

Meeting called by Norwood Action Group and Norwood Forum to discuss local planning issues arising from proposed council policy, held at Chatsworth Baptist Church on 9 September 2013

Meeting opened at 7.15pm with c.260 people present (221 signed-in).

Speakers: Rob Andrew - chair Norwood Action Group (NAG); Noshir Patel – chair Norwood Forum; Dan Thorne – vice-chair NAG; Graham Pycock - committee member NAG; Councillor Peter Robbins councillor for Larkhall Ward (Stockwell), also council cabinet member for housing and regeneration.

Rob Andrew opened the meeting with welcome and introductions. Warned that filming would take place and advised those who did not want to be filmed to notify. He emphasised that the local groups are not against development but that each plan should be appropriate to its location and not predicated to be high rise. He stated that West Norwood is a most unusual and attractive suburb, to which the meeting warmly responded, and the need to protect and enhance its character for current and future residents.

Dan Thorne followed with a brief history of Lambeth Council's recent Planning Policy. This demonstrated that 'intensification' and the zoning of the area for buildings of up to 6 storeys had been added after the 2008 Masterplan consultation, which hadn't even offered this possibility to public scrutiny. To demonstrate an outcome of this policy he outlined a proposed development of Tulse Hill railway sidings (site MDO 47).

Rob Andrew highlighted a research document "Housing Intensification in seven South London town centres" which offered scenarios for up to 8 storey buildings throughout West Norwood and called on Lambeth Council to repudiate this report. He also highlighted that the least successful existing developments were being used by developers to justify more of the same.

Graham Pycock said residents should propose their own local plan as enabled by the Localism Act of 2011. Proposed a representative Neighborhood Forum which Lambeth would be obliged under the Act to assist and engage with. Over 300 such groups already active, many with great success. With such a forum, he asserted, we would not have suffered some of the calamities we now endure. Cllr Peter Robbins responded, stating that the initial consultation to the draft Lambeth Local Plan had generated a big response. It is presently undergoing revision with a new draft due for public consultation in late October. He said he had heard 'loud and clear' local views and objections, also representations by ward councillors. References to 4 - 6 storey buildings will be removed from the plan and he will examine the document's wording; this will be submitted to NAG and Norwood Forum for early consultation. He reported that the plan for MDO 47 has been withdrawn by the developer following being directed to extensive issues by planning officers. He noted the character of Norwood Road / High Street and said any development must be sympathetic. He highlighted possible future Government changes to planning. These may affect local councils' ability to block some changes of use. Cllr Robbins said Lambeth supports local forums and commented on the Localism Act approach saying it is resource heavy and slow, and without some of the powers mentioned by Graham Pycock; he will be offering for consideration an alternative which he believes more effective and efficient.

Rob Andrew thanked Cllr Robbins and handed over to Noshir Patel.  
Noshir Patel welcomed comments and questions from the audience, to be taken three at a time.

#### Questions

- 1) Rodney (?) Why was MDO47 refused permission?
- 2) Rod Brown was sceptical of claimed sewage deficiencies relating to MDO 47. Also, as the council seems opposed to conversion of offices to flats, why had this happened to council owned property in Streatham?
- 3) Susan (?) What had led 4-6 storey blocks being included in the plan?

#### Answers

- 1) Cllr Robbins was unsure but thought possibly: height / mass / overlooking / poor amenities / poor design.
- 2) Dan Thorne related backed-up sewers in Thurlow Park Road. Cllr Robbins responded that the building in Streatham had been sold prior to its conversion.
- 3) Cllr Robbins responded that the 'possibility for larger buildings' was included in the plan but that it was not intended for the length of Norwood Road. The wording was the result of poor drafting.

#### Questions

- 1) Richard Moore. How is it possible to keep pace with constant changes in planning regulations? What is the status of the area between the South Circular and Brockwell Park as it is not mentioned in the draft Lambeth Local Plan?
- 2) Keith of St. Julian's Farm Road. What is the design context for new buildings and how are they kept in sympathy with their surroundings?
- 3) No name given. What will be done to improve Norwood Road / High Street now? A plan is needed to improve services and amenities.

#### Answers

Noshir Patel noted that if contact details were left Norwood Forum could advise more fully on planning matters.

- 1) Cllr Robbins said that it was hard for councils to keep up with changes and that things have now tilted too far in favour of developers. Councils have also to cope with budget cuts, so local input was even more essential to assist officers. Re the status of 'northern Tulse Hill', he felt that was for local discussion.
- 2) Cllr Robbins said design is a matter of taste, so is a difficult issue. He referenced Zaha Hadid school design saying he likes, others don't. Suggested a local 'Carbuncle Cup'! He added there is a council email alert system by request to notify planning applications but it may be better for local groups to 'filter' them.
- 3) Cllr Robbins noted that Norwood Road, does need sympathetic regeneration but local improvements are beginning, such as the new leisure centre and cinema plans.

A short discussion followed on the section of Norwood High Street from the railway bridge to Chapel Road. Nick (?) from the floor highlighted the effect of high rents and business rates in a run-down area. Rob Andrew related that this area is to be taken out of the regeneration zone and that NAG is campaigning to keep this, the neediest area, in the zone. Cllr Robbins disagreed saying that it no longer functions as a part of the shopping area and suggested that this section could be used more for residential and business uses, not just retail.

A brief mention of MDO 38 followed (the site bounded by York Hill, Lansdowne Hill and Norwood Road). Rob Andrew said that planning officers have said the total redevelopment of MDO 38 is now unlikely. The plans have now evolved into piecemeal regeneration or redevelopment, but what would drive this is not yet known.

#### Questions

A question followed on the progress of the library.

1) Philip (?) Thurlston (?) Road. Is NAG still worried about high-rise development ?

2) No name given. 'High Quality' needs definition. Could this be included in the local plan? What about contributions to the Project Bank? Are developers required to contribute? What is it currently and what happens to it?

#### Answers

Cllr Robbins replied that the library / cinema plan is to be expedited.

1) Rob Andrew replied that there will continue to be applications for high rise even without 4-6 storeys in the local plan. Local action can have a real effect both on policy, and on specific planning applications, so encouraged people to be more involved through local groups.

2) Cllr Robbins, the community should take decisions on the value of bringing buildings back into use. 'High Quality' is regulated by the Mayor of London Plan and local control is constrained by this. The Project Bank is currently not functioning. More local consultation is needed over how / where it should be used.

Three motions were then proposed for a vote, in abbreviated form as follows (motions in full at end):

1) This meeting requires high-rise zoning to be removed from the draft Lambeth Local Plan but quality requirements retained.

*Agreed, with 1 vote against*

2) This meeting requests the council to repudiate the report "Housing Intensification in seven South London town centres".

*Unanimous*

3) This meeting is in favour of creating a Local Norwood Neighborhood Plan under the Localism Act 2011

*Agreed, with 1 vote against and c 20 abstentions*

Rob Andrew again thanked the meeting and Cllr Robbins, and closed the meeting at 8.35pm.

Motions in full:

1. This meeting rejects "intensification" by creating 4-6 storey zones. We therefore require such terms to be excluded from PN7 and its sub clauses in the Lambeth Local Plan. Terms for retention are "Development will need to be of a scale and form related and appropriate to its

context”, and requirements for quality architecture.

2. For the avoidance of doubt, the meeting requests the council to repudiate the aspirations for West Norwood contained in the research document “Housing Intensification in seven South London Town Centres”.
3. This meeting declares its interest in creating a local Norwood Neighbourhood Plan under the 2011 Localism Act. We want to bring planning and governance closer to Norwood people and wish to explore ways to enable greater participation in planning.