

General Meeting of the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Forum

held at Alpha Grove Community Centre, Alpha Grove, E14 8LH

on Tuesday 17th March 2016 at 7.30pm

1. Introduction

The chair noted that the meeting was quorate as there were more than the required 21 members present.

The secretary made health & safety announcements followed by an overview of the agenda for the evening.

2. Development update

The secretary gave a development update. He noted that there were 74 tall buildings (over 20 storeys) currently in planning for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) – the highest number by far of all London boroughs, followed by Greenwich with 44.

The secretary re-iterated the large number of plans that are currently being compiled including the LBTH Local Plan.

The secretary outlined the plans for re-routing of buses around the Island and reminded members that Sunday is the last day for consultation responses.

3 Forum history

The chair ran through the history of the Forum, noting that the original application for recognition had been made on 1st December 2014. The chair reminded members that the LBTH officers had recommended that the Forum be approved in December 2015, but there was as a last minute attempt by LBTH officers to change the boundary that led to confusion, postponing full recognition. The chair read out a statement from the LBTH Mayor.

The Forum was nevertheless approved in principle by the Mayor at the December 2015 cabinet meeting, but the exact boundary was left to be finalised. The boundary area will be finalised on 5th April at the next meeting of the LBTH cabinet. At that time, there will be an option given to the Mayor by LBTH officers either to allow the original boundary or grant a smaller boundary area.

The chair read the eight criteria in the legislation that need to be born in mind when deciding on the boundary of a neighbourhood planning forum.

A question was asked from the floor as to why the Mayor would consider a changed boundary. The chair stated that this was not yet clear and a final report from officers would be required before this question could be addressed. However, it was clear that Canary Wharf Group had made representations to have their estate removed entirely from the Forum's area. The chair commented that having Canary Wharf Group involved with the Forum would be positive for the Forum as, in his opinion, they are one of the best developers in the area.

The secretary provided an update from the DCLG around how local community planning forums have been rolled out nationally.

The chair made the point that there are some Canary Wharf Group sites currently intended solely for commercial development and as such could be logically and sensibly excluded from our area, but planning applications could be made for a change of use and so they may become residential in the future.

4 CIL

The secretary reviewed the purpose of CIL (essentially a tax on development to support infrastructure enhancements required as a result of developments), and the two levels of it in London: i.e. London Mayor and LBTH. He reminded the Forum that in the case of a parish council, 25% of the CIL would be spent directly by the parish council. In our case as neighbourhood forum, however, we would simply direct LBTH through our neighbourhood plan on how to spend 25% of the CIL and would not actually manage it ourselves.

The secretary noted that the forum could only stipulate the 25% CIL spend for developments receiving full planning consent after our neighbourhood plan had been written and adopted by public referendum.

The secretary outlined how CIL might be spent – both by LBTH and as directed by the forum. He noted that the forum has more discretion on how CIL can be spent.

The chair noted that technically the forum cannot speak for or against any developments until the neighbourhood plan is completed, and referred the meeting to the related proposed resolution to address this. A further suggestion from the floor was that on-line surveys could be created to provide a view on any particular development. This was generally accepted and no objections were made to that proposal.

5. The Neighbourhood Plan

The chair outlined the process for creation of a neighbourhood plan. It was made very clear that a plan is a long term piece of work.

The chair outlined the option of creating two plans:

- a. A fast track plan that would have a limited life-span
- b. A more detailed plan that would take longer

The benefit of this strategy was that we would be able to start exerting influence sooner.

The floor asked a question about whether the London Mayor can overturn the neighbourhood plan. The secretary responded that whilst our plan would have legal weight, the London Mayor's plan takes precedence and our plan must align to his. However the Secretary of State has supported local plans in the past and we would have the right to appeal to the Secretary of State should that be required.

The chair stressed that the neighbourhood plan would have the same legal status as the LBTH Local Plan. However, the neighbourhood plan cannot contradict anything in the LBTH Local Plan.

6. Fundraising

The Treasurer outlined options around raising funds to create the neighbourhood plan as well as opportunities for volunteering.

7. Resolutions

There was a debate around the exact wordings of the motions that were proposed. After thorough discussion, the following motions were approved:

1. That, in light of the scale and rapid pace of development in the Forum's area, and subject to professional advice, the Forum should proceed quickly with an initial plan including, inter alia, (i) a policy focusing on the need for adequate infrastructure (in its widest sense) to support all existing and consented developments, as well as for those being applied for, before planning consent is granted for a development that would exceed the maximum density recommended in the GLA's London Plan; (ii) a 'policy' of what is currently only 'guidance' to the London Plan that any developments that exceed the maximum recommended density should be the exception, as well as of exceptional design; and (iii) guidance on how Community Infrastructure Levy funds are spent. And that a full plan expanding on the initial plan be written as soon as may be practicable thereafter.

Resolution #1 was passed unanimously.

2. That the members of the Forum's committee be authorised to speak on behalf of the Forum (and otherwise represent the views of the Forum) in support of the principles set out in resolution #1.

Resolution #2 was passed unanimously save for one abstention.

3. That the Forum write a plan for the area set out in its constitution or, if different, for such area as may be recognised by the Mayor of Tower Hamlets with recommendations for any unrecognised areas.

Resolution #3 was passed unanimously save for one abstention.

4. That the Committee be authorised to make further representations to the Mayor of Tower Hamlets urging him to recognise the Area applied for in full.

Resolution #4 was passed unanimously save for one abstention.

The Secretary was instructed to include the above resolutions in the minutes.

7. Other business

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 9pm.

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Richard Horwood, Chair