

3rd Finsbury Park Regeneration Conference Report

Our Finsbury Park, Our Future

12:30 – 5:30pm, Saturday 25th March 2017

Opening Session

The Chair welcomed all participants to the third Finsbury Park Trust Regeneration Conference. He was proud to be part of Finsbury Park - an area that was both diverse and dynamic.

Cllr Richard Watts	Leader of Islington Council
Paul Clark	Finsbury Park Trust
Phil Glanville	Mayor of Hackney
Simon Donovan	(Chair) Finsbury Park Trust
Paul Cooke	Director, Higgins Construction plc

1. **Paul Clark, Finsbury Park Trust**

Finsbury Park is a mixed community, placed near the centre of London, yet with its own open spaces and facilities/services. On 1st June 2012 the Finsbury Park Accord was signed which brought together three boroughs who would together seek to reduce crime and the perception of crime. The Finsbury Park Regeneration Board was then formed. Later, Islington Council had contributed £½ million to improve the environment, especially around the railway bridges.

Since 2012 there had been many changes, with a new theatre, arts spaces, more students, cycle routes and greater use of the park for major events. Property prices had gone up and rates changes were an issue for many businesses. The index of multiple deprivation showed that Finsbury Park had gone from 2,400th out of 32,000 to 614th in 2015.

Crime figures from 2011-17 showed a co-relation between crime levels and festivals in the park and/or football matches, though each of these undoubtedly brought benefits to the area too.

An outcome from the second Regeneration conference held in 2015 was that there was a need for better neighbourhood planning and more thought on how to make the most of the area's assets. It remained important to ensure access to housing, education and open spaces for local people – and to deal with the bridges!

2. **Philip Glanville, Mayor of Hackney**

Mayor Glanville spoke of both the great assets of Finsbury Park and the challenges that it faces: the transport interchange, it is an area of multiple deprivation, has a largely transient population and there are issues with feeling safe for residents which must receive attention.

The three councils need to build housing, clusters, businesses and services across borough boundaries. Regeneration today was different to that which was faced twenty years ago. Today, poverty sits next door to affluence. Regeneration must benefit both

existing residents and those who need it most – it could not just be about increasing house prices. The three councils must change their relationship with businesses and provide support.

Within the area there must be opportunities to work and to move into work. The environment must also be improved.

There were, however, challenges. It was a time of austerity and cuts. Schools were under threat, through their budgets, teacher recruitment and the need for additional places. ‘Free schools’ would not meet local needs. What the area needs is comprehensive, non-selective and non-religious schools in partnership with local authorities. He wished that local authorities were not currently barred from funding and building new schools.

Mayor Glanville also desired genuinely affordable homes and Hackney was delivering 9,000 – either directly or in partnership with others. These developments would mean an overall increase in the number of genuinely affordable homes and would include some homes for private sale to subsidise the project. 765 homes were being built at Kings Crescent and good work had been done at Woodberry Down. The councils now needed to work closely with communities and ward councillors to ensure that the most was made of scarce resources.

3. **Paul Cooke, Higgins Construction plc**

Mr Cooke explained that he is interested not only in construction, but also in protecting the environment and providing training and employment opportunities. He was pleased to be part of the Kings Crescent scheme. Higgins Construction is a family company which has operated for about 60 years, is based in Loughton and specialises in publicly funded works, including regeneration projects. Across London, hundreds of thousands of homes had been upgraded through the Decent Homes Scheme in London, but they were still ageing buildings. He said that until now housing associations had been building most social housing projects, but that local authorities were now increasingly able to do this using public land, by building in partnership with others and using private sales to cross-subsidise affordable housing.

Regeneration could be an inconvenience for residents, but the aim of regeneration was to involve communities, develop both employment and training opportunities and allow communities to continue growing. Land prices had escalated, as had property prices, with the lowest prices now around £350k. Build to rent is seeing a resurgence. The Mayor had been consulting on ‘Housing for Londoners’, but the question was whether the building industry has the capacity to meet demand, particularly post-Brexit with many workers returning home abroad. It had been calculated that 2 million more workers are needed to meet demand.

