

Questions for Oral Reply from Ms Davina Misroch, on Behalf of Friends of Community G

1. What weight, if any, can now be attached to the targets in the AAP for Site G given that the site has been bisected by the Ringers Road development and given that there is no Master Plan which the AAP Inspector decreed should inform the 'location, mix and amount of development'?

Reply:

The Bromley Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) 2010 is the adopted plan for the town centre, which sets out the development land use strategy which will be pursued. As such, considerable weight is given by the Council and the Planning Inspectorate to the plans, policies and site allocations set out in the AAP to guide development on individual sites.

2. Does the Council accept that development on Site G should not be coming forward in an unplanned piecemeal way but should be guided by a Master Plan, as recommended by the AAP Inspector? Moreover, that the Master Plan should identify those sites which would benefit from redevelopment and those that should be left alone, as referred to in paras. 6.41 and 6.42 of the Inspector's decision, and does not mean that comprehensive redevelopment should take place?

Reply:

The AAP Planning Inspector acknowledged that there were a range of opportunities for extensive redevelopment to take place on Site G and by committing to a masterplan process the Council would have greater certainty about the form of development which should take place, and whether certain existing buildings need to be included, or excluded, from any redevelopment. The Council has adopted such an approach throughout the recent development procurement exercise. This exercise has illustrated that a retail led development on the scale envisaged in the Site G Policy is not currently viable or achievable. However, this exercise has illustrated what is likely to be viable, achievable and meet the policy requirements of the AAP.

Supplementary Question:

Ms Misroch asked what the Council's attitude was to preparing a masterplan. In response, the Leader stated that he would come on to this later in the questions.

3. Neighbourhood Planning is a Localism success story with 1200 communities across England now taking forward Neighbourhood Plans, many in London Boroughs. What are Bromley Council's views about a potential Neighbourhood Plan for Bromley Town Centre?

Reply:

The Bromley Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) 2010 is the adopted plan for the town centre, it is still relevant and current. However, if there is community interest in

complementing these policies with a neighbourhood plan then this is something the Council would give due consideration to.

Supplementary Question:

Ms Misroch suggested that giving consideration was not strong enough and that under the Localism Act the Council had a duty to assist with a neighbourhood plan. The Leader responded that he would ask for legal advice on this, but he accepted that the Council had to work with residents to achieve a satisfactory development.

4. What are the Council's plans for Opportunity Site G?

Reply:

The appraisal work carried out in respect of the MUSE Masterplan confirmed that the ability to deliver a comprehensive redevelopment across the whole of Site G has been negated by the commencement of the Crest Nicolson residential development in Ringers Road. It is therefore highly unlikely that a comprehensive redevelopment proposal will be forthcoming in the period of the AAP. However, while market testing of a retail led scheme on Site G has proven negative, the appraisal work did illustrate the strength of the site to deliver a potential residential/mixed use redevelopment. The AAP planning policy for Site G, which remains the adopted planning policy, sees the site making a significant contribution to the AAP total of 1,820 residential units as well as supporting new restaurants, community facilities and public realm improvements.

The Council's development advisors have recommended that development work on Site G should be refocused to promote a first phase residential/mixed use development option which could be limited to properties north of Ethelbert Road, including the residential properties of Ethelbert Close and the Town Church. It is proposed to retain the majority of commercial frontages to the High Street, except the two units closest to the Central Library which will be incorporated into a widened entrance. This first phase development has the benefit of clearly setting out for the first time which residential and commercial properties will be impacted and will be required to be purchased to bring forward this development option. This approach will provide greater certainty to the owners and occupiers of properties inside and outside of the proposed first phase development site.

Supplementary Question:

Ms Misroch commented that the community wanted to be involved from the inception of any new proposals and that what was being suggested sounded too ambitious for Site G. The Leader responded that the Council could not take on the risk of acting as an independent developer. Vision was needed for the site, involving local people at the earliest point.

5. Should the Council propose to go forward with an alternative scheme, will the Council undertake to invite and incorporate the community's input from the very beginning, including full consultation at the design stage?

Reply:

Subject to Executive approval, it is proposed to undertake initial design work on the first phase development site which will be used to inform a public consultation on the

potential site, phasing, massing, mix and layout of any potential scheme. It is proposed to write to all residents and stakeholders informing them of the Council's decisions regarding the development of Opportunity Site G. This letter will invite all residents and stakeholders to a public meeting in the New Year to discuss the future development option. This will also be an opportunity for officers to consult stakeholders on a range of community infrastructure improvements that they would like to see delivered as part of the overall town development programme.

Supplementary Question:

Ms Misroch welcomed these last comments and that it was on record that the Council would consult residents from the beginning.

6. Residents on Site G are concerned that their properties remain blighted. What is the future of residents' properties in what was formerly known as Site G?

Reply:

The Council is committed to undertaking public consultation on the revised development programme, which will also clarify the approach to bringing forward development on the remainder of Site G.

The Leader asked officers to elaborate further on the proposals, picking up some of the issues that had been raised. Subject to the decisions made by the Executive, the Council could consider purchasing at market value those properties within the "red line" i.e. those within the development property site. Properties outside the red line could also be considered for purchase, but the Council would have to consider the merits of hardship claims. It was confirmed that Neighbourhood Plans had to be properly constituted and to complement national and local policies. The Council was committed to a masterplan process, and this would need to be informed by proposals from a development partner. At present the Council did not have a viable scheme, so the issue was to consider what alternative schemes could be compatible. The Council was committed to consulting with the public, other stakeholders and Ward Councillors.

Ms Misroch commented that many of the people most directly affected were not familiar with the technical language being used and that she hