

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **MONDAY, 3RD APRIL, 2023** at 6.00 pm in Committee Room 2, Crowndale Centre, 218 Eversholt Street, London, NW1 1BD

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT

Councillors Awale Olad (Chair), Camron Aref-Adib, Nina De Ayala Parker, Sharon Hardwick, Matthew Kirk, Izzy Lenga and Rishi Madlani

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT

Councillors Stephen Stark

ALSO PRESENT

Councillors Danny Beales, Linda Chung, Judy Dixey Nancy Jirira, and Tom Simon

The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting of the Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.

MINUTES

1. GUIDANCE ON HYBRID MEETINGS

RESOLVED –

THAT the guidance on hybrid meetings be agreed.

2. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Stark.

3. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF STATUTORY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, COMPULSORY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND VOLUNTARY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS IN MATTERS ON THIS AGENDA

There were none.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair announced that the meeting was broadcast live by the Council to the Internet and could be viewed on the website for six months after the meeting. After

that time, webcasts were archived and could be made available on DVD upon request. Those who were seated in the room or participated via Teams were deemed to have consented to their contributions being recorded and broadcast and to the use of those sound recordings and images for webcasting and/or training purposes.

5. DEPUTATIONS

The Chair advised that two deputations had been accepted and copies of the deputation statements had been included in the supplementary agenda.

The accepted deputations related to Agenda Item 7 and would be taken when that item was reached on the agenda.

6. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DECIDES TO TAKE AS URGENT

There was no urgent business.

7. CALL-IN- IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGENERATION STRATEGY FOR THE KENTISH TOWN REGIS ROAD GROWTH AREA (SC/2023/15)

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director Supporting Communities.

Councillors Chung, Dixey, Jirira and Simon attended the meeting to support the call-in. Councillor Simon outlined the reasons for calling in the decision made by the Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden on 10th March 2023, regarding the implementation of the regeneration strategy for the Kentish Town Regis Road growth area, along with the alternative course of action proposed within the call-in request.

Responding to questions from Members Councillor Simon provided the following information:

- The Holmes Road Depot office building was recently refurbished and retrofitted at a cost to the Council of £8.4 million, which had made it 40% more efficient than it was previously in terms of energy efficient. If this building was demolished as part of future regeneration the efficiency savings generated by the retrofit may not be realised.
- As there was not yet a Planning Application, it was unknown whether the building would be demolished, but this course of action seemed likely given the context of the sale of the site. It could not yet be determined how much housing could be provided on the site.

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- Whilst the decision did not directly propose to demolish the building, it created a clear potential for demolition, which would be environmentally damaging. Reducing carbon emissions should be a top priority for the Council.

The Committee also considered the deputations presented by Tom Young and Alice Brown, representing Climate Emergency Camden.

Alice Brown provided the following responses to questions from the Committee:

- Net-zero carbon was often perceived to refer only to operational carbon, such as decarbonising the heating in buildings. In reality, however, the construction of buildings created huge carbon emissions, which were not often considered by central and local government.
- Climate Emergency Camden called upon the Council to better educate Officers and Members on carbon emissions, as simply relying on Planning Policy did not go far enough. The construction of large developments generated huge amounts of upfront carbon, which took up to 60 years to break even.
- It was imperative that drastic action was taken within the next 10 years in order to stop the continuous rise in temperature. Climate Emergency Camden had been lobbying the Council to do all it could to reduce carbon emissions.
- Reducing carbon emissions started with education on the effects of high carbon emission construction on the environment and the impact that large scale developments, such as the O2 Centre, would have.

Responding to questions from Member the Cabinet Member for New Jobs, Homes and Community Investment provided the following information:

- The Holmes Road Depot site was not closing immediately, the process would take several years, and any decisions on development were subject to the normal planning application process. The decision to refurbish the site was taken in 2017 and the processes of pre-construction, planning applications, and decamping the site would be a long process, in which time the building would continue to be in use and value would be gained from the refurbishment. Furthermore, the building had be redeveloped so it was able to provide facilities to an increased number of staff following the closure of the Arlington Road Depot.
- Much of the equipment that was installed as part of the refurbishment, such as solar panels and CCTV could be removed and be used at a different site or may require upgrading by the time the building was decommissioned.
- The climate emergency and housing shortage were both issues of equal importance and one should not be prioritised over the other. Furthermore, recommendations stated that in response to the climate emergency, urban areas should be better utilised and densified.
- It was not envisaged that the Holmes Road site would be used to create an access route, the main road serving the area was Regis Road.

- There was value in the proposals for development in the area and much room for improvement, with many of the local facilities not being up to standard and a need to better use urban environments. The regeneration strategy aimed to catalyse redevelopment and made improvements to the area and there would be an increase in affordable housing as well as better facilities, greenspaces and biodiversity.
- A future planning application would include detail of how the site would be developed and how the existing building would be used. Any application would be subject to the planning process and would have to successfully have met planning policy before potentially being approved and Planning Committee would be the body that made the decision on a planning application, not any individual Member of the Council.
- Regardless of any plans that came forward, resident engagement would remain a priority, with consultation and engagement taking place continuously to ensure that development was the best for residents.
- Responding to comments made by one of the deputees, it was explained that the Council was not relying on the capital receipt generated through the regeneration strategy to fund any aspect of the Community Investment Programme, as it was in addition to the current capital programme.
- If the area was developed there would be a contractual requirement for provisions, such as the recycling centre, to be continued without disruption.

The Chief Planning Officer added to the comments made by the Cabinet Member for New Jobs, Homes and Community Investment by reporting that when the Planning Framework was consulted on, 80% of respondents were supportive of the proposals and wanted affordable housing, health and wellbeing, walking and cycling, employment and green spaces to be prioritised. The Chief Planning Officer explained that any planning application that came forward would need to meet certain policy requirements, such as the London Plan Guidance Urban Greening Factor.

With regard to the seamless provision of recycling services the Chief Planning Officer reported that if the site was reprovisioned as part of a Planning Application there would be a section 106 requirement to provide these facilities elsewhere without delay or disruption.

Responding to a question, the Chief Planning Officer advised that the planning framework advocated a comprehensive approach because if individual sites came forward the opportunity for developing the area in a comprehensive and optimal way would be lost. Furthermore, it would be more difficult to plan social infrastructure and access routes.

The Cabinet Member for New Jobs, Homes and Community Investment clarified that any decision made on any planning application that came forward would follow planning process and would be determined by the Planning Committee, not the Cabinet Member.

A Committee Member expressed concern that it was not clear on whether the building would be demolished and felt that the decision had not been transparent. Concern was also expressed that environmental and democratic concerns would not be at the forefront of future decisions on the site. The Committee Member supported the call-in proposal that the decision should be amended to prevent demolition of the depot building.

However, the majority of Committee Members were supportive of the decision made by the Cabinet Member for New Jobs, Homes and Community Investment on the basis that the proposals would provide much needed affordable housing in the borough, would improve the area, which was currently a brown site, and that there would be benefits to the local residents and area. Members believed that reducing carbon emissions and building more housing during the housing crisis were of equal importance, and were not mutually exclusive, and should both be at the forefront of decision making. Members were assured that local residents had been engaged with and believed it important that this continued. Members also stated that they believed the process had been democratic and transparent.

On the basis that the majority of the Committee was in support of the original decision, it was

RESOLVED –

THAT the original decision of the Cabinet Member for New Jobs, Homes and Community Investment be approved.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There was none.

The meeting ended at 7.10 pm.

CHAIR

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MINUTES END