At Kings Crescent the project was in Phase 1 of a plan to build 765 homes. The builder was taking the risk of being able to sell some as private properties. As the builder they had made a deposit of £5 million and then LB Hackney had been involved throughout. At the end of the project the builder would also invest money for fitting out the private homes. When the social housing is ready the builder pays LB Hackney £50 million for the private dwellings. LB Hackney invests fund throughout, so the builder’s funds are not tied up and the council is able to develop more housing. Mr Cooke showed a video in which residents explained their experience of regeneration, including training opportunities which had led to employment. Higgins had met its training targets during the project. The only target missed was on local employment, where it had achieved 15% against a target of 25%, which meant there were 75 local people working on site on a daily basis. Newman Francis (as ITLAs – independent tenant and leasehold advisers) had been used to help partner with the

local community. At the end of the scheme London Borough of Hackney would take back the scheme with the help of the local community.

Mr Cooke commended Mayor Glanville for making this happen and for supporting the financial model which had made it attractive.

4. **Councillor Richard Watts, Leader of Islington Council**

Schools and the promotion of education and skills both have key roles in regeneration. Local schools had gone from being amongst the worst to the best in the country over 15 years. The Institute of Education had said that inner London schools had made the greatest progress of any city internationally. The three boroughs, Islington, Hackney and Haringey were all in the top twenty boroughs nationally and Hackney was number one for progress. Schools were working collaboratively, but nevertheless the funding for this area of work was under threat. The only unfortunate point was that the results at age 16 were still not mirrored by results at age 19. Cllr Watts suggested five key themes for improvement:

- A system wide commitment to apprenticeships, leading to real jobs and qualifications.
- As a country we must ensure that there is parity of esteem for post 16 qualifications, including through the 15 vocational pathways.
- A nation-wide, industry led commitment to training and skills for local people as we cannot rely on bringing skills from abroad. The Painting and Decorating Academy in Islington was a great example of this.
- Further education colleges must match the number of places on courses to the numbers of jobs available.
- The changes required as a result of Brexit must be addressed.

Questions on the Opening Session

If properties are being sold privately, how can their resale at higher prices be avoided?

Mr Cooke (Higgins) said that LB Hackney had been prescriptive about who the properties could be sold to, with priority going to local people. A housing sales strategy had been developed. Once sold, they no longer had control.

Cllr Watts (Islington) observed that to develop social housing it was necessary to 'in-fill' on sites and have private sales to subsidise the project.

Mayor Glanville (Hackney) explained that his Council received regular updates and 80% of the flats had been sold to British local buyers (i.e. not sold overseas). The shared ownership properties would be marketed through the Council to local people or those from neighbouring boroughs.

Would eco-friendly housing be promoted?

Mr Cooke (Higgins) explained that all current new build housing has to meet sustainable standards, aimed at a zero-carbon footprint. Most of their schemes in London would have photo-voltaic solar cells. From the outside the properties should be tenure-blind with differences only in the internal fixtures.

Mayor Glanville (Hackney) reported that across Hackney there would be green roofs, car-free developments, there would be improved insulation and homes were being refurbished to above the Decent Homes Standard.

Does the panel have any comments on the Haringey Development Vehicle?

Mayor Glanville (Hackney) said that the Kings Crescent project has a much more limited set

of aspirations than the HDV and it would not be appropriate for him to second-guess another Council's democratic decisions.

Are any other models being considered for how people can live together, including communal options?

Cllr Watts observed that many people were now living in shared houses. Somewhere to live was an issue for many groups, including teachers.

Hackney has a long tradition of housing co-ops. Mayor Glanville reported that they had tried to develop a co-operative housing scheme, but while they wanted to provide housing at the London Living Rent, they also wished to secure a return on the land.

How can people with disabilities be helped to stay living near their families?

Cllr Watts said that the lifetime homes standard is a requirement for all Islington homes.

Mayor Glanville said that all homes being built in Hackney meet the lifetime standard and they are also 10% larger than the post-war standards and so generally better than in the private rented sector.

How can anti-social behaviour (ASB) be addressed?

Cllr Watts said that in Islington all new build was designed to correct the mistakes of the past. They were rebuilding over garage spaces and designing out crime.

