more amenities are needed for young people, existing facilities need to be better signposted, and overall they needed to be more evenly distributed geographically.
- 4.24 Many respondents referred to the close link between education and accessing employment opportunities. They welcomed the fact that the consultation document referred to this, although some thought that more could be said.

Employment opportunities

- 4.25 There was support for the discussion of barriers to work in the employment section. Numerous respondents felt that greater emphasis needs to be placed on achieving higher educational standards to secure economic well being for young people, and get the most out of living and growing up in Camden. There was support for apprenticeships.
- 4.26 Similarly, the Camden Training Network agreed with the identified barriers that make it difficult for local people to develop their skills. They felt that the final strategy should outline priorities to enable partners to work towards this vision.

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- 4.27 The importance of ‘selling’ employment opportunities was also highlighted, particularly among the long term unemployed where a lack of self esteem is a major issue. Another suggestion is that employment opportunities within the Council and partner organisations should be advertised locally as well as nationally.
- 4.28 Encouraging and supporting alternative working practices, such as working from home, as a way of developing flexibility was another suggestion. However, the Camden Trades Council criticised the current wording of the vision which they felt seems reliant on financial support being forthcoming from local employers.
- 4.29 Another point that was made by a number of respondents to the consultation is that the vision needs to make reference to older people and not just younger people as this group is also in need of increased employment and training opportunities. It was also noted that not doing this may be discriminatory under new Government legislation. None the less, the need for more opportunities and vocational training for young people was a prominent point that was raised throughout the consultation.
- 4.30 Another comment was that there is a need to create employment opportunities that give people scope for promotion and advancement, access to higher paid positions, and economic mobility, not just entry into the job market.

5. Balancing growth with our environment

“Camden in 2012: We work together to accommodate a growing population while protecting our environment and quality of life. We are meeting the needs of people in Camden now and safeguarding our inheritance for future generations.”

- 5.1 This was the aspect of the vision that attracted most comments from respondents, which suggests that growth and the environment are priorities for a large number of residents and other stakeholders. There was a general feeling that unless something is done now, problems will be stored up for future generations to deal with.

Accommodating growth

- 5.2 The fact the borough’s population was projected to grow was seen as inevitable by many people given that Camden is a vibrant and prosperous

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central London borough. That said, some asked whether the situation should be accepted, and questioned whether growth is desirable as it was felt this would have a detrimental impact on the overall quality of life enjoyed by current residents of the borough. This also links back to an earlier observation that the needs of existing residents should be prioritised over those of new arrivals in the borough.

- 5.3 General concerns were also raised about the ability of the borough as a whole to accommodate this growth. In particular respondents worried about the ability of essential service providers to meet increasing demand, and the impact on existing residents, housing, transport and green spaces. As one individual remarked:

'we must be sure we have the infrastructure, the health and educational facilities to accommodate would-be residents of Camden. Otherwise the resources will be over-used, and existing residents will feel overcrowded and deprived'.

- 5.4 People also asked how future growth would impact on the character and quality of the living environment in Camden. As the one contribution commented, *'all areas need to share the burden of growth but this needs to be balanced against the need to ensure the character and viability of an area is not threatened'.*

Housing

- 5.5 The issue of housing attracted a lot of discussion and was a key theme from the consultation process. It was perhaps not clear to all that the phrase 'accommodating growth' in the consultation document included the need to provide appropriate housing. However, it was clear that people wanted the final strategy make specific reference to housing.
- 5.6 As part of this it was noted that the final document should refer to the need for family sized and affordable housing options in the borough. Furthermore respondents argued that it is also important that affordable housing refers not just to residents who require social housing, but also to middle income groups, who are ineligible for social housing but unable to afford the cost of open market housing in the borough.
- 5.7 Indeed it was observed by a range of respondents that this middle income group make up an important segment of the borough's population but increasingly are having to move to other areas to meet their housing needs, despite the fact they would prefer to remain in Camden. This same problem was also impacting on younger people in the borough. As a consequence it

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was felt that Camden is becoming increasingly polarized between affluent members of the community and those who were less well off.

