



OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 7 May 2013 at 6.00 pm at 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Catherine Bowman (Chair)
Councillor Dan Garfield (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Neil Coyle
Councillor Toby Eckersley
Councillor Gavin Edwards
Councillor David Hubber
Councillor Lorraine Lauder MBE
Councillor Tim McNally
Councillor Paul Noblet
Councillor The Right Revd Emmanuel Oyewole
Councillor Mark Williams

CO-OPTED MEMBER: Jeremy Leach, Walworth Society

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Fiona Colley, Cabinet Member, Regeneration & Corporate Strategy

ALSO PRESENT: Eileen Conn, Peckham Vision
Elizabeth Cox, New Economics Foundation
Suzanne Hall, London School of Economics, Cities Unit
Liz Peace, British Property Federation

OFFICER SUPPORT: Shelley Burke, Head of Overview & Scrutiny
Norman Coombe, Legal Services
Steve Platts, Director of Regeneration
Julie Timbrell, Scrutiny Project Manager

1. APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Noakes, Councillor McNally Tim attended as a substitute.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

2.1 There were none.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

5. GATEWAY TO PECKHAM - PUBLIC SQUARE AND STATION REGENERATION

5.1 The chair welcomed the residents and traders in the audience and explained the call-in process. The process provided the opportunity for discussion with stakeholders, cabinet members and officers in order to review the decision-making process. The chair emphasised that the committee could not overturn a decision but could recommend that a decision be further considered.

5.2 The chair detailed the reasons for the call-in:

- Failure to maintain the link between strategy and implementation - the scheme that officers discussed with Peckham Vision stakeholders differed significantly from the scheme presented in the report. Specifically, stakeholders claimed that the area for development outlined in the report was not the same as the one that had been discussed with officers.
- Due consultation and the taking of professional advice from officers - Peckham Vision representatives gave evidence at Cabinet that they had had "18 months of unsatisfactory" meetings with officers. The Director of Regeneration (Steve Platts) acknowledged that there were problems with the report, apologising "for some of the language".

5.3 The chair invited Councillor Fiona Colley, cabinet member for regeneration & corporate strategy, to introduce the background to the decision. Councillor Colley explained that the Gateway to Peckham proposal dated back to 2002 and that there were three principal elements to the project:

- the creation of a new public square which would see the upgrade of the retail units into high quality spaces similar to the ones in the Royal Festival Hall re-development
- the regeneration of the station including new lifts
- the regeneration of the courtyard to the rear of the station

5.4 Councillor Colley said that, whilst there was no criticism of the businesses to the rear of the station, some of the light industrial businesses did not necessarily need to be located in a town centre. What Peckham's town centre lacked was many leisure and cultural facilities such as bars, restaurants and galleries and there was an opportunity at the rear of the station to create a Peckham specific destination, drawing on the ever growing arts and culture sector in the area and the reputation of some of the existing businesses in the area such as Bar Story and the Sassoon Gallery, which did work well in this location. She added that while she did not accept that there had been a lack of consultation or a gap between implementation and strategy, she would quite readily accept that there were mistakes in language in the report. She assured the meeting that the council did not need full vacant possession at the rear or sides of the station but only at the front and that she had recently been to visit the businesses and thought that the council needed to improve communication.

5.5 Councillor Colley explained that the report was slim but in line with the strategic vision for the Gateway to Peckham. There had been extensive and numerous meetings between Peckham Vision and officers and she was sorry that Peckham Vision found these unsatisfactory as the council had found them useful. Councillor Colley added that, for various reasons which included commercial confidentiality and the negotiations with Network Rail, the council could not share all the information. She believed that concerns were fundamentally about a misunderstanding that the council had already rectified.

5.6 A member noted that points 25 and 26 of the cabinet report stated that when the community were asked, as part of the consultation on the Peckham & Nunhead Area Action Plan, if they would want to see a square in front of Peckham Rye Station, 86% of respondents were in favour and that there was an extensive consultation and engagement process planned. The member asked how many respondents were invited to comment. Councillor Colley did not have these numbers to hand but stated that lots of people were contacting her in support of the scheme and that she felt that the scheme had extensive community backing. Steve Platts, director of regeneration, reported that consultation plans were in development to engage further with businesses and residents and that the council would be doing broader communication. He explained that the report focused on delegating those powers to officers.

