

# MOUNT PLEASANT NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

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## MINUTES OF PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON MONDAY MARCH 19 AT THE CALTHORPE PROJECT GRAY'S INN ROAD, FROM 6.45pm

**1.PRESENT:** Louise Gates, P. Verlaan, Shirley Careene, Miles Hansard, Anne Winchester, Casey Jones, Camilla Jenssen, Burns Van de Graf, Oliver Bennett, Belinda Webb, Lucy Shimadzu, Francois Smit, Elena Henson, Julie Riley, Ed Denison, Graeme Weston, Judy Dainton (Chair). *There were two other members of the public present, who did not sign in and whose names were therefore unknown.*

**2.APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Meg Howarth

**3.MINUTES OF LAST MEETING:** Accepted nem.con.

**4.ACTION TAKEN FOLLOWING LAST MEETING.** Chair reported that apart from Meg Howarth (Forum exec member) attending and speaking at the Appeal over NCP car-park (Farringdon Road) site, the Forum had worked intensively on the Neighbourhood Plan.

**On the NCP car-park,** she explained that Whitbread had bought the site on Farringdon Road for redevelopment as a Premier Inn, but their application had been refused by Islington Council. Whitbread had appealed this decision.

MPA and MPNF had opposed this planning application (Meg and Judy both speaking at the meeting). MPA opposed the application on grounds of lack of housing provision, unsuitability of the building, noise nuisance etc. MPNF opposition was on grounds of unsuitable massing of proposed structure, noise nuisance to local residents, also recommending no late-night trading licences for retail outlets on the ground floor, no taxi or other vehicle access through the Pine Street Medical Centre car-park etc etc. MPNF was absolutely horrified by the sudden unveiling of the design for the building... since a polished and reflective aluminium façade was hardly in keeping with the local area. Local residents also opposed the application on the grounds of an hotel being unsuitable use of the site. Islington Council refused this planning application.

When the Appeal was notified Meg Howarth (MPA and MPNF executive committee) spent time preparing papers and attended the Appeal, again voicing our opposition to the re-vamped proposal, as did the local residents from Pine Street and Vinyard Walk. We await to hear the Inspector's findings on or after March 22<sup>nd</sup>. The Chair and the meeting thanked Meg for her steadfast, singlehanded and largely unsupported work on this project, much appreciated by both MPA and MPNF.

**Forum executive committee work on the draft Plan.**The Chair then briefly mentioned the new Forum Website and the projects the Forum had been studying – air pollution (study ongoing), green issues (draft for Plan) and social details (diagrams and charts).

**5.INTRODUCING OUR DRAFT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN.** The Chair said the Forum started in February 2016, following 18 months preliminary hard work by MPA to set up the Forum and recruit the representative membership. She said the reason we started the Forum was to produce a Local Plan and obtain a proper say in local planning - to prevent disastrous developments like the Mount Pleasant development ever happening again. We wanted to preserve for the future what was good about our neighbourhood, and to be able to have a proper say in local planning matters. The Forum had obtained a grant from Locality, a Government Agency. The Forum had spent the first year asking the members for their views on the neighbourhood, and on holding two intensive learning sessions – to which local residents were also invited – to get up to strength on town planning procedures. We also leafleted 4,000 households, asking for their opinions. We issued newsletters setting out our progress and held public meetings. We

then spent the second year developing themes that local people said were important to them, issues like housing, air pollution, green spaces, facilities for teenagers, too much traffic, too many cars. She finally mentioned that this Plan was a draft, awaiting more local views, and that many local examples and information on our local area past and present are already to be found in our full Appendices, which we had not yet finished editing. The Appendices would be circulated as soon as they were complete.

## **6.RESPONDING TO LOCAL VIEWS – SOME OF OUR PROJECTS.**

The Chair introduced this item saying that the Forum had set to work on projects in response to local views, and members of the executive had collectively worked on all the issues put forward before concentrating on the following topics.

**6.1 Graeme Weston summarised our Air Pollution project.** He mentioned its inception; an initiative of Citizen Science introduced to us by Dee Searle, who spoke at our December 2016 public meeting.

He then explained how we ran two trials (spring and summer) which we funded from our grant, and two further trials (autumn and winter) funded by Camden Council as part of a borough-wide local survey project. Our aim was to collect data over a year to see if there was any seasonal variation in pollution due to temperature, wind and other changes in weather. Graeme explained the first two surveys covered Camden and Islington parts of our Neighbourhood, whilst the second two surveys only covered Camden. He added that all parts of our neighbourhood suffered NO<sub>2</sub> pollution – from petrol and diesel, from building sites – to levels far above the level considered dangerous by the EC. He explained how we tested for air-pollution, and gave more details of our concerns, including the vulnerability of children to air pollution, then concluded by saying that was one reason the Forum had developed its policies about "clean-air walks", traffic flow and car-usage. The report was set out in full in our Appendices (yet to be circulated).

A member of the audience said she was surprised there was no significant seasonal variation; the response was that the Forum was equally surprised, but members guessed that perhaps – without any scientific knowledge - high levels of air pollution from 24hr traffic and building sites persisted at a reasonably constant state despite changes in the weather.

