

Wood Green Area Action Plan – A Consultation response (consultation period extended to 28th April 2017)

I am concerned about the adverse impact of Haringey Council's proposals for the future of Wood Green. I believe this plan would create social division and social exclusion and that the Council should reconsider its proposals.

Tenants and residents whose homes are to be demolished

The Plan proposes the demolition of housing association estates at Sky City and Page High with 297 dwellings, and also private houses and community facilities in the areas C1 and C2 (Caxton Road, and parts of Coburg Road, Parkland Road and Mayes Road).

It is unclear whether or not the housing association tenants would be rehoused within the redevelopment area. Haringey Council does not have a public policy on the rehousing of social tenants who are not tenants of the council, but whose homes may be demolished under the Council's planning powers.

At Northumberland Park, housing association tenants have been told that they will not be rehoused within the redevelopment area, but will be rehoused by their housing associations, in Haringey 'or elsewhere'. I am concerned that a similar approach may be taken at Wood Green: which means that social tenants are not wanted in the redevelopment area.

Social housing would be lost under this scheme, due to the hostility of the Conservative government to council and social housing, expressed in the abolition of public subsidy either for new Target rent homes, or for housing renewal schemes. I think that social housing deserves investment not demolition.

Areas C1 and C2

Areas C1 and C2 have been identified as new demolition areas, when they were not included in the version of Local Plan which was consulted on and examined in public by the Planning Inspector only last Summer. The residents of these homes reject demolition, and these areas should be excluded from the scope of the Plan.

The Planned 7,700 new homes

The planned 7,700 new homes for Wood Green do not meet any test for affordability by local people, including those on average or below average incomes, and those with low or no savings, or in personal debt, as detailed in the Borough's Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

Neither the 60% of market housing to buy or rent, nor the 40% of so-called "affordable" housing, would be really-affordable for local people with average local incomes and savings.

The impact of building so much market housing, while demolishing and not replacing existing social housing, would be to raise house prices and rents in the area, pricing out local people who would no longer be able to afford to live here.

Corporate Vanity projects

It is completely unacceptable in a time of economic austerity that Council leaders aim to replace the existing Civic Centre and other council offices, by a brand new corporate headquarters.

The Mayor of London's policy

The Wood Green plans do not comply with the Mayor of London's stated policy.

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/improving-quality/good-practice-guide-estate-regeneration>

The very first of the Mayor of London's web-pages on the Draft Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration sets out key principles that the Mayor wants followed in all estate regeneration projects. These say that regeneration should only happen where:

- there is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the borough or housing association in maintaining and improving at housing estates [sic]
- there has been full and transparent consultation and resident engagement
- proposals should offer full rights to return for displaced tenants and a fair deal for leaseholders
- demolition should only be followed where it does not result in a loss of social housing, or where all other options have been exhausted

None of these four principles are being complied with at Wood Green:

- Social housing estates are being demolished, rather than maintained and improved.
- The consultation has not discussed the real negative social impact of the plans.
- The proposals do not include rights to return for displaced tenants and residents.
- Demolition will cause a loss of social housing. Other options have not properly been considered.

Real affordability

Many people are demanding 100% really-affordability in all new housing developments, because - what is the point of unaffordable housing? Housing must be for all of the people, not just for those with money.

I believe that an absolute minimum of 50% of the 7,700 new homes to be built in Wood Green must be really-affordable, which means homes for rent, at the Target rents used by Councils and housing associations. So-called "Affordable" housing at near-market rents and requiring high deposits is not acceptable.

Haringey Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee called for 50% real affordability at Target rents, when they sent the Cabinet decision on the preferred bidder for the Haringey Development Vehicle back for reconsideration, after the recent call-in. Catherine West MP has spoken out in favour of 50% real affordability and Target rents.

50% real affordability of the planned new homes could mean 3,850 new council homes in Wood Green. This would transform housing affordability in the area, and develop and preserve a genuinely mixed community.

Recommendations:

1. This is a plan for gentrification, social exclusion and social cleansing, and should therefore be rejected.
2. Remove Areas C1 and C2 from the demolition plan.
3. No to a new Civic Centre at a time of austerity for the rest of us.
4. Haringey Council should adopt a publicly declared policy for rehousing housing association tenants whose homes are demolished under the council's planning powers. This should include the right of return for all social tenants to new social homes in the redevelopment area, at the same rent no higher, and the same service charge no higher. There should be no difference between council and other social tenants in the impact of housing demolition schemes.
5. There should be full re-provision of demolished social housing within the redevelopment area, at the same rents, service charges and tenancy terms as before. If some of the existing social tenants chose to move elsewhere, then new social homes must be re-provided in the redevelopment area, for letting to new applicants from the waiting list, with no restrictive lettings policies, at the same Target rents as are presently used.
6. A minimum of 50% of the 7,700 new homes to be built in Wood Green must be really-affordable, which means homes for rent, at the Target rents used by Councils and housing associations.

7. There should be No Demolition of any existing housing in Wood Green unless there is a decisive Yes/NO Vote by residents of the estates and areas facing demolition. Soft consultation is easily manipulated by the consuler, and is not acceptable. A secret ballot vote must be required before demolition can be agreed.

These are our homes and communities, and it must be our right to decide on their future.

Yours Faithfully

Richard Matz