



STREATHAM ACTION PUBLIC MEETING
WEDNESDAY 7TH AUGUST 2019 – 7.20 pm start

Venue: HIDEAWAY, Streatham

MINUTES OF MEETING:

About 60 people present

INTRODUCTION BY NS

The idea of a public meeting was raised at the SA AGM on 31st January 2019.

The public consultation being run by Lambeth Council as to how Streatham's high street should develop further will close on 23rd August. With very short notice it is great to see so many people in attendance and the committee would like to thank both the panel members and all those present in the audience for participating in the public meeting.

We want YOU to respond to that consultation. Please have a read of it at: <https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/consultations>

Many thanks also to Hideaway and InStreatham's Louise Abbotts who jointly helped to organise the meeting with Streatham Action.

LS then provided a brief overview about InStreatham:

InStreatham is funded by businesses, who want to invest in the community to make Streatham more pleasant. InStreatham provides much support to business, dealing with authorities and lobbying for initiatives such as cargo biking.

NS introduced the members of the panel. Presenting the draft plan proposed by Lambeth are:

- Cllr Matthew Bennett, Lambeth Cabinet Member responsible for planning & investment
- Owain Jones, Head of Area Regeneration, Waterloo & Streatham, Lambeth Council
- Laura Hutson, Principal Area Regeneration Officer, Waterloo & Streatham, Lambeth Council

. The panel, which will be taking questions following the presentation, is made up of all of the above listed individuals and:

- Neil Salt, Vice Chair of Streatham's civic group, Streatham Action
- Louise Abbotts, Manager, InStreatham, Streatham's voice for the business community

It is important to work together as businesses and residents to ensure that overarching themes and key issues are addressed and that solutions that are proposed are right from the points of view of both Streatham residents and businesses, but there needs to be fine tuning on the delivery plans, but not all details of changes to those plans have yet been defined.

Cllr Matthew Bennett's Presentation:

A copy of a slightly expanded version of the presentation slides accompanies these public meeting notes

The below bullet points summarise the main areas covered:

The aims of both the consultation and this public meeting is to accentuate positives, recognise weaknesses and find ways, if seen to be beneficial, to improve upon the draft proposal.

The proposal is structured around five core objectives, which are accompanied by an overarching vision:

- Objective 1: Challenging Perceptions and Attracting Inward Investment
- Objective 2: Diversifying the Town Centre Offer
- Objective 3: Providing Space for Growth and Enterprise
- Objective 4: Providing Spaces for Better and New Experiences
- Objective 5: Unlocking Development Opportunities

Initial evidence that has been gathered to see where Streatham sits in terms of a shopping destination in South London views Streatham's major competitors as being:

1. Brixton
2. Tooting
3. Croydon
4. Peckham

Streatham has a resident population of around 66,000 people. The population is relatively young with a higher proportion of people aged 25-44 than the London average. The population has grown by 13% over the last five years, which is significantly higher than for either Lambeth, or for London as a whole.

Streatham's economy has been growing over the last decade:

Employment has increased by 19% since 2011 and the number of businesses has increased by 43% since 2012. There are now 2,000 businesses in the area, employing approximately 11,000 people.

However, employment growth while higher than the London and Lambeth average has not been as high as in many of the comparator areas considered over the same period.

Streatham's town centre comprises 428 retail and retail service units (i.e. cafes, restaurants and takeaways). Since 2012 vacant floorspace has fallen by around 12%. Only 10% of retail units are now vacant, which is below the UK average.

Representation of "comparison goods" retail units is broadly in line with the national average. Provision of cafes and restaurants is also strong, accounting for around 52% of all units in the area (above the UK average of 38%).

There is however, a clear gap in the high street offering in relation to footfall generating clothing and footwear retailers. Representation of a number of other types of "comparison goods" retailers is also below

average. This partly explains why Streatham loses footfall to neighbouring town centres like Brixton and Croydon, which have a more diverse retail and leisure offering.