- 5.7 A member asked if there had been a delay while agreeing a framework with Network Rail and Councillor Colley agreed that it had taken more time to work through the Network Rail bureaucracy than had been anticipated.
- 5.8 A member noted that the report talked about “acquiring all the interests” in the area identified in Appendix One, which was the broader area. Councillor Colley responded that the director of regeneration was authorised to come back to cabinet with a plan for acquiring interests not to go ahead and acquire them and the director of regeneration confirmed that when he came back to cabinet it would be with a more suitable form of wording following cabinet discussion and that there were issues that the council would need to negotiate with Network Rail. Members noted that a clarification on this would be useful and that the committee would like to see the final form of words used.
- 5.9 A member commented that the cabinet member had responded to the call-in issues very well and said that he thought the call-in referred to the officer report rather than the cabinet decision. The chair disagreed and said that the call-in was of the cabinet decision.
- 5.10 The chair invited Eileen Conn from Peckham Vision to comment. She opened by saying how shocked Peckham Vision were to find out that the council was seeking secure vacant possession of the whole of Network Rail land from Rye Lane almost to Bellenden Road. During the cabinet deputation, Peckham Vision were told that this was not the intention, and the decision was revised so that the land assembly strategy had to be reported further to cabinet. However, she understood that there was still the intention to “acquire all interests” of all that land, and this needed explanation if vacant possession was not needed for all the units affected.
- 5.11 Eileen Conn reported that Peckham Vision had produced a map to indicate different parts of the site to help to explain their emerging vision and what was expected, compared with what was in the cabinet report (the map was circulated and is appended to the minutes). She said that Peckham Vision had understood that there would be public consultation and discussion about the urban design of that part of Rye Lane, before decisions on design and final plans were taken.
- 5.12 Eileen Conn commented that Peckham Vision had been working with the council for many years on the vision but would have expected more consultation on the master plan. She noted with interest the reports on the later agenda item on Business Mix on Walworth Road, and raised concerns that the final outcome of Peckham Gateway could be more “clone town” as the Network Rail plan assumed a complete makeover of all the arches and buildings on the site compared with the unique independent approach which Peckham was capable of. Eileen Conn indicated that there were emerging

business that with flexible and empathic management could deliver the organic change faster and more cheaply than anything the council and Network Rail could generate. She said this would complement the physical infrastructure investment and change of the public square and the reconfiguration of the ground floor of the station to connect to the rear.

- 5.13 Eileen Conn complained that in her view the process to date had been opaque. The fact that the news of this cabinet report reached Peckham Vision by accident, after the information had reached the public domain, even though Peckham Vision was named in the report as a council partner, indicated that communication and information provision from the council had not been adequate. Eileen Conn commented that during the last year Peckham Vision had sought but failed to engage in a conceptual discussion of how the strategy could be achieved on the whole site. She requested clarification of what the partnership with the council entailed and highlighted that Peckham Vision felt that it was essential for there to be a clear written agreement about this.
- 5.14 Eileen Conn said that it was notable that of all the organised partnership arrangements in the council processes few, if any, seemed to relate to the physical infrastructure policy areas. She hoped that the committee would recommend that the council looked into this aspect of partnership arrangements and take the Peckham Gateway project as a case example to clarify some of the issues, as well as come to a satisfactory arrangement on the Gateway project itself. Eileen Conn said that she was the elected representative in the new Community Action Southwark 'Voice' arrangements and the wider partnership issue might be able to fit within that umbrella. She emphasised that Peckham Vision valued working with the officers and she hoped that the call-in process would achieve a collaborative and fruitful relationship with the council, as well as achieve clarity on the issues around the plans for the different parts of the site.
- 5.15 The chair asked how a better of model of partnership arrangements could be achieved and Eileen Conn emphasised the importance of a written agreement. The chair suggested that clarity on how the council would work with the community, voluntary and business sector might be helpful, and that there might be useful examples, e.g. Brixton.
- 5.16 The director of regeneration commented that Peckham Gateway did not have a conceptual design but that the council was about to start engaging with the wider community. Councillor Colley said that there was a massing plan developed with Network Rail, but that this was commercially sensitive.
- 5.17 A member cautioned against a more formal partnership relationship and said that that one regeneration initiative spent two years agreeing the terms of reference, however a tenants' friend arrangement worked well to communicate the regeneration plans. Councillor Colley emphasised the

need for the council to have direct relationships with local business, as well as working through groups such as Peckham Vision. She reported that over the last eighteen months there had been twenty-two meetings with Peckham Vision.

- 5.18 The chair commented that nevertheless people remained unhappy. Councillor Colley commented that there was a limit on how much information the council could share. While the council would consider a written agreement she was unsure if this would be productive and emphasised the need for the council to make decisions quickly.
- 5.19 A representative from Peckham Vision remarked that consultation was different from partner to partner and recalled that Peckham Vision was written in as a partner and was described as this in the cabinet report. She said that this status generated reasonable expectations around information, dialogue and decision-making. She emphasised that a framework would be helpful. The representative thought that this would be of enormous help and suggested that CAS could help to develop this.
- 5.20 Councillor Colley said that the council could work on this but indicated that this would not go as far as the Brixton Windmill partnership agreement which was a very different type of project. A member of the committee commented that bureaucracy could delay a dynamic process, that the council should not be giving a veto to the community and emphasised that the people who ran there council were democratically elected.
- 5.21 A second member appreciated that communication from the council could be better and noted that Peckham Vision were asking for meaningful engagement. He suggested that this could be a log of achievements. Another member said that the partnership work with Creation Trust on the Aylesbury Estate had undertaken some very successful work and agreed that regeneration processes needed to be deft and fast and that there should be nothing too bureaucratic.
- 5.22 A member commented that the committee also needed to talk about involving the wider Peckham area and the more diverse elements of the community. Members agreed that this was a key issue.
- 5.23 A member asked if there was core agreement on the development of the front of the station and whether the key issues of difference might be more around land use at the rear of the station. He referred to the Peckham Vision map and asked if Peckham Vision thought it was likely that there would be problems around use of the land marked green and yellow on the map. Eileen Conn responded that Peckham Vision thought there was agreement around the yellow area, but that the green area and the pink area had not been discussed. She emphasised that this was exactly the conceptual discussion that Peckham Vision had not been able to have.

Peckham Vision had local Information and ideas that it would like to feed into the regeneration process. Three businesses that sounded very interesting had indicated an interest in the pink area and a micro brewery could possibly occupy the area marked in green.

- 5.24 A member asked if the areas marked in blue would be affected by the creation of the square. Eileen Conn thought this was the base but Peckham Vision was not an expert on this. Councillor Colley commented that some of the area marked in pink might also need to be integrated into the physical regeneration. She explained that the situation for the front units was complex as these involved leases that the council needed to acquire, however units operating in the area marked in green were more straightforward as these units were rented.
- 5.25 Councillor Colley stressed the importance of acknowledging that Peckham Vision and the council were not the only partners. The chair suggested that the cabinet look at successful partnership models.
- 5.26 A member commented that Creation Trust was democratic in its terms of reference and was not short of information, which was crucial. He reported that sometimes the partnership agreed to disagree, however there were lots of stakeholders and community groups who did communicate through the process. Ultimately the council took decisions and residents could disagree via the ballot box. Councillor Colley commented that Creation Trust was a very different body to Peckham Vision – a charity with a very formal governance structure to ensure representativeness, employing members of staff to deliver services and with a closely monitored funding agreement with the council. She did not think that the council could impose the Creation Trust model on Peckham Vision which was a more informal network seeking to work collaboratively with the council. A member noted that this partnership model brought in faith groups and brought everybody round the table.

RESOLVED:

1. That the decision not be referred back to cabinet.
2. That the cabinet should investigate models of partnership arrangements which are as dynamic as possible while involving the widest range of stakeholders and community groups.
3. That the cabinet clarifies as soon as possible the extent of the area in which the acquisition of all interests is required.
4. That the cabinet member and officers ensure that the outcomes of involvement activities for this project are recorded, especially those with partners, alongside logistical information on the number of

meetings and consultation documents distributed and stakeholders consulted, to ensure meaningful and measurable engagement.

