

**Development Pressure and Crossrail
Fitzrovia West Neighbourhood Forum Topic Group Meeting 30 September**

Present

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At the meeting last night, the following recommendations were made to the Executive of the Neighbourhood Forum. The suggestion is that work on these aspects commence immediately.

- 1. Direct dialogue with Crossrail and HS2**
- 2. A process of pre-application discussion with developers**
- 3. A draft development checklist**

1. Direct dialogue with Crossrail and HS2

We agreed that the greatest pressure for development, and potential source for improvements in our area will be Crossrail and HS2. We recommend that The Forum collaborates with surrounding Neighbourhood Forums, in order to discuss the issues directly with Crossrail and HS2 management and establish priorities for improvements.

In particular measures will need to be taken to manage pedestrian flows, tourism facilities and the impact of pressure for development (changes of use, scale, deliveries, traffic etc.)

2. A process of pre-application discussion with developers

A new process of dialogue should be set up for larger schemes in the area. We were particularly keen that developers should start the contact early, at sketch scheme stage, that a clear development checklist should be established for discussions and that our efforts should be recognised by the local authority and GLA.

The aim would be to diffuse locally controversial issues at an early stage, input useful local information and act as the honest broker between the parties. This would not preclude any other local individual or organisation making their own representation to the planning authority at any stage.

The discussion should commence at the earliest stage, when the client is briefing designers, at pre-application and in more general terms for multi-ownership firms.

We wish to become the honest broker between the parties.

It was noted that discussions have commenced with Derwent, and that a letter of invitation has been sent to the relevant parties in the Holcroft Court scheme and for the Great Portland Street/Foley Street scheme.

3. A draft development checklist

1.	Aspects of WCC policy that should be adhered to:	
	1.1	Percentage of affordable housing
	1.2	Density, overlooking and other impacts on adjoining properties– the test is, will this scheme be a good neighbour? It should be noted that these impacts are not just relevant for residential schemes. Proposals to introduce more supermarkets might also be covered by such discussion.
2.	Neighbourhood Plan Emerging Policy:	
	2.1	Diversity of use targets: Applied per block or per zone. These should include the safeguarding of smaller independent retail (A uses) and smaller office units or the provision of 'special' space for artists' studios, etc.
	2.2	Identification of zones: WCC already recognise that our area is divided by character (the conservation areas) and by function in the Central Activities Zone. http://www3.westminster.gov.uk/docstores/publications_store/planning/udp/UDP_C_hapter_01_Westminster_Central_Area.pdf Attempts have been made in the CAZ document to define different sub-areas, even referencing Fitzrovia (called East Marylebone) and recognising the mix of uses, the established height (6 stories) and mentioning the rag trade and medical services. There is no mention of the media/broadcasting in this area, neither has the academic/research aspect (mainly in FitzEast) been linked to the medical and clinics specialities. The view is that these sub zones could be better defined and monitored.
	2.3	Leading on from 2.2 above. We think that these zones should be used to limit the 'creep' of certain uses, for example late night pubs and clubs, retail outlets, large hotels, high end residential mega-blocks.
	2.4	Plot ratio: We feel that many schemes are being submitted that are over-developed. In order to manage this, there needs to be different methods of testing height and bulk of a development. One suggestion is to establish maximum plot ratios for different zones.
	2.5	Higher environmental considerations: These include greening, dealing with rubbish collection and storage and the environmental standards of new buildings.
	2.6	Contributions to the neighbourhood: Possible contributions include street improvements, the gradual improvement in streets for ped/cycles to the gradual exclusion of through traffic. (it is recognised that this will require technical modelling.)(But this is already WCC strategic policy.) Support for local people, small business, culture or retail.
	2.7	Detractions to the neighbourhood: How is parking and deliveries dealt with? What are the traffic impacts? How will rubbish be dealt with? Noise, pollution.
3.	Aspects special to the site:	
	3.1	Each scheme will, by virtue of its location, highlight aspects of the immediate area that require improvement. For example the Cleveland Street triangle provides an opportunity to improve the mews and the outlook from adjacent flats. The Great Portland Street/Foley Street scheme provides an opportunity to improve the rubbish collection system in that area, and in particular to install new underground rubbish bins across the road.

Notes from the public meeting:

Pressure for Development in the area, including Crossrail.

(Numbers in brackets refer to the action points agreed last night)

Key issues

Need to get comprehensive list of all development sites (3.)

Nature of local business matters – don't want sex, arcades, drugs (2.2)

Think about the existing community – building works very disruptive (2.7)

Change of use (2.2)

Incremental change -> big change (2.2)

Infrastructure (bus, rail, phone boxes) (2.7)

What do we want to see change (2.6)

Robust procedure – having a real say (1 and 3)

Information and statistics (1 and 3)

Super-prime residences – buy to leave – no! (2.3)

Petrol station (3.1)

More local involvement (2)

Forum involvement in local planning applications (2)

All the implications of development – parking, bins, greening, pavements (2.6/2.7)

Trees/food/independent business (local not national)/public space/street life (2.1) (2.5,6,7)