

Neighbourhood Forum Committee Meeting Minutes

6.30 – 8.15pm, 17th April 2015
Lift, 16a St Thomas's Road, Harlesden

Committee member attendees:

Leao Neto (Chair)
Carol Allen
Atara Fridler
Rhoda Ibrahim
Colin George
Paul Anders
Sumathi Pathmanaban (interim Secretary)
Nancy Strang

Also present:

Ken Hullock (planning advisor)
Lorraine Hart (planning advisor)

Apologies:

Amanda Diamond

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair confirmed that the committee meeting was quorate. All present introduced themselves.

The Chair clarified that in his understanding the role of the Chair is to fulfil the Forum's constitutional obligations but also to facilitate the committee to work effectively, and requested that all engage in the process.

2. Reflection on launch

Draft minutes from the launch AGM were circulated to committee members. The Chair emphasised that these are not finalised and will need to be approved / adopted by at the next general meeting of the Forum.

Committee members shared the following general reflections on the launch:

- Carol: there was a good turnout. The people who put themselves forward as candidates for the committee have lots of skills and experience. It is important to follow up with them and encourage them to be a part of the neighbourhood planning process. (Sumathi confirmed that all candidates have been contacted and asked about future involvement in neighbourhood planning).
- Lorraine: has been to 14 inaugural meetings of Neighbourhood Planning Forums in London, and the atmosphere at this was more collegiate and people were genuinely interested. Good to get involvement of people who are distributed from around the area and the forum should try to get more members – primarily because the plan will eventually go to a referendum within the plan area.
- Paul: need to engage more and keep the momentum going. It is important to ensure representation from across geography. The forum needs to be mindful of population churn in Harlesden when recruiting members. It will be important to develop a communications strategy.

Committee members agreed that the minutes of the launch are an accurate representation of the event.

3. Applications for forum and neighbourhood plan area

Committee members discussed the draft application for the neighbourhood plan area and forum to be designated. Lorraine drafted the application, and it will be submitted to the two relevant local planning authorities (LPA): Brent Council and the Old Oak & Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC).

Lorraine provided a brief summary of the application which has to include the following key points:

- Map (appendix 1)
- Why is the area appropriate – this section describes the boundary, why people regard it as a neighbourhood
- What we have done to consult on the boundary – events held etc
- Demonstrate minimum of 21 members. Local planning authority will take a view on whether all sections of the population are included and that the Forum has a commitment to growing the membership
- Constitution – specific clause about neighbourhood planning. Binds us to consulting with everyone in the area not just forum members

Once the application is submitted to Brent Council and the OPDC they will check it to ensure all the relevant sections are in place and will advertise it more widely for 6 weeks. Anyone is able to object to or comment on the application. The LPAs then consider the consultation responses received and make a decision on designating the forum and plan area.

Committee members had some questions about the application process:

Q: During the LPA-led consultation period who can comment? Where do they live? To whom do they send comments?

A: Both LPAs will invite comments and responses will go directly to the LPA. It is possible that the neighbouring LPAs will also submit comments on the application.

Q: How many applications are rejected? What happens if an application is rejected? What if one authority accepts and the other rejects?

A: There have been refusals in areas where there is significant developer and landowner interest in the area identified e.g. in East and South London neighbourhood plan areas were challenged on this basis. Some applications are not encouraged by the LPA because already have detailed local plans in place. LPAs can't refuse an application for no reason, they have to provide a reason and make suggestions about what changes could be made to the area boundaries. So far neither LPA has suggested this will happen.

There is a question about how will Brent determine the application e.g. it may be the lead member who takes the decision or it could go to Cabinet.

Q: How is the LPA's consultation process run?

A: Previously Brent has advertised the application on its website. Generally LPAs will post notice of the application on their website and email everyone on the planning consultation email list. Not clear whether OPDC has agreed its consultation and approval procedure yet.

Q: Whose responsibility is it to respond to questions or comments on the application?

A: It is the LPA's consultation not the forum's and therefore LPA officers deal with comments.

The committee asked for the following amendments to the application:

- Add a sentence about the OPDC being established in appendix 2.
- Add Sumathi as the interim secretary as the contact person for the application
- Ensure list of members is correct

Agreed:

- Committee members agreed unanimously to adopt the application form.

Thanks were given to Lorraine for all her help and support on getting to the point of application.

Actions:

- Once the LPAs begin advertising the link to the consultation, the forum needs to advertise it as well via email and on its website / social media. (Sumathi / Lift)
- Revise application with members' suggestions and submit to LPAs on Monday 20th April. (Sumathi)

4. Forum response to OPDC consultation

Committee members discussed the draft response to the OPDC consultation on its Opportunity Area Planning Framework.

Agreed amendments include:

- Expand acronyms
- Discussion on point 19: Transport and access to Willesden Junction station is important. There was discussion about whether to support the idea of a Harlesden bypass and alternatives for a new road. Agreed to add in that the Forum is concerned about traffic increasing through Harlesden particularly during construction phase and want consider how this increased pressure can be mitigated.
- Point 10: Good that building density and height raised.
- Suggestion about structure – add opening paragraph to highlight key concerns e.g. This response was discussed at an inaugural meeting of forum. Flag concerns about affordable housing, but also the issue about high population density and transport. The paragraph needs to emphasise that there are important links between Harlesden and neighbouring areas, and the Forum wants to strengthen high street.
- Paul: more generally we need to develop boilerplate text about who we are, what we do etc to put on consultation responses.

Responses from Forum members via online survey also considered.

Lorraine reminded the group that consultation responses affected by evidence we gather e.g. about vacant residential properties etc.

Agreed:

- The committee received the report, made some small changes and the document will be submitted to the OPDC in the week of 20th April.

Actions:

- Ken to draft additions etc and circulate on Monday to committee. Need swift response (by Wednesday 22nd April)
- Aim to submit the response by 23rd April (Sumathi)

5. Forward plan for committee

There was a brief discussion about key milestones in the short term:

- Forum submits application 20 / 21 April
- Council consults for 6 weeks
- Possibly 2 months to receive a council decision on the application

Agreed:

- The committee will meet every 2 months to ensure pace is maintained
- Hold an away day for committee members to create a vision for the Forum and neighbourhood plan. (This will inform the development of a forward plan for the committee)
- Next committee meeting will be the away day. Two possible dates were agreed on: Thursday 4th June and Monday 15th June

Actions:

- Arrange meeting between Chair / some committee members with Leader of Brent Council and lead member for housing and regeneration (Sumathi to follow up)
- Sumathi to confirm date for away day