- 5.8 Another significant concern mentioned by a number of respondents was the need to improve and protect the existing housing stock. Numerous participants raised concerns about the impact of Right to Buy and the fact that family sized dwellings are being lost to the rental sector which is breaking up communities on estates. This also links with comments made about the overall standard of social housing in the borough and that the Council was having difficulty meeting the Government's Decent Homes Standard.
- 5.9 In addition to the need for new developments, many also suggested that existing properties that are currently empty or only partially used should be brought back into use. It was felt areas such as empty office space, space above shops and empty buildings could potentially be put to better use and converted into housing.

Planning

- 5.10 It was widely agreed by respondents that planning has an important role to play in managing and sustaining growth in the borough. As part of this it was felt that planning applications need to be scrutinised more than they are at present. The 'unnecessarily complicated' planning regulations also came in for criticism from several respondents and some felt a lack of enforcement is also undermining the planning position.
- 5.11 Some respondents argued that it was important the Council receives "Section 106' agreements i.e. community benefits from new large scale development. Such gains, it was argued, have the potential to benefit whole communities and ensure existing residents are not excluded from the improvements that new development can bring. The Bloomsbury ward meeting suggested there was a possible role for local communities in deciding how financial planning gain contributions are spent. It was stressed that it will be important to employ local people and seize the opportunities presented by the new King's Cross development.
- 5.12 There was a consensus that brownfield sites should be developed ahead of greenfield sites. Some respondents felt the quality of the built environment has fallen behind other parts of central London. It was also stressed that it is important that the design of new developments are appropriate to the surrounding community. The University of London drew attention to the importance of delivering developments that were '*sensitive to the value of Camden's unique built environment*' while an individual response noted that:

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'housing developments should be similar in scale and density to the surrounding area'.

- 5.13 The potential benefits to be gained from design were raised in relation to new developments and the regeneration of existing areas in the borough. As part of this it was important to recognise that well designed public places encourage interaction and bring people together and the refurbishment of Torrington Square, which has recently been awarded the Landscape Institute Award, was highlighted as a good example of where this has happened already.

The environment

- 5.14 Environmental issues were a key theme highlighted by a large number of respondents. Overall, there was significant support for protecting the environment for us now and for future generations. Respondents wanted action to be taken to combat climate change and promote environmental sustainability. But many feel that it needed to be easier for residents to 'do their bit'.
- 5.15 Broadly speaking respondents tended to discuss growth and the environment separately, though the link between the two was also recognised. In particular there was widespread agreement that as Camden grows there was a need to protect the desirable aspects of the borough's environment, and as one member of the community commented *'the future depends on the present'*. The need to ensure growth was sustainable was also highlighted by some and it was suggested by the one response that it might have been appropriate for the final strategy to outline what it meant by this.
- 5.16 A number of respondents, such as the Sustainability Taskforce, felt that the final strategy needed to do more to encourage the use of alternative energy solutions, cutting out waste and enabling people to act in a more environmentally friendly way. One organisation argued that the document should have mentioned water usage and wildlife.
- 5.17 However, many respondents recognised that environmental concerns were too big for Camden alone to address and there was a need to develop a joint approach to the issue with neighbouring boroughs and areas.
- 5.18 Another important observation that was raised by St Mungo's concerned the tone of the consultation document and the fact many of the environmental solutions referred to relate to the role of the individual, despite the fact two thirds of the borough's emissions come from businesses. In view of this it was

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felt the final strategy needed to put more pressure on businesses to be greener.

- 5.19 Many felt the Council and its partners have a responsibility to lead by example as their behaviour will set the tone for good practice among other organisations, residents and businesses in the borough. A number of respondents suggested that the final strategy sets some environmental targets.

Recycling

- 5.20 Discussions surrounding the issue of recycling tended to concentrate on two main points. Firstly, there was support for the use of incentives and, in certain circumstances, penalties. Secondly there was a general consensus that the process of recycling needs to be made easier.
- 5.21 People tended to support use of incentives to encourage people to recycle. This was because people want to act in a more environmentally friendly way but felt that current arrangements prevent them from doing so. As a consequence they said it would be unfair to enforce penalties. People wanted to see improved recycling arrangements, particularly for council tenants and businesses, and the ability to recycle a wider range of materials.
- 5.22 There was no unanimous agreement about what type of incentives would be appropriate. Cost and who would provide the incentives was a worry, while others argued that the benefits of looking after the environment should be a large enough incentive in itself. There was general agreement that if people do have the opportunities to act in an environmentally sensitive way, penalising people who choose not to recycle would be appropriate.
- 5.23 Linked to these points a number of respondents also felt that to encourage recycling the process needs to be made as simple as possible. One respondent commented:

‘we all know about recycling, but at the moment we think it is a bit of a chore’.