Another member of the public said she objected to cycle-lanes, since she felt they caused more traffic congestion and made air pollution worse. Other members of the public disagreed. Ed Denison said that once car users got used to bicycle lanes, studies showed they found alternative routes and the congestion calmed down. Julie Riley, made the point that traffic congestion due to cycle lanes was a short-term reaction, and that the traffic jams did subside over time. The lady who raised the point disagreed and said this was Central London, and we should accept cars, this area was in the centre of a big city, it was a cosmopolitan locality not a village. Judy Dainton said Camden and Islington Councils both had policies moving towards less car traffic in smaller side roads, and that this Neighbourhood Plan was mainly dealing with traffic on side roads, squares and residential streets. Julie also made the point that most of our proposed changes would be phased-in over time. Ed added the fact that our Plan had to fit in with council plans and with the London plan for traffic usage, and so far, these proposals merely echoed and enhanced the policies held by these other bodies; our policies were far from unique.

Another member of the public asked about the proposed changes of traffic flow in Frederick Street and what the Forum's views were. The Chair said that the Forum was, as a group, in favour of the proposals. Elena added that the consultation period had been extended, so there was still time to write in.

A further speaker complained about cars/taxis idling in residential streets and squares, which he said increased pollution. The meeting agreed.

Oliver Bennett said that idling was illegal – it was against the law. However, as another member of the public said – is it ever prosecuted? Is it ever enforced? The Forum agreed and took note.

## **6.2 Julie Riley discussed the Forum's new website, and her contributions to our green policies.**

She said it had been unanimously agreed by the Forum, and confirmed at a public meeting, that the Forum would spend a proportion of our grant money on a new website, which would become a long-term asset for the Forum and our most significant way of consulting local views. She reminded the meeting that the website could be found at

[www.mountpleasantforum.org.uk](http://www.mountpleasantforum.org.uk) and that contact can be made through email: [mpforumwebsite@gmail.com](mailto:mpforumwebsite@gmail.com) where they could record their comments and make their opinions known.

She then went on to discuss green issues, saying she had contributed notes on play-streets and on big developers contributing actively to the neighbourhood's environment, over and above CiL payments, by including green roofs, green walls, natural drainage systems, accessible green public spaces etc in their proposed developments. She asked everyone to read the Plan and make comments on the website via the email address. The meeting generally agreed with her sentiments; there were no objections or alternative views.

### **6.3** Since Meg Howarth was absent, **Judy Dainton talked briefly about writing the Plan.**

She said it had been a mammoth undertaking, with most of the Exec contributing research, notes and text. Meg had gone through the text with a toothcomb, for spelling mistakes, errors of fact and for faults in grammar. Judy and Ed had worked on pulling the narrative into shape, and Ed had toiled against the clock organising this final draft. She said that the Appendices, which contain examples, graphs, charts and diagrams, would probably be more meaningful for local people to read, since they refer to local issues, whilst this draft Plan at the moment contains all the priorities and policies that local people told the Forum concerned them. She said the full Appendices were still being edited and would be circulated within the next month; meanwhile she urged all the audience to make sure they read through the main document, the Plan, since it contained the essence of our proposals, and to be sure they made their views known, either at this meeting, or via the website. There were no comments from the floor.

**7. SUMMARISING OUR DRAFT PLAN. Ed Denison spoke to this item.** Ed talked the meeting through the Plan, pointing out that this was a draft document setting out the main issues of local planning concern and that the purpose of this meeting was to invite the audience's comments. He urged everyone present to read the document, and tell their neighbours, friends and local t/a about the Plan, (obtainable on the Forum website) and invite them to comment via the website or the email address.

He said the draft Plan was written in plain language, which the Forum hoped would be understandable to everyone, but it did contain some technical planning terms, which were necessary. He hoped everyone would persevere, and read through the whole Plan, since the success of the Plan would influence the neighbourhood in years to come.

He then talked briefly about **Priorities** (the information we had obtained from asking local residents) and our **Policies** (the changes we wanted to make to fulfil local priorities). Ed also praised our Town Planning consultant, Vincent Goodstadt, who had been invaluable in helping turn our local concerns into planning statements. He explained that the Forum had paid for Vincent's services from our grant funding, and that Vincent had willingly given, and was still giving, the Forum much more time and advice than he had charged for, which was greatly appreciated.

Ed then continued with **a brief summary of our suggested Policies**, one by one, detailing how each Policy also included Recommendations. He further explained how the full colour version of our Plan, available on our Website, set out the Policies in red and the Recommendations in yellow text boxes, to aid easy understanding.

Ed finally homed in on the section of the draft dealing with **Strategic Development**, talking through each section in detail.

He concluded by reminding the meeting that the point of this time-consuming exercise of creating a local Plan was to enable local people to have a proper legal voice in local planning matters. It was essential local representatives be able to discuss issues early on in the planning process, to make sure that local concerns were written-in to plans, long before any firm decisions were made.

**8. THE NEXT STEPS FORWARD. Judy and Ed briefly summarised the future time-scale.** They explained that, with the best will in the world, this was a lengthy official process, with certain time constraints which could not be hurried.

