

# MINUTES OF THE LEWISHAM CENTRAL ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 15 March 2023 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Edison Huynh, Aliya Sheikh

ALSO PRESENT: Ade Joseph

Apologies for absence were received from

## Record of Meeting

	Item	Actions
1	<b>Welcome, Introduction &amp; Format of meeting</b>	
	Cllr Aliya Sheikh welcomed attendees and went through the format of the meeting.	
2	<b>Lewisham's Local Plan</b>	
	<p>David Syme from the Council Planning Division provided a detailed outline of the Lewisham's Local Plan in a presentation as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lewisham Council is currently running a consultation on its Local Plan. A lengthy document which contains planning policies.</li><li>• Over the last couple of years, Lewisham has been reviewing and updating its plan. The latest draft of the plan looks ahead to 2040.</li><li>• The plan sets out the level of growth that is anticipated within Lewisham over the next 20 years around transport improvements, community infrastructures, parking standards and defines sites allocations. Lewisham Shopping Centre was cited as an example of such site allocated for redevelopment. When the time is right, Land Security will approach the Council to discuss their proposals and it is hoped that their proposal will be in line with the policies set in the Local Plan.</li><li>• An explanation of the range of topics covered in the plan was provided. This ranges from Housing, Heritage, Green Infrastructure, Sustainable Design and Infrastructure, Transport and Connectivity.</li><li>• It is expected that the document will help the Council decide on planning applications on whether development is suitable or not.</li><li>• Initial consultation events on the plan were conducted in the Spring of 2021. Local people had the opportunity to review the document and provided their comments.</li><li>• Over 400 people joined the online information sessions. More than 13,000 people viewed the plan online and 14,000 people shared lengthy comments on a variety of issues</li></ul>	

- All the feedback collected was compiled, responded to and the plan updated and changed as necessary as part of Regulation 18
- The next stage requires a final check of the plan before it is submitted to the Planning Inspector for an independent examination.

**What happens next – some key timeline?**

- March 2023 to April 2023 - ongoing consultation on the final draft plan.
- Autumn 2023 - The plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State who will appoint an independent examiner. The Planning Inspector will hold an independent examination of the Plan to see if it is sound
- Following this, the Local Plan will be adopted and become part of the Council's planning policy, guiding development over the next 20 years and helping to ensure planning applications reflect the needs of local communities.
- It is expected that the Plan will be adopted in 2024.

**Areas of concentration for the independent examiner**

The examiner will check whether the Plan is:

- legally compliant i.e., does it comply with relevant legislation and regulations?
- Does it comply with Duty to Cooperate
- Is it proactive in terms of its approach to engage with stakeholders including neighbouring Councils and public bodies?
- Is it sound and robust in terms of the evidence based.

**Regulation 19 - How you can have your say on the plan**

- Attendees were directed to search for the Lewisham Local Plan Consultation on the Council website to comment on the draft Plan.
- A Regulation 19 Consultation exhibition is also taking place in one of the units within Lewisham Shopping Centre on Saturday 25 March from 10am to 4pm. Event is open to the public.

Following the presentation, several questions were raised as follows:

**Q1** – On the community comment on 'Green Infrastructure' there is an abbreviation 'MOL', what is MOL?

**A** – MOL stands for Metropolitan Open Land which is equivalent to Green Belt in London. It the highest protection for Open Spaces.

**Q2** – What is the role of the council in determining the priorities, where a land has been designated for permitted development? Is it to negotiate with developers as to which site is most attractive to them and up for discussion, or is it council driven?

**A** – it is a bit of both. The council identify sites that they think are suitable for developments. The Local Plan provides guidelines and gives an indicative on the capacity and the number of residential homes and recreation / leisure etc. that should be provided in the development. In some cases, the Council may approach a developer or landowner to encourage them to develop sites and vice versa.

When this happens, Council will enter negotiation about what is appropriate on the site. This is what happened with Land Security for example, where the Council is actively pushing for the redevelopment of the Shopping Centre. Hopefully if their vision is in line with the Council's guidelines, a negotiation through the pre-planning application process will follow.

