

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

THAMESFIELD WARD **LET'S TALK MEETING**

held at Brandlehow Primary School, Brandlehow Road, Putney, SW15 2ED
on Wednesday, 6th July 2016 at 7.30pm.

PRESENT

Council Members

Councillor Mrs Sutters (Cabinet Member for Communications – in the Chair);
Councillors Maddan, Ryder and Mrs Torrington (Thamesfield Ward Members);
Councillor Carpenter (Opposition Member).

Council Officers

Wale Adeyoyin – Head of Client Services (Housing & Community Services)
Camillus Donnelly – Network Assurance Manager (Housing & Community Services)
Danny Edwards - Area Housing Manager (Housing & Community Services)
Gary Hipple – Head of Schools ICT (Children's Services)
Andrew Jolly – Neighbourhood Officer (Community Safety -Public Health)
Steve Lane – Senior Parking Policy Officer (Housing & Community Services)
Ellen Richards – Area Planning Group Leader (West) (Housing & Community Services)
John Scully – Principal Enforcement Officer (Housing & Community Services)
Graham Collins – Committee Services (Administration Department)
Frankie Belloli - Committee Services (Administration Department)

Residents

Approximately 25 members of the public.

INTRODUCTION

The Chairman, Councillor Mrs Sutters, 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. Underpass at Watermans Green/Church Square

A resident referred to proposals to carry out developments in this area and concerns in the local community about the possible impact, including the effect on the tranquillity of the area close to the church. Councillors Maddan and Mrs Torrington explained the background and confirmed that consultation

with residents would take place. Councillor Maddan advised that the Parochial Church Council of St Mary's had been supportive of a feasibility study or the project and confirmed that implementation could only take place after completion of the Thames Tunnel work in any event.

2. Air Quality

A resident raised the question of the continuing breaches of EU air quality standards in Putney High Street in spite of the efforts by TfL and the Council to make progress. She referred to the initiative of the new Mayor of London on traffic emissions and sought information on how the Council proposed to respond. Another resident suggested that one-way traffic arrangements should be introduced for the High Street.

Councillor Ryder confirmed that the Council and TfL had been working for a number of years to improve the situation which was particularly challenging since the road was a narrow Victorian High Street continuing directly on from a river bridge with, therefore, limited options to redirect or reduce traffic.

Councillor Maddan considered the High Street to be unique in its configuration with the river bridge, its narrowness, the volumes of traffic and the adjacent residential roads. One-way working had been considered, but there would, of course, be serious impacts both in terms of traffic congestion in the area and importantly, on local residents accessing and exiting the area. He referred to a very recent King's College London report which had demonstrated that air pollution had reduced by 15% as a result of the introduction of lower emission buses and other vehicles, an improvement far outstripping efforts elsewhere. He acknowledged that the situation was still serious and further improvements would be sought, but he underlined that there was no magic solution to this longstanding problem.

Councillor Carpenter suggested that pedestrianisation of the High Street could be considered and he proposed that bus stops in the centre of the High Street should be removed. He referred to the experience with the closure of the bridge for repairs not long ago, which had not resulted in as much disruption as feared. He was aware that an architectural practice in the area had offered some pro bono work on the feasibility of certain options.

Councillors Mrs Torrington and Carpenter encouraged residents to respond to the Mayor of London's consultation of low emission zones.

In the context of planning, Ms Richards advised that the Council's planners had attended a training day covering the issue of addressing air quality in planning applications and consents. All major developments and those involving demolition works require developers, through conditions, to submit information on the impact of the development construction on the local environment. This is monitored by the Council's Air Quality team over the duration of the development.

3. Planning: the “TKMaxx/Barclay’s Bank” and “Blades” Sites

A resident asked whether the planning consent for this site which had been granted by the former Mayor of London after the Council had refused permission, could be referred again to the new Mayor of London. She also asked whether there were any new proposals for the “Blades” site and whether the planning policies for the town centre placed any caps on building height.

Ms Richards considered it was unlikely the previous Mayor of London’s decision could be overturned, though even under the current planning consent, there were a number of planning conditions to be discharged before actual development could commence. Councillor Mrs Sutters added that there was no mechanism for a second “call-in” of the application since it had been determined. As for the Blades site, Ms Richards advised that there were no planning applications submitted as yet, and confirmed that the Council’s planning policies did include site specific allocations documents which could restrict tall buildings. Another resident stated that the developers’ claimed financial value of the initial proposals suggested no fewer than 140 flats at current values. In response, Councillor Mrs Torrington confirmed that, in pre-application discussions, it would be made clear to developers the extent of the development likely to be considered acceptable by the Council. Councillor Carpenter cautioned that existing tall buildings on the Upper Richmond Road and by the river made it more difficult for the Council to resist new proposals of similar design with the consequent risks of appeals and costs awards.

Councillor Maddan understood it was not valid to refuse planning applications solely on the basis of possible impact on air quality. Councillor Ryder pointed out that there were some sites and circumstances where a tall building could reasonably be permitted, but others where the impact on the particular area was not acceptable. Councillor Mrs Sutters considered that the planning system was essentially pro-development and local planning authorities needed to point to clearly demonstrable harm to local amenity in order to refuse any application. She underlined that the Council’s planning officers were nevertheless robust in applying the approved planning policies and addressing residents’ concerns.

4. Planning: Neighbourhood Forums and Planning

A resident spoke about provisions in the recently-enacted Housing and Planning Act 2016 which expanded opportunities for local people to become involved in the planning system through neighbourhood plans and forums. She reported that there were neighbourhood planning forums for almost all the area of the borough of Westminster, that many other councils also had a positive approach to these initiatives and that there was at least one such forum in the neighbouring borough of Richmond.

