NOTTING HILL GATE IMPROVEMENTS GROUP

MINUTES OF THE 57th MEETING
held on
WEDNESDAY 29th Nov 2006
at
233-235 WESTBOURNE GROVE, W11 2SE

1. Welcome Members of the Metro Shopping Fund. "M.S.F." (jointly owned by Land Securities, Delancey & others) Development Team were welcomed, to explain and discuss their development proposals. (Steve Burgin - Director of Retail Asset Management, Mark Rymell Development Manager, James Owens - King Sturge - Planning Consultant, Jason Trisley Architect Conran & Partners).

Proposals were presented with boards illustrating & demonstrating un-detailed proposals with much useful question & answer discourse over 2 hours.

Aspects discussed were:-

a) J.T. stressed that most of this 60's development was very 'tired', particularly Newcombe House and that the professional team would do a first rate high quality improvement job. The project had to be 'deliverable', catering for the many interests involved and this would include improvement of the Public Realm. Properties of MSF on the north side of N.H.G. would be the subject of a second phase project.

Waterstones and the Kensington Church St frontage would be demolished (excluding Kensington Place) & the area south, north & east of Newcombe House developed to create basement car parking and servicing for a large supermarket (possibly Waitrose) and several smaller shops. The upper parts of Kensington Church St frontage would be 5 floors of residential, a similar height of 5 floors, as No 145 Ken Ch St (brick built in the 70's).

Newcombe House to be reconfigured, (extra steel work) to increase the size of and, change of use from offices to residential. Improved cladding balconies and an extra floor would dramatically improve its current very tired slab aspect. Entrance moved round to Ken Ch St.

b) Further aspects were proposed:-

i. **Farmers Market to be relocated** - S.B. had discussed with Market traders who had acquiesced in car park area behind Marks & Spencer. This was felt to be too small & with awkward access for vehicles which were needed by the farmers for re-stocking etc. This location also extended the centre linearly (ribbon development) when the aim should be to keep such a popular use central and not on the periphery. It was felt there was not enough space on the pavement outside Smiths & Boots.

ii. **Estimated additional retail space** This figure was not stated.

iii. **Public Art**. There will be Public Art & this will be considered at an early stage so as not to be 'just stuck on'. The Eco Halo will be considered.

iv. **Open space north of Newcombe House (Newcombe Piazza)**. The proposals envisaged extending retail east of the Travel Agent (and on its frontage line) round on to Ken Ch St. The loss of this rare open space was universally opposed. Once lost this can never be regained. Newcombe Piazza is a focal and central spot for sitting and meeting - it is the only central place in Notting Hill Gate. The Belgian Pavilion at the current Venice Biennale - "Citta Architectura & Societa" extols exclusively the vital element of OPEN SPACE.

v. **Residential in place of offices**. The proposals are for change of use from offices (Astley, David Game & Newcombe Houses) to residential . The N.H.I.G. Committee felt strongly that serious consideration should be given by R.B.K&C. to the retention of office use. The aim must be to retain a

proper mix of uses and retain employment opportunities in a centre with such an outstanding transport facility.

Once residential, and sold on long leases, comprehensive change back is impossible (witness the disgraceful aspect of Campden Hill Towers which cannot be changed on account of its long lease structure).

Great anxiety was widely expressed that super rich flat purchasers might buy flats for investment and not live there. Short term lets destroy any hope of creating a sense of neighbourhood & local community spirit.

D.McH. expressed his deep anxiety at the increasing loss of the rich social mix that has made N.H.G. such a vibrant centre. Like King's Road Chelsea it may well become a high class ghetto exclusively for the very rich. The secure maintenance of small offices would provide space for a youth culture (and provide an opportunity for the "Monsoons" of to-morrow to start, grow & flourish). The key was felt to be a balanced and sustainable community in the long term.

vi. **Small Independent Shops**. C.B. stressed the importance of small shops that would enable people to live in urban centres (i.e. Repair electric domestic equipment - Olympia Electronics). The world is now moving away from the modern "throw away" wasteful philosophy.

C.B. thanked S.B. for the improved cleanliness of the small shops but both agreed this problem would require more careful efforts when this area becomes a cul de sac & if the supermarket is constructed over Newcombe Street thus blocking Uxbridge St.

The meeting applauded the success of the Howard de Walden Estate at Marylebone Village in the rich mix of multiple & small independent shops. G.R. referred to the original R.I.B.A. report on the 1961 N.H.G. development & asked what would be different from the linear development of Plymouth or Basildon & what did the Development team feel they would be proud of in the N.H.G. development? J.S. asked where would be the "wow factor"!! The team's response was that the additional retail tenants would make the centre much more attractive with more users, more profit & thus more surplus to improve the Public Domain and provide shopping for residents in N.H.G. (no need to go elsewhere).