**Q3** – Does the Plan cover Council and Social Housing?

**A** – Yes it does. The plan covers all developments across the council's and non- council housing. There is a development arm within the council who designs and builds council houses and they must meet the same guidelines and policies in the Local Plan as well.

**Q4** – Is there a certain number of percentages of affordable homes that would be required as part of the Plan?

**A** – The Council currently has a target of 50%. This is deliberately ambitious. On some site where the Council is delivering, it might be 100%. Also housing association like Phoenix Housing Association delivers 100% affordable housing on site. In larger scheme such as the Lewisham Shopping Centre Development, it is very difficult to achieve that kind of percentage i.e., 50% mainly because of the other things they need to provide as part of the development e.g. commercial space, culture facilities plus the construction costs is quite high. The starting point would always be 50%.

**Q5** – You mentioned the protection of green spaces and open spaces, what about things like existing trees etc?

**A** - There is quite a lot in the Plan about the protection of existing trees and that is something that the Council recognise and would want to protect. With development it may something be inevitable that some trees are lost through development of a site. The council will try wherever possible and where those trees are mature high-quality specimen to retain those. Sometimes there is no option. When this is the case, the Council would ask the developer to provide significant replacement planting and landscape.

**Q6** - Are there opportunities for local studios within new developments?

**A** – Don't think that would be part of the Local Plan process. But the representative from Landsec might have an answer on this question.

**Q7** – Is there any opportunity for residents to get involved in the design process besides the consultation in order to pitch for money to design something for young people or creative people?

**A** – Some private developers do have an arm which concentrate on social projects which people may be able to pitch for funding, there is also the Neighbourhood CIL, a proportion of money that Council gets from developers. Around 25% of the fund goes to Neighbourhood CIL to caters for community projects. Several millions of pounds were allocated to various community project about a year ago throughout the borough. As the council is still accumulating money from other developments there would be future rounds of this type of funding.

	<p><b>Q8</b> – A question about the tall buildings in the Centre of Lewisham next to the train station, was wondering what infrastructures can be put in place to give the women coming home at night a safe route home as the area is poorly lit? Plus, the accommodation are too small for the people living there at the moment. What might future space look like?</p> <p><b>A</b> – This is something the council has identified in the Plan and councillors are passionate about this as well. The council has identified the around poor lighting in this area and are in discussion with Network Rail and South-eastern about station improvement projects to accommodate level of growth to improve the plaza area and safety around the station. This will include lighting, improvements to the general outlook of the building, safety of the station routes along the station and the public realm.</p> <p><b>Q9</b> – Can you provide more explanation on the plans the council propose for the Shopping Centre site, will it be refurbished or redeveloped?</p> <p><b>A</b> – Rep from Landsec provided a response. Landsec is running several public consultations to get people’s view on the plans for redeveloping the site over a number of months. Plans are still at early stage.</p> <p><b>Q10</b> - The Gateway Development took over 10 years to complete. Is there a guarantee that residents would not have to endure another 10 years of disruption when the redevelopment of the Shopping site commences?</p> <p><b>A</b> – The council will work with Landsecurity on this programme of built. A very large multi-scheme like Lewisham Shopping Centre would probably take several years of between 10 to 15 years to build due to the complexity of the project. The council wants to see the Centre redeveloped to retain its core function as a Shopping Centre and to diversify some of its mixed use to make it a vibrant place.</p> <p>Residents were encouraged to take part in the online and in person consultation on the Local Plan.</p>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Lewisham Central Government Levelling Up Fund</b>	
	<p>John Bennett, Head of Economy Jobs and Partnerships introduced himself to the meeting and provided an overview of how the funding secured from the Government Levelling up programme will be spent to revitalize Lewisham Town Centre. £19m was secured from the Government Levelling Up fund. An additional £5m was provided from council’s own investment bringing the total fund to £24m. A vision for the project has been developed based on consultation conducted with residents, visitors, businesses and other partners in the Town Centre. The 3 projects earmarked for this funding are:</p> <p><b>Project 1 – Transformation of Lewisham Street Market.</b> This funding will help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improve the layout of the market, creating more attractive environment to customers</li> <li>• provide more pitches spaces to accommodate new stalls</li> <li>• provide new modern, stylish uniformed canopy covers to extend</li> </ul>	

the market outside current trading hours which can be used as an event space

- improve the public realm, making it an inclusive space for events with improved paving, benches, new lighting, green spaces with trees, ornamental planting and sustainable drainage.
- Refurbish the historic Clock Tower

A couple of images illustrating what the refurbishment might look like when completed was shown to the meeting.

