
Overview and Scrutiny

High Streets Review

Sustainable Development Select Committee

November 2015

Membership of the Sustainable Development Select Committee in 2015-16:

Councillor Liam Curran (Chair)

Councillor James-J Walsh (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Bill Brown

Councillor Suzannah Clarke

Councillor Amanda De Ryk

Councillor Carl Handley

Councillor Mark Ingleby

Councillor Olurotimi Ogunbadewa

Councillor Eva Stamirowski

Councillor Paul Upex

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Introduction

I'm proud to present to Mayor and Cabinet this report carried out by the Sustainable Development Committee, which has undertaken a High Streets Review, which is dealing with a very contemporary issue that affects both residents and businesses alike. Ensuring that our high streets meet the current and future needs of those who use them, and those who want to grow and develop businesses in our Borough, has to be a significant priority of the council.



At a time of changing local economies and markets; technological advances; and both evolving and emerging needs of communities from their public realm; it is important that Lewisham Council does not remain a passive participant, but instead uses its significant role as a Council, a landlord, and planning authority to not only facilitate these developments but craft and sculpt them, failure to do so, will mean urban decay, a proliferation of low quality or boarded up shops, and a loss of amenity from our communities.

Lewisham is fortunate as the changes to high streets are happening during a period of significant growth and renewal right across the borough, with even more significant projects planned. With these changes the opportunity to build high streets fit for new, *and emerging*, purposes is significantly increased, but equally without proper consideration and planning, we could exacerbate urban decay on our high streets.

One thing that witnesses and members of the scrutiny committee are keen to impress is that we need to ensure that we aren't led into creating a 'template town' by market forces, instead we need to ensure that we review and remain committed to the principles of good urban design; be willing to suffer short term losses for longer term gain; and most importantly, listen to our communities about their needs and aspirations for the heart of their communities. To achieve this we can't just rely on blunt planning tools, but instead new mechanisms that further extend and refine our influence as the Council, so that we can place make, to create viable modern "destination" centres, which offer retail, entertainment and public amenity, in a balanced and attractive way for both residents and commercial stakeholders.

On behalf of the Sustainable Development Scrutiny Committee, I want to thank all those organisations and individuals who gave excellent and illuminating evidence to the committee, about the modern needs of our high streets, so that we as a Council can ensure their future longevity and prosperity. I would also like to extend my personal thanks to the clerks and committee members, for their diligence and commitment to this review.

Cllr James-J Walsh

Vice Chair: Sustainable Development Committee

1. Executive summary

To be finished in light of the recommendations, once agreed

2. Recommendations

The Committee would like to make the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Shopping habits, retail centres and high streets are changing, and as a Council we need to make sure that we are keeping pace. As a Planning Authority, the Council needs to make sure its planning policy is fast, flexible and open minded, so as to readily adapt to multi-configurations and future reconfiguration options that an evolving future high street will need. Lewisham Council should consider how it would deal with non-traditional pop up activity within our Borough, whether that's the top floor of a car park being turned into a garden market restaurant and farm, or a unit that has a rolling programme of pop ups with an activity programme that cuts across several planning class uses.

Recommendation 2: Lewisham is establishing a positive name as a Local Authority for being open to innovation in our town centres and high streets. Projects such as the Mary Portas SEE3 pilots, Street Feast Model Market project or the Catford Canteen have all added to that reputation – and serious consideration should be given on how we can embed that opinion and increase the number of these opportunities setting up in our borough.

Recommendation 3: The Council should look to help with the reimaging of our public space through 'place making' and creating town centres with 'experiential' entertainment activity. The Council should look at directly funding, or working with other funding partners (Regional National & European), to facilitate the animation of our high streets, through pop-up shops, arts and community activity. It was also noted that "quirk" and "experience" were key 'pull' drivers for visitors to commercial/entertainment centres, and any such activity should look to capitalise on those elements.

Recommendation 4: The Council should look at further developing night time economies across the Borough to offer a rich mix of restaurants, bars, recreational activities, and cinemas. During the committee's deliberations it became apparent that for large high streets and town centres to thrive, there needs to be a mix of retail, commercial, and entertainment and have both day and night time usage. There are some sections of our communities like young professionals and students that can significantly add to making a night time economy viable. It would therefore be desirable for the Council to enter talks with local post compulsory education providers to discuss ways in which we could create the conditions for more students to live in the locality of Lewisham and Catford Town centres.