6. Communities

“People feel at home in Camden, take an active part in democracy and can influence the decisions that affect them. Quality of life is improving for all, particularly children, young people and older residents.”

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- 6.1 Overall respondents felt strongly about the importance of promoting diversity in the borough, and improving and enhancing the sense of community. However, some respondents were uncertain about more people coming to live in Camden. Others were keen that English was promoted to ensure everyone could communicate with one another.

Social inclusion

- 6.2 There was widespread agreement that creating a sense of community and belonging within the borough is important to build a more integrated and socially inclusive Camden. However, some respondents felt that the consultation document lacked an emphasis on social inclusion and addressing social inequalities.
- 6.3 The BME Alliance suggested the community cohesion theme should appear as a separate priority in its own right within the vision. They also felt that there is an absence of explicit community values for the borough and this needs to be addressed.
- 6.4 Segregation both among different ethnic groups in the borough, and between the young and the old, was highlighted as a major concern by a range of respondents. Although the benefits of segregation in certain circumstances were argued by some, for example separate prayer facilities for women and children, there was widespread support for initiatives that bring people together.
- 6.5 However, although the consultation document refers to the *'need to discourage facilities that can create unhelpful segregation'*, some noted that while they agree with the tone of the point, it perhaps needs to be made in a way that does not imply criticism of segregated facilities.
- 6.6 There was also a lot of support among respondents for more intergenerational activities that encourage interaction between the young and old. One respondent observed:

'older and younger people in Camden live, work, learn and play side by side...but may never meet each other. Distrust, misunderstanding, hostility and fear of each other is frequently the result. Intergenerational work challenges many of the institutions and segregations on which modern life is built which leads to these bizarre divisions of people.'

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Local decision making

- 6.7 There was strong support for giving local communities some kind of voice and influence over local decision making. This was seen as an important way of helping residents take ownership of localised issues. There was strong support for local area forums, and some reference to Neighbourhood Partnerships. As one person commented:

‘residents need to be given a voice about local services and the decisions that affect them’.

- 6.8 There was also a lot of support for some kind of youth parliament. Many saw this as a particularly useful way of engaging and involving young people in the borough. Some respondents noted this was particularly important as children and young people at present did not feel involved in decision making yet are central to the future of Camden.
- 6.9 However, though the notion of empowering local communities was well supported, concerns were raised about the implementation of such forums and their overall level of influence and effectiveness. A particular concern was that they would simply add another layer of bureaucracy without delivering any real benefits to the communities for which they are intended.
- 6.10 Participation was another important topic raised. Respondents wanted to ensure that everyone is able to participate and it is not just the vocal minority that are heard. The Hampstead Town ward meeting also asked whether different strategic approaches would be needed in different parts of the borough to make such an approach effective.
- 6.11 Another important point that was raised by St Mungo’s was the danger that too local a focus was taken with the cumulative effect not making the best economic or good practice sense. They were also concerned about the risks to ‘unpopular groups’ if everything was biased towards communities of location.

Minority Groups

- 6.12 The presence of minority communities living in the borough was widely referred to and the vision was praised by many for recognising and making reference to their needs. However, the LGBT Forum felt the final strategy should go further and actually mention marginalised groups by name.
- 6.13 This linked to a wider point that was raised by the LGBT Forum that many minority groups are often invisible in plans and policies, as well as their

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implementation. They commented *'one size does not fit all'* with regards to service provision and this should be acknowledged in the final strategy.

- 6.14 Isolation among minority groups is another issue that respondents asked to be recognised as this impacts on initiatives that promote integration in the community. As part of this a number of respondents commented that often services target geographically located community centres rather than specific needs and as a consequence there are always groups that are not being reached.

Faith communities

- 6.15 There was widespread recognition of the importance and value the range of different faiths that are found in the borough bring to developing and enhancing community cohesion. Many people said recognising cultural differences is important and necessary. However, promoting understanding is equally important and is something the borough should do more of. Church and faith groups were seen to have a key role to play in nurturing this, as were schools and the education system.