6. BUSINESS MIX ON WALWORTH ROAD

- 6.1 The chair reminded the committee that Jeremy Leach from the Walworth Society had been co-opted onto the committee for this item.

Suzanne Hall, London School of Economics, Cities Unit

- 6.2 Suzanne Hall introduced her presentation, “Walking the Walworth Road”. She explained that her recent work had concentrated on “Ordinary Streets” and that she was currently studying Rye Lane. Her approach was an ethnographic and visual exploration of a street’s vitalities and of the constraints in the spaces, economies and cultures of the street. She reported that she had spent a lot of time talking to shopkeepers and visitors on the Walworth Road.
- 6.3 A spider web diagram in the presentation showed the distribution of retail activity in the city; two thirds of all Londoners lived within five hundred metres of a high street. There was an increasing level of ethnic diversity, demonstrated by graphs showing London’s population changes over the ten year period 1991 – 2001. In London the most ethnically diverse areas were also the most deprived. London was a polarised city in terms of wealth distribution and had the country’s top 10% of the richest people and the top 10% of the poorest.
- 6.4 Walworth was very high density and consequently although the population had a low level of disposable income the retail annual turnover of the Walworth Road was similar to Hampstead Heath, which was much wealthier but also of lower density. East Street was the best location economically, followed by Elephant and Castle around the London College of Printing Communication and South Bank University and the Walworth Road library, although Heygate Estate formed a physical barrier. Economic activity dissipated towards the south of Walworth Road.
- 6.5 The results of a survey demonstrated that shopkeepers were from around the globe. The languages spoken by shopkeepers were very diverse and Rye Lane had more language capacity than the LSE with 28% speaking four or more languages. There was an equal preponderance of food and clothing retail outlets, as well as a recent growth in beauty outlets. This rise in beauty outlets was because hair and nail products could be purchased cheaply and space could be rented for £50 to £80 a week. Mutualism was important between and within businesses. For example money recipients would tend to spend a proportion of the cash locally as soon as it was received.

- 6.6 Traders were asked how long they had been in occupation; many had been in the area a long time including 32% for twenty years or longer, and a quarter of these for fifty years or more. Long term proprietors often owned the shop and living accommodation above. More recent retailers wanted smaller places. People were developing innovative strategies - for example hat shops and barbers incorporating nail bars.
- 6.7 The surge in online buying had undermined the more traditional retail role of the street. The ordinary high street and Westfield differed in their diversity and also because Westfield had a stronger marketing approach. The Mayor of London had developed funds for retail areas. Town teams and street trade associations could take on a marketing role.
- 6.8 The diversity of small outlets made the area very resilient. Sometimes it was very valuable to have a Sainsbury or Tesco's, but too many large retail chains could cause a tipping point, and the same was true of betting shops.

Comments and questions

- 6.9 A member highlighted the general concern of constituents about a local concentration of betting shops and loan shops. Clustering appeared good for their business but the impact was worrying.
- 6.10 The co-opted member asked how the retail opportunity could be maximised. Suzanne Hall recommended thinking about the hinterland which included schools, libraries, etc. and suggested utilising the Mayor's Outer London Fund. This was highly collaborative and there had been some interesting initiatives, for example providing retail units with an initial start of three months on half rental charges. One project collaborated with an art college. The Architecture Foundation, based in Tooley Street, was involved in the initiative. A partnership with the London College of Communication could be productive; their street frontage was an exciting intervention on the Elephant and Castle roundabout.
- 6.11 In response to a question about the most effective type of interventions, Suzanne Hall responded that recent regeneration had focused on physical investment and that the Walworth Road improvements had been principally mechanistic and had improved the retail environment. However there were recent moves into developing local websites that gave streets a technological profile.
- 6.12 A member asked how Lend Lease related to such a diverse, local retail environment, which might become fragile with major regeneration, and whether there was an opportunity to provide linkage in order to protect and enhance the area. Suzanne Hall thought that Walworth Road and Peckham Rye were successful and that their health value could be

amplified. Peckham had things that brought people to the area but not necessarily something to hold them once they were there. Diversity of provision with an anchor could work well; a strong gesture project could achieve this.

