

# **BRIXTON**

## Neighbourhood Forum

### **Notes of Meeting on 27 March 2014**

Held at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road, SW2

Present: Alan Piper (Secretary)	Jean Kerrigan (FoWG)
Nick Weedon (Treasurer)	Tina Jennings,
Annick Alet (Friends of Windrush Square)	Maria Thacker,
Bill Linskey (Brixton Society)	H. Gundry White.

NB: some members were absent due to a meeting on the Brixton Central Site taking place the same evening. Apologies for absence received from:

Matthew Clarke (Carlton Mansions)	Brad Carroll (Brixton Green)
Deborah Bestwick (Oval Theatre)	Kevin Lowrie,
Gerry Evans (Lambeth Forums Network)	David Oldfield,
Fred Taggart (Brixton Advice Centre)	Tom Wood,
Juneary Raymond (Lambeth Enterprise)	

#### **1. Reports back on current developments in Brixton:**

**1.1 Central Site** (former ice rink and around the railway station): There are three consultation processes underway, one for short-term uses of the former ice rink site, and another for long-term development of the wider area around the railway station. Lambeth, having agreed to retain the Recreation Centre, is also considering how this can be used more efficiently and is inviting comments on future activities.

Details of these will be circulated.

**1.2 London Overground access:** Nick outlined interim findings reported by the Council's consultants last month. The existing railway lines crossing Brixton are too curved to meet modern platform standards for accessibility. This also applies at Loughborough Junction, so creating a new station at either site would be relatively expensive. Re-opening East Brixton station (in Barrington Road) looks like a cheaper option but interchange with other lines is then more difficult. In any case, it would be several years before a new station was operating.

**1.3 Brixton Markets:** There is currently a planning application to use land alongside the Railway Hotel (Brady's) as a market, but it may not be practical unless London Underground also re-opened the disused arcade alongside the Tube Station, which used to emerge onto Electric Lane. The special markets in Brixton Station Road appear to be effective in reviving trade and attracting customers. Bill reported that agreement had been reached between Lambeth Planners and the Arcade management over controlling the overall mix of uses within the market arcades.

**1.4 Townscape Heritage bid:** This covers a fairly small area centred on Electric Avenue, Atlantic Road and a short section of Coldharbour Lane. In addition to restoring the appearance of the buildings, ideas have also been invited for complementary projects to promote local heritage or develop building restoration skills among local workers.

Despite increased residential values, many upper floors above Electric Avenue shops are neglected. Planning permission appears to have been granted at last for restoration of the flats above Iceland's store.

**1.5 Somerleyton Road** including Oval Theatre: Brad Carroll sent a short report (incorporated into the Forum Bulletin since circulated). The aim is for all the new housing to be rented, and 40% to be social housing.

**1.6 New Town Hall project:** Lambeth had selected Muse as its developer partner. A new office block would replace Town Hall Parade (between Porden Road and the Electric) but the developer would use other sites for new blocks of flats, generally higher than existing buildings, e.g. Hambrook House and Olive Morris House on Brixton Hill.

**1.7 Lambeth College at Brixton Hill:** It was reported that the college has sold its present site to the Dept. for Education, for building a new Free School, though they aim to retain a smaller facility on the site. (See also reports on the Brixton Blog).

**1.8 Brixton Public Realm improvements:** No further news following the consultations late last year.

**1.9 Windrush Square etc.** Black Cultural Archives expect to move into their new premises late in June, which should animate this corner of the square. There have been a number of proposals for re-use of the underground toilets but the Council seems reluctant to address the issues. The Friends of Windrush Square are due to meet on 10<sup>th</sup> April.

The Brix has prepared plans to upgrade St. Matthew's Peace Garden and take over management as part of the Council's Co-operative Parks Programme. Members questioned if it would remain open to the public, and if it would close at night.

**1.10 Community Infrastructure Levy:** From next April, Lambeth will levy charges on new building developments on a set scale, instead of individual negotiations. It has agreed that 25% will be spent locally, on amenities, public buildings or streetscape. Lambeth is starting a consultation on how the local share should be distributed, who should have a say, and the boundaries for the relevant areas.

Members commented that the funds should still aim to reduce the adverse impact of developments. Local facilities needed to keep up with demand from an increasing population if most new building was likely to be residential.

Lambeth had not shown itself effective in protecting existing amenities from developers. A local meeting had recently been held to promote the Sustainable Communities Act as a channel for community-based

regeneration, but the weakness of any Community Asset approach was that local organisations could not compete with commercial developers in acquiring property at market prices. This was only feasible if there were planning restrictions on residential use, or the Council was willing to transfer a property on favourable terms.

## 2. Neighbourhood Forum matters:

There had been a delay in arranging this Forum meeting, due to the number of local events and consultations which the Council had been conducting directly.

It was agreed that there was value in networking between local interests, but we need to involve more groups. Groups can too easily confine themselves to silos where they only have contact with similar groups, but we should be encouraging a bigger vision for Brixton.

The Town Centre is the focal point for several Council Wards, but the Forum has aimed from the start to cover a wider area than the shopping centre. We should aim to involve Councillors from all relevant wards. If the Council's aims remain similar after the May elections, the Forum's own aim should then be **to hold the Co-operative Council to account**.

Resources are still likely to be available through the Lambeth Forums Network in 2014/15, so we should plan a programme of community engagement activities and approach LFN for funds to carry it out.

Tina suggested a stall or event on Windrush Square would allow us to make contact with a lot of people passing by. We should also take part in other local events in order to reach a wider range of people and groups.

**Next meeting:** preferably in last week of April (Secretary to confirm).

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