

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SOUTHFIELDS WARD **LET'S TALK MEETING**

held at the Sheringdale School, Standen Road, SW18 5TR on Monday, 8th June 2015 at 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT

Council Members

Councillor Govindia (Leader of the Council – in the Chair); Councillors Caddy, Humphries and Walsh (Southfields Ward Members); Councillor Osborn (Leader of the Opposition).

Council Officers

Nick Calder – Head of Development Permissions
(Housing & Community Services)
John Johnson – Assistant Director (Education and Social Services)
Andrew Jolly – Neighbourhood Officer, Community Safety Officer
(Administration Department)
Steve Lane – Senior Parking Policy Officer (Housing & Community Services)
Mike Singham – Waste Strategy Manager (Housing & Community Services)
Christine Zuest - Deputy Area Housing Manager (Housing & Community Services)
Gareth Jones – Committee Services (Administration Department)
Frankie Belloli - Committee Services (Administration Department)

Residents

Approximately 80 members of the public.

INTRODUCTION

The Chairman, Councillor Govindia, introduced the Council Members and the officers.

The Ward Members then gave a brief overview of their role representing ward residents and updates on recent local issues.

ISSUES, RESPONSES AND ACTION

1. Traffic - Speeding

A resident referred to a proposal to introduce a 20mph speed limit in Granville Road which would be discussed at a Residents Association meeting on 26th June. Councillor Caddy explained briefly how the consultation would work and the general 25% support threshold which the Council applied. She would speak further to the resident and the Residents Association after the meeting about the inclusion of Granville Road in the scheme.

(Action: Councillor Caddy)

A resident suggested that the signage about the 20mph limit in Standen Road should be improved, perhaps to include conspicuous road markings. The parent of a child at Sheringdale School reported that the traffic was still not slowing sufficiently and consideration should be given to a zebra crossing, particularly in view of the significant expansion in the school population over the next few years. Pam Davis, the Chairman of the Governors at St Michael's School asked about the parent there being involved in discussions about a 20mph limit. Councillor Caddy confirmed that she would raise this with the School.

(Action: Councillor Caddy)

A resident asked about the number of prosecutions and cautions in respect of speeding in Pulborough Road. It was made clear that this was primarily a matter for the Police and the Council was not provided with this information. Councillor Walsh reported that he had been suggesting to the Police that they use a vehicle with cameras to secure evidence of speeding and thereby improve the prospect of convictions.

A resident and a Governor at Riversdale School suggested that a pedestrian crossing in Replingham Road be considered. Councillor Caddy concurred with the suggestion that parents be asked to indicate their support for this.

(Action: Councillor Caddy)

2. Sheringdale School Redevelopment

A resident living close to Sheringdale School reported that there were often cement mixer lorries outside the School on Standen Road at 7.30am with their engines running in spite of the notices warning that this should not happen. She was also aware of coaches for school trips also running their engines in the same location. Councillor Humphries replied that he, as Vice-Chairman of the Governors, would take up the matter again with the Headteacher and the contractors. He expected that the bulk of the construction work would be completed by the end of the year and that full project by the Spring of 2016. He acknowledged that this was a period of upheaval for residents, parents and children, and he encouraged the reporting to the School of specific problems and concerns.

(Action: Councillor Humphries)

3. Litter

A resident reported a number of litter bins being overfilled; he also referred to litter problems in Augustus Road where there were few bins and children and young people would often drop litter. These issues would be passed to the relevant Council staff (the Client Services team within Housing and Community Services Department); there were powers to fine those who dropped litter.

(Action: Mike Singham/Sharon Wright)

4. Dog Fouling

A resident reported problems with lack of maintenance of an area of land between 39 and 41 Balvernie Grove, part of which was owned by the Council, including dog fouling of the alleyway. This issue would be passed to the relevant Council staff.

(Action: Housing and Community Services Department)

Other residents added their own reports of dog owners not clearing away their dogs' mess; one suggested that the Council should provide collection bags in dispensers in case dog owners had forgotten theirs, and another felt that the mess was often down to urban foxes rather than dogs.

Mike Singham confirmed that it was a criminal offence not to clear dog mess, but it was very difficult for the Council to enforce this as evidence of responsibility was required. If the mess was on areas of public highway, the street cleansing service would normally clear it within a week; it would be prohibitively expensive to arrange for daily cleansing. The Council tried to use publicity and information to encourage less responsible dog owners to change their behaviour; there was an Animal Welfare Team at the Council which took the lead in these efforts.