Mayor Glanville said that Kings Crescent had been a centre of crime and prostitution. Some of those problems had now been moved to Brownswood, Stamford Hill and Stoke Newington. Licensing arrangements for HMOs (housing with multiple occupation) and hostels.

Presentations by Developer

Lorraine Humphrey

Stewart Margolis

James Gaffney

Transport for London, Senior Project Manager

City North, Property Sales Director, Business Design Centre

Director, Telford Homes

1. Lorraine Humphrey, TfL

Step free access is being developed at Finsbury Park The project began at Christmas 2014, but it has been a long process. There is only 12 metres between ground level and the top of the tunnels and it had been necessary to lay beams under the tracks to support them to excavate the lift shafts without disrupting services. The Wells Street entrance had been closed to develop the new building development. A passageway had been extended to improve access. The internal south-bound stair had been closed to build the new lift shaft and this would be closed until later in the year.

In April 2019 the western station entrance will open. There would then be step free lifts and access via Goodwin Street. By October 2019 the new street access and works would be completed.

Overall the project had been a challenge with many space constraints and the need to work close to the tracks while they are still in use.

2. James Gaffney, Telford Homes

The Business Design Centre is a co-developer and Telford is the contractor for the development which is bounded by Fonthill Street, Goodwin Street and the station. There will be 355 residences, of which 305 would be private sales. 47 would be

shared ownership or rented. The various buildings would be 3, 12 or 24 floors high. There would also be 12,000m² retail and office space. There would be a single basement with some parking for a car club and disabled spaces, plus cycle storage. Site clearance began in July 2016 and it had been important to ensure there was no damage to the existing infrastructure. In June the first of the concrete structures would be poured and this would last until 2018. The fit-out would run from mid-2018 onwards. The western station entrance would be complete by 2019. From June 2019 – 2020 the residential properties would be built and from late 2019 – 2020 the commercial ones. Tenants would include Cineworld, M&S, the Housing Trust, TfL and London Underground.

The scheme had generated £1 ½ million section 106 funding for LB Islington and there had been liaison with the neighbouring communities. Apprenticeships had been arranged and students from the Muslim Welfare Centre had been encouraged into construction.

Telford Homes was also involved in other schemes, with London and Quadrant, on the Caledonian Road, in Dalston and Bermondsey. These included building schools.

Questions to the Developers

What plans are there for public toilets at Finsbury Park Station?

Ms Humphrey said there would be one accessible toilet gate-side and no other facilities as this would meet current standards.

Why were blocks over ten storeys allowed, how many properties have been sold off plan abroad and how much space would there be for children to play?

Mr Gaffney said that the properties had been sold on the open market, although they had been advertised locally first. They would not be sitting empty, however, and if rented they would go to local people. There would be areas for children to play and contributions from the project would support other areas locally.

How can people be sure that S106 money is spent locally and not elsewhere in the borough?

Mr Gaffney said that that would be for the Council to respond to, but the expenditure plans should be in the public domain.

How would deaf people be able to access announcements and, within the regeneration project, what design and services would be included for those with disabilities?

Ms Humphrey said that step free access was being improved and Network Rail were also working on that. There were displays for the visually impaired and standards for supporting the visually and hearing impaired would be met.

What investment would there be in the local area and the road network?

Comments could be taken back to TfL, but Telford Home is on a board with Highways Management and could raise this as well.

What was being done about overcrowding in the station?

The Victoria Line is very heavily used, so any delay at all can lead to overcrowding. The platforms cannot be lengthened any further so congestion forms easily. There have been extra staff while the southbound stairs have been closed, but it is necessary to make the station accessible. Twitter is used to inform people.

Will there be an entrance from Wells Terrace again and would there be consultation on the type of shops?

The new entrance would be via the new development. The project team was working with the local authority to ensure a good mix of shops, which would include a supermarket and a cinema and it was hoped that this would enhance the area.

Would there be access to the presentation slides online or to the 'community newsletter' (only one person present had been aware of it).

The next newsletter was due to go out, though the area it would be distributed to could be reviewed. Contributors would investigate where the presentation slides might be published.

What action would be taken about ASB under the bridges?

