

Hornsey Pensioners Action Group (HPAG) Response to the Wood Green regeneration consultation.

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Haringey's proposals for the future of Wood Green were discussed at the HPAG meeting on March 15th. A briefing on the consultation and how to respond were circulated.

Members of our group attended the workshops on March 6th March 29th organised by Public Voice to get information about the public consultation that runs until **Friday 31st March 2017**. We appreciate the efforts made by Public Voice to help us understand the proposals. However, given the huge scale of the plans and the short consultation time, it is difficult to respond fully. Note that the location of Cross Rail is not yet known.

General comments on the validity of the consultation process.

- On March 15th our members were urged to find out more by attending public workshops or by visiting the website <https://woodgreen.commonplace.is>. But the inadequate way in which presentations are handled makes it very difficult for the public to grasp precisely what is being recommended. **We doubt whether meaningful acceptance of the plans can be achieved.**
- A Haringey leaflet was delivered to roads in the proposed development of Wood Green, but we suspect that even those households are not aware of the scale of the proposals. Many households outside this area remain ignorant of the plans.
- The proposals are not presented as being part of the **Haringey Development Vehicle**, but those at the March 6th workshop had confirmation from the officer present that the HDV would provide funding.
- It follows that a private company will have part ownership of those areas and properties currently owned by Haringey Council; this is a major concern.
- It appears that Haringey Council wants overall approval of a scheme that cannot be properly specified. This cannot be a fair consultation.
- HPAG notes that the plans cover many aspects of Wood Green within 5 objectives. Our comments refer to the objectives but not in the leaflet order.

Section 1: innovative economy

- We feel that the demolition of almost every large building in the north end of the High Rd will completely disrupt the local economy rather than improve it. The chaos, disruption, noise and pollution will go on for 15 years. The scheme is so vast that co-ordinating the replacement of one facility that has been demolished with the finishing of a new one is going to be extremely difficult - probably ineffective. Jobs, shoppers and businesses are very likely to go elsewhere.
- It was suggested at the March 29th workshop that Wood Green already has thriving businesses. Has a survey been conducted?
- In Wood Green there are many small businesses, including those housed in the Market Hall and operating from High Road street stalls. There are community initiatives such as the Big Green Bookshop. These facilities are valued by residents and Haringey should develop Wood Green starting with these. Wholesale demolitions threaten such valued communities and market forces may raise rents beyond their reach. Independent businesses are already struggling to pay increasing Business Rates and need support.

Section 5: creating new homes

- The target to create more social housing is approved but we doubt whether wholesale demolition of existing homes and replacing with new build is an effective way to do this, especially when market forces will inevitably minimise the number of tenancies that workers can afford, and make it difficult to guarantee security of tenure for tenants.
- At the March 29th workshop it was suggested that creating more affordable homes could be achieved on pockets of Haringey owned land in a more imaginative way using developers used to working in communities.
- Demolition and new build implies a need for adequate transition arrangements for those displaced. This could be problematic. Rebuild could take years, yet families need accommodation near children's schools. Older people, long term residents, will find such displacement extremely distressing.
- It is essential that residents should be made aware if their home or environment would be effected. However, publicity has been minimal. We suggest that the plans for each zone should have been presented to residents familiar with that area with detailed input.
- There are many serious issues. In particular one proposal is to demolish houses in Caxton Road and Mayes Road, some with multiple households. Another is the proposal to demolish the Shopping Mall (Sky City) where many have homes. Both of these are clearly unacceptable, especially when information is buried in a huge set of plans.

Section 3: urban environment & Section 7 celebrating diversity

- The demolition of key building in the High Rd such as the library, (apparently one of the most used in the country), Civic Centre and The Mall and Sky City represents destruction of Wood Green's history and environment. These buildings can be refurbished and brought up to date. They are by no means eye sores, although examples of their time. Like the Vue cinema, they are relatively new buildings, places used by the community on a continual basis.
- The public space outside the library is very well used and part of the fabric of Wood Green life. A case has not been made for demolition of the library, rebuilding it a few hundred meters from where it is now. Situated as it is now, at a central location, the library is an invaluable resource for all especially students.
- Wholesale demolition is an extreme waste of money and materials; the pollution caused by demolition would be detrimental to the neighbourhood and the environment.
- Meanwhile, aside from any grand scheme, the pedestrian pathways such as Station Road & Parkland Road already link Alexandra Palace, the Heartlands, the Cultural Quarter, the shopping Mall, Market Hall and Library. These should be made more attractive and indicated with more prominent sign posts. Haringey could at reasonable cost, make these walkways more inviting. Regular street-cleaning is currently below standard.
- It is suggested that the Mall, instead of being demolished, could host evening events. This would encourage more footfall & trade in the Mall. The council should avoid licensing late night clubs in residential streets: residents currently suffer from noise and unsocial behaviour. Both can be addressed without the current plans.

Section 6: Take advantage of good transport links.

- Cross Rail is expected to be built, but the precise location not yet confirmed. The High Rd is an extremely busy road, with large numbers of buses, lorries etc. The plan to demolish The Mall removes a bridge that provides pedestrians with a safe way to cross. Yet the planned subways serving the Crossrail station, if it comes, will not help people coming by bus or on foot. Most people come to shop in Wood Green by foot from other parts of the borough. The bridge is a very useful piece of architecture and again well used.
- While transport links may draw more affluent shoppers to the area, we do not welcome gentrification; this can further reduce the supply of affordable homes for rent.

In conclusion HPAG consider that [Wood Green AAP Preferred Options 2017 \(PDF, 16MB\)](#) represents a scheme that is vast and very risky. Haringey should consider that management of overseeing of the scheme would be fraught with dangers, requiring coordination of safe demolition and rebuilding. This is a daunting task and we warn the council to withdraw the plans in their present form.

It may turn out that it is not possible to replace Wood Green library and the civic centre. Financial constraints may become an issue and Wood Green will be left in a poorer state, not a better one.

In particular, we object that the plans were not adequately presented to the public. A longer period should have been devoted using detailed presentations, inviting input, for those intimately and directly affected. Leaflets delivered door to door with more indication of what the scheme represented would be needed with a series of workshops.

Instead of adopting a top-down style it would be more effective and sustainable to focus on inexpensive innovations approved and driven locally.

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on behalf of Hornsey Pensioners Action Group.