

Fitzrovia West Neighbourhood Forum Local Environment Interest Group

Notes from meeting, 9th September 2014

Community Room, All Souls Clubhouse, 141 Cleveland Street, W1T 6QG

We were asked to discuss and discover issues around the local environment, including open space, leisure facilities and greening issues. Nine people indicated interest in this subject at the 15th July FitzWest meeting. As a member of the shadow executive committee, Brian Weaver (Holcroft Court Block A, Carburton Street resident) was asked to convene this discussion. Two people were able to participate, Denise Julien (Holcroft Court Block B, Carburton Street resident) and Caroline Mawer (Gosfield Street resident). There were apologies from two others. Here are notes of our discussion.

Points touching on Open Space, Leisure Facilities and Greening Issues

- An inventory of the area would be useful, resulting in a map that identifies gaps where none of these currently exist (ex Gosfield Street) and where there are good examples (ex Foley Street outside Fitzrovia Community Centre and King and Queen pub).
- We identified parties that might be excluded from these discussions and should therefore be intentionally consulted: hospitals; universities (incl Halls of Residence); churches; schools; residential homes (incl Foley Street nurses homes); and new developments (Royal Mail site on Rathbone Street). What are their priorities and how might they help solve issues that the Neighbourhood Forum deem important?

Points about Open Space

- There is limited opportunity to introduce new open spaces, so we could encourage making the most of space that we have. For instance, fun street art could be initiated (ex Tower Hamlets pavement art). Co-ordinating with youth clubs in the area might result in art that is pro-social rather than anti-social.
- The proposed redevelopment of Cleveland Street shops and petrol station may be an opportunity to create open space.
- Introducing benches on wider pavements would appear to be a positive step towards making the most of existing open spaces, but we sadly must admit that it usually results in anti-social behaviour materialising.

Points about Leisure Facilities

- We recognise it's unclear who is lacking leisure facilities. Besides the wonderful asset of Regent's Park on our doorstep, what else needs to be provided? What's exciting and for whom?
- Certain groups should be consulted about needs: Fitzrovia Court sheltered housing in Carburton Street; CityWest Homes regarding use of courtyard and wide pavements at Holcroft Court (as well as HC Res Assoc); All Souls CE Primary School. These and other groups represent constituencies and situations that may desire leisure facilities, but we don't know what they might be.

Points about Greening Issues

- There are a number of good examples we identified that should be shared for best practise and to spur others to act: rainwater pebbles around trees on Great Titchfield Street; flowers

around trees on Bolsover, New Cavendish and Great Titchfield streets; refurbishing of planters and flowers around trees on Carburton Street.

- Good ideas could be shared through photos and stories on FitzWest website and emails. Stickers with QR codes connected to the FitzWest website could be placed on areas that are changing, to help people know how they can do the same outside their front door. There should also be advice about planting: proper watering; health and safety of your gardening techniques in relation to neighbours; appropriate plants for location and time of year.
- We could work with area businesses, who are also interested in improving their shop fronts. Britain in Bloom or similar organisations may have information on urban areas, or perhaps we could become a featured urban area. Micro-gardens in pavement cracks and open house of garden roofs are other opportunities to promote creativity and initiative.
- Bulk buying of plants and other garden supplies could make these ideas more accessible. One goal would be to store tools, pots and soil at places like All Souls School, All Souls Clubhouse Community Centre and Fitzrovia Community Centre for their use and to share with the neighbourhood. There are numerous issues around this, so car sharing schemes could be consulted regarding their principles for sharing.
- The Mayor's Fund for greening is a possible resource to fund these ideas.

Overlapping points of Leisure Facilities and Greening Issues

- Greening projects could become leisure activities.
- Moveable planters could be part of building sites, sort of allotments for Fitzrovia.
- Gardens at All Souls School, All Souls Clubhouse Community Centre, Fitzrovia Community Centre and Fitzrovia Court could become shared spaces for planting vegetables and fruit that could be tended and enjoyed by various groups.
- Living walls, planters on railings and hanging pots could become normal features of the neighbourhood, adopted by residents and businesses.
- Young people could be encouraged to get involved for CV enhancement (and surprising pleasure).
- Social media could be utilised to share good news and to promote a 'project of the week' for business people to join during lunch hours and after work.

Next Step

1. Green around trees with wildflowers or rainwater pebbles
2. Inventory and map of gaps and good practise
3. Approach BT to encourage greening of BT Tower as high-profile example