Challenges:

Loss of office space:

If Streatham is to move towards a higher value economy, it is important that sufficient workspace is available. Since 2013 the area has lost around 9,000 sq.m of office floorspace.

Locations where Streatham has lost office space to residential uses include:

- Norwich House, Streatham High Road
- The Print House (former South London Press), Leigham Court Road
- Hopton House, opposite Streatham station

The area also has a limited number of workspaces to support small and medium size businesses. The workspaces identified via the Technical Evidence Base work include Artist Studio Company Streatham Hill, Hideaway Workspace, Vinters Studios, Sunnyhill House and meeting/rehearsal space at the Streatham Youth and Community Trust's hall on Wellfield Road. This is despite 14% of the businesses registered in Streatham being owned by sole traders and 21% of residents being self-employed.

If any additional workspace is lost it could have significant impacts for employment in Streatham, which would have subsequent impacts for the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre itself.

Traffic is still very high:

Whilst there has been investment, and interventions have improved the quality of the environment and visitor experience, some parts of the town centre still do not perform well against indicators of Healthy Streets, mainly due to the large amount of through-traffic in both directions along Streatham High Road.

Some areas of the High Road are more in need of intervention than others. Discussions with InStreatham and Lambeth Council highlight that residents and businesses frequently report that the area known as "the Dip" between Gleneldon Road and Streatham Station needs an improved and enhanced public realm. The quality of the environment is perceived to be poor and it is difficult to cross the busy road safely and easily.

Lack of action, execution delay

While a number of the development sites identified in the 2009 Masterplan have been brought forward, several have not come to fruition.

The plans aim to build on the objectives with targeted strategies:

- Objective 1: Challenging Perceptions and Attracting Inward Investment
 - Local place marketing to attract residents to use and visit the town centre
 - Soft marketing testing with retailers and developers
 - Inward investment marketing materials – develop material to position and market Streatham to developers, businesses and entrepreneurs

- Objective 2: Diversifying and Strengthening the Town Centre Offering

- Planning levers- use review of the local plan to review and amend the boundaries of the primary shopping areas (PSA) and the town centre
 - Experimentation - LBL and InStreatham to explore the possibility of acquiring leases of units
 - Night-time economy – enhance and develop the early evening economy (food, drinks coffee on way home)
- Objective 3: Providing Space for Growth and Enterprise
 - Planning levers – bring forward an article 4 direction to safeguard the office stock (not being pursued)
 - Workspace policy - draft local plan Workspace policy (does not apply to Streatham)
 - Deliver more workspace –ensuring mixed development through planning, acquiring leases and development
- Objective 4: Providing Spaces for Better and New Experiences
 - New public spaces and activities - work alongside TfL and local groups. i.e. Streatham Action to secure temporary road closures to host events for the community
- Objective 5: Progressing Development Opportunities
 - Cultivate socio-economic uses - working with stakeholders and partners on developments such Pop Brixton and international House
 - Direct participation in development: investigate with Homes for Lambeth and other stakeholders opportunities for direct delivery
 - Redevelopment of Streatham Hill Station – actively explore the potential to redevelop it

NEXT STEPS

- Public consultation ends at midnight on 23rd August
- Analysis of representations September 2019
- Publish summary of representations September 2019
- Finalise updated SIGS October 2019
- Publish final version of SIGS October 2019
- Continue to pursue the objectives set out

Lambeth submitted a bid for Streatham’s high street earlier in the year as part of the Government’s Future High Streets £675mbil fund.

Unfortunately LBL’s bid did not get taken beyond the first round of bidding, as much of the money went to the north of England. However, the opportunity can still be pursued as the bids are still being compared and there will be a second round of bidding, in which Lambeth intends to take part.

Lambeth’s submitted Expression of Interest for Streatham focused on 3 areas:

1 Streatham Hill Theatre:

Explore a range of options around acquiring the theatre, drawn on strategic investment.