Councillor Humphries encouraged residents and the Residents Association to help get the message across about the problems and costs associated with dog fouling.

5. Sainsbury's Store – Wimbledon Park Road

A resident reported persistent problems with large delivery vehicles causing congestion and obstructions in the area immediately around the store; at times, he had observed four lorries parked there, only some 30 metres from a busy junction, and often they would remain in place for up to one and half hours, with their crates and cages obstructing the pavement. He stated that, at the time the store was granted planning consent, residents had been told congestion would not occur, and that it appeared the authorities were quick to give parking tickets to delivery vans outside small independent shops, but seemingly took no action in respect of the large, chain supermarkets.

Steve Lane explained that there were no loading/unloading restrictions on this particular part of the highway; however, there were obligations on the operators to avoid noise nuisance to local residents by not delivering, say, between 10pm and 6.30am. He accepted that delivery lorries would block sightlines, but he had not observed any vehicle obstructing the pedestrian crossing nearby. He would discuss the issues again with the store managers and representatives of delivery companies, but the delivery of fresh produce did require some tolerance of large vehicles in this area at times. In response to a question, Mr Lane confirmed his understanding that the company had

purchased the former petrol station site nearby, and that this might provide other options for less problematic delivery arrangements.

Councillors Caddy and Humphries confirmed that this issue had been raised repeatedly by local residents and the Council should again engage with the store manager and Sainsbury's to find a solution.

(Action: Steve Lane)

A representative of the Southfields Business Forum stated that she had previously been advised that businesses were not permitted to take deliveries between midnight and 7am, yet the times given at this meeting were different. She argued for clear and consistent guidance to be given to businesses and residents and reported that the local Tesco's store had been observed taking deliveries as early as 5.30am.

Mr Lane stated that his previous advice about delivery times had been in relation to noise nuisance, but it was possible that other Council staff had advised in respect of other requirements. He suggested that deliveries as early as 5.30am should be reported as noise nuisances to Environmental Services at the Council.

6. Sunny News Shop – 161 Wimbledon Park Road

A number of residents expressed their concerns about the prospect of the Sunny News shop closing due to the owners wishing to convert the premises to residential use. The Leader of the Council confirmed that the Council had granted the property the status of an "Asset of Community Value" under the Localism Act 2011, but this solely created obligations on the owners to take certain steps if they proposed to dispose of the property. The owner also had a right to request a review of this decision by the Council. There was a separate planning process which would be considered at the Planning Applications Committee meeting on 18th June, but the fundamental aspect of this was that there were "permitted development" rights for such a conversion in recent legislation.

Nick Calder confirmed that the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 effectively granted permission for this type of development in specified circumstances; however, a "Prior Notification" approval was still required before the development could be implemented. He advised that the legislation was explicit about the limited range of factors which could lead to the local authority requiring a formal planning application to be submitted in such cases. These included the highways and traffic impact of a proposal, contamination and flooding risks, and the design or external appearance of the building; he confirmed that there was also reference to conversion from a shop to residential, but he added that this was only where there was a reasonable prospect of the building being used to provide such services, or where the building was located in a key shopping area and the proposal would affect the sustainability of that shopping area. Mr Calder stated that the designation of the property as an Asset of Community Value was not, in itself, relevant to the separate decision about the "Prior Notification" approval.

Councillor Humphries confirmed that, in view of the large number of objections and the degree of community concern over this proposal, he had requested that the matter be discussed by the Councillors on the Planning Applications Committee, although proposals under this legislation would normally be dealt with by officers. As Deputy Chairman of the Committee, he would be one of the decision-makers and would need to reserve his final decision until all the relevant material factors and information were presented to the Committee, including professional advice on the implications of the relevant legislation. Nevertheless, he and other Councillors were, of course, fully aware of the strength of local feeling on the matter.

A number of residents reiterated their wish to see the shop retained, underlined its unique value in the local community, and asked about how best they could influence decisions on its future. The Leader of the Council suggested that further representations from the community could usefully address the specific criteria which the Council were obliged in law to apply to the consideration in the "Prior Notification" approval process.

7. Overdevelopment in Southfields

Sarah Roberts raised concerns about the trend towards the development of oversized and inappropriate buildings in the area; she particularly cited the building on the site of "Riley's", Wimbledon Park Road. She argued that, although the Council had refused the relevant planning application, she considered that it had not been committed to fighting the subsequent planning appeal which had then been successful, allowing implementation of the proposal. Sarah Roberts considered that the Council had adopted a similarly lax approach to other applications, permitting a number of inappropriate developments in the area.

