

Subject: FW: Feedback on the Wood Green AAP

From: Annabel Gregory
Sent: 25 April 2017 10:49
To: woodgreen@publicvoice.london; LDF
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Comments on Wood Green AAP
from Annabel Gregory

25 April 2017

Dear Public Voice / Haringey Council,

Wood Green would certainly benefit from some redevelopment, and some of the ideas underlying the AAP proposals make good sense (see section 2). But in its current form this megalomaniac project is unbelievably risky, misguided and unnecessarily cruel to some of the poorest in the borough. The consultation is also flawed because the over- long consultation document is not written for the general public – the language is full of jargon, the points are vague, repetitive and hard to interpret, and the illustrations are nearly all of current buildings. Instead, they need a document that expresses clearly and succinctly what the Council has in mind, with adequate drawings.

1 Housing and the Funding of the project

The target of 40% 'affordable' housing is admirable, but will not be achieved under the current proposals. As the Council will know only too well, it has become more difficult in recent years for local councils to get developers to agree to provide affordable homes, as a result of changes in planning legislation (according to the [architectural critic](#) of the Guardian). This has been apparent in Haringey's recent failure to get any 'affordable' homes at all included in plans to build hundreds of flats at the new Spurs stadium. The Council should stop trying to deal with developers – even the project to have a 50% share with the developer Lendlease in the massive, super-risky £2bn 'Haringey Development Vehicle' (which will be responsible for some of the buildings in the AAP) is unlikely to succeed, given the failure of [Croydon](#) and [Tunbridge Wells](#) councils to make similar projects work a few years ago (it is thought that the latter council paid hundreds of thousands of pounds in compensation to their developer). The latter two councils – like [many others](#), including Enfield – are now setting up their own companies in order to have tighter control over the projects, their profits, and the proportion of 'affordable' homes built. The emphasis in these schemes is on tweaking the existing buildings rather than razing them to the ground and rebuilding – a sustainable alternative that also does not disrupt local people as momentarily as the current proposals would.

In the current scheme, the new homes built by Haringey will only be affordable by the rich.

Furthermore, the 500-odd social housing tenants living above the Mall would have to join the mass exodus from the borough of similar tenants from demolished Broadwater Farm, Northumberland Park and other estates in Haringey, because the Council do not have alternative accommodation for them, and cannot afford to pay others to accommodate them. This is unbelievably cruel and unnecessary.

2 The general design of the AAP

The thinking behind the AAP makes good sense in stating that Wood Green is too much centred on the north-south axis of the High Road, and dominated by four-wheeled traffic. Some pedestrianised and really cycle-friendly areas would really improve the environment. A new pedestrianised town centre behind the Library is in principle a great

idea. But why does this involve the demolition of masses of buildings? Pedestrianised areas do not require major changes in infrastructure. Wood Green has some distinctive buildings from different historical periods that are due to be demolished – in particular the handsome Victorian terraces of Caxton Road and part of Mayes road (people's homes!), the attractive and purpose-built Library, and probably the purpose-built Civic Centre when it is found not to be suitable for other purposes in its present form. The intention appears to be to create a characterless, homogenised town centre just like all the others being built elsewhere in recent years. Let us keep our distinctive buildings (some suggestions for a couple of them below), and integrate them into the new plans. And not demolish people's homes for no good reason.

Not having a car, a much more radical cycle- and pedestrian-friendly scheme would suit us much better than what is proposed in the AAP – something on the lines set out in [Frederick Guy's blog](#), but I don't feel qualified to discuss this.

I am very unclear about where the tall buildings are likely to be built – the drawings indicate that some are proposed, but not where or how high. This is very worrying.

2a The Library

The Library is handsome, light, airy and purpose-built, and does not crowd onto the High Road. It is very well-used. I suggest removing the Library Arcade next to it to open up access to the new pedestrianised town centre behind, and relocate the shop units from the arcade elsewhere. Smarten up the front of the library (the roof terrace with plants along the edge has great potential), and what need is there to demolish this centre of the community, only to rebuild it round the corner? To make even more space around it, you could demolish the little block of 2 shop units beyond (south of) the Arcade (next to the Kervan Sofrasi Turkish restaurant), and relocate them. This would open up an attractive space to the west of the High Road - part of what you are trying to achieve?