Recommendation 5: the Council needs to develop a clear, proactive 'Meanwhile Use' policy, for commercial properties where it is a landlord either directly or at arm's length. This policy needs to realise that an empty property has a significant impact upon local amenity and the perception of the success of a high streets. It is this committees position that it is more desirable for a 'meanwhile tenant' to be brought in so as to animate a section of a high street or town centre, at a peppercorn rent, then having an empty decaying shell that is bringing in no rent or business rates. The Council should also look at developing partnership with meanwhile use charities/organisations, for both meanwhile usage of council voids, but also as a service that we promote to external commercial property freeholders across the

Borough. The Council should also take learnings from the collaboration between Brent Council and Locality, in their establishment of www.meanwhile.org.uk and any other similar meanwhile use charity, so as to fully understand the scope and potential we can unlock.

Recommendation 6: For the Council to do more about poor quality frontages on our high streets. Our high streets can be blighted by run down frontages from both active and inactive commercial properties, much like the 'broken window' theory an ill-kept property on a high street can cause further deterioration in the locality. It is therefore recommended that the Council give much greater consideration to the use of 'section 215 notices' on high street properties that give powers to the Local Authority to be able require property owners to improve their land/property to stop negatively affecting local amenity.

Recommendation 7: It is recommended that the Council give consideration to extending its 'free for 30 minutes' parking policy that operates in places like Sydenham, to other high streets and shopping areas around Lewisham.

Recommendation 8: The role of markets, such as that in Lewisham Town Centre, as a key asset of the borough, that animates the town centre and meets the needs of a broader spectrum of shoppers than supermarkets alone, must be protected. However it is recommended that the Council invest in the aesthetic of the Market so as to improve the visual impact of the locality.

Recommendation 9: Committee noted that the commercial/retail offer in mixed use planning developments, seemed to create vacant units that could often remain as such for a significant periods of time. It is therefore recommended that we review the combination of mixes and configurations that we are offering, to include planning use classes of A3, D1, D2, and in so doing improve the amenity of an area.

3. Purpose and structure of review

At the meeting of the Sustainable Development Select Committee held in September 2014 Members resolved to carry out an in-depth review into High Streets. The scope of the review and its key lines of enquiry were agreed by the Committee in January 2015. It was decided that the review would explore the following themes and seek answers to the following questions:

Key Lines of Inquiry:

- **What are the local development management policies in respect of high streets and how are these being implemented?**
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- **Is the role of the Council in supporting local high streets clearly defined, and is it being communicated effectively to local businesses?**
- **What are the Council and key partners doing to support and improve the high streets in the borough – and how are businesses, traders and local residents involved in the development of high streets?**
- **How is the public realm being shaped to promote high streets and better access to high streets for the public?**
- **What role does planning play in the development of high streets in the borough and could more be done in light of the government's proposals on the 'change of use' of building?**
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- **What is being done to promote the diversity of provision on the high streets?**
- **Are markets and local high streets being supported to operate in a way that is mutually beneficial?**
- **Are the Council and other partners effectively taking on board lessons from the SEE3 Portas Pilot in Sydenham, Forest Hill and Kirkdale?**

At their meeting in January 2015, the Committee also agreed to the following:

- **Look at a combination of small, medium and large high streets for its Review.**
- **Focus on the following areas:**
 - **Empty shops and vacancy rates**
 - **The mix of residential and commercial properties**
 - **The variety/mix of shops on Lewisham's high streets**
 - **The future of retail – and future planning in light of these changes**
 - **The night-time economy**
 - **The role of Planning**

- **The potential for improved streetscape to provide the right setting for businesses to flourish**

Evidence sessions were held on 3 March 2015 and 16 April 2015. Witnesses were:

- John Miller (Head of Planning, London Borough of Lewisham)
- Andrew Rawlings (Senior Portfolio Manager, Land Securities)
- Ed Holloway (Director of Beep Studios, SEE3)

In addition, the Committee considered the following written reports:

- High Streets Review: Scoping Paper - Officer Report
- High Streets Review - paper for the first evidence session - Planning Service and Transport Policy and Development Manager

The Committee concluded its review and agreed its recommendations in October 2015.

4. Background and policy review – Scoping Paper

The National Picture – High Streets

4.1 The Scoping Paper for the review tried to define exactly what is meant by ‘town centres and high streets’ The British Retail Consortium’s report called ‘21st Century High Streets: A New Vision For Our Town Centres’ defined Town Centres as having the following:

- A retailing centre that serves the needs of the local community;
- Leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities
- Public and private sector services
- An employment and business sector
- Accessibility by a choice of transport
- The perception of the local community as their town centre

In respect of High Streets, it defined them as the following:

- Destination/regional/national city centre
- Local town centre
- Neighbourhood
- Market towns
- Historic/cultural destinations

4.2 The Scoping Paper sought to outline some of the key initiatives that the Government has embarked on in recent times to aid high streets and town centres, as they believe they are facing serious challenges from out-of-town shopping centres and the growth of online and mobile retailing.

