

Bloomsbury Village Neighbourhood Plan (BVNP)

Planning and development group meeting notes 10.11.11.

6- 8pm Helen Graham House, Gt Russell Street.

Apologies: Ros Stewart (InMidtown).

Group members present: Sharon Charlton (SC), Barbara Douglas (BD), Alan Spence (AS), Stephen Rowland (SR), Nikolay Shahpazov (NS), Hugh Kennedy (HK).

Also present: Donna Turnbull (DT, minutes) and Michael Parkes (MP, chairing), Kate Goodman (KG) Principal Placeshaping Officer, LB Camden.

1. Role and modus operandi of working group

MP explained that he would chair for this initial meeting but as the group developed chairing arrangements would need to be agreed by members. The reasons for having a planning and development working group were discussed:

- To develop relationships with critical players like LB Camden planners and InMidtown BID.
- BVNP lies in area with high levels of development pressure.
- The rationale for the BVNP boundary was to include the development sites on New Oxford Street as long as there was a high percentage of residents on the planning forum. In this context the forum could work in partnership with the private and public sectors to guide development and manage elements of the process like planning gain, and delivery of regeneration.

Despite being 'early days' the planning and development group needs to think about what it wants to engage with.

2. Placeshaping consultation

KG explained that the Place Plan presented an opportunity to think strategically about services and investment, council wide objectives, not purely a planning focus. St Giles and Holborn is one of nine potential place plans. They are all in areas where major changes are anticipated and give residents and other stakeholders an opportunity to contribute. The plans don't have a solid boundary so it is not a case of being in or out of it. The plans will attempt a vision fed into by stakeholders about how they see the area developing. So far there have been two workshops with 33 attendees in the St Giles and Holborn area. The attendees were a mix of landowners, business, residents associations, churches etc. The report from those workshops will be put up on the council website and officers will start to write the place plan which

will contain some key actions on the plan objectives. By the end of March further workshops will be held to consolidate the plan and look at opportunities for delivering the shared vision.

MP suggested that a Planning for Real type event for the neighbourhood plan in December would be an opportunity to get residents in the driving seat.

AS asked about arrangements with Westminster Council where the place planning crosses the borough boundary. KG explained that whilst the plan boundary is not fixed there are major sites that will impact on areas that cross the borough boundaries. There is a working relationship in place with Westminster Council planning officers.

MP asked if working with the neighbourhood plan was viable. KG said that neighbourhood plans were new and planning specific whilst the placeshaping was broader and strategic. The policy team are looking at where they fit together and complement one another.

NS asked whether Camden Council will be considering Bloomsbury Village issues in the place plan. KG replied that the place plan was wider but yes they would also consider the Bloomsbury Village issues. MP reiterated the importance of the planning and development group and working in partnership with other key local and strategic stakeholders. KG described the place plan as a stage in a process. The action plan would be reviewed every six months so will evolve. NS asked if, for example, the Bloomsbury Village area would be defined in the plan. KG replied that it could be mentioned as a key part of the area. Identity is an issue, for example, at St Giles.

MP stated that he hoped to see the Bloomsbury Village planning forum endorsed as a credible neighbourhood forum.

3. Site Allocations consultation document

KG explained that the site allocations show on a small scale what the council want to achieve. The document is being submitted for consultation from 24th November to 4th January. MP suggested that there were some important sites so it was an opportunity for the group to comment on them. KG continued that the site allocations have been aligned with the Local development Framework (LDF) and the London Plan and now Place Shaping. Together the Site Allocations and Place Shaping are key for influencing, for example section 106 agreements.

There was some discussion about the wider area but and Bloomsbury Village context. AS pointed out that other communities interests would need consideration in relation to Section 106 etc. KG suggested that Bloomsbury Village neighbourhood would have their views but the Place Plan could then consider the broader implications. MP stated that realistically the Bloomsbury Village planning needed to focus on the neighbourhood area. NS asked about gaining consensus on strategic routes like Museum Street, and other neighbourhood plans and views. MP thought it was unlikely that the routes would cause big conflicts, and that LB Camden would hear all those views and know about all the plans so would maintain strategic (and democratic) oversight. MP noted that Museum Street is a designated strategic pedestrian route.

