

MOUNT PLEASANT NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

www.mountpleasantforum.wordpress.com

NEWSLETTER 3 AUGUST 2016

Hi folks.....this is your quick update of our monthly progress for July 2016

1. **New Contacts.** Meg Howarth and I attended the nascent Holborn Neighbourhood Forum get-together at Coram's Fields on July 10th, for a very interesting and informative meeting. One of their speakers was **Paul Lloyd**, who is a member of Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum. We talked. We've asked him if he can organise one of the KTNF people to talk to us at our next training session (September). He will let us know. Paul is now added to our mailing list. It is useful for us to learn from Kentish Town because they are a similar neighbourhood to our own, and they are ahead of us. They have completed their Neighbourhood Plan and it has been accepted. We hope to have a fruitful dialogue with this local NF.
2. **Our Mapping Study - defining our Neighbourhood Area..** Josie Vos (Forum member) and I discussed our local mapping project. Our intention is to show all of us, through maps and diagrams, what exactly our neighbourhood consists of - number of people, types of housing, occupations, ethnic mix, deprivation, etc. All the information is publically available....it is just a matter of setting the information out in ways that we can all readily understand.. The Forum also has grant money allocated for a mapping exercise.

We all "know" our neighbourhood in a personal way.....but often it is only when you look at the data that you can see a different, more complex picture.

However, when Josie and I discussed the data we saw there would be some problems with mapping directly from the available data. Whilst overall much of our area appears to be "the same", in actuality there are complex differences which are difficult to show visually on a map.

- For instance, in Calthorpe Street, most of the housing is theoretically social housing....in that the landlords are mainly Camden Council or Housing Associations. So on a map showing housing tenure all that street would look much the same....social housing!
- But in fact through Right to Buy, some of those Calthorpe Street flats are either leased to Council tenants who are buying their flats, or have been sold on into private leaseholds (though Camden Council is still their "landlord"). What's more, a couple of the buildings have been sold into the private rental market, and one or two are now actually free-hold residential dwellings.
- As you can understand, one single building in Calthorpe Street may have a social housing landlord but encompass both social tenants, social leaseholders and private leaseholders. How will a map show this mix?.....not with any clarity! The real picture is richer and more complex than the simple blanket "social housing".
- Similarly, because many houses contain three or four flats, you can have a mixture of age groups living within one dwelling (for example - an old person or elderly couple, a single person, and a family with children- all in different flats within one house) ... so how will you show the age-mix on a map? The map will show an "average" age for the occupants of the whole street - and that will tell us nothing useful.

This sort of intricate detail doesn't display well on a map but can be better displayed by charts and graphs.

We need to work through the data figures to draw out the richer picture of what our neighbourhood is truly like.

So the plan is now that in September we will give you all some pie-charts and graphs to show you a more detailed breakdown of our neighbourhood. Then, when we have all understood the make-up of our basic area, we can get maps drawn which will be able to illustrate defined questions.

Josie Vos and her husband Cieran Tuohy have kindly volunteered to do most of the hard work - thank goodness - but if any of you would like to help me with data-combing (*not my forte*) - let me know!!

3. **Our Website - subgroup.** Our website www.mountpleasantforum.wordpress.com has served us well over the years and it has always been a useful community tool. Now it is in need of redesigning, re-organising and updated.

We're asking Julie Riley, Oliver Bennett, Randy MacDonald and Ed Denison to get together, and make a decision about what is to be done. They will report back to our public meeting on September 19th.

The issues are really whether we

- Stay with the existing wordpress system but get someone to tidy it up and teach more of us how to use it. This system is free for us to use.
- Go with a new system....as have holborn forum ...www.holbornforum.org.uk.....
.. and pay someone to set it up and teach us how to use it. Their system costs about £110 per year.
- Andrew Burns (local resident, on forum info-list) has kindly volunteered to design and run a new site for us, (including teaching us how to use site). Andrew would work for free but we would have to pay for site etc..... again about £50-£70-£90 per annum.
- What-ever solution is agreed upon it is essential that some of us are trained up to use the site, i) so one person doesn't get lumbered doing all the work and ii) the Forum does not suddenly get left with a website no-one can operate.

We do have funds from our grant to do this work, it is just making the right choice for us and getting the work done.

4. Our Training Session 1 – July 30th at the Calthorpe Project.

Thanks so much to Sue Vincent, who gave us a very comprehensive and entertaining introduction to the Principles of Urban Design.

Thanks also to those who attended: Oliver Bennett, Andrew Burns, Cath Cinnamon, Judy Dainton, Louise Gates, Meg Howarth, Bruce McDougall, Tony Randall, Julie Riley, Lucy Shimidzu.

It was an excellent session in the very pleasant and comfortable surroundings of the Calthorpe Project. Sue's notes are being circulated to you all, and will be posted on our website.

We discussed buildings and spaces. It was clear how most people, in any city, prefer their local "vernacular" (in our case rhythmic and pleasant Georgian and Victorian terraces). The point was made that apart from sentiment the reason these buildings appeal is that they are fit for purpose, they are adaptable and they have endured through a couple of centuries without need for demolition. These buildings are a true example of good urban design. We discussed iconic buildings (skyscrapers, the Shard) and the issues which can arise around the podium (where often the "iconic" gets lost in an unhappy mix of access routes and unattractive but functional necessities. We discussed all aspects of urban planning - including good road plans and awkward road plans, meaning of density, access to services, importance of including social needs. We were surprised to hear how many suburban areas have so few public transport links that cars are a necessity - even though "cars in cities" are now a problem. We rushed through the cascade of planning authorities and decision makers.....and we had a fairly "ironic" look at excerpts from our current national planning documentation! It was all good fun.