4.3 One of the initiatives was the Mary Portas Review. In May 2011, The Government appointed Mary Portas to lead an independent review into the future of the high street. ‘The Portas Review: An independent review into the future of our high streets’ was published in December 2011. The Portas Review identified the need to put the heart back into the centre of high streets, re-imagined as destinations for socialising, culture, health, well-being, creativity and learning as well as places that will develop and sustain new and existing markets and businesses. High Streets should become places where people go to engage with other people in our communities, where shopping is just one part of a rich mix of activities. A key precursor to the Portas Review was the New Economics Foundation’s major campaign entitled ‘Clone Town Britain’, which tracked the increasing dominance of chain stores in the town centre retail mix and ranked high streets according to the uniqueness of their retail offer. The Portas Review suggested a wide range of measures to help the high street, including funding 24 Portas Pilots and 330 town teams with support from dedicated local experts, to help the Portas Pilots and town teams adapt their high streets to changing consumer behaviour.

4.4 Some of the other Government initiatives in the period 2010-15 were:

- A new consultation to tackle aggressive parking policies, which harm high streets
- A review of double yellow lines, legislating to allow “grace periods”
- Stopping CCTV being used for enforcement
- Cap increases in parking penalty charges for the rest of this Parliament, with immediate effect

4.5 The Autumn Statement in December 2013 also presented a number of initiatives:

- a package of business rates support to help the high street
- support for business-led digital town centres and the Government, in partnership with business,
- fund £4.7 million of research on e-commerce and digital high streets innovations
- proposals to change planning regulations, so that changes to permitted development rights will offer town centres the flexibility they need to adapt existing buildings
- consult on permitting change of use from retail to restaurants and retail to cinemas, gyms, skating rinks and swimming pools.
- consult on allowing installation of mezzanine floors in retail premises where this would support the town centre.

4.6 The Scoping Paper also noted that the Government created the ‘Future High Streets Forum’. This body’s role was to advise Government on the challenges facing high streets and helps to develop practical policies to enable town centres to adapt and change. The Forum’s main functions are:

- Helping to accelerate the programme of local mentoring established in response to the Portas Review
- Advising the Government how better use could be made of existing buildings, to bring people back to live in town centres, increasing footfall and supporting shops
- Supporting the expansion of initiatives such as ‘Love Your Local Markets’ and pop-up shops across the country
- Researching a practical toolkit to help town teams ‘futureproof’ their high streets
- Exploring solutions to barriers like local parking policy

4.7 A number of other initiatives the Government established to help high streets were:

- British BIDs-run £500,000 loan fund scheme, to help communities who wish to create a ‘business improvement district’ overcome prohibitive initial start-up costs
- ‘Love Your Local Market’ initiative
- Competition launched in June 2014 to find the nation’s best high streets, run by the Future High Streets Forum and the Association of Town and City Management

4.8 The scoping paper also outlined the local context for high streets. It noted that in the Lewisham’s Sustainable Communities Strategy 2008-2020’, the section, ‘Improve the

quality and vitality of Lewisham's town centres and localities' sets out the following in respect of High Streets and Town Centres:

- Lewisham Gateway has ambitious plans for the future of Lewisham town centre, including replacing the roundabout with a new road layout, opening a new park and attracting a major department store to the area
- Catford town centre will undergo substantial regeneration. This will include transforming the former greyhound stadium into a new housing development and small shops. Catford and Catford Bridge stations will be linked by a new plaza and a new pedestrian bridge over the railway will provide better connections with the town centre
- The Giffin Street development will see the extension of Giffin Square as well as new library and learning facilities and a new home for Tidemill Primary School

The Council will also:

- Support the growth and development of our town centres by working with commercial partners and developers
- Encourage a mix of businesses that reflect the diversity of the borough and its citizens and ensure that our town and local centres are fully accessible for all our communities
- Maximise the use of our town centres as places to engage the local community
- Strengthen Lewisham's economy by continuing to support and encourage the cultural and creative sectors

4.9 The Scoping Paper also noted that the Lewisham Regeneration Strategy sets out the high level approach to encouraging and supporting local businesses, including high streets. The Implementation Plan 2011-2014 Monitoring Report received by the Sustainable Development Select Committee on 12 March 2014, highlighted a number of achievements in improvements to high streets, such as:

- Highway and footway improvements in Ladywell Village including road narrowing and creating parking for shoppers
- Works to Sydenham high street during 2012 and early 2013 to create a more pleasant environment for pedestrians and shoppers, without adversely affecting the flow of traffic

There are other local policy contributors, such as the Local Plan, which will be examined in the next chapter.

