

29 Nov 2012

Application for Boundary Designation

Bermondsey Neighbourhood Forum, SE1

You will be aware that the Bermondsey Neighbourhood Forum (BNF) have been working for some time as a 'Neighbourhood forum' to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for part of the Bermondsey area of Southwark. See the map of the agreed area to better understand the geographic focus.

The BNF were recognized as a Vanguard Area / Front Runner by the Department of Communities and Local Government. Initial funding was provided by DCLG.

Now that Localism Act has been passed and our work has progressed, the forum wants to be the 'designated' group for the area so that we can progress the Localism planning process.

Let me set out why the Forum members feel we are the right group for designation by the council.

First, we have come together as a group which did not exist prior. We have reached out to various members of the community. In addition have coordinated with members of Southwark Council and DCLG as to the direction of Localism and planning.

The community inside the designated boundaries includes many small businesses and some very large one. We have members of the community living in housing provided by the council and members who are private owners or who rent privately. There is a major university and medical center plus a business district. There are charity, youth, and religious groups all within the boundaries. At various times member of the Forum have spoken to representatives of all of the above.

When it comes to developing a local plan, we have developed a federated model to bring together as many of the community groups and organizations as possible. We recognize that what is right for one specific street or sub area of the larger community might not be right for a different area. We have devolved the designated area shown on the map into a number of individual Opportunity Sites grouped together into Action Areas. This allows local champions to drive the fine detail of the local plan in an Action Area so the work is distributed and nuisances are reflected in the overall plan. The designated area needs to be inclusive for all and at the same time something that feels joined up so people who live, work or play in the area have a sense of community.

Change will happen. Being in Zone 1 of London implies an urban lifestyle is to be expected. A local plan aims to nudge the change in ways the community wants and in ways the community of people who live and work here in the future will enjoy. The plan is not there to stop change. The objective is to facilitate better change and to bring forward good ideas sooner. The BNF and the local plan are a communication tool so there is an active voice about the built environment.

We encourage diversity of ideas while encouraging people to be responsible for making the change happen. Rather than be a group that feels like the party in opposition which

only complains, the Bermondsey Neighbor Forum is all about being the leader of change through careful consultation with the diversity represented by the community. Disagreement is fine. The measure of success will be a neighbourhood plan that has community support but not unanimous support given the wide diversity of viewpoints. If the plan had no one objecting, it would not be a plan worth having.

John B. Corey Jr.
Chair
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