Towards the end of the session Sue dealt briefly with our "concerns and wishes" - (the issues in our Neighbourhood we want to address) - to help us redefine our varied list into various groupings. She made some salient commentsand I have summarized a few key points here.

- **National Government Issues** where we can do little
 - **Housing Concerns in General** - affordable housing, impending destruction of social housing provision, instability of the housing market. We can certainly comment on these issues - we may wish to support our local Councils in their stance of 50% affordable housing in any developments/redevelopments - but we can do little to influence these concerns through planning alone, since these are national political decisions. Many of these concerns are only resolved at the ballot box.
 - **Some Traffic Concerns** - main roads and national policy re cars, bicycles, parking are set by the government of the day or by the GLA or by the local Councils. We will have little influence except by supporting policies we like or commenting adversely on those we dislike.
 - **School Provision** - the local campaign for a secondary school south of the Euston Road is ultimately dependent on approval from central government (Dept of Ed), who will also have to fund this school. So whatever views we may have - and might wish to state in our Neighbourhood Plan - ultimately that decision is out of our hands.
- **National Government Issues** where we can usefully express our views
 - **Housing Concerns in particular.** We can support 50% affordable housing in every development. We can oppose over-development of residential dwellings for rental gain. We can encourage house building. We can, if we wish, support any on-coming GLA policies to control rents in London.
 - **Traffic Concerns at local level.** We can't change the nationally agreed traffic flow BUT we can rightfully comment on moderation or improvements to local junctions, we can discuss cycle-lanes, on-street parking, pedestrianising some local streets, positioning of local crossings, getting rid of excess traffic signs etc. We can certainly work on our "Fleet Valley Walk".
 - **Air Pollution.** We can do a lot of work on this issue, with help from GLA, who have already made this a policy issue.
 - **Green Areas.** We can certainly work on green infills, on pocket-parks etc
 - **Workshops.** We can support subsidized workshops but we will have to work out who pays for them.
 - **Empty Shops** - we need to see why they fail and try to decide on issues of retail boosting....or change of use of building to housing....or.....?
 - **Schools.** Although the final decision about the secondary school will be made at Westminster we can, and we should, hold a view about whether we support the project, whether we approve of the proposed site....or say if we have other alternatives in mind.

- **Concerns on our list which are NOT planning issues**
 - **Regaining the Fire Station.** The loss of the local fire station was a political decision which we, on our own, cannot reverse. We can find out if the Fire Service still owns the building or to whom they will be selling, and what plans have been made for the building. MPA (who can act politically) can campaign to get a replacement service.....but on the face of it, this is not Forum business....it is a local political campaign (like the school campaign). However the loss of the fire station is a loss of social amenity and can affect local safety, so if MPA can make a local case for this, the Forum can, of course, include this item within the Neighbourhood Plan.
 - **General Nuisances - drug-dealing, dog fouling, noise, rubbish collections etc.** Although good design can help dispel these problems in the future, the local Councils and the Police deal with existing issues. Planners have no authority here, and the Forum therefore has minimal reason to interfere.
- **Things to remember.** Changes cost money, so things we want have to justify their upkeep. We have to give good factual reasons (evidence) for any proposals we make.

At the end of the month we'll circulate the revised list of "issues and concerns" when we start our local neighbourhood consultation.

5. Local Consultation on "Our Mount Pleasant Planning Issues" - August 22 to Sept 16

We are beginning to see what local issues concern people. These views are mainly from people who come to our meetings or receive our emails. However, we do need to give all our other neighbours the opportunity to say what they think. So we're going to print leaflets and posters and circulate the information as widely as we can through local groups. **All of you will be asked to help with the leaflet drop in your own local area.**

6. Our Second Training Session. Sept 10th 3pm-7pm at the Calthorpe Project, Gray's Inn Road.

Most of you preferred this day, and these sorts of times, so we have set the date. More news and details in our next Newsletter (September).

7. Executive Decisions.

- The Forum is submitting our CRtBuild project to Camden Council, for approval. More news on this item in the MPA Ltd report at our next Forum meeting on Sept 19th.
- Expenses have been approved to pay for Training Sessions (including food and drink), room hire for our meetings, and printing costs for the public consultation. Accounts will be tabled at the next Forum meeting on Sept 19th.
- Claer Lloyd-Jones will remain on our executive, but is withdrawing from the post of treasurer due to pressure of work. We're very grateful to Claer for all the work she has done and we are so pleased she is staying on the executive. We will elect a new treasurer at our meeting on Sept 19th.

8. **General Neighbourhood Issues.**

As you will remember MPA deals with individual planning issues and campaigns and then reports back to the Forum. Then the Forum may include those issues in their plans. MPA will report back in full at the next Forum meeting on Sept 19thbut just to note

- that some MPA members are enquiring about the future of the local Fire Station
- residents in Pine Street are very concerned about plans for NCP car-park
- there are (unsubstantiated) rumours that Eastman Dental hospital site may be up for sale next year.

We all need to be aware that this "quiet backwater" is now a target for central London development. So keep your eyes and ears open for signs of change.

That's all for this month but still lots to do! Thanks so much to everyone who has put in time and effort to move our work forward. You are all stars in your own right!

Judy Dainton and the Forum Executive. August 5th 2016.

(until we sort out info on our website, if you have any comments or views on our work, please send them to: judithomas@blueyonder.co.uk)