4.10 In terms of previous scrutiny in the area of high streets, the Scoping Paper outlined a number of reviews and policy papers that have come to the Committee in recent years, namely:

- A Street Trading Review that was published in March 2010
- A report examining local shops and parades in May 2011, which outlined the Council's approach to supporting local shops and parades as well as the powers that local Councils do and don't have in shaping shops

- A review of Business Development in 2013, with the final report sent to the Mayor in July 2013 and a response in October 2013
- The Lewisham Business Growth Strategy 2013-2023 was received in December 2013 and was approved by Mayor & Cabinet in January 2014

4.11 The Scoping Paper outlined the formation of the Mary Portas Review Pilot, which culminated into body which became known as SEE3. A group of volunteers worked together across Sydenham, Forest Hill and Kirkdale, bid for and won one of 27 Portas Pilot grants in the second round of bidding on 25 July 2012. The pilot, known as SEE3, had a vision of a high-street where established independent traders are an integral part of the community, new traders bring innovation and further quality, boundaries between retail, culture and community blur, energy of active citizens is harnessed, new ideas are championed and space that is secured for start-up enterprises to develop is readily accessible. SEE3 had five key objectives, which were:

- To test a coherent approach to High Street development in an area of urban sprawl where one neighbourhood merges into another.
- To increase the sustainability of the High Street through layering uses.
- To build on the existing blending of retail and community use to enhance the High Street as a Hub Street and cultural destination.
- To create a fit, agile High Street that can successfully adapt to changing needs.

4.12. The SEE3 pilot was comprised of three key projects:

- Jack and Jill, where two high street shops (one in Sydenham, the other in Forest Hill) were renovated for creative community engagement via exhibitions, showcasing local products, business workshops, pop up events and use as a Town Team base
- The Shop Revolution, which introduced landlords and leaseholders to the concept of 'meanwhile' use – short term leases which keep the unit in use between tenants
- Market Makers, which built on the success of the Girton Road car boot sale and the Forest Hill Food Fair to pilot offerings in Sydenham, Forest Hill and Kirkdale with the aim of finding long term tenants for vacant units. By giving traders the opportunity to test market demand for their offering, they are able to refine their business plan before committing to a long term leas

4.13 In addition to these main projects, the pilot also sought to improve signage, encourage people to shop locally and provide support to get more businesses online.

5. Witnesses:

a. John Miller - Planning Service

The Policy Context

- 5.1 In the officer policy paper, it noted that, the Council's planning policies are contained in the Council's local plan. The local plan is currently made up of a suite of documents, which include the Core Strategy (2011), the Development Management Local Plan (2014) and the Lewisham Town Centre Local Plan (2014).
- 5.2 Lewisham Core Strategy sets out the vision, objectives, strategy and policies that will guide public and private sector investment to manage development and regeneration in the borough over the next 15 years (up to 2026). The Core Strategy is the key planning document in the Lewisham Local Development Framework (LDF). It sets out the overall ambitions and priorities for the borough, a set of proposals, and a means for making sure that they are delivered. Major change is anticipated, with a focus on Lewisham, Catford, Deptford and New Cross, and we need to plan for this. The Core Strategy also states that it is a development plan document in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It forms part of the statutory development plan for the borough, alongside the London Plan, and needs to be read in conjunction with the London Plan and relevant national planning policy and guidance¹.
- 5.3 The Core Strategy notes that it has been prepared so as to be consistent with national planning policies and in general conformity with the London Plan. Throughout the Core Strategy the impacts of national and regional planning policies are highlighted. It needs to be recognised that there are certain things that we cannot change or influence and must implement. However, in some instances, evidence has been used to justify a locally distinctive approach for Lewisham².
- 5.4. The London Plan: The London Plan is the name the Mayor of London has given to his Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) for London. The LP is the strategic planning document for London and was published on 10th February 2004. The Mayor is under a legal duty to produce a SDS and keep it under review. All local development documents must be in general conformity with the London Plan in accordance with Section 24(1)(b) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 5.5. The key London Plan elements for Lewisham are:
- Opportunity areas for Deptford Creek/Riverside (with LB Greenwich) and Lewisham/Catford/New Cross have been identified as a focus for new housing and jobs. Indicative employment capacity is 4,000 for Deptford Creek/Riverside and 3,500 for Lewisham/Catford/New Cross and 8,000 and 6,000 minimum homes respectively, between 2001 and 2026.