2. Streatham Hill station redevelopment

LBL to lead on the feasibility study for a mixed use redevelopment over/ adjacent to station

3. The repurposing of the KwikFit site

The site is coming up for renewal in a few years' time and has potential to create a public space around the current garage area, adjacent to the high street.

All 3 ideas need to be further investigated in terms of feasibility, as when may be seen to be appropriate.

Lambeth has also recently been looking at bidding for monies from another pot of funds.

One example would be a part-funded trial for devolution of business rates.

This would potentially allow for local authorities to access and manage funds for local new business generation.

Q&A SESSION:

Q1: Have you considered the commercial viability to split the Streatham Hill Theatre building up for smaller areas for crafts and office? For example, the current Artist Studio Company Streatham Hill is being shut down.

A1: If we can get over the issue of acquiring the building, it could be operated as a community-based space with performances, events, retail businesses, office space, educational.

The Friends of Streatham Hill (Led by David Harvey, who made a brief presentation earlier in the meeting about his campaign group's activities) have done some sums based on the initial plans and the study proves that the building could be sustained with income from the individual business. It would be a non-for-profit operation and yes, part of the plan involves the allocation of space to a number of initiatives. There are ways to use smaller spaces within the building without compromising the heritage of the building

Q2: What does the proposed Boundary Change and restriction mean for businesses going forward?

A2: This refers only to the primary shopping area, taking things out of the current protected retail area. There are currently homes and other services, which are not necessary retail and should probably not be there.

Things in place will not be removed, however going forward more focus will be kept, when it comes to new approvals being sought, only to permit approved services

Q3: 2 requests for Streatham: Reduce business rates and re-open the police station, can these be considered? With devolution coming in, given the £20mil worth of business rates that Streatham generates, would that money be reinvested in the area?

A3 There are now £160K of remaining monies available to InStreatham for use in this year. There will be a business rates fund next year, but LBL does not currently have control on this, until such time as we get to devolution.

LBL I collects business rates, but does not set the rates, the government does. Lambeth only keeps 30% of the rates at the moment.

Crime in Streatham is actually lower than in the rest of the borough.

The question about a police station is not a matter for Lambeth, but for the Mayor

Q4: What happens to the rest of the high street, especially around Streatham Common. This area seems to be forgotten, with the plan seeming not to be bold enough with the open spaces.

A4: Streatham, including some parts of "the dip", is on the up. Brick café has been open on a historically debilitated site and other units have been bought and will be redeveloped. Café Barcelona, within "the Dip" area further down has been a great success. InStreatham is working with the existing businesses to look at how they are presenting themselves and HeartStreatham magazine promotes them as and when viable. The regeneration will continue and stretch beyond the primary shopping area considered by the plan. In terms of green spaces, these fall into a different plan specifically focusing on green spaces and parks.

Q5: Streatham Space Project is a great place and does good work, however more participation from the community should be attracted. It is not publicly funded, it is a charity and it receives 25 years' rent-free, but why are they not doing more to try to bring more people in from outside the area?

A5: With no representative from the Streatham Space Project present, the question will be put forward and panel will liaise with the management of SSP to discuss with them further.

Q6: About green spaces, it is great to look at new places but LBL is not properly supporting the existing ones e.g, the paddling pool on Streatham Common, which is very popular, but still has to raise money year in year out to be maintained, as it has no funding allocated from Lambeth.

A6: The council has not been receiving any funds to assist with this, especially with the political scene as it has been over the last 3 years.

The amount of money available is short and will continue to go down unless more jobs and businesses are brought in to the area to justify pitching for more money

Q7: What type of businesses is the council trying to attract within the primary retail area? Is not the elephant in the room Streatham itself, on the basis that it is very hard to get to?