- 6.13 A member asked if it would be a good idea to link the high street with the cultural offering, for example to Pullen's Yard. Suzanne Hall agreed that linking with artistic organisations in the hinterland would work well and commented that it would be interesting to bring together the head teacher, librarian, Pullen's and the local retailers. Another member commented that Harold De Walden developers revitalised Marylebone High Street. They retained retailers like specialist book stores and cross-subsidised the rent. Community links were created which brought in the local schools for festivals.
- 6.14 A member asked if shops on the Walworth Road moved up the retail ladder; from the South to the North and then on to East Street, for example. Suzanne Hall responded that they did not, however she thought that the retail area in the South could be improved, for example there was no signage to show that Pullen's Yard was there. Entrepreneurial activity could be encouraged by showcasing a small project to get wider buy-in and by forming associations.
- 6.15 A restaurateur commented that footfall in Tower Bridge Road was not large, but that the council had offered support to form a business improvement area, which managed to raise £92 000 for improvement. He reported that originally the smaller businesses were worried about rents rising and the bigger businesses had to get head office approval, but that the medium sized businesses were able to see the benefits more easily.
- 6.16 A member of the audience asked if a coordinator was an important role and commented that town centre managers were often brilliant for an area. Suzanne Hall commented that coordinators and partnership were vital in terms of vision and implementation.

Liz Peace, British Property Federation

- 6.17 Liz Peace stated that retail had been the mainstay of the high street but was now moving to the internet, retail parks and out of town supermarkets. Small interesting shops were disappearing from the high street, as were some bigger chains. The Nexts of the retail world were now only targeting ninety-eight high streets rather than the three hundred that could be available. There was a saturation of unwanted shops, for instance nail bars, chicken and betting shops.

- 6.18 Liz Peace reported that Mary Portas had commented that however much you might not like supermarkets and out of town retail parks, you could not turn back the clock. The solution for high streets was not retail but instead to encourage people to visit for community links and entertainment. The focus in town centres was going back to the smaller retail store.
- 6.19 Liz Peace believed that there were four potential solutions:
- Holistic planning, including shrinkage
 - Information, particularly about ownership
 - Holistic management
 - New uses/change of use
- 6.20 There was a question of who was best placed to lead holistic planning; this could be the town council, a local neighborhood group or a business association. There was a need for a leadership team and this could be part of a partnership. Business could be used as a resource and as a champion. It was recommended that there was a strong leader. It was useful to establish ownership as this helped in bringing pressure to bear. Places which had a single owner had greater choices. For example the Marylebone High Street was owned largely by one corporation and it was possible to maximize leverage. Councils had considerable powers at their disposal in terms of neighbourhood planning, compulsory purchase and reducing rates.
- 6.21 Liz Peace suggested that footfall could be increased by thinking about social and community resources, for example putting a health centre in the centre of town. Lots of property companies had recently been formed for doctors' centres. She reported that there was a trend of converting retail use into residential but that there could be problems with this, particularly if it was a haphazard approach. Local authorities could help to define the area to invest in and identify peripheral units that might be best placed for conversion to retail.
- 6.22 Liz Peace stressed that, although they had risen in some areas, rental levels and values had generally fallen in real terms. Property was often overpriced and landlords needed to accept a lower price otherwise there would be problems down the line and a possible reduction in footfall and revenue. There was a need for partnership and leadership to develop a successful high street.

Comments and questions

- 6.23 A member asked whether landlords held onto properties charging sky-high rents in order to force a change of use. In Liz Peace's view, some landlords were not good and she recommended a robust high street plan at the right price. She advised the council to lay down firm guidelines but to be realistic

about what could be achieved.