¹ page 4, Lewisham Core Strategy, June 2011,
<https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/planning/policy/Documents/CoreStrategyAdoptedVersion.pdf>

² page 4, Lewisham Core Strategy, June 2011,
<https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/planning/policy/Documents/CoreStrategyAdoptedVersion.pdf>

- An annual housing target of 975 dwellings is required during the period 2007/08 to 20016/17 and any subsequent target when the London Plan is reviewed in 2010.
- Within the London town centre categorisations, Lewisham and Catford town centres are designated as major centres and Blackheath, Deptford, Downham, Forest Hill, Lee Green, New Cross and Sydenham as district centres.
- Strategic Industrial Locations (SILs) are established for part of the Surrey Canal area and Bromley Road, which are designated as Preferred Industrial Locations (PILs).
- Significant areas of the borough are identified as Metropolitan Open Land (notably Blackheath and Beckenham Place Park) and within the Blue Ribbon Network (Ravensbourne River).
- A waste apportionment of 208,000 tonnes is allocated in 2010, rising to 323,000 tonnes in 2020.
- Greenwich Park to St Paul's Cathedral and Blackheath Point to St Paul's Cathedral are identified as Protected Vistas within a London Panorama.

5.6 The Development Management Local Plan (2014) sets out additional planning policies to guide decisions on planning applications where locational or site-specific provision has not been outlined in the Core Strategy or the London Plan. The Development Management Local Plan has been prepared having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), is in general conformity with the London Plan 2011 and helps implement the Lewisham Core Strategy.

5.7 The Development Management Local Plan provides further detail to the Core Strategy policies to support its implementation. The objectives of the Development Management Local Plan are as follows.

- To facilitate a positive and proactive approach to shaping, considering, determining and delivering development proposals to meet the Core Strategy's strategic objectives.
- To facilitate development which protects and enhances the amenity of the local area.
- To ensure a high standard of design.
- To create safe, attractive, accessible and functional environments for all.
- To secure development that helps create a more sustainable Lewisham and facilitates its positive impact on health and well-being³.

5.8 The Lewisham Town Centre Local Plan (2014) looks to outline the development opportunities in Lewisham Town Centre. It notes that "Lewisham town centre is at the

³ page 5, Development Management Local Plan, November 2014, <https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/planning/policy/LDF/development-policies/Documents/DMLPAdoption.pdf>

heart of the Borough of Lewisham. The town is the most important shopping and leisure destination in the area as well as a major transport hub. The town is a home, workplace and visitor location for a diverse and varied community.” (page 4, Lewisham town centre local plan, February 2014). The plan notes that alongside the many positive aspects of the town centre, it recognises that there are a number of redevelopment opportunities that provide the prospect to change Lewisham town centre for the better. There is an opportunity to transform the way the centre works and radically improve the way of life for everyone associated with Lewisham town centre through the regeneration of residential, commercial and retail development sites, the radical improvement of the transport interchange and the careful management of this process to meet the overall town centre needs⁴.

5.9 The officer report stated that the local plan policies aim to sustain the viability and vitality of town centres. Retail, commercial, and community uses within the Borough’s high streets are protected through the adopted policies. The strongest level of protection is given to retail uses within the Borough’s primary shopping frontages. The report also shows the retail hierarchy, taken from the Core Strategy:

Major town centres	District centres	Neighbourhood local centres	Out of centre	Parades
Lewisham	Blackheath	Brockley Cross	Bell Green	There are over 80 parades
Catford	Deptford	Crofton Park	Ravensbourne Retail Park, Bromley Road	
	Downham	Downham Way		
	Forest Hill	Grove Park		
	Lee Green	Lewisham Way		
	New Cross and New Cross Gate			
	Sydenham			

Evidence to the Select Committee

5.10 The Committee heard evidence from the Council’s Head of Planning. They heard that planning policies can shape the success of town centres. Existing planning policies protect retail, commercial and community uses in town centres, promote residential uses where appropriate, and promote the night time economy where appropriate. However, there are limitations to the influence that planning can have due to the way in which planning regulations have been written. For example:

- The Planning Service is unable to control the occupants of premises where there is no change of use. Therefore a change from one type of retailer within the A1 use class to another type of retailer within the A1 use class cannot be controlled. For

⁴ page 4, Lewisham town centre local plan, February 2014, <http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/planning/policy/LDF/lewisham/Documents/Lewisham%20Town%20Centre%20Local%20Plan.pdf>

example, the Planning Service could not control the change of a unit from a supermarket to a discount retailer. Nor could the Council control the change of a unit from a bank to a betting shop

- The Planning Service is unable to make a planning decision based on prejudices against a particular end user. For example, an application for a convenience shop operated by a major supermarket chain could not be refused on the basis that an independent operator would be preferred by the local community

5.11 The Committee also heard that in relation to current high street trends and observations a number of points were made:

- In relation to vacancy rates, the majority of centres within the Borough are faring well compared with the national and regional statistics. The national mean vacancy rate is currently estimated to be 11.8%, with the London vacancy rate estimated at 7.8%. The mean vacancy rate for the Borough's two major town centres and the seven district centres compares favourably, being 7.3% in 2014.
- Each town and district centre, with the exception of New Cross/New Cross Gate, is allocated a primary shopping frontage. The primary shopping frontage is considered to be the retail core of the centre, and therefore A1 (retail) uses are given especially strong protection within this frontage. The Local Plan sets a target of 70% of units within the primary shopping frontage in each centre to be in A1 use. Many of the centres either meet or come close to the target. However the figures for some centres are significantly below the target. These figures demonstrate that retail may not be the dominant focus of some centres, and that these centres may have other strengths and niches.

