

MINUTES OF THE CATFORD SOUTH ASSEMBLY

Monday, 22 May 2023 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Natasha Burgess and James Royston

ALSO PRESENT:

Apologies for absence were received from

9. Welcome from the Chair

Please note these are summary notes of the meeting presentations and discussions with residents and not verbatim minutes.

Councillor Royston welcomed attendees to the meeting and pointed out fellow Councillor Natasha Burgess and noted that Cllr Eva Stamirowski sends apologies due to other council business.

He thanked the library for providing the space and coordinating group members for helping to arrange it and how grateful we are to have the amazing resource in our area. He reminded people that the library ran thanks to volunteers and donations from the community.

Cllr Royston noted that the co-group and assembly team had worked to get the sustainable street consultation item on the agenda for this meeting but were unable to do so as they are currently reviewing the phase one consultation. We would endeavour to get the sustainable street item at a future meeting and ran through the agenda items for this meeting.

10. Catford Town Centre Road Layout proposals - Transport for London (TFL)

Catford Town Centre Road Layout Proposals – Ami Ibitson, Transport For London.

Representatives from TFL attended the meeting to discuss the proposed changes to the road layouts in Catford based around the re routing of the south circular.

The group were primarily at the meeting to promote the consultation to residents, to take any questions and to note any feedback about the proposals.

The key change currently being proposed is the relocation of part of Catford Road (part of the A205 South Circular Road) to a new route to the south of Laurence House and returning the gyratory system to two-way working. This will allow:

- The council to create a new public space in the town centre
- Improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and bus users
- Opportunities for improving the public realm with new planting and landscaping around the town centre

The presentation covered the following areas:

- An overview of the proposals
- The proposed changes to the South Circular for drivers and changes for cyclists, pedestrians and bus users
- Environmental issues and consequences
- Artist impressions and maps
- How TFL are consulting with the community including online, in person drop ins, attending the assembly meetings
- Next steps

Summary of main discussion points. Questions and statements from the meeting attendees included an understanding of the equalities impact assessment of the consultation and request to work in a targeted way to consult with minority communities.

Questions around modelling were asked regarding the traffic volume and a concern about issues in Lewisham Town Centre being mirrored in Catford. The TFL representatives were not people that had done modelling themselves so could not specifically give modelling information but hoped to share this information in the next steps.

Other issues of note were concerns over the moving of the bus stops from the town centre, meaning people having a longer walk to or from the town centre – which is an issue especially for people with mobility problems and a risk to businesses and the theatre. TFL commented that they absolutely want Catford town centre to thrive and alongside the proposed redevelopment of the centre, the hope is that the more attractive and free flowing town centre will benefit businesses.

There were also several questions around parking changes and road crossing points, bus and cycle lanes – these were noted as part of the consultation.

Questions were raised around the impact on the environment and TFL have modelled that it will have no significant impact either better or worse on the environment. Questions were raised around the impact on surrounding roads and more traffic going on to the roads off the south circular, TFL confirmed that they had modelled this and that there should be no impact on the surrounding roads as removing the gyratory should improve traffic flow, there acknowledged that there will be disruption while the works are taking place if they go ahead, but will be doing everything possible to mitigate this as much as they can.

TFL noted these concerns and will feed this into the consultation. They highlighted the two in person events that people could still attend and encouraged people to either complete the online consultation by the 5th of June, or if they are not online to send in their comment and questions by post or call the dedicated consultation phone line.

TFL will produce a consultation report, including a 'Responses to Issues Raised' report to be agreed by TfL and the council. The report will contribute to how decision makers decide the next steps. The report and next steps will be published – currently proposed for some time in September 2023 – and 'close out' the formal consultation process.

Cllr Royston thanked TFL for attending and providing an update to the assembly.

11. Update on the Catford Masterplan

Catford Town Centre masterplan update –Charlotte Harrison, Head of Strategic Regeneration, LBL Council.