- The deadline for comments from this meeting, and from the wider public, were agreed as April 29.
- Our next public meeting, with the amended draft Plan, to be held on Monday May 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Then, if all content was agreed locally, the Plan would be printed, circulated and formally submitted to both Camden and Islington Councils in early/mid June 2018.

- If the content of the Plan was not locally agreed at the public meeting on May 21<sup>st</sup>, a further month would be spent incorporating any further comments and views, another public meeting would be held and the Plan would be submitted in early July 2018
- Once the Plan had been formally submitted to both Councils, a further period of public consultation would take place (6 weeks formal consultation by MPNF, 6 weeks formal consultation by both Councils),
- A public referendum would then have to take place throughout the designated Neighbourhood Area, and this would include another 6-week period of leafletting and public notice of the referendum before the voting takes place, plus a few weeks for collation of votes and announcement of result. So, we are looking at maybe November/December 2018 at the earliest for the referendum results.
- Eventually, the Plan would/would not be accepted by one or both of the Councils, and would then have to be incorporated into the legal planning system, which has various processes of its own, and could take a good 6-9 months
- People should be aware that the required processes concerning our Plan also involve the diaries of the local Councils, so even after the Forum has adhered to all the rules of formal consultation, we also have to dovetail our Plan's processes with both local Councils' timetables. This inevitably adds more weeks before any outcome is reached.
- So, the earliest, earliest possible date for our Plan to become part of the legal planning system would be early autumn of 2019 and in actuality, would probably be by Christmas 2019.

## 9 OPEN FORUM DISCUSSION.

### Items discussed were:

- **What powers would the Plan and the Forum both have?** It was explained that if accepted the Plan would become legal planning law for our locality, and that the Forum would, we expected, have a seat on the Planning Committee and the Design Advisory Group for both Councils.
- **Would the Forum have access to more planning information than neighbourhood groups have at present?** It was agreed that, when the Plan was accepted, the Forum would have better, more detailed planning information at an earlier date than the general public, because the Forum would legally be "a part" of the planning system.
- **Were small brownfield sites included in the Plan?** These had no mention at present, but it was agreed to include these in the final Plan. There was discussion about the amount of small brownfield sites locally, such as part of the Holiday Inn/Crowne Plaza land, and the site near the primary school/Laystall Court/Panther House.
- **Mount Pleasant development.** There was a long discussion about what was happening, the problems with the Camden side of the site being constructed well before work began on the Islington part of the proposed development (in apparent contravention of the agreement in the planning consent that the whole site would not be subdivided in development); the intentions of Taylor Wimpey and other issues, such as the decline in the expensive rental property market in London. It was agreed that local people were relatively powerless at the moment. However, any changes to the plans would be severely scrutinised, and once the Plan was accepted local views would certainly prevent any deviation from the permitted plans, (unless those alterations were to improve the existing provision in line with local preferences). It was agreed in the short-term to work with Taylor Wimpey towards any small concessions we could get for the locality, such as the pocket-park on Mount Pleasant, near the primary school, the greening of Phoenix Place, etc. The relationship of MPA and MPNF with these developers would depend largely on their corporate flexibility towards local planning gain. The meeting was also reminded that our CrtB scheme could, possibly, be revived at some suitable future date.

Ed reminded the meeting that Mount Pleasant, whilst locally still a very sore point, was not the only issue of local concern, referring back again to the Plan's Strategic Development policies. He said that the Plan contained much wider issues, a much more general over-view of the local problems, and he did hope locals would take these issues on board.

There was general and brief discussion of these strategic topics including thoughts on the proposed Fleet Walk and the Wren Street workshops.

**10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS.** There was none.

**11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING Monday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2018.**

(JD 19/03)

## **APPENDED**

### **NOTE OF WALK-IN SESSION ON SUNDAY MARCH 18<sup>th</sup> from 1pm-5pm**

The executive committee members working shifts at the walk-in session were: Judy Dainton, Julie Riley, Josephine Vos, Meg Howarth, Elena Henson and Francois Smit. Elena kindly came early to help with the set-up, before coming back later to take part in the rota of shifts, and Francois stayed on later, with Elena to tidy up, store the exhibits and made sure the room was left fit for use. Many thanks to everyone.

Despite the bad weather (strong and biting wind, snow and sleet showers) we had twelve visitors to the exhibition plus two people working at the Calthorpe Centre (14 people in all). Frankly, that was more than we expected, given the temperature outside and the dreadful walking conditions.

Questions were asked, mainly relating to the Mount Pleasant Development rather than the Plan itself. The maps were inspected. Copies of the Plan were collected. All comments were noted, will be collated and added to the responses from the audience at the public meeting held on Mar 19<sup>th</sup>. In due course these queries and opinions will be included in the revised draft Plan and discussed at the next public meeting on May 21<sup>st</sup>

Participants were : Paul Stevens, John Lonski, Rosemary Sawyer, Tom Rosen, Michael Franks, Anne Winchester, Paul Thornton, Charlito Robins, Dickon Robinson, Jamie Dicks, Evan Reynolds, David Sulkin, plus two Calthorpe Project staff

(JD 21/03)