5.12 John Miller informed the Committee that Lewisham has fared well in respect of the changing nature of retail in respect of high streets, in the sense that Lewisham's district and major town centres have not suffered from failing high streets or high vacancy rates, and therefore the national discussions relating to these issues are not directly applicable to the Borough. The Committee also heard about the various roles of different high streets, such as Lewisham town centre, Bell Green, and Grove Park and some of the issues they are facing. For example, they heard about the plans for Lewisham Town Centre that includes:

- Significant expansion of retail floorspace.
- Improved leisure and evening economy provision.
- Provision of 3,300 new homes.
- Improvement and expansion of streetscape, pedestrian linkages, open space and recreational facilities.

5.13 The Committee heard, during questioning, that Officers would circulate LB Bromley's vacancy rate to Members so the Committee could have a comparison to Lewisham's vacancy rate. The documents were circulated to the Committee at a later date, and can be found at appendix **.

5.14 It was noted to the Committee that the European Union (EU) Grants

Officer would be informed of the possibility that grants could be obtained from the EU for public realm improvements. Usually, the Grants Officer would help co-ordinate bids across a number of boroughs for various projects. The Committee also heard that the Planning Service is limited in what it can do to stop buildings changing their use to restaurants, cafes and takeaways in areas such as Blackheath and New Cross. It is also limited in its powers to control the level of 'budget' shops in areas such as Catford.

- 5.15 The Committee heard that the Council does have landlord powers, but Catford Mews/Shopping Centre is the only major retail area it owns. In the original agreement to purchase the Catford Shopping Centre, it was established that the developer would attempt to balance the accounts, while the regeneration of Catford was on hold, and so the businesses that operate in the Centre are those that have the potential to make the Centre money. It was also noted that resources are limited in the Planning Service and Business Development teams, so work is focused on the larger shopping centres rather than the smaller areas. Also, the financial situation within local government at the present time, and future projections, makes it difficult to commit to projects. However, the service will assist in implementing the Neighbourhood Plans where possible. Officers are also willing to liaise to Members and local communities about what limited training they could offer in relation to supporting the Neighbourhood Plans.
- 5.16 The Committee heard that the Council is engaged in a programme of streetscape improvements across the borough which will help improve the look of many high streets. It was also noted that a Council can issue a '215 notice' in certain circumstances where it is considered that the condition of a building or land is detrimental to the amenity of an area or neighbourhood.
- 5.17 The Committee also heard during questioning that changes to the shopping environment in Lewisham are influenced by issues such as the popularity of 'free for 30 minutes' parking bays like those in Sydenham. The increase in use of 'shop and grab' places has more of an impact in areas with big retailers. It was also noted that the Council does keep a register of commercial property ownership in the borough.
- 5.18 The Committee heard that the present owners of Lewisham Shopping Centre is Land Securities, who also gave evidence to the Review. They also manage a number of retail centres across the UK. In a recent survey, only 9% of people in the catchment area of Lewisham Shopping Centre stated that it was their first choice for shopping. However Land Securities have attempted to make the Shopping Centre more attractive for shoppers, with promotions such as the Street Feast last summer. With the Lewisham Gateway Development, there will be more opportunities in the future to showcase the Shopping Centre and build its potential.
- 5.19 The Committee heard that officers will continue to work with the market traders to make the markets more attractive and viable. The importance of Lewisham Market is recognised by the Council, and its attractiveness to residents due to their access to cheap, affordable produce. The problem with managing the storage and waste around the market is recognised, and how best to manage this going forward needs to be considered. Officers have tried a number of initiatives to grow Catford

Market and the surrounding area, such as the improved streetscape, however its attractiveness should increase once the Catford Regeneration Scheme is complete.