The Catford Town Centre Framework presentation covered several areas of work currently in process by the council. The council are currently working on a delivery strategy and appointed consultants in 2022 to develop a delivery strategy is being set out to bring forward the project areas that the council have control over. This delivery strategy should be completed later this year, this will be in line with the TFL work discussed earlier in the meeting as the town centre and proposed road changes are linked. The aim is to make Catford the greenest town centre. The Plassey Island site is not being updated on at this meeting, as currently there has not yet been a planning application made by Barratt homes.

Holbeach road improvements:

Improvements have been made to the public space at the Rushey Green end of Holbeach road including improved lighting, CCTV, adding trees and seating and this has been received really well and is a much-improved environment. The council are also working with Holbeach school to create a mural. An open call was made for artists to submit ideas. Artists have submitted designs and the team are consulting with the school and other residents to develop these ideas. The hope is that the mural will be installed this summer.

Catford shopping centre: Improvements have been made to the outside of the new Catford library, including a bright and uplifting painted floor and new seating put in. The old, tired and unused seating has been removed, and a new seating space has been put in which incorporates a play space, reading chair for children and planters. This area will open in June for people to sit, rest, play and ties in with the new library area.

Area between Catford and Catford Bridge stations.

The council engaged design consultants January this year working to improve the public realm between both stations to provide an improved sense of space on arrival, make the space greener, improve accessibility and make the space better for pedestrians as well as feeling safer. This project is being worked on currently, in collaboration with Network Rail, Barrett and key stakeholders, who have land interests in the area. Catford Food market now takes place here.

The Catford Constitutional Club:

The ccc, closed to the public since 2018. Work started on site in April this year with completion hopefully by April next year and opening in summer of 2024. This will be a new community hub with a community kitchen, the old ccc was the Victorian section of a larger building, the Georgian section that was previously unused, will be opened up to create triple height space for events and community space, possibly community gallery. The council will be working with a new provider who will be announced in due course. This is a very exciting project for the town centre.

Thomas lane yard: The current car park site, next to Milford Towers behind Catford Broadway. The council are proposing to deliver approximately 100 affordable homes on that site, 2 blocks, 1 at c 80 meters and 1 at c 30 meters and will have 2 thirds commercial space on the ground floor – this will also improve the public realm, and sense of arrival and will include green space and a new access way to the town centre. This project should coming to planning in 2023 hopefully on site in 2025-2027 as is the next affordable housing offer for the council.

Summary of discussion points. Main discussions were around incremental changes rather than seeing a holistic overarching plan, many residents felt that Catford TC was unsafe and there were lots of issues with anti social behaviour and that people simply don't want to go there while it is like this. There should be more focus on better architecture now, rather than meanwhile usage and public art etc.

Residents were very interested in being more involved with the regeneration and that the community has a great deal of skill and experience and should be part of the ongoing dialogue and a co-design approach would be appreciated. One resident group, the Catford alliance, challenged the council to work with the group going forward and there was an agreement that a discussion would be had.

Concerns were also raised about the retail outlets being put over to development would affect the local economy and jobs, however it was noted that any new developments were likely to have a retail and housing mix.

The matter of Milford towers would be picked up at a later meeting as that is not in the remit of the speaker, although work is currently being done improving the windows and doors of the Milford towers properties.

There were additional questions around concerns that a number of the parking areas were going around the Plassey Island and Thomas Lane sites people are worried about those with mobility issues not being able to park in the future when the redevelopments happen. There was an acknowledgement that the parking would be greatly reduced, but in fact this is extremely rare to have as much parking as there currently is. There was a call to hold a more detailed agenda item on parking specifically at a later date.

Cllr Royston thanked Charlotte for attending the meeting.

12. Council update on HMO licensing in Catford South

HMO Licencing – Rhona Brown, Head of Private Sector Housing and Home Improvement, LBL Council.