There is ongoing work with the police around rough sleepers.

Tri Borough Partnership Session

Gary Heather Ward Councillor, Finsbury Park ,LB Islington (Deputising for Cllr Asima Shaikh)

Guy Nicholson

Executive Member, Regeneration & Planning, LB Hackney

Tim Gallagher

Ward Councillor, Stroud Green, LB Haringey

1. Cllr Gary Heather, Finsbury Park Ward

Cllr Heather spoke of the positive things being done for the least well off in the area. The three Finsbury Park ward councillors would apply the principles of the Fairness Commission as to how the S106 money would be spent. On the Andover Estate the community was involved with regeneration and dealing with issues of damp. The council was working with local people, including on a Neighbourhood Plan. Work had been done modelling options for a gyratory system.

2. Cllr Tim Gallagher, Stroud Green, Haringey and Finsbury Park Trust

The area had changed continually since the 1970s, as had the park. Finsbury Park had kept its identity, however, with a diverse and multi-cultural community.

Regeneration must not be code for rising property prices.

It was important for Finsbury Park to have a Concerts and Events Policy.

While events could be both enjoyable and profitable, they could also cause inconvenience the community, so the benefits need to be tangible.

The Rowan site is private land and could therefore be developed, but this should be discussed by local residents, including at the Neighbourhood Forum. There should be no apology for regeneration, but it should be with input from and for the benefit of local residents.

3. Cllr Guy Nicholson, Executive Member, Hackney

Cllr Nicholson wished to raise planning policy and quality of life in the area. Regarding planning policy, a plan for a neighbourhood across three boroughs was needed. For a good quality of life, a thriving and prosperous town centre with good access was needed. The Finsbury Park Accord had been an attempt to coordinate services – there were good services in place in each borough, but they did not coordinate well across boundaries.

There were two area plans in place nearby, one in Woodberry Down and the other in Manor House. Overall there was an increase in the number and type

of planning applications, including conversions, hostels and HMOs, as well as those who wished to extend their homes.

There had also been a number of requests to begin neighbourhood forums, most of which had failed for one reason or another. Neighbourhood plans need to be robust and to be able to withstand challenge by developers. The criteria that LB Hackney applies are:

- Inclusivity – a wide range of views must be accommodated.
- Conformity – There must be conformity with local plans and the London Plan.
- A neighbourhood plan would need to meet both of these to be successful in Finsbury Park.

Questions to Councillors on the Tri-Borough Partnership

How will ASB be approached long-term, rather than moving it along?

Cllr Heather said that there is a police panel in Finsbury Park and it prioritises three issues. The City North plans were already in place, but it would be important for the community to hold to the promises they were made, including keeping business rates down.

How would the promises being raised be acted on?

Cllr Gallagher said that not all concerns could be addressed, such as the children's play area in City North, but others, such as toilets in the station, could be raised.

Who would ensure that the three boroughs worked together?

Cllr Heather said that this would always be difficult, but there was a town centre management group that would help to coordinate. The councillors meet regularly with each other and with local businesses.

Cllr Gallagher said that there were many groups who needed to liaise, but the Finsbury Park Trust and the Finsbury Park Regeneration Board both allowed for ongoing discussions. He encouraged residents to speak to their Councillors.

Cllr Nicholson advised local people to use the existing forums. There was a need to consider how services could be delivered as there would be difficulties, but gave an example of the 2012 Olympics Project when different boroughs agreed a common constitution for one area.

Why have different approaches been taken to businesses at different addresses about business rates?

Cllr Heather said that Cllr Shaikh had led a campaign against the Conservative Government's policy on business rates as it would affect small businesses. A petition with 15,000 names had been taken to Downing Street. In Fonthill Road there had been a freeze on rates, while on neighbouring streets there had been a 10% reduction. Other addresses nearby would see an increase of up to 45%, however. None of this had been a local authority decision, however. Cllr Nicholson said that Hackney Councillors had also campaigned against it. Hackney had had the highest increase (Islington second highest) in business valuations in London and the fifth highest nationally. This threatened small businesses and SMEs. It would close High Street shops and create unemployment. It was not only businesses in the north of England that require support.