- 5.20 The Committee were informed that the rent-levels in Catford might be affected by the Catford Regeneration Scheme once it begins, and officers will monitor the situation, and were also informed that there should be opportunities in the future to encourage a diverse mix of buildings across the borough, for example a hotel will soon be opening near Lewisham Town Centre.
- 5.21 The Committee heard that officers are confident that the retail space that is available in Thurston Road will soon be let. Once the Renaissance development and the Lewisham Gateway are complete, more benefits will be gained by business and retail in central Lewisham. In the longer-term, the proposed Bakerloo Line extension would also help to grow the local area. The Council will also play its part in developing the area. Officers also understood that the Council are in negotiations with Tesco to develop the car park area, and there will be an office-to-residential scheme at the former Citibank building.

5b. Andrew Rawlings – Land Securities

Background

- 5.22 Land Securities is the UK's largest Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) with a commercial property portfolio worth approximately £14bn (as at 31 March 2015). They are a FTSE 100 company, owning and managing more than 26 million sq ft of commercial property⁵.
- 5.23 Land Securities' retail portfolio consists of (as of 31 March 2015) 19 million square feet of retail accommodation, 13 retail parks, 13 shopping centres and 16 leisure destinations. In London, Land Securities have 6.9 million square feet of office & retail accommodation, 1.1 million square feet to let in development pipeline and 3.5k acres of strategic land holdings ripe for regeneration⁶.

Evidence to the Committee

- 5.24 The Committee heard from Andrew Rawlings, Senior Portfolio Manager at Land Securities), They heard that as Senior Portfolio Manager, he manages a number of sites, including the 02 Centre in Camden, West 12 Shopping Centre in Hammersmith and Fulham, and the Lewisham Shopping Centre.
- 5.25 Andrew told the Committee that High streets and regional centres are continuing to evolve, with some of the drivers for the evolution are:
- Shoppers are shopping less often but spending more: Land Securities are seeing frequency down but conversion up to 55% in some of their locations
 - catering and leisure uses are becoming ever more critical to location decisions – 40% of Land Securities' customers eat or drink in their centres
 - more choice of brands is the number one requirement of Land Securities' shoppers
 - Access and environment becoming more important
 - Destination marketing and digital offers are also becoming important
- 5.26 Andrew also told the Committee that some of the innovations Land Securities have tried at its Trinity Leeds Shopping Centre have included:
- 46 new brands to Trinity Leeds
 - Boar Lane car park purchased with 635 car spaces
 - Later Opening times
 - Trinity Kitchen – dedicated street food in the centre
- 5.27 The Committee heard that research has shown that customers will shop for 50% more goods if they also have something to eat while shopping. They were also informed that The high street is going through a structural change, with more internet shopping, more price comparison and more discount shopping – but this also has meant that there is more spending on better quality items rather than quantity.

⁵ Land Securities website, <http://www.landsecurities.com/about-us/company-overview/what-we-do>)

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- 5.28 Andrew told the Committee that some of the factors that have changed retail behaviour are as follows:
- Multi-channel TV shopping; therefore less stores needed
 - There are now less retailers in each sector
 - Some sectors disappearing or downsizing – for example in the areas of music, insurance, video hire
 - Also customers are able to check pricing via the internet to ensure they get the best deal
 - The UK's biggest towns are now competing with European rivals as locations to shop and for business.
- 5.29 The Committee heard that Land Securities have attempted to diversify into other areas such as Printworks in Manchester, and expand in the retail sector, for example acquiring a 30% share of Bluewater Shopping Centre. With their ownership of Lewisham Shopping Centre, Land Securities have tried to reduce the Centre's void rates (availability of retail units) and aged debts as well as improving the retail mix.
- 5.30 In terms of development of Lewisham Shopping Centre, Andrew told the Committee that Lewisham has tried innovative approaches, such as the Street Feast's Lewisham Model Market, which had been very successful. They have also looked to bring in different types of shops to the Shopping Centre, improving the shop front and displays, encouragement of 'Pop Up shops in the Shopping Centre and in-shop refurbishments. Land Securities would also like to reconfigure the space in the Shopping Centre to incorporate larger units, for example, and Land Securities are in discussions with retailers about redesigning some of the stores. The Committee also heard that Land Securities are also in negotiations with a number of top retailers about having units in the Shopping Centre.
- 5.31 The Committee heard that the vision for Lewisham Shopping Centre for the next few years is as follows:
- Residential growth in excess of 30%
 - Enormous potential for future reposition of scheme
 - Favourable planning environment
 - Significant mix-use development prospects
 - Convenience and Experiential Centre
- 5.32 Andrew told the Committee that Lewisham Shopping Centre does have some key factors in its favour, such as it is located within a developing London commuter belt with excellent transport links with mainline to Charing Cross, Waterloo, London Bridge and Cannon Street, Blackwall Tunnel access, DLR to Canary Wharf and possible Bakerloo Line extension; plus there are major increases in housing developments in the area. There are other proposals to upgrade the Shopping Centre, which include changing the Riverdale Hall area, improve the Leisure Box area with the possibility of a pop-up cinema and improve the car park.
- 5.33 In questioning from the Committee, they were informed that the success of Street Feast's Lewisham Model Market, has led to a second initiative that opened in April 2015, and runs until September (on Friday and Saturday nights).