The Committee felt there was a conflict of interest in the role of Sir Terence Conran as Chairman of the architectural practice proposing its development and his membership of the R.B.K&C. Retail Commission in supporting small independent shops.

vii. Other points

a) S.B. stressed the existing proposals were still v. flexible and further questionnaires were circulated (and added to our website) for return to S.B. indicating local preferences on size of shops etc. etc. G.R. tabled a R.B.K&C. 21st Century glossy brochure setting out 21 major architectural projects in the Borough. The meeting was amazed N.H.G. was not included and all hoped it would be added when a vacancy appears. The early arrival of a new Chief Planning Director (Planning & Development) G.R. urged should be an opportunity to co-ordinate with other freeholders & the Council the comprehensive development of the area to achieve a sustainable quality centre.

b) Finishes at Newcombe House J.T. enthused about the rich variety of finishes at the re-clad Newcombe House with balconies, terraces & gardens (Derry & Toms roof gardens were mentioned) to enrich vistas & appearance by pedestrians in N.H.G. A layered effect with consideration for solar panels & other energy saving would create a 'special' building.

c) S.B. estimated considerable more time in firming up proposals as a result of further local & other opinions and recommendations with a view to a Planning Application around early / 1st quarter 2007.

d) Affordable housing would probably be located on the lower floors of David Game & Astley Houses and not in north or south of the Borough. This secures social mix

e) The application may require consent from The Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone. Normally he seeks an increase in Residential development to alleviate the housing shortage. It was suggested that affordable housing might be used for young artists/entrepreneurs who would enrich the vibrant culture/entrepreneur nature of the area.

f) Exhibition of Proposals The Committee suggested a public meeting or display of this major development proposal. J.O. proposed individual / group consultation. The matter was not resolved.

g) S.B. declared that M.S.F. intended to build the proposed development & retain the

valuable investment with other investments already held & proposed.

h) Conclusion

P.M. expressed warm appreciation to the 4 members of the M.S.F. team for their open & helpful presentation of the N.H.G. Proposals. He declared that this is the way all large urban developments should be initiated. The entire meeting heartily agreed and thanked the team.

Other Matters

2. Apologies for absence. Iain Wilcock, Robert Meadows, David Marshall, Adam Moy.

3. Present. Those ticked on the list below.

4. Minutes of the last meeting were tabled & copies distributed for approval & perusal & signed.

5. Date of the next meeting. 7.30pm Tues 10 Apr 07.

6. N.H.G. L.U.L. Tube Station Art. It was reported that Mike Ashworth LUL Design & Heritage Officer was fully supportive & would contact us shortly to co-ordinate proposals.

7. Local Development Framework. D.C. reported v. little progress on this change from U.D.P.

8. Coronet Cinema. A spreadsheet programme was circulated from Ron Salamat of The Elim Church promising a start on "restoration" from Dec 2007.

9. N.H.G. Advisory Group. This meeting took place at 4.00pm on 14 Sep 06 under D.C.'s Chairmanship. An RBKC Project Group Road General Arrangement was proposed. 4 options were tabled & briefly discussed. The details involved Options 1,2a,2b & 3 and

1) Removal of "Street Clutter" including most bollards, railings and N.H.I.G. Art Features including The Carnival Figures & Elephant.
2) Extending pavements.
3) Changing bus stops.
4) Removal of benches, planters & guard rails, phone boxes.

Clearly the traffic, pedestrian crossings & car parking will need very careful analysis. It was declared that both M.S.F. & R.B.K&C. are united in the proposal to remove all N.H.I.G. improvements to Newcombe Piazza. All parties are exhorted to obtain & consider these proposals albeit a decision on them is probably far distant.

10. Financial Report. The reports for 5 Sep & 29 Nov were circulated at the meeting.

11. R.B.K&C. Retail Commission. R.P. reported on the first meeting of the Commission, whose aim is to secure an improved shopping environment - Amenity - Diversity - Character. The terms of reference were fixed but not the list of witnesses that should appear before the commission. The preliminary report is due in February with the final in July, but considerable postponement is anticipated.

The Commission felt that all local authorities should adopt the Commissions' findings to give the proposals universal credibility and facilitate the change in the law that implementation would probably require.

12. Trees. Great anxiety has been widely expressed over pruning/mutilation of many of the large trees particularly in Ladbroke Grove and Holland Park Avenue. R.P. organised a meeting with the Council's Chief Arboriculturalist Angus Morrison with D.C., J.S., Clive Wilson & David Cornelius (Ladbroke Assn). A.M. asserted that higher branch pruning prevented the spread of tree roots & the subsidence which was a heavy cost on the Council. Branches overhanging the highway must be cut to avoid damage to buses & high-sided vehicles. However, he agreed to modify pruning on the pedestrian side to maintain green cover which is the aim of tree planting: to create "Rus in Urbe".

13. URGENT NEED for more helpers for N.H.I.G. J.S. reiterated his appeal for a new Deputy Project Leader & Hon. Treasurer for N.H.I.G. (Adam Moy has now formally resigned which has

created an urgent situation). This is an oft-voiced urgent appeal.

The meeting concluded at 11.15pm

Distribution:-

Petra Brown * Steve Burgin * Christopher Buckmaster * David Campion * Fiona Fleming-Brown Frank Lieberman David Marshall * David McHugh * Robert Meadows Peter Mischon * Adam Moy Toni Newman Dez O'Neil * Andrew Pilkington * Geoffrey Roome * Robina Rose * John Scott * Amin Taha Maria Vlotides * Iain WilcockWilloughby Wynne * Robin Price Chairman of Kensington Society *