

## Community Meeting: 20<sup>th</sup> May 2014: notes

### Introductions

Davina set out the objectives of the meeting and the ground rules.

Each of the panel introducing themselves

- Tonina
- Davina
- Tony
- Tim
- Clive

### Where are we now?

Tony outlined the history of Site G dating back to 2004 when it first was mentioned that the site might be re-developed. Tony's main interest to preserve the heritage of the town centre. First draft of the AAP - everything was shown as being demolished from the Churchill Theatre down to the station and heritage shop fronts. Plan for a tall building. AAP finalized in 2010 and adopted and went to a public enquiry with an inspector. In the case of Site G he said that further work needed to be done including producing a masterplan. If the site is going to be re-developed there needs clarification. In Ethelbert Close there needs to be an assessment of the impact of new retail units.

Crest Nicolson development has now started and this scuppers the Site G development to turn it into Bromley's Regent Street.

Back to square one with what can be produced. Need to decide on what to do with former Habitat building, Laura Ashley and buildings in the heritage area. Last year at a public meeting there was a tentative plan shown. Some buildings will be retained largely because the council can't raise the money to compulsory purchase them. Now Muse development have been given 12 months to come up with a plan for the site. We are still waiting for the results, may see something in next 3 weeks or 3 months.

Several meetings have shown Churchill Place showing Library Gardens completely built upon. (people expressed distress at this).

On 1<sup>st</sup> April Davina attended a council meeting where she put a question about what consultation with the local community has taken place, and is compulsory purchase being considered still. Council said nothing to consult until Muse had come up with a masterplan. We felt this was the wrong way around. The council confirmed that compulsory purchase is under consideration though.

### Any questions from the floor?

Is Laura Ashley is a listed building, what else is? Tony confirmed it is not and there are NO listed buildings along the route. They are in a conservation area but they are not listed so they need planning permission to be demolished.

In the meeting back in July, is it correct that Councillor Morgan committed to having a transparent discussion? Davina and Tony think this is what was said, but they have no record of this.

Question about Library Gardens – the plan to build on it – how can this happen if it was given to the people of Bromley. The same is true of Queens Gardens which Intu plan to build on. Davina said that the council have not confirmed this is the case, there is no transparency. What gave the council the right to sell Queen's Gardens? The plan was refused twice, but Intu were committed and went to a planning appeal. The Executive Committee (6 people) took this decision. Tony is concerned there will be a planning application and it can be appealed in the same way.

Another question about Library Gardens – Tony clarified what is library gardens. There was a plan to turn it into a car park 25 years ago. It was turned down. But they couldn't get past. Also need to make the distinction between Church House Gardens. Tennis courts is part of Church House gardens.

A question about the Italianate gardens and Queen's Gardens – which bit will be built on.

Tony made the point that the Glades was a name that came from the community, so calling it Intu is against this.

Someone who used to live in Croydon where they have similar concerns about building of lots of shopping centres. Can the Secretary of State be called in to help?

### **What happens next**

24<sup>th</sup> July 2013 council granted exclusivity agreement to Muse and asked them to write a masterplan. On 25<sup>th</sup> July 2014 Muse will have to submit their report. If not viable then council say nothing further will happen.

What would a consultation process look like? Davina read the statement from the Council:

- Laughter at the statement that the council is committed to keeping the residents informed.
- Objections will trigger a public enquiry

Tony summarized the statement that makes it clear that the residents can comment once there is a planning application in place. All suggests they are heading straight to a planning application rather than a masterplan. There were CPO's for the Glades – but a CPO won't do much but get a fair deal for those affected.

Question – who should residents be writing to complain about this? Davina suggests that the Chief Executive – Doug Patterson of Bromley Council. The Councillors are the decision makers.

Is a planning application made before a masterplan? It should be the other way round Tony clarified so there can be consultation.

### **Best practice and asking the community**

Tim said that there was very little information on the Council website. Around the country the best developments are those where they ask the community what they want before they build. Communities organize developer days where they meet lots of developers to set out their vision. That encapsulates the localist approach in the 2011 Localism Act. It doesn't seem clear in Bromley what the council are intending in terms of consultation, apart from a vague reference to July 2014. The community has been allowed little input into the shape of the High Street.

Davina read out a quote from 4<sup>th</sup> April from the Chair of Civic Voice: need to put communities at the heart of the planning movement. Otherwise communities at risk of speculative developments.

Question - Muse Developments are making a development in Lewisham – is it worth pursuing with Lewisham Civic Society. Their developments are not attractive – retail at the bottom with residents at the top.