The presentation delivered to the assembly attendees covered the following key subject areas:

What is an HMO – Homes of multiple occupancy are two or more households, sharing at least one basic amenity (e.g. bathroom or kitchen)

The proportion of HMO properties in the Catford South ward. Ms Brown broke down the statistics of HMOs in Lewisham in general and how many are in Catford South comparatively – CS has the 6th highest number of HMOs across the 19 wards. (see presentation for data)

HMO licensing – what is it, and how it can help. Ms Brown talked the audience through some of the mandatory regulations through the housing act of 2010 and gave more detail about how licencing works in Lewisham and their team. In the last year, the introduction of selective licencing which is having a positive impact on the rental sector meaning you can licence any and all private rented housing in a given area. So not just houses multiple occupation - see presentation slides for data.

Benefits of licensing include:

- Places proactive responsibility on landlords to declare, and ensure properties meet standards
- Provides income to fund administration and enforcement
- Allows the council to set out minimum property conditions and management standards
- Address issues like overcrowding, rubbish in front gardens, broken fences, property safety (including fire safety), and require landlords to take steps to manage antisocial behaviour.

What it doesn't do:

- Cover party wall agreements
- Affect proposed development
- Addressing alleged ASB directly – this is for landlords, or in serious cases, the police
- In extreme cases we can and do prohibit properties and revoke licenses

Ms Brown reiterated that Lewisham Council's top priority is to work with landlords to raise standards in these properties and the reason for that is that the council's overall, overriding priority when it comes to housing is preventing and reducing homelessness and good quality landlords of HMOs can support that goal.

The team are endeavouring to be data led but are still very reliant on people around the borough letting them know if they think they've got an unlicensed HMO next door, or if they think there's a problem with an HMO in the vicinity so welcome you getting in touch. Contact information was given as:

Email: PSHE@Lewisham.gov.uk **Tel:** 020 8314 6420

Web: <https://lewisham.gov.uk/organizations/private-sector-housing-enforcement>

Summary of main discussion points. There were comments from the community that they were very please to see the good progress happening from the team in only a year Ms Brown confirmed that the team was currently 8 people strong which is a large expansion and hope to increase the numbers working in this area going forward.

It was confirmed that the council does publish a register of licenced properties. There is no legal limit to the number of HMOS in an area and licencing can be done retrospectively. Licencing is not the same of planning permission. The licencing team cannot stop HMOs only work within the licensing guidelines, the Article 4 directive is about planning permission.

The Article 4 directive due to come into force across the borough in January 2024 whereby planning permission will be required for HMOs will help the council to see if there are certain areas with a large concentration and decisions can be made accordingly, but it was clarified that good HMOS are a valuable source of low rent accommodation.

It was commented on that HMOs don't have enough bins, which leads to rubbish issues in areas, the licencing team do not provide bins but if landlords are not taking care of these issues themselves let the team know and they can issue fines.

It was clarified that student accommodation is not an HMO if it is directly managed by the university or FE college.

It was suggested that residents register for planning alerts – which can be done at street level, this will be particularly useful to raise concerns when Article 4 comes into effect.

Concerns around anti-social behaviour, drugs and fly-tipping that happen in HMOs were raised and some particular properties were mentioned but these individual casework issues were discussed offline.

Cllr Royston thanks Rhona and her team for attending the meeting.

13. AOB/Community information

A question was raised about planning permission for the scaffolding/scrap metal site on Bromley Road on the corner of Randlesdown road. This issue was taken up as casework by Cllrs after the meeting.

Bring me sunshine event for older adults in June was promoted at St Andrews Church and congratulations were given to the Diamond Club for a successful funding bid for a Windrush 75 event.

Please support your Broadway Theatre, and a hope that the theatre would prosper going forward.

14. Meeting Close

Councillor Royston thanked attendees for coming. He also thanked the library for making the space available for the assembly to use and thanked the volunteers for their help setting up and closing down the space.