Councillor Mrs Sutters confirmed that local residents were entitled to group together to make a request to the Council as local planning authority to establish these mechanisms. Ms Richards stated that her general experience with these local arrangements in other authorities was that residents’

expectations of local control often came up against the reality that neighbourhood plans had to comply with the planning authority's broader planning policies and indeed, the national planning framework. In many instances, the process involved could be long, bureaucratic and arduous without residents feeling that the eventual outcome met their expectations of local choice and priorities. Councillor Mrs Sutters gave her personal view that these mechanisms seemed to work better in rural areas compared to urban settings where there was less flexibility in planning policies and decisions.

A resident of Tooting at the meeting reported that she was involved in a group in that part of the Borough interested in developing a neighbourhood planning forum.

5. Riverside Quarter - River Walkway and New Development

A resident of the Riverside Quarter asked about the possibility of reviving the proposal for a river walkway alongside the waste transfer station; he also expressed concern that a developer was seemingly proposing a building 19 floors in height nearby. Another resident echoed these points and underlined the concern about the impact on those living alongside the Wandle River.

Councillor Mrs Torrington reported that the developers, Frasers, had been asked to revise their initial proposals to achieve a more proportionate and improved design, and to include a river walkway. She confirmed that, following the receipt of a revised proposal, residents would be consulted and if necessary, a public meeting could be held to discuss the scheme; she expected all this would take some considerable time before the Council determined the application. Councillor Maddan stated that residents were welcome to raise concerns not only with the Council, but also with their MP.

Ms Richards explained that the timescale for a river walkway would depend on the implementation of a relevant planning consent.

6. Wandsworth Park – Water Fountain

A resident referred to efforts to secure the reinstatement of the water fountain in Wandsworth Park which had been replaced by a statue. Councillor Mrs Torrington confirmed that she fully supported this project and was looking at funding options to implement it. Pat Gross of the Friends of Wandsworth Park confirmed that feasibility and funding was being investigated; the new fountain would be designed to meet the needs of dogs as well as people visiting the park.

7. Wandsworth Park – Improvement Schemes

Pat Gross referred to the notification two years previously of a sum of £40,000 to be made available via a local site development for improvements to the Park; the Friends of Wandsworth Park had put forward project ideas, but no funding had been forthcoming. She explained that the infrastructure of the Park required repair and improvement, with potholes appearing in some areas

and decline in overall maintenance standards. She acknowledged that a Heritage Lottery Fund application was in hand, but underlined the importance of the Council looking after the Borough's green spaces. Councillor Mrs Torrington reported that the £40,000 funding would only be released on implementation of a planning permission which was still awaited. Councillor Maddan acknowledged the value of green spaces, but confirmed that in the current climate of public spending reductions, it was increasingly difficult to maintain previous standards and there was a growing reliance on external sources of funding.

8. Top Shop Store

A resident of Monserrat Road thanked Councillor Ryder for his assistance in taking up issues related to the redevelopment of the Top Shop store at the junction of Putney High Street and Montserrat Road. It was considered that the replacement of a brick refuse shed at the rear of the premises would attract street drinkers, and that the proposals for the display windows along the existing flank wall in Montserrat Road should be adapted so that the proposed illuminated windows facing Nos. 1, 3 and 5 Montserrat Road are replaced with planters to prevent light pollution.

9. "MK by Muriel's Kitchen" - Licensing

A resident of Monserrat Road questioned the license arrangements for this café since it appeared not to be permitted to sell alcohol to take away from the premises yet there was clear evidence of the actual sale of alcoholic drinks since he himself had bought some there. Local drunks were purchasing alcohol from the café and engaging in anti-social activities in the immediate area close to residential properties. The resident also referred to the proliferation of A-boards on the pavements and the refusal of Police to patrol areas to the rear of shops where drunks congregated and anti-social behaviour took place. More generally, he was concerned that no one seemed to take overall responsibility for coordinating various agencies' and businesses' efforts to tackle these problems.

Councillor Maddan reported his disappointment with the attitude of at least one local Police officer who took the view that there were "more important things to do" than dealing with drunks around the High Street; he had raised the matter with the local Safer Neighbourhood Team. He acknowledged the need to improve the back-alley areas which attracted vagrants and drunks; the resultant rubbish increased the number of vermin in these areas. He cautioned that the Council and Police were often constrained in tackling these problems due to the uncertainty of ownership of some of these areas. Councillor Maddan would check the licensing position with relevant staff at the Council.

(Action: Councillor Maddan)

Post-meeting note: a licence was granted on 4th July 2016 for the sale of alcohol at or from the premises on the condition that it is not supplied otherwise to persons ordering food.

In response to Councillor Maddan saying that he had been verbally abused by a passer-by for asking drunks to move on, a resident expressed concern at the apparent lack of sympathy towards people who had fallen on hard times due to a range of social and economic problems.

10. South West Trains Services and Wandsworth Town Station

A resident asked for councillors' support in lobbying South West Trains to increase the frequency of the Sunday service to 8 trains per hour. He also referred to the limited staffing at Wandsworth Town Station (5 hours per day) when it was the 22nd busiest station on the whole network. The risks of such limited staffing, and the consequent costs to conscientious, paying railway passengers, had been revealed when a recent sweep had uncovered no fewer than 60 fare-dodgers on a single day

Councillor Mrs Torrington reported that she and Justine Greening MP had met with the Managing Director of the company responsible for Southern Rail services and the Department Transport, but had not been able to secure a positive response on the deficiencies in the service passengers. She would make a copy of her representations available on request.

(Action: Councillor Mrs Torrington)

CLOSE OF MEETING

Councillor Mrs Sutters 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 9pm

Frankie Belloli (020 8871 6005)
Graham Collins (020 8871 6021)