

Response to Wood Green Area Action Plan Consultation

We are writing to respond formally to the Regulation 18 consultation for the Wood Green Area Action Plan.

Introduction

It is arguable that this Area Action Plan is predicated on a Crossrail 2 station being built in Wood Green. However this is far from certain, with decisions about Crossrail 2 delayed, and no guarantee that, even if Crossrail 2 does go ahead, the station will be located in Wood Green. There has been considerable public support for Crossrail stations in Haringey to be located at Turnpike Lane and Alexandra Palace, and this may prove to be the case, should Crossrail 2 be given the go ahead.

Given this situation, it is of concern that this AAP asserts it and the Investment Framework 'will provide a comprehensive, and statutory, framework that provides clarity and certainty to landowners, developers, service providers and the community about how places and sites within the Wood Green AAP area will develop, and against which investment decisions can be made and development proposals can be assessed.'

The opposite could just as easily be argued, with uncertainty being created through this framework for homeowners, tenants, and businesses as red lines are drawn around neighbourhoods, with homes and buildings proposed for demolition.

Below we set out points related to specific issues included in the AAP.

Crossrail 2

As mentioned above the Plan seems to depend significantly on a Crossrail 2 station being located in Wood Green. This assumption drives the plans for the proposed increase in densities, and for the major reconfiguration of the town centre between the High Road/Library and Coburg Road around a new 'central' square. Having plans established for only this possibility, seems misguided. What will be the alternative plan if Crossrail 2 is deferred, or if the chosen station is Turnpike Lane? These plans do not appear to take this eventuality into account.

Yet the impact, should this AAP be approved, is that homes, businesses, and other properties will be blighted for years through planning designations. The threat of demolition of homes in Mayes Rd, Caxton Rd and Coburg Road on the *potential possibility* of a Crossrail station is irresponsible, and labeling this as 'development' is disingenuous and lacking in transparency. Whilst the AAP seeks to promote housing development, these perfectly sound Victorian homes and pleasant terraces will be sacrificed.

Housing

The AAP refers to the National Policy Planning Framework as containing a 'number of themes that are relevant to the preparation of an AAP for Wood Green'. Amongst these is

- Widening the choice of high quality homes.

But at whose cost and for whom? The AAP section on Housing Mix and Unit sizes goes some way to answering these fundamental questions. At para 4.29 it states: *‘Due to the town centre, opportunity area, and Growth Area designations for Wood Green, new housing developments are likely to be delivered at relatively high densities, with a high proportion of smaller (1 & 2 bed) units.*

This suggests that the proposed new housing will not be for families. Indeed this is made a bit clearer in the subsequent sections of the AAP. *‘While it is appropriate to maximise housing delivery in a highly sustainable location, it is important that a mix of family, and particularly affordable family-sized units are produced within the area. There is a need to guide the market regarding the locations more and less suitable locations for family housing within Wood Green.’*

Decanting/Replacement of demolished stock

4.30 There are development sites within the AAP area which include existing housing. One aim of this AAP is to increase the number of housing units within the area, and as such while finding suitable local relocation opportunities is not a planning matter, there is an expectation that the increase in local housing stock, including affordable housing stock, will improve the area’s ability to meet housing need. Relevant Council policies including those in the Strategic Policies and Housing Strategy will be observed.

Any reduction in the percentage of family size units in the Town Centre locations should be offset by increased percentages of family units in other specified/identified site locations to ensure overall dwelling mix targets are achieved. (p 76 AAP)

What this appears to mean with regard to Wood Green is an increase in housing densities, increases in the number of 1 and 2 bedroom properties through development of flats, and a loss of family housing. It is unclear what town centre locations are being referred to, but since the plan proposes demolition of Shopping City it is reasonable to assume that it is the social housing in Sky City and Page High which is being discussed. These flats provide secure homes for families at genuinely affordable rents and as can be seen from the section quoted above (para 4.30. page 76), there is no clarity as to where or how people will be rehoused, should Shopping City be demolished. It is simply not good enough to have vague references to other specified/identified locations to rehouse people when this is talking about families, their homes and lives. So whilst the AAP is ambitious in proposing some 7000 new homes, it is silent on what will happen to those whose homes are blighted – either as freeholders, leaseholders or tenants – and what alternatives there will be for displaced people. The impact on the local infrastructure of schools, health facilities and other services is not fully quantified.

The AAP includes several SWOT analyses to underpin the proposal being put forward. It is a serious omission and revealing that the loss of homes is not included as a threat or weakness (SWOT page 29). Much is made of physical change, arts improvements, cultural heritage and Crossrail – but simply no mention of either new

or lost homes. Surely the loss of homes and the impact on families' and individuals' well-being is a serious issue for any regeneration proposal? As housing is central to the AAP proposal these SWOTs should be reviewed and rethought.

Alongside from the very real social implications of these plans, there are also issues with densities and floor areas which appear to be at the upper limits of the London Plan, and which ignore key constraints of the area, such as building close to existing communities of largely two storey Victorian streets.

The equalities implications of these housing proposals have not been spelled out, even though the AAP includes data on housing tenure, educational qualifications, ethnic make up of the area etc. The data provided should signal unequivocally that an EQIA must accompany these proposals, since the impact on those living in social housing is disproportionate and the possibility of rehousing locally for families is significantly reduced as discussed above.

Demolitions

This AAP proposes demolition of large swathes of Wood Green. Many of the buildings proposed for demolition are in private ownership which would compound both the difficulty of achieving this programme, and, presumably, the costs. None of this is made apparent, yet the result of approving such plans and site allocations will surely result in blight and stalled investment over many years, and to reiterate, is all predicated on one thing – Crossrail 2 coming to Wood Green. Should this fail to happen the question must be asked as to whether these plans are viable or needed. Clear examples are the proposals for Caxton and Mayes Roads and a boulevard, which are dependent on a Crossrail station. Without this, there is no economic or commercial case for a central square and providing a better view to Alexandra Palace, as mentioned in a recent public meeting, is hardly justification for demolishing sound and good homes.

Although not made explicit, the proposals to transfer council properties in Wood Green (e.g the library, River Park House, and properties on Station Road) into the Haringey Development Vehicle are integral to this AAP. This is a high risk joint venture and it is not a given that these developments will happen or that the Council will be able to realise on its investment of land. Any difficulties will be likely to impact on the proposed development of a civic building in Bittern Place, the new library etc. Have any other alternative ideas for Wood Green been considered should these plans fail to materialise?

The Night Time Economy

The AAP refers to the development of a night time economy as part of the proposed changes for Wood Green. Any such developments will need to be very carefully planned, controlled and regulated, since the impact on residential communities can be very adverse as has been well-documented.

Traffic and Wightman Road

The AAP appears to be proposing that traffic is diverted from Wood Green High Road to Wightman Road. If this is incorrect, then please amend the plans to ensure that they are clear in this regard. The current holistic Green Lanes traffic study is already consulting on changes to reduce the impact of traffic on Wightman Road and it is vital that this AAP takes account of those proposals and does not result in formal adopted plans which contradict the work being done now and which increases traffic pressure on Wightman Road and the Harringay Ladder.

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