- 5.34 The Committee also heard that the attitude of Land Securities has been to try pop-up shops and small business units in the Shopping Centre and give them a chance to thrive. This also gives the Shopping Centre the opportunity to feature varied and specialised independent outlets and add to a sense of 'place-making' for the area.
- 5.35 Andrew told the Committee under questioning that Land Securities still want to attract some of the big retailers to the Shopping Centre and this will be easier to achieve once they have reconfigured the South Mall. Land Securities will work closely with Lewisham officers to ensure that it gets the development support to improve the Shopping Centre and continue to make it succeed. Alongside this, one of the key objectives for Land Securities is securing at least a pop-up cinema in the Shopping Centre.

5c. Ed Holloway – SEE3

Background

- 5.36 As mentioned earlier in the report, SEE3 are an organisation set up in the borough of Lewisham that won one of 27 Portas Pilot grants in the second round of bidding on 25 July 2012

Evidence to the Committee

- 5.37 The Committee heard from Ed Holloway, Director of Beep Studios, who was part of the SEE3 project. The Committee heard that The Sydenham Town Centre Steering Group worked with Council officers on bidding for funding for the Outer London Fund, which they were unsuccessful in receiving.
- 5.38 Ed told the Committee that the group evolved into the group working together across Sydenham, Forest Hill and Kirkdale, which bid for and won one of 27 Portas Pilot grants in the second round of bidding on 25 July 2012. To formulate the bid, the group put a business case together which included setting up a number of roles in the project, such as a Town Team Manager, an Artist-In-Residence, a Market Manager and a Shop Revolution Project Manager.
- 5.39 Ed told the Committee that the Shop Revolution Project was a project to attempt to fill empty properties in the area to make viable entities with pop-up shops and possibly turn them into permanent businesses. He also told the Committee that the project would have been even more successful with improved marketing and project management. There were also limited funds to promote the project.
- 5.40 The Committee heard that the legacy of the project is that there are now several shops that have been sustained in the area, plus there was an urban design workshop partly funded by SEE3. There are also now local professionals embedded and involved in the local area. Also, the LIP funding to make improvements in Dartmouth Road shows that the SEE3 area is still developing and is a synthesis of what is going on.
- 5.41 Ed also told the Committee in his evidence that an aim of the project is to make sure the lessons learnt from the project are disseminated to other market areas who might be thinking about conducting a similar project.
- 5.42 Under questioning, the Committee heard that the lessons learnt from the SEE3 project in respect of improving the borough's high streets is to ensure that affiliated groups can be brought together to work successfully, and continue to stimulate initiatives such as the SEE3 project. This will encourage embryonic and sustainable high streets in the future. To sustain such projects, they need to be resilient and continue the synergy of organisations talking to each other. Another lesson learnt from the SEE3 project is to ensure that the knowledge that has been gained is not lost, and the experience is passed on to other like-minded groups and initiatives.

5.43 Ed informed the Committee that the SEE3 project has led onto more work, such as an initiative in LB Lambeth to improve shop frontages in Streatham. The GLA are looking at the legislation and protocols in respect of landlords' policy towards utilising their vacant property

6. Monitoring and ongoing scrutiny

A number of issues were discussed during the course of the review which could not be considered in depth. The Committee might want to consider these issues further at a later date. These include:

- The development of the smaller high streets in the borough.

The Committee may decide to consider these issues as part of its 2016/17 work programme (time permitting). The Committee would also like an update on the implementation of any agreed recommendations before the end of the 2015/16 municipal year.

Recommendation #:

An update on the committee's recommendations should be brought before the Committee before the end of the 2015/16 municipal year.

7. Sources

1. Lewisham Core Strategy, June 2011 <https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/planning/policy/Documents/CoreStrategyAdoptedVersion.pdf>
2. Development Management Local Plan, November 2014, <https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/planning/policy/LDF/development-policies/Documents/DMLPAdoption.pdf>
3. Lewisham town centre local plan, February 2014 <http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/planning/policy/LDF/lewisham/Documents/Lewisham%20Town%20Centre%20Local%20Plan.pdf>
4. Land Securities website, <http://www.landsecurities.com/about-us/company-overview/what-we-do>
5. '21st Century High street – a new vision for our town centres' British Retail Consortium, July 2009 <http://www.brc.org.uk/Downloads/21st%20Century%20High%20Streets.pdf>