

Background

OBVNF Designation and Draft Neighbourhood Plan 2015 -2016

The OBVNF was designated on 13th August 2015 following an application attached here as Appendix 3. The first general meeting after official designation was held on 23rd Sept 2015.

From October 2015 - January 2016 the forum developed initial policies and a vision statement through working groups and produced a questionnaire that was circulated by the Council via 3K leaflets. Feedback was given by the Council to some initial policies at the end of 2015 and the vision statement completed and submitted in January 2016. From January - October 2016 the forum made representations on the Local Plan (NSP) and continued to develop policies through working groups. In May 2016 a formal application for a neighbourhood area revision was made but to no effect and the forum submitted a first full set of draft policies in October 2016, receiving feedback from the Council at the end of November.

OBNF 2017 - 2019

During this period, in accordance with its constitution and vision the forum continued to develop the neighbourhood plan while also making representations upon the NSP and the New London Plan (NLP) in conversation with the local community and other community and planning groups in Southwark. A good example of this activity is the 'Local List' initiative, much positive effort around which has resulted in both a well developed policy in the draft neighbourhood plan and a corresponding borough-wide policy in the latest version of the NSP.

The forum applied for a revision of the Neighbourhood Area in September 2017 seeking to unite areas of shared character and history, appropriate for our emerging policies and to allow residents and businesses in the area to have a stronger voice in the local planning process. The Council consulted in January 2018 and despite clear local support the application was refused in February.

The forum consistently works to extend for our members and affiliates, the wider local community and the general public, key consultations carried out by the Council and by developers. For example from autumn 2018 through to Spring 2019 the 'St Thomas Street East Framework' (STSEF) consultation programme was extended through questionnaires, exhibitions and well attended open meetings at Globe House including a 'roundtable' meeting on 20th February 2019.

Present

OBNF Draft Plan 2019-2020

Our open meetings are advertised via posters and online newsletters to our mailing list of 900+ membership, with a consistent active readership of 200-350 people at any time. While membership processes are open/informal to remove barriers to participation the required list of 21+ members is attached as Appendix 4. At the same time as maintaining consultation activities like the above on the development of the St Thomas Street area, the forum has continued to develop the neighbourhood plan, taking into account changes to national, london-wide and local planning policy.

The current draft plan (Appendix 5) now constitutes a positive, detailed and functional document across seven chapters upon which we have just completed a very successful consultation exercise (despite the Covid 19 situation) with a good range of key stakeholders including residents, local businesses, local churches, a youth club, transport experts and local historians, TRAs, Councillors, workspace providers and more. In the next few weeks we will be reflecting on this feedback and constructing our pre-submission draft for consultation which should take place later in the summer.

Key policies on *Character and Heritage* (Chapter 1) like *Local List* (1.4) and *Tall Buildings* (1.1) for example are set to significantly improve upon related policies in the NSP (and the NLP) by virtue of the application of the vital contextual detail/perspective which is available to the forum through it's well embedded working knowledge in the area. Policies on subjects like *Housing and Development*, *Local Services* the *Local Economy* similarly seek to improve upon the local planning policy context. These policies in particular have been developed in constructive conversation with the some of the Council's recent consultation activities (for example on the draft local regeneration charter where we attended and extended a series of walkabouts and discussions), so that we are now nurturing a good evidence base for our policies on the maintenance and future development of housing, schools, nurseries, libraries, leisure facilities, community spaces, facilities for younger and older people.. as well as for protecting and encouraging the positive evolution of the local economy, improving access to genuinely affordable workspace, improving green/open space infrastructure and more in the neighbourhood area. Last month we engaged with the Council's online mapping exercise for CIL project ideas by supporting some of the more strategic suggestions in the area and by proposing the following project ideas which gained good support and which we look forward to discussing with the Council going forward: *Tool Sharing, Repair and Re-Use Facilities; Youth and Adult Education Services; Affordable Workspaces; Restoration of the Crucifix Lane Railway Arches.*

Another recent example of our positive and constructive activities reflected in the emerging plan (see Appendix 5 - Chapter 4) is the pioneering model currently being co-developed with the chair of the planning committee for neighbourhood forums to give meaningful local briefings upon (major) planning applications. To this effect we facilitated a guided walk and discussion of St Thomas Street and the Bermondsey St Conservation Area with the planning committee chair and two deputies in January this year and are now set to brief the planning committee in advance of some key current applications being brought before them. We are proud of this pilot/test model for future initiatives across the borough which directly reflects some of our fundamental objectives: of *highlighting the importance of the built environment in our designated area and promoting its preservation and enhancement...* and *ensuring that local people gain a real voice in the planning process.*

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We trust that the Council will now expeditiously determine this application for the OBNF to be redesignated. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any queries, especially on how we can best help facilitate consultation in the current/developing Covid-19 situation.

Yours sincerely,

Old Bermondsey Neighbourhood Forum

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 OBNF Constitution

Appendix 2 Designated Neighbourhood Area Map

Appendix 3 Forum Designation Application 2015 (Extracts)

Appendix 4 OBNF List of Members

Appendix 5 Current Draft Neighbourhood Plan