Clive – the money is in the housing. Will money be made if there is more housing in Westmoreland Road being built.

Question about if BCS are aware of the free school at the bottom of high street? Tony confirmed that BCS are aware.

Question about whether a committee should be formed to represent Site G residents. Residents Society in Bromley North- could this not be done.

Davina pointed out that nobody has responded to the call for a committee. She organized the Street Party and had a good turn out. Support from Bromley Town Church. 85% of people in Ethelbert Close are tenants. So she wants local churches and buildings to send representatives.

Mike Payne from Bromley North appealed to residents to get together to support Davina. He urged the group to look at a Neighbourhood Forum idea.

Is it possible to spot list the Laura Ashley building – could the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Society help with this? Hard to get 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings listed.

What are the plans for the lower part of the site – the doctors surgery. Have we worked with them? It's now very busy. What should we do about doctors surgeries and schools which are oversubscribed. Davina confirmed BCS have been in contact with Dysart. 10,000 patients so could be a community. However Dysart are in negotiations to remain where they are and they are not under threat. But they will face a problem with an enormous increase in patients.

Ann Garrett – asked if residents would get together and join Davina to put together a proposal of what they would like to see.

Tonina – excellent suggestion and in Bromley North village there are improvements being put in place. Working with the council. They are looking at social enterprise model. Should we have a show of hands for people to come forward.

### **Asking the Community – what kind of town do we want**

**1) What would we like to be protected and preserved**

**2) Looking at the plans for development being undertaken at present – what would we like to see included now and move towards**

**3) What we would like to see taken into account regarding the longer term future development for the Town Centre**

### **Questions and comments**

What do we want to remain unchanged in the local area.

Why has all the money being spent on lots of new pavements? But what was wrong with it before.

Clive – housing, retail and social was on the site in earlier plans but they are now saying this is a retail site. They have designated it as retail so the Church won't be on the site in the future. It should be a mixture. You want people living in the town centre so there isn't trouble like on the High Street. So less community and social on the site.

Question – is it viable to put more shops on the site – lots of empty shops in the High Street, 99p shops, charity shops. Elmfield Road site they can't let to businesses, so shops are not viable.

Tony said many of us would agree. Council are wedded to idea of expanding shopping. Glades destroyed a lot of the north part of the High Street. This expansion would threaten Bromley North.

Tonina – viability issue – council have consulted on the bus stops on the market square. Economic impact has not been done by the council. Report has been done by Bromley North traders and report going out next week. The council have said they will go back to a consultation - if you come together it is viable.

Social return on investment studies – what sort of studies are used in dealing with town developments?

Economic viability – one attraction is a big department store in Bromley – but they have all gone and been replaced by lower end market shops. Do they want to attract a high end shop? It's not feasible. We go to Bluewater so Bromley is on a loser trying to compete with Croydon and Bluewater.

Tony pointed out many shopping centres have an anchor store and give them a special rate or free rent. If John Lewis came to Bromley they would expect it for free. But surely everyone would want a big department store.

Comment - Bromley Council work be best placed to revamp other places apart from the town centre.

Tony explained the council are spending money on the town centre.

Davina said from a shopping point of view there is not enough parking so they should not encourage a department store.

It was suggested that the group don't get sidetracked by the town centre by Mike Payne – it's a much wider issue. You need to focus on the local residents. Davina said she is committed to Site G but the overall welfare is what unites us.

Ann urged people to sign the petition to support Site G, but also to ask people to come forward if you want to be on the community dialogue group. Please sign up on the sheet.

### **Neighbourhood Planning and Localism**

Tim explained that it can't be used to stop developments but can shape it. Locally there are designated areas in Grove Park and New Cross. In an un-parished area such as Bromley you would need to create a Neighbourhood Forum – need at least 21 people to do that. The group applies to the local council for their area to be designated. It could be the whole of the High Street or just Site G. You make an application to the council and consult local people on what they want – their vision for the area. Then develop policies for the area. It could be around heritage, area designation. It could be one or two simple policies.

The Council have to organize an independent examination and then a referendum. A very specific process set out in law about what communities can do. At the end of the process if the plan is adopted then it has statutory weight. A residents group could take this forward, it could be a Business Improvement District. It could be BCS who apply.

Tonina – Bromley have put together a BID. The general manager of Intu is chairing it but Tonina and Tony are on it. Tonina asked Tim a question about which takes precedent – a BID or a Neighbourhood Plan. This was discussed outside the meeting due to time.

Davina closed the meeting at 9.25 and encouraged people to sign the petition and get in touch if they were prepared to be involved.