MP asked the group if they all understood what planning gain was. KG explained that it involved communities benefitting from development. For example that might include developers using local labour, or developing a community facility. Planning gain refers to built in community benefits. NS asked if Bloomsbury Village needed a 'shopping list'. MP replied that the survey and outreach work being done with residents would be a first step to establish local priorities. KG added that the Council were asking those questions too. MP suggested that planning gain isn't just about building a facility it could be about managing it etc. NS asked how would residents know if their requests were realistic. KG said that plans would be used as tools to negotiate with developers. There was some further discussion about changes underway to Section 106 agreements and the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). DT pointed out that a neighbourhood plan backed up by strong evidence will be the best negotiation tool, not a 'wish list'. MP added that the group need to be on the ball about planning gain but first need to establish what the real priorities are for improving the neighbourhood by engaging more people and gathering evidence through outreach work. Some of the work that has already started was discussed including gathering the views of a significant minority in the area who are largely housebound. The neighbourhood boundary within which residents are being contacted was reasserted. AS commented that since there has been no neighbourhood facility like a community centre there is nowhere to bring people together. DT agreed that it was very dependent on individuals to flag up where the people who aren't involved yet are and how best to engage them. There are different activities all happening simultaneously so eventually everyone will hopefully have the opportunity to get across their ideas.

Questions were raised about any existing planning applications for the development sites in the area. KG explained that applications are anticipated in the near future but recently Arriva (owners of one of the sites) seem to have gone quiet. Consultation about what is expected on the sites has already fed into the Site

Allocations document. There was a discussion about the consultation process and if the Bloomsbury association had responded at any point. *Since the meeting it has been confirmed that no response was submitted.* It was confirmed that this consultation on the Site Allocations was the final phase before being submitted to government (it has already been through 2 previous public consultation stages).

4. Planning for Real type event

MP explained the planning activities and approach: large scale plan – big enough to walk between sections of it, an emotive scale that people can relate to, placing ‘priority’ and comment cards on the plan, but not a voting exercise. The event would be an easy and engaging way for people to get their ideas and priorities across. The event would also give the working groups the opportunity to have areas about their interests and for ‘experts’ to give advice and answer questions. BD asked if we could get enough people to come and if we knew the neighbourhood profile. HK suggested that there were 2000 residents, 800 of them in social housing and 280 students in the ‘neighbourhood’. It was noted that tourists / visitors also played a big role in the locality with 8000 a day visiting the British Museum. AS raised long term nature of planning and development as an issue. MP replied that the planning event would also give an opportunity to grade priorities for the short, medium and long term. KG pointed out that Crossrail was likely to stimulate development on the static sites like the old post office which in turn will activate more people in the area. AS reiterated the need to have realistic suggestions for when the developers come along. DT pointed out that it wasn’t all about huge developments – there are also smaller scale ‘quick win’ initiatives like decluttering, planting etc.

A venue for the planning event / next full meeting was discussed. The best venue in the neighbourhood would be St Georges Church – access from street and size. SC offered Helen Graham House to fall back on if the church was unavailable. Dates in early December were suggested. AS asked if MP or DT would also attend the Bury Place Residents meeting on 30th November. DT agreed to do this. SC offered to circulate Place Check questionnaires.

Actions

- **DT to check if any Bloomsbury Association responses to the previous Site Allocations consultations.**
- **DT to follow up on venue / dates / invites with Jim Murray.**
- **MP to prepare resources for planning event.**
- **Group members to inform neighbours / other residents and encourage attendance at planning event.**
- **DT / MP to attend Bury Place meeting on 30th November.**

Planning and Development Group members

Ros Stewart	InMidtown BID
Hugh Kennedy	Stedham Chambers
Catharyne Ward	Coptic Street
Geraldine Beskine	Atlantis Bookshop
Sharon Charlton	Viridian Housing
Patsy Prince	Tavistock Chambers
Robert Kime	Robert Kime Interiors
Nikolay Shahpazov	Sculpting the Time
Mike Wade	Bury Place
Albert Beale	Museum Chambers
Alan Spence	Bury Place
Barbara Douglas	Bury Place
Stephen Rowland	Bury Place
Helen McMurray	Bury Place