Another resident, Denise Lloyd, also felt that the area was being permitted to change for the worse, with a proliferation of estate agents and mini-supermarkets; she considered that the sense of community was being degraded as a result. She referred to the examples of development proposals for the scout hut and snooker hall as indications that this battle was being lost. Another resident referred to the severe pressures on housing and infrastructure arising from the growth in the London population; this had led to intensification of development across the capital.

Nick Calder stated that the Council had, in fact, tried very hard to defend the refusal of the planning permission for the snooker hall. In response to a question about parking at this new development, he advised that there would be limited parking spaces in the basement, but residents of the accommodation would be excluded from the controlled parking scheme and most would, in practice, have to use public transport, with Southfields Station nearby.

Councillor Osborn referred to the repeated loosening of the national planning framework, making it easier to build large buildings and extend residential accommodation. This had created an environment in which, even if the Council decided to refuse consent, developers were likely to win permissions

on appeal, along with the award of costs. He suggested that residents could lend their support to campaigns to change the planning framework, and he argued that the Council should give greater weight to factors such as the quality of building design and its suitability to particular areas. Councillor Osborn referred to the new Government's interest in extending local powers in the north of England, but suggested that this was less likely in London without a campaign by the London Boroughs. The Secretary of the Residents Association encouraged residents to join the Association and support its efforts to provide a strong voice for the local community.

A resident argued that the Council should do more to lead resistance to overdevelopment, perhaps in conjunction with other councils, as it currently appeared that there was an acceptance that little could be done. Councillor Humphries underlined that, as local residents themselves, ward councillors were prepared to resist developments which they considered were not in-keeping with the local area, but there also had to be some recognition of the reality of development pressures and the constraints of the national planning policies.

Another resident suggested that the creation of the local parish council would provide a means for local people to have greater influence over planning decisions.

8. Mosque in Pulborough Road

A resident raised the question of plans for the extension of the Mosque in Pulborough Road. Clarifying that this site was, in fact, in East Putney ward, not Southfields, the Leader of the Council, reported that there had been a couple of consultation meetings so far; the proposal differed from the one presented in 2012 in that it no longer involved residential accommodation on Melrose Road and that it was no longer proposed that the Caliph would live on the premises, a factor which had previously led to concerns that significant traffic congestion would be generated for some activities. Councillor Govindia understood that the multi-purpose hall would be used not simply for worship, but also for recreational activities.

Sarah Roberts advised that there would be a further exhibition of the proposals at the Mosque on 15th June 2015 between 9.30am and 7pm.

9. Replingham Road Business

A businessman seeking to open a new restaurant in Replingham Road reported that he had been instructed to alter his plans for the business at short notice on the basis of one objection; he wondered whether large companies like Tesco's and Sainsbury's were similarly required to make such adjustments. The Leader of the Council suggested he speak to Nick Calder of the Planning Service after the meeting.

10. Bus Stand – Mapleton Road

A resident reported problems with noise vibration in his property caused by proximity to buses at a nearby bus stand. Councillor Caddy agreed to look into the matter for the resident.

(Action: Councillor Caddy)

11. Street Scene Improvements

In response to a resident's question, Councillor Caddy reported that seed funding from a Mayor of London scheme had been obtained for improvements in Replingham Road and around Southfields Station. She was also hopeful of further funding from the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy fund. The plans for the works were still at a very early stage, but they could include dismantling unnecessary street furniture and railings, installing new pavements, introducing new loading/unloading parking arrangements for shops, etc. She would arrange for local consultation and discussions on options.

(Action: Councillor Caddy)

12. Southfields Library

A resident expressed concern at the very restricted opening times for the library. Councillor Walsh reported that he had had discussions with the company operating the Borough's libraries about Southfields Library and was hopeful that improvements could be achieved in due course.

13. Food Waste

In response to a question about including food waste in the recycling collections, Councillor Caddy advised that the issue was being considered but there were many conflicting arguments about the value of pursuing this option. Councillor Osborn confirmed that the Council had considered it in the past and were keeping it under review.

CLOSE OF MEETING

Councillor Govindia thanked the residents for attending the meeting and invited them to stay and speak with Councillors and officers about any further queries that they might have.

The meeting ended at 9.24 p.m.

Gareth Jones (020 8871 7520)
Frankie Belloli (020 8871 6005)