



Minutes of General Meeting on 25 September 2023

Held at The Advocacy Academy from 7pm.

Present: Ken Floyde, Alan Piper, Jason Gibilaro, Mathew Clarke, Will Steadman, Marilyn Rogers, Su Opie, Lara Samuels, Maria Thacker, Indar Pickton-Howe, Hiba Ahmed.

Apologies: Nick Weedon, Roger Hartley.

Welcome from the chair, Ken Floyde.

Alan Piper introduced Will Steadman of Lambeth Council's Regeneration Team, to update members on Town Centre developments.

As well as Brixton Town Centre projects, WS is currently working with Loughborough Farm/ LJ Works, restoration of the Dominoes Club/ Soup Kitchen and Angell Town. His team includes Mat Gibbon and Nabil Kahn.

International House

The long-term aim is to refurbish International House, with modern services and improved energy efficiency. AP highlighted that consideration of embodied carbon is encouraging retrofitting of existing buildings rather than demolishing them.

Its "meanwhile" use as workspace has been extended to mid-December next year, and 3Space are actively seeking new tenants to fill the gaps where others have already moved out. **Pop Brixton** has been granted a similar extension, in both cases to keep the sites active while **London Square**, the appointed developers, prepare planning applications.

This may be delayed because post-Grenfell regulations impact on design and cost. London Square had started community engagement but despite sortition, no young black men were involved in the main community engagement exercise.

Atlantic Road

In pre-Covid times, much work had been done on redesigning this road to reduce congestion while enabling delivery access to the arcades and to shops in Electric Avenue. Attention was diverted by the subsequent focus on Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, but the Brixton BID is interested in reviving the scheme.

The slow re-letting of the shops in the railway arches remains a brake on the revival of trade in both Atlantic and Station Roads. More "pop-up" uses like the Empathy Museum might help, but they need to be for longer periods than 6 weeks, or better still if rents were reduced to tempt traders back.

Station Arcade

A discussion followed of the shopping arcade that runs next to the tube station. It was once full of shops and in good condition, but is no longer in use following work on other parts of

the station. Members wondered why it is closed as it would relieve commuter access between the tube and rail stations. JG suggested a Freedom of Information request, but LS said that is not possible as it is privately-owned corporation property.

Brixton Station Road

Creating workspace below the Recreation Centre is well underway – this is behind the shops and accessed from Beehive Place. Photofusion is expected to move into part of this space around Christmas time, and the Advocacy Academy may follow in early 2024.

New shopfronts are being provided for the shops, with GLA funding. In contrast with the Arch Company's mismanagement of the railway arches, traders have the chance to move within the Rec frontage without steep rent increases. Thus Brixtonia will move to the former LVAC volunteer bureau at the Popes Road corner.

In parallel, illuminated signage on the Rec will be restored, and five trees will be planted along the street in the New Year.

Popes Road

No news yet if **Hondo** will try again to develop the Popes Road site, now other stakeholders are more alert to the issues. The Lambeth Local Plan sets a framework for what should be put on the site, but perhaps this needs to be reviewed. AP stated it was possible for the Forum to develop its own Neighbourhood Plan, but it takes a great deal of work. MC recalled that an earlier Brixton Master Plan promoted the concept of One Planet Living.

Somerleyton Road

Despite last year's completion of the Brixton House Theatre, and conversion of Carlton Mansions to small workspace units, the rest of the land alongside the railway line has remained in limbo. Lambeth Councillors had brushed aside a proposal from Brixton Green to develop this as 100% affordable housing, and instead entrusted its development to their Homes for Lambeth subsidiary, which did nothing. Meanwhile, the owner of a factory site halfway along obtained his own planning permission for housing development, and Lambeth failed to buy back his land for the original larger-scale scheme.

Lambeth's Scrutiny Committee recently made a rare expression of concern at the delay, and in a belated rush to get a private developer on board, the Council now appears willing to reduce the share of affordable housing from their usual 50% to only 30%.

There was concern that the Council had no Housing Strategy and limited leverage with developers. WS restated that 50% affordable housing remained the target for the Pop Brixton site.

Anti-Social Behaviour:

A discussion ensued by members who highlighted the anti-social behaviour that has occurred due to vacant arches on Station Road. The newly-opened walkway from Station Road to Atlantic Rd is badly lit and lends to more opportunities for anti-social behaviour. The covered walkway to the railway station has become a popular spot for the disaffected. MT noted that at the last meeting mention was made of using the empty arches for a substance misuse support project and prescribed substance use support, with the broader aim of supporting mental health. Members felt there should be a letter to The Arch Co, the landlords of the arches.

Other Business:

AP reminded members that voting for renewing the BID closes on 18th October.

IPH introduced himself as a volunteer with **Lambeth School Patrol** project and reminded members of the Lambeth Council's Child Friendly Strategy which encourages young people to be involved and consulted. It was noted that HA of Advocacy Academy would be a good connection for IPH as it is also a young people's project.

MR commented that housing was inaccessible for young people and that a strong response should be expected from council residents, who are voters.

IPH and LS mentioned that the new developments in Vauxhall tower blocks were under-populated, and there was concern that overseas landlords were washing money via UK property ownership.

MC shared that he had attempted to follow the Scrutiny Committee review of the Somerleyton Rd development where the project had been called in by councillors, though some councillors were not in attendance. He felt that schemes should not be rushed through on bad terms, but reviewed at key stages.

AP and LS preferred a Committee System, rather than individual cabinet members making decisions with little scrutiny. LS shared that a recent Ombudsman review revealed a lack of transparency in every council department.

SO reported that Anne-Marie has been occupying a self-built structure under a tree on Atlantic Road for some months. She was recently evicted under the Mental Health act and is now a patient at Lambeth hospital on Landor Road. It was hoped she could then be properly rehoused.

The meeting closed at 9pm.

Draft minutes 26/09/23 M Thacker

Additional detail/ amendments, 23/10/23, A Piper.