### **Project 2 – Transformation of Lewisham Library**

The improvement will provide a mixed offer of a cultural hub alongside a high-quality library and archives services which is hoped will draw visitors to the Town Centre during the day and in the evening. Areas of improvement for this project to include:

- Renovation of the existing library to create a flexible welcoming, and adaptable cultural and business space for socialising, exhibitions of cultural attractions
- provision of spaces for small business hub, with flexible office space, meeting rooms, and workspaces
- Rooftop bar with views, to provide a destination space to stimulate the evening and night-time economy.

### **Project 3 – Connected High Street**

This will include:

- upgrading pedestrian crossing to improve road safety
- better signage and way finding
- improve cycling provision and upgrading existing routes to the Town Centre. Part of this will include the provision of 3 mobility hubs to accommodate cycle storage and electric cars charging points
- improved public realm – improve the look of the high street to accommodate spill out zones for local businesses, and pedestrian corridors
- improved green infrastructure, with new tree planting, planters and pocket green space, paving and street lighting.

#### **Timescales**

- The government has set a tight timescale for the spending of the £19m by end of March 2025.
- The design works and planning permission must be secure over the next 6 months with construction commencing from October 2023
- Aims to avoid or minimise disruption wherever possible. There may be some level of disruption where there is a need to change some of the structure on the High Street.
- The market will continue trading whilst the refurbishment goes on.
- The library will need to close during the refurbishment. The council is looking into where the services could be provided whilst the works to the building is ongoing.
- No changes to bus route on the High

Officer happy to return to future assembly meeting and other events

taking place in the ward to discuss the design and get people's input and thoughts.

A question-and-answer session followed this presentation:

**Q1** – Where will the library be relocated whilst the renovation work is done?

**R** – Discussion about where to relocate library services during the renovation are yet to be decided. But will hopefully be somewhere local to its current location.

**Q2** – How will the council address issues with fly tipping on Lewis Grove / outside the post office / Mercier Grove

**R** – The officer could not provide an answer to this question as these issues were outside his remit. But promised to pass the issues raised to colleagues in the Environmental team

**Q3** - What plans do you have for night-time economy in the Town Centre and how does young people feature in the plan?

**R** – A great thought has been given to this offer and Lewisham Library has been identified as having the greatest potentials to link with some of the broader activities around the provision of evening and night-time activities for all ages. The ground floor space in the library will have an IT space, a café, and exhibition space where young people can display their work and engage in other cultural activities. A roof top bar will operate from the site as part of growing night economy in the Town Centre. This was said to give one offer but doesn't address some of the other issues already raised by young people. The council will also be working with other partners who are doing things in the Town Centre like the Gateway Centre, Landsec etc. who will have the capacity to provide offers such as leisure, hospitality cinema and model market etc.

**Q4** – Has consultation taken place with young people around the scheme?

**R** – Some consultation has taken place with young people through the work they do with Lewisham Youth Theatre and Circle Collective. Some of the suggestions and views collected from sessions held with young people were included in the bid. Interested in hearing ideas from young people present on how they want to be engaged and what they can do with the council to ensure their thoughts are captured and fed into the project.

**Q5** – How will the cultural hub consider young people with neurodiversity in the use of the future common space within the library facility i.e. a quiet space?

**R** – This is exactly the kind of details the council needs to speak with young people about. The council need to know what young people use the space for currently and what they value about the space in ensuring that a quiet space is factored into this project through engagement with young people.