- 6.16 One of the key messages for the vision, and something that was stressed by the Camden Faith Partnership, is the need to live and interact together but also recognise and celebrate diversity. Individual responses also reiterated this point. One for example commented:

'the vision for Camden should be one where all faiths live and work as one but have diversity at the same time'

- 6.17 Muslims of all ages drew attention to the need for a new mosque in the borough, and additional facilities so women and children could pray in a culturally appropriate environment.

Voluntary and Community Sector

- 6.18 Some respondents argued that statutory services were not always sensitive to the diverse range of needs that can be found within Camden. This point was made by the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and in individual responses. It was partly attributed to the size of the organisations concerned and the fact many minority groups were often reluctant to engage with them; and partly it was a reflection of the way in which some services were provided.

- 6.19 Many respondents felt this emphasised the importance of the VCS and many people expressed concern about the future of funding the VCS. Significantly

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though, as the Camden Network of Networks commented, the VCS was seen as a valuable way of working with minority and hard to reach groups in the borough, and they argued that it was important that it continued to be seen in this light. There was a series of comments on English language training in this context, and the role of the voluntary sector in providing this service.

- 6.20 However some respondents argued that the voluntary sector has a wider role to play than service provision and as the BME Alliance commented, *'the VCS is a community asset and one people expect to see fully utilised'*. The consultation document's commitment to a strong voluntary sector was welcomed, although some respondents felt it could go further. There were many examples of work that the voluntary sector was doing to contribute to Camden's sense of community and overall cohesion, including community festivals and community enterprises. There were calls for these community resources to be valued and promoted.
- 6.21 The important role played by volunteers was also highlighted and the Volunteer Centre Camden stressed the final document should include a greater commitment from the Council to promote and support volunteering in all sections of the community. This was echoed by comments made by one individual who felt:

'if more people were encouraged to feel a bit involved in activities and events it would make one feel more a part of everything, rather than outsiders looking in'.

English language services

- 6.22 Alongside the VCS, English language services were highlighted by a large number of respondents as an important means of improving social cohesion in the borough. One respondent noted:

'there is an opportunity for all Camden residents to participate in community activities, but one of the major obstacles is the difficulty of integrating minority groups who do not speak the language'.

- 6.23 It was felt more needs to be done to help non-English speakers to learn the language and schools have an important role function to play in achieving this. It was also noted that language classes are a valuable way of promoting understanding and further integration.
- 6.24 Respondents argued that being able to speak English was an important way of promoting and enabling social integration because people from all backgrounds were then able to communicate. As one respondent commented:

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'this will ensure efficiency, a sense of belonging and self confidence'.

Older People

- 6.25 The emphasis in Camden Together on independent living was welcomed, but some respondents thought it could go further. There were clear messages that older people should be seen as active and valuable contributors to society and not vulnerable people who were dependent on services. There were calls to improve home visiting services, availability of exercise classes and volunteering opportunities. It was also recognised that public and voluntary organisations cannot be expected to provide everything.
- 6.26 A number of respondents commented that more work was needed locally to involve older people in their community, especially isolated older people, and promote local cohesion. An example included enabling older people to get involved with youth clubs and young people's activities more generally.

Health

- 6.27 Though the impact health had on an individual's or area's quality of life was recognised, it was not an issue that attracted a large volume of comments. This might have reflected the fact that the overarching theme of the vision – that people's quality of life should improve – was something that people typically agreed with.
- 6.28 However, the importance of the quality of the local environment on health was highlighted as an issue during the consultation. As one response observed:
- 'all planning should take into account the potential effects on general health'.*
- 6.29 Furthermore it was also suggested the final community strategy needs to refer to the link between poverty, bad housing and health.
- 6.30 The role of the individual was also recognised by some respondents. They commented that although service providers have certain duties to fulfil, individuals also needed to take greater responsibility for their actions. As one commented:

'health services do require a bottomless pit of finance, so everything must be done to encourage families and individuals to take care of their own health'.