If you must move the Library elsewhere, how about using this building for a community centre (e.g. relocating those currently in Caxton road), theatre or etc?

Pevsner (*Buildings of England*), calls the Library a 'dignified composition', adding 'now, alas, cluttered by later building'.

2b The Mall

Part of the perceived ugliness of the Mall comes from it being shut off from the outside world, except for the shopfronts on the High Road. Opening it up with some windows and doors giving onto the new pedestrianised town centre would make a huge difference – this could be achieved with fewer retail units and more mixed use, such as cafes, community centres and even a theatre (there have been other requests for the latter in the online comments). Large windows along the bridge over the High Road with views up and down it would also help (with a bar, or restaurant, here?).

The Mall is like a huge warehouse – just the sort of building that architects and developers (like Urban Splash in Manchester) have been turning into really attractive spaces/accommodation. Also think Brunswick Square in London – it took very little to [transform](#) that from a site of urban decay into a thriving residential/commercial complex. Sky City viewed from the back – i.e. this new town centre – is really quite attractive.

Building magazine waxed lyrical about Page High in 1975, calling it 'one of the most encouraging portents we have for the eventual solution of the worsening housing problems of our large cities', noting that it 'will have very much the atmosphere of a village street – with a community room at one end', and that Haringey

Council were 'pleased enough with the way in which the scheme has turned out' to plan for more rooftop housing, in other words Sky City.

The little shops in the Market Hall are invaluable (as some other people have commented online) for both everyday stuff that larger retail units will not stock, and for specialist ethnic food that supermarkets do not stock – thus catering for the multi-ethnic population of Wood Green. I use them more than the larger shops. These are not stalls that can be taken down every evening, so a covered outdoor market is no replacement.

3 The emphasis in the AAP on larger shops

Pinning so much of the plans on large retail units when people these days shop so much on the internet is surely risky (as pointed out by some of the online commenters). Also, larger shops which have abandoned Wood Green in recent years are not being replaced, apart from Primark replacing Pearsons department store. The newer shops are more down-market, and you obviously cannot declare by dictat which ones will set up business in Wood Green. The Council is presumably relying on Crossrail2 bringing lots of enthusiastic shoppers to Wood Green, and hence encouraging more up-market shops to set up business here, but what if Crossrail2 does not come here, as seems increasingly likely? A more sustainable option discussed in another person's online comment is to support the small businesses that are already setting themselves up in Wood Green – they do not have to be enticed to come here, and their profits will go into boosting the local economy rather than huge retail chains. Ask them what resources they are looking for here.

Instead of focusing so much on large shops, how about introducing some new amenities such as a swimming pool (mentioned by several commenters) and a theatre (mentioned above, and by some commenters)? The theatre could be something suited to a local community, similar to the one at Jackson's Lane. The theatre being refurbished at Alexandra Palace is a very different animal, and is not very suited to modern, intimate performances with its very long, relatively narrow auditorium.

4 Additional Points

4a The old railway line behind Cumberland Road

Opening up this narrow strip of land to the public would not add much in the way of amenity, but would create security problems. The very small gardens backing on to it from both sides would need high security fencing – it is not like Parkland Walk (another old railway line). Why not instead improve the amenity of the many other green spaces in Wood Green, such as the Common, and Trinity and Avenue Gardens, and leave this green corridor to the abundant wild life that is already there?

4b Penstock Tunnel

The plan to widen this and increase access to the park for pedestrians would be much appreciated. At the moment it is scary going through the tunnel.

Conclusions

These plans rely very heavily on Crossrail2 bringing in large numbers of people who are richer than the current average Wood Greener, both as shoppers and future residents. The plans make no allowance for Crossrail2 not coming here. Given the likelihood of this, perhaps the Council could instead set up their own company and consider the much more achievable and practical modifications of existing buildings suggested by various people in local meetings, exhibitions and online comments during the consultation (as well as in this email) – modifications that would benefit the existing local community, and would not entail the likely bankrupting of the Council.



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