**Q6** – Do you have a budget split for the various aspects of this project? What is the budget split assigned to the library?

**R** – about £8m assigned to each project. This was clearly stated in

the bid submitted to the government.

**Q7** - How well does the Council relate to market traders? Does the council have control over stall holders and how will the council deliver the reform if there are resistance from traders?

**R** – Cannot respond to the question on the relationship aspect as the management of the market lies with another team. The market is regulated by the London Authority Acts and there are certain rights that stall holders have through this Acts i.e. passing on stalls between family members. Market traders have been engaged right from the start and were the first people to be informed about the successful bid. The local councillors continue to hold regular discussions with traders around their needs.

**Q8** – Is the model market returning to Lewisham Town Centre? Can some of the Levelling up fund be used to facilitate this?

**R** – There isn't any money from the Levelling up fund to facilitate this. However, as the site is owned by Landsec it is up to them to make a decision on this. Landsec is currently in discussion with the operators and the council is keen to see this return.

**Q9** – What is the relationship with Landsec in relation to their proposed development of Lewisham Shopping Centre? Is the Council planning to put any fund towards the development?

**R** – The development will not involve any Council investment. However, there would be development contributions from planning obligations to the council from the developers.

**Q10** - Will you involve the Lewisham Disability Commission in the consultation? Are there things that are easily accessible, easy read that will enable disabled people to have their say?

**R** – Accessibility is one of the aspects of the improved High Street. Some of the things included in the project such as trees, seating etc. responds to things that have come out of the Disability Commission. The design will be done in a way that easily allows accessibility to all. All sectors of the community will be involved in the design process to ensure that all needs are captured in the project.

**Q11** – Are there any thinking around problem with mental health, homelessness and rough sleepers in Central Lewisham?

**R** – This project will not address the issues highlighted. However, there are other Council department who are working to address such issues. Councillors also explained that they get regular casework on these issues and have passed these concerns to council's department such as Social Services who can approach and provide support for the rough sleepers.

**Q12** – Is there anything in this plan that supports charity and if not what is the council actively doing to help charities in the area?

**R** – Councillor Aliya responding explained that councillors are already providing support to charities in the ward and is happy to discuss this outside of the meeting.

**Q13** – with the tight timetable attached to the delivery of this project, many have concerns around how the space would be used after it's

	<p>being built. How will the council communicate with the community for those opportunities if they exist between now and October?</p> <p><b>R</b> – The council will be using a variety of communication channels e.g. Lewisham Life, websites, social media handles, both within the council, its partners, schools and others forum in the community to encourage people’s involvement in the project.</p>	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Cllr’s update</b>	
	<p>The ward Councillors hold monthly in-person ward surgery on the first Saturday of each month from 10am to 12 midday at Lewisham Library. Both also conducting street by streets ward canvassing.</p> <p>Councillors represented the ward at the Town Centre Partnership meeting, a forum for multiple stakeholders. A winter warm spaces project was recently launched, with partners including Lewisham Library and Landsec signed up for the scheme. A well-being hub opened in one of the units within the Shopping Centre. Several activities on offer to children and adults at the project.</p> <p>Councillors received a number of case works around street cleaning, in certain areas of the ward. In responding to these complaints Council Officers were invited to the last assembly meeting and since then there has been noticeable improvement to these areas.</p> <p>Plans to restarting the Lewisham Station Group as mentioned. A meeting of this group is taking place on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> April at St Stephen’s Church, Lewisham from 6pm – 7pm. The two local MPs, representatives from Transport for London, Network Rail and South-eastern are expected to attend.</p> <p>Hither Green station is to get a new entrance offering a foot bridge and lifts to make the station step free.</p>	
<b>8.</b>	<b>Community update and any other business</b>	
	<p>The Migration Museum is holding a coffee morning on Friday 17 March at 11am to celebrate St Patrick’s Day. All are welcomed.</p> <p>Lewisham Speaking Up recently moved into Leemore Centre. The project is an independent charity working with people with learning disabilities.</p>	
	<b>Declaration of interest</b>	
	There were no interest declared at this meeting	