Why has there been no consultation about the Haringey Development Vehicle?

Clr Gallagher encouraged residents to speak to their councillors about their concerns. The Finsbury Park café should not be part of the development.

What will the impact of police cutbacks be on the service offered?

Clr Nicholson reassured the conference that the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, and the police commissioner had made commitments to neighbourhood policing, albeit at a lower level than had been the case in 2010. City Hall would keep neighbourhood policing in play and councils should see where they could support this, so as to tackle ASB.

Workshop Introductions

1. The Chair called upon the Director of Finsbury Park Trust, Talal Karim to introduce the leaders of the various workshops:
2. Ricky Thakrar would lead the group on the Finsbury Park Neighbourhood Plan. This would provide a long term vision for the area, consulting on what works should be carried out and what would improve the local.
3. Martin Ball (Friends of Finsbury Park) would lead the group discussing green spaces.
4. Irma Isara would lead the arts and culture group, seeking to incorporate it from an early stage in any plans.
5. Sandra Edwards (Job Centre Plus) will the workshop on education, jobs and skills and the group would discuss employment opportunities in the area to be co-facilitated by Simon Pearce (Ways into Working, Hackney Council and Mina Scarlett (Islington Council, Employer Engagement).
6. Paul Clark will lead the group to discuss how to support local businesses. The conference split into groups from 3:35pm – 4:45pm.

Feedback from the Workshops

1. Neighbourhood Plan, Susie Barson

The main issues raised were:

- Green spaces, including Finsbury Park, and they had discussed linking these together through the communities and groups that represented them.
 - Considering a large community centre or hub with a wide range of activities and sports.
 - ‘Valued places’ such as Rowans and other historic buildings.
 - Other models for business outlets, including not-for-profit organisations.
- The next meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Forum would be 20th April 2017 6:30-8pm.

2. Defending Green Spaces, Martin Ball

- Parks and green spaces should stay in public ownership and control.
- The quality of spaces must be maintained so as to encourage use. This would require proper investment and skilled maintenance and the parks should then be open to all.
- Local people should use the parks, expect high standards, join the Friends of Finsbury Park and hold events there.

3. **Arts and Culture, Irma Isara**

- Craft markets would bring people together.
- There could be temporary stalls in the new development
- Arts festivals - Stroud Green Traders Association lays on the Summer of Love Festival
- Shops could promote or provide workshops.
- Workshop spaces and venues for performances
- The community could be brought together through an annual sustainable community festival, based around the park and linked to a community based radio station.

4. **Education, Jobs and Skills, Sandra Edwards**

- People need help that makes a real impact, not just one that appears on paper.
- SMEs need help to be more accessible.
- Links with colleges need to be more effective.

5. **Supporting Local Businesses, Paul Clark**

- Many local businesses are open 6-7 days each week and have little time to engage with Finsbury Park Trust.
- There need to be more links with businesses along bus and other transport routes.

Keynote Addresses

Catherine West, MP for Hornsey and Woodgreen
Rt Hon Jeremy Corbyn MP, Leader of the Labour Party
Simon Donovan, (Chair), Finsbury Park Trust

1. **Catherine West, MP**

Ms West said that it had been in 2004 when lobbying had seriously begun for full access to the tube, especially at Finsbury Park. She was pleased to see the community still together. She had three themes for her talk today: affordable housing, open spaces and lifelong learning.

London needs to see at least 50% of new housing being affordable – by which she meant genuinely affordable at the target/social rents that would be expected in council housing. With an average London salary of £28K pa, even two adults working could often not afford the private rented sector. Estates like the Andover estate had changed considerably since 2002 with the support of the community. It had improved immeasurably from the time it was a no-go zone.

London can use its open spaces in ways that bring people together. The Gillespie Festival had begun as a way of trying to save part of the park. Often the impact of gatherings and conferences like these was only seen when looking back. Now it is a vibrant festival in the second week of September every year. By and large residents rub along well with football supporters in Finsbury Park, though there were still issues to be addressed regarding

concerts and events in the park.

Lifelong learning remains important and the fight for colleges and libraries must not be given up. The N4 Library and the adult education there were very valuable resources. It was also important to stand up for local businesses. Park Theatre, for example was vibrant, but could not afford to open every day. The government is saying that creative industries should be supported and the theatre was very much wanted here and now. This would provide opportunities for younger people to express creativity. While this school which had hosted today's conference had been supporting the community for many years, Crouch Hill Community Centre would also open soon with a launderette as its focus. If people come together as a community, they will be able to withstand austerity.

2. **Right Hon Jeremy Corbyn, MP for Islington North and Leader of the Labour Party**

Following the incident in Westminster, Mr Corbyn asked the meeting to reflect on the community in Finsbury Park. It was made up of all faiths and of people from all parts of the world. When people ask how they can live together he recommends that they take a leaf from the people of Finsbury Park.

There had been a long history of public and community expression which had led to the present Finsbury Park Trust being established. This had begun with the demand for the park itself. In the early 1970s LB Haringey had planned to demolish the Woodstock Road area and there was a campaign against its re-development. The inspector had found against the local authority in a public enquiry and ruled that the properties should be rehabilitated and not demolished. Those buildings were still there as the community had made sure of it.

Three boroughs had been brought together through one forum in a journey that began in 1980 and later with a single regeneration bid before finally reaching the arrangements today. Representatives of each borough had to work together.

In London there had been a property boom which had led to a number of dangers for communities and so there was a need for a strict planning regime. There was a need to ensure that the working classes were not pushed out. There was a need to invest in skills in communities and to tackle the housing crisis. For many people there was little opportunity to find housing and the private rented sector was too expensive, so they could be forced out of the area, even though they wanted their children to continue in their current schools and to be part of the existing community. Some families made long journeys to bring their children to school in the hope that they would be able to return to the area. Affordable and social housing was therefore needed to maintain local communities.

Finsbury Park is a transport hub and its usage is rising with 30 million journeys starting or finishing there each year, as well those changing between different lines. The station should be under one management. Mr Corbyn had raised these matters in Parliament. Patrick McLoughlin had visited and conceded that there was a problem. The sheer volume of people on the platforms for the Victoria and Piccadilly line, with 30 trains an hour on the Victoria line, means that even a very small delay leads inevitably to congestion as there is no back-up space.

There were economic issues that affect small businesses, with very high business rates. This was an issue for central government, not local authorities. These were penalty-level rates which could kill businesses and they would lead to dead high streets. It was important to keep small manufacturers, such as clothing makers.

Regarding health and arts, there are serious health issues. People in Finsbury Park had lower life expectancy than elsewhere, in part due to air quality. There were problems too with diabetes, poverty and poor quality housing. This had costs to everyone as health problems had to be addressed by the NHS. There was a mental health crisis, so the stigma attached to it had to be ended and there had to be investment to ensure access. A health audit would help identify the extent of the issues clearly.

Poor air quality was a wider concern and the amount of pollution produced by cars needed to be reduced, by ultimately getting rid of diesels and reducing the time that buses and other vehicles spent idling.

Mr Corbyn thanked those who gave of their time to support those in their community with mental health issues. People should not be alone when they were unwell. A sense of community could be supported by arts, culture and expression.

Mr Corbyn said that he had supported the Park Theatre and would like to see the theatre on the old bath site supported too. There were opportunities there for schools to give support, eg by providing practice space. It was important that there should be places for live music and venues, as one (the Silver Bullet) had recently been lost.

Communities had been coming together around planning, transport and to develop jobs. He was proud to see the different communities coming together, including those who had fled wars elsewhere and who were making their homes there. The community had to encourage its representatives, including a Mayor, of the three authorities to work together. If the government feels that the inner cities are a source of the vitality needed for the rest of the country, then it was important people were not pushed out.

Together – there could be clean air.

Together – there could be housing.

Together – people could campaign to meet health and social needs.

Together – people could be together. That was what Finsbury Park was all about.

Closing Remarks, Simon Donovan

The Chair, Simon Donovan, thanked all those who had contributed, including the artist, the organisers, FPT volunteers and Talal Karim, who had kept the trust going in challenging times. The information from the conference would be published on the website. He encouraged people to get involved in the area and the Finsbury Park Trust