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- 6.31 To help people do this it was suggested that more leisure centres and sports facilities are required as current ones are over-used. This showed that people recognised sport and physical activity were essential for encouraging healthy and active communities, and the tone of many comments suggested this was an increasing priority for residents.
- 6.32 The importance of healthy eating was also referred to. Some commented that incentives should be provided to encourage people to do this, although there was not widespread support for the idea. More however agreed that public awareness needs improving and as one individual remarked:

‘we need to make more people aware of food and organic, farm fresh food in particular’.

7. World City

“We share a thriving and safe part of London – and gateway to the rest of Europe – where all local people benefit from the excellent cultural and leisure opportunities on our doorstep, including the Olympics.”

- 7.1 The vision’s fourth theme received a great deal of comments on the issue of community safety, but less so on world city and leisure. One respondent commented *‘one reservation I have is the fourth statement lacks the power of the other three and doesn’t seem to be clearly about things within our control.’* It was also observed that there is an important distinction to be made between addressing the needs of the local community, and addressing the needs of a world city.

Drugs

- 7.2 Concerns about drugs were the most persistent and strongly articulated message coming out of the consultation process. There was a high degree of dissatisfaction on the issue from a large number of respondents, including children, young people and older people. For example, one respondent said:

Camden, whether we like it or not, is one of the major drug markets in the country and we need to tackle this problem if we are going to make the borough truly safe. To tackle this problem, we need new ideas and a fresh approach that recognises the problem and allows us to solve it together’.

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- 7.3 The prominence and disruptiveness of the problem, and a perceived failure by the authorities to successfully address it, were the two biggest criticisms raised by respondents. Another concern was that efforts to tackle the situation would simply push the problem into neighbouring areas, such as the housing estates around Camden Town. It was also widely acknowledged that drugs pose a significant barrier to the development of cohesive society where people feel at home.
- 7.4 A lot of attention was given to current enforcement measures and how they might be improved. Generally there was a consensus that current approaches are not working as the problem (e.g. drug selling) remains extremely visible, and to rectify this people seemed in favour of having more visible policing, particularly in problematic areas.
- 7.5 As part of this there was a call for the Police, Police Community Support Officers or Street Wardens to work longer hours and patrol at different times of day. A considerable number of respondents commented that these officers typically patrol during the day but not at night, which was when preventative measures were most needed.
- 7.6 However, as an incentive to dealing with the problem a number of respondents commented that successfully addressing problem of drugs and drug dealers had the important cross cutting incentive of improving the environmental quality of the borough. Overall the tone of the discussion indicated that residents want a clear commitment to address the drugs issue.

Community Safety

- 7.7 Problems with community safety were closely linked to the borough's drugs problem and crime. There were also widespread feelings that the problems caused by begging and anti-social behaviour (ASB), which are closely associated with crime, were ruining the quality of the living environment in the borough. Summing up this situation one individual remarked:
- 'we are harassed by drug dealers on a daily basis and feel unsafe as we walk our streets'*
- 7.8 A number of businesses highlighted that crime levels would impact on their decision to move into an area. This linked the prominence of crime with the overall prosperity of an area.
- 7.9 However, despite the problems caused by crime there was recognition that service providers in the borough have had some success in their attempts to address the issue. A small number of respondents stated that there had been

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some notable success within the borough but because people had not been made aware of this they still thought that crime is a growing problem. As one individual commented: *'peace of mind develops only when one is knowledgeable of the borough's safety arrangements'*.

- 7.10 It was also suggested that people are given more information on how resources to tackle crime are prioritised as it was felt bringing greater transparency to this would engender a greater understanding of the pressures faced by service providers among residents.
- 7.11 The problems posed by drugs and crime, and the implications this had on community safety led some respondents into a discussion about the quality of the built environment, the use of public space and the importance of improving safety and security through design. For example, people talked about improvements to street lighting and landscaping and some thought the benefits of these should be further explored. People asked whether impact of crime was adequately addressed at the planning stage.
- 7.12 A number of respondents highlighted their strong association between the provision of appropriate facilities, such as the provision of after-school activities or youth clubs, and tackling youth crime. However attention was also drawn to the fact children and young people were frequently victims of crime and this needed to be recognised in the final document.
- 7.13 The consultation document made reference to the unique character of Camden Town. However, many respondents asked whether the reality was really that desirable. Many referred to the problems posed by crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour, which have already been discussed, as well as problems with the tube station, overcrowding at weekends and the amount of rubbish in the area as all having a detrimental impact on the area.
- 7.14 Camden Town Unlimited commented that the number one issue to be resolved in Camden Town was the prominence of aggressive, visible drug dealing. They also noted that a well managed street environment reduced the prominence of anti-social behaviour. At present they argued that the area was very dirty and there was too much rubbish. They suggested that lighting and pavements in the area needed addressing and a number of respondents also asked whether there is a case for pedestrianising the high street.