A7: SAT have been campaigning for long to get improvements to the train service. To be fair, the services have improved from 1 year ago. Franchising will be up for renegotiation in 2021. Population growth is at the highest in Streatham and the fact that we have a growing resident population, we already have a ready-made audience for use of the high street, which should be first and foremost a destination for residents. To attract people, in competition with Croydon or Brixton, is hard because there are no big retail businesses or parking spaces.

The night-time economy is also a great opportunity, with places such as Streatham Space Project and Hideaway. Promoting more office space will attract more people to work and shop locally.

This does not mean attracting people from north London, but there are many local/adjacent entrepreneurial people who will consider staying in Streatham and/or working in Streatham, rather than travelling across London.

Q8: Can the proposal be reviewed to clarify things such as the fact that KwikFit renovation only involves the ground floor? Also the writers should look at the terminology? "Dwelling space" for example can be interpreted as residential. One practical restriction on the site is that there is very little depth in the shop floors, which makes it difficult for bigger stores to want to open in the area

A8: The proposal will not reduce the number of existing retail businesses; the plan is to take a strategic view to differentiate between parts of the town centre economy. An over concentration of A1 Class businesses is not sustainable, as seen nationwide. However, existing businesses will continue to be supported and will not be asked to move. The proposal will be reviewed, so that all areas of differentiation are clarified and that the language as clear as possible

Q9: I did not see any mention with regard to the lower part of the High Road. If most of it stays the same, and a similar level of flexibility is not applied there, then aren't those premises going to stay empty?

A9: There is no proposal for evicting and putting people out of business

Q10: How can bigger retail names be attracted into Streatham? How can Lambeth incentivise businesses to invest here?

A10: There have been some great successes already. The plan is to ensure there are more office applications in the area, which currently are not happening to anything like the extent that LBL would like to see. It is a matter of accentuating the positive and promoting the benefits. A PR/marketing strategy will be devised.

Q11a: What has been done about the traffic and air quality?

A11: If the town centre is dominated by car then town centre would be dreadful, so we have to start thinking about a greener approach, introducing and encouraging more cycling, outdoor sitting spaces and

more/better transport. 80% of the traffic is travel-through traffic and consequently is creating a lot of pollution. The other elephant in the room is that the A23 is the main arterial route into and out of south London and working in conjunction with this requirement of the road creates the greatest challenge. Phases 5 & 6 of the on-going central reservation improvement works on Streatham High Road - between Streatham Hill station and Christchurch Road - will be a key step toward such a greener, safer high street.

Q11b: 80% of polluting can be reduced just by greening, but Lambeth is not investing in this, why?

A11: As important and close to the heart of all of us is this aspect, this consultation is about high street development and not about greening strategies. The A23, as a red route, is managed by TfL and not by LBL.

Q12: What does Streatham's proposed reclassification mean financially?

A12: Class use classification can be found on-line. Please remember that existing businesses will not be affected. This is about future potential and how the high street may change in the future.

Q13: Has the fact that Streatham Hill station building is a historical building been taken into consideration when considering renovation?

A13: This is ultimately a Network Rail decision, but there will be plenty of opportunity for all of us to submit input on this.

Q14: The environment crisis is key and overarching and should be included in to all of the strategies and policies, especially on the future of the high street. Why is the LBL plan of moving to Healthy Streets, not being given key consideration with regard to a healthier high street?

A14: Elements within this proposal can accommodate a healthy high street. A great change would be made if TfL may be able to deliver a bidirectional cycle lane for an area beyond what is likely to be proposed soon for the area between Streatham Hill station and Christchurch Road. Also low emission buses would make a huge difference.

Q15: It would seem that a considerable amount of dilapidation in Streatham Vale and Streatham Common is holding back development there. Dealing with shops in disrepair in that area and using LBL's power to address and resolve the situations should be a priority

A15: There is a limit to what LBL can do, but it is looking into these issues.

NS thanked both members of the panel and the audience for their participation. He made one final request for all attendees to submit their responses to the consultation by 23rd August Midnight.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm