

ST QUINTIN AND WOODLANDS NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM/ST HELENS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING HELD ON MAY 29th 2014 AT ST HELENS CHURCH HALL

Present: Chair Henry Peterson, StQW management committee members Jenny Harborne, Andrew Michaud, David Marshall, Richard Ehrman, newly elected RBKC councillors (see below) and around 45 members of the public.

1. Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including those who had not attended earlier meetings and who had concerns over the future of the Nursery Lane site. He reminded everyone that the St Helens Residents Association and the StQW Neighbourhood Forum share a common membership, the former body having initiated and established the latter. Hence this would be a joint meeting as on previous occasions. Both bodies are open to all who live or work in the neighbourhood area, and current membership stood at 360 members.

2. Outcome of Local Elections

Local elections on 22nd May had resulted in two newly elected councillors for the St Helens Ward, and two Labour councillors (one re-elected and one new) for the Dalgarno ward. Cllrs Robert Thompson, Pat Healy and Mo Bakhtiar were welcomed to the meeting, and apologies received from Cllr Eve Allison.

3. Nursery Lane Site

The Chair explained this 0.48 hectare site (locally known as the Clifton Nursery site) had recently been marketed for sale as a 'residential development opportunity' with conditional and unconditional offers invited. The site was one of several 'backland' green areas that formed part of the original design of this part of the St Quintin Estate, and had been used previously as a tennis club (Pre World War 2) and subsequently as a plant nursery and adjunct to the Clifton Nursery business in Maida Vale.

Previous attempts to develop the site for housing had been refused permission, on appeal. Following a Planning Inquiry in 1972, sheltered housing had been permitted on the southern part of the site. The site is owned by the Legard family, descendants of the St Quintins. It appeared that neither they nor their planning consultant had sought views from RBKC on acceptable planning uses of the land, prior to marketing. It was understood that 80 expressions of interest had been received, reduced to a shortlist of around 10.

Members of the audience raised a series of concerns at the prospect of the site being developed for what would be likely to be expensive private housing. The precedent of the former Princess Louise Hospital site, under development as 'Argyll Place' was seen as an example of how market forces were shaping the area and introducing built forms felt to be out of place with the character of the area.

A number of residents living immediately adjacent to the site, in Bracewell Road, Brewster Gardens, and Dalgarno Gardens, stated that they were interested in forming a group that might develop an alternative offer, as a communal garden area.

The meeting considered a series of possible future uses for the site, assuming that Clifton Nurseries were forced to leave. Of these, continued open green space was seen as the preferred option, given the history of the land and the fact that other backland spaces had been lost to development over the years. The criteria for Local Green Space, as defined in the new National Planning Policy Framework, were noted. It was agreed that the Neighbourhood Plan should propose this

designation. Of the alternative options (e.g. a school, a private sports club) the 'least worst' was agreed to be a scheme providing extra care or sheltered housing, possibly with some private housing to achieve financial viability.

Several members of the public referred to the fact that the site was regularly waterlogged (lying above Counters Creek) and that it currently hosted a wide range of wildlife and rare birds, given its proximity to the Wormwood Scrubs Nature Reserve.

The meeting agreed to support an application to RBKC for the site to be placed on the Borough's Register of Community Assets, albeit that it could prove an uphill struggle to demonstrate that the site met all the necessary criteria in terms of previous community use or benefit.

4. Progress on StQW Neighbourhood Plan

The Chair gave a brief update on the national picture on neighbourhood planning. Over 1,000 areas across England were now involved at varying stages, with plans being prepared either by Parish Councils or neighbourhood forums.

The wider context of the StQW Plan was explained, with the neighbourhood being a part of London surrounded by Opportunity Areas in which major development would be taking place over the next 20 years. These were the White City OA, where developments are already approved, Kensal, and the large Old Oak Opportunity Area for which the HS2 interchange, major office development and 17,000 new homes are proposed by the Mayor of London.

The meeting was shown a list of the 12 'objectives' for the StQW plan, as set out in the draft version which would shortly be published on the Forum's website at www.stqw.org. These have been derived from the Residents Survey carried out earlier in the year and were:

1. Keep the area as an attractive place to live and work
2. Update conservation policies
3. Protect environmental quality (wide streets, views, trees)
4. Protect open space – community use of backland sites where ownership permits
5. Improve public transport – reduce traffic – improve pedestrian/cycle connectivity
6. Maintain safety, security, tranquillity of area
7. Safeguard viability of our shopping parades
8. Manage new development in a way that maintains character of the area
9. Keep buildings in active use (reduce vacant shops and offices) allowing wider mix of uses
10. Maintain and increase employment opportunities
11. Provide housing affordable to younger generations (Latimer Road, Crowthorne Rd site)
12. Protect local education, health and community facilities (St Quintin GP surgeries)

Views were invited on whether any key local issues had been missed out from this list. There would be several further weeks of informal consultation on the content of the Draft plan, and discussions with RBKC planning officers, before a 'Submission' version of the Plan was finalised and submitted to the council. This would then be subject to a further 6 week consultation prior to independent inspection and a local referendum, later in the year.

Next meeting

The Chair suggested that a further open meeting be held in around a month's time, when people had had a chance to read the current draft version. This was agreed.

The meeting closed at 21.20 hours