Leisure and cultural facilities

- 7.15 Generally respondents seemed to appreciate the range of leisure and cultural facilities available in Camden although the geographical distribution of facilities is an issue for some. Respondents either noted they were in close

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proximity to several of the same types of facility, such as libraries, or they were some distance away, which meant they would be less likely to use a facility.

- 7.16 However, cost was an issue that restricts many from using facilities as much as they would like. In particular it was felt this penalised lower income groups and children and younger people. As a way around this problem there was a lot of support for a 'Camden Card' that gives local residents discounts on leisure and culture facilities. Westminster was referred to as a good example of where this happens already.
- 7.17 Another important point that came out of discussions is that more culturally appropriate leisure facilities are needed and reference needs to be made to this in the final strategy. Hopscotch for example stated there was a need for culturally appropriate facilities for children and young people, and in particular Asian girls over the age of 12.

Parks and open spaces

- 7.18 The parks and open spaces of the borough were highly valued by residents, and there was strong opposition to there being used to accommodate future development, given the pressure for space that exists in the borough.
- 7.19 What was clear from respondents was that parks and open spaces needed to be clean and attractive so that they could be enjoyed by all. However, there were notable differences of opinion regarding the use of public spaces for public events. A number of people objected to the use of parks for large scale events as this conflicted with the notion that parks are a place for peace and quiet that could be enjoyed by everyone. Others took an alternative point of view and welcomed this idea.
- 7.20 What was clear was that using parks for large public events was a sensitive issue and the size, frequency and nature of the event had to be carefully considered. As one individual commented:

'events in parks and open spaces are judged on their merits - but should not exclude other users excessively.'

Olympics

- 7.21 The Olympics in 2012 attracted a mixture of positive and negative comments from respondents, although it was not a major theme of the consultation overall. A slight majority considered it to be a positive thing for Camden. However, there were concerns over cost, the implications for transport and

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whether local residents would feel any real benefits. Two common questions were raised in relation to these concerns: would the money be better spent elsewhere? And would Camden really benefit from the Olympics to the extent the Council thinks?

- 7.22 Many people wanted to ensure that facilities would be available for local residents to use. Linked to this people thought it was important that the occasion was used to increase participation among minority groups.
- 7.23 Many observed that the Olympics presented a valuable opportunity to reinvigorate Camden, and it was one that it would be important not to waste. To realise this though the Council and its partners needed to be creative and imaginative in how they went about this so as to ensure they maximised all available opportunities.

8. Concluding comments

- 8.1 The consultation phase for Camden's new community strategy raised a wide range of points that reflect the diversity of views that exist in Camden. Generally people seemed to agree that the vision for the future of Camden is going in the right direction. The final strategy provides an opportunity for the Council and its partners to reaffirm the vision we have for the borough taking these issues into account.
- 8.2 A clear set of priorities emerged from the consultation including drugs, housing and environmental issues. Respondents also wanted to understand how Camden Council and its partners would work to achieve the strategy. Overall people want the final strategy to have clear definitions of its objectives and a clear understanding of the challenges in the way of achieving them.

9. Camden Together: the final community strategy

- 9.1 The responses from the consultation process of the community strategy are an important source of the priorities and concerns of our residents. They will be fed into the development of the final community strategy. Information that will influence the final strategy include evidence about what is happening in Camden and trends for the future and the priorities of the organisations that make up the Local Strategic Partnership. The council has an overall leadership role in agreeing the final strategy and the fifty-four elected members of Council will agree the final version of the document.

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- 9.2 The final community strategy is due to be launched in Spring 2007 and will be available in a range of formats. Details will be available in *Your Camden*, at www.camdentogether.org.uk.
- 9.3 For further details about the final community strategy please contact the Community Strategy Team:

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