- 6.24 A member commented that the Strata Tower still had empty units and felt that there was a question about the future of the site. Liz Peace reflected that there were opportunities to give rate concessions if the council had a specific economic purpose. She noted the lack of sufficient guidance to local authorities, but stated that it was clear that rate variation could be used to encourage business development. Development plans also required affordable retail provision.
- 6.25 A member asked Liz Peace to expand on her reference to introducing entertainment into the high street. Liz Peace responded that she was thinking of galleries and another member suggested cinemas. The member said that recently Peckham had a pop up shop initiative which helped young people get experience. Liz Peace agreed that these could be useful initiatives. Projects like this could be a good way for people to try out a business.
- 6.26 A member commented that people now went to Camberwell for food. Pubs were often owned freehold and now the publicans had retired. The member asked if joint ventures could drive out diversity - like the tech industry in the East London. Liz Peace replied that this was always a danger but that a strong objective and ensuring the right mix of units would mitigate against this.
- 6.27 The co-opted member reported on his involvement with "Better Bankside" and his experience of lobbying central government. He felt that there needed to be a community engagement ethos. Liz Peace commented that business was often well placed to take the lead but generally needed local authority support.

Elizabeth Cox, New Economics Foundation

- 6.28 Elizabeth Cox commented that there were many positive things about high streets. They provided an economic and social role but the preeminence of the economic role was not predetermined; it was possible to design them around what the community wanted to achieve. Elizabeth Cox felt that it was not possible to separate out the high street from broader economic and other pressures. Her brief this evening was to focus on specific shops, such as betting shops, however there was a wider context. The country had to reduce its carbon output by 80%. In part this could be tackled by reducing the consumption of consumer goods. The country was also facing other issues such as rising fuel prices, an aging population and rising obesity. Affordability was another big issue.
- 6.29 Elizabeth Cox referred to the resurgence of social movements such as Occupy and 38 degrees. People were questioning the use of social spaces.

She wondered whether the design of spaces would be radically different if we were looking at wellbeing as the frame. There were a range of social, environmental and economic drivers.

- 6.30 Elizabeth Cox reported that NEF had been looking at “home” and “clone” towns and considering local economies and multipliers. Looking at estates it had been found that much of the money left the local economy. Supermarkets created local jobs but local shops created more employment because they created local supply chains. Elizabeth Cox cited the Brixton pound where, for every pound, seventy-five pence stayed in the local community. NEF had also been looking at streets from the point of view of design, connection and sustainability and trying to identify whether money flowed out of the community or circulated locally.

Comments and questions

- 6.31 Members asked how to best manage the high streets, whether the approach should be to ensure that more money was in the hands of local people through statutory minimum wage and to use economic stimulus. Elizabeth Cox agreed that these were useful tools as were the creation of citizen movements and local partnerships. In response to a question from a Walworth resident, she also suggested that community land trusts could provide more local economic relationships.
- 6.32 A member felt that it would be useful to understand the local spend and whether betting shops were sucking huge amounts out of the local economy. He wondered whether business rate relief could be linked to businesses that were working hardest for the area. Elizabeth Cox commented that betting shops involved moral choices and if the council’s framework was well-being then this could give a context to decisions around rate relief. Another member was interested in how much it had cost to set up local currencies such as the Brixton pound.
- 6.33 In response to a question, Elizabeth Cox outlined the five elements that promoted well-being and explained that Liverpool used this model:
- Connect
 - Be active
 - Keep learning
 - Take notice
 - Give
- 6.34 A member asked how important was the role of ethnically diverse business to the global economy. London had seen a large rise in independent retailers and some of the money would go to communities in need abroad, for example in Vietnam. Elizabeth Cox commented that some activities would be better achieved if done on a greater scale. There was also the

social impact of spend to take into account; family global networks would usually have a more positive social impact than global corporations.

- 6.35 A member stressed that questions of economic and social justice needed to be considered. The Southwark Youth Council was not happy with the betting shops and loan shops. The views of the community had to be taken on board.
- 6.36 A Walworth resident highlighted that some business proprietors did not want to engage with the council because of difficulties over rates. The chair welcomed any more detailed information on this.
- 6.37 The chair suggested that the review concluded in the first meeting of the new administrative year. She outlined areas which could lead to recommendations:
- The amount of money that remains in the local economy
 - Young people's involvement in enterprise, community and trade/business associations
 - Identifying who is best placed to lead the development of the high street, is this the council or some other agency
 - The reduction in numbers of voids
 - Opportunities for synergy, e.g. light touch systems such as food or cultural quarters, wider place making of which Walworth Road is just one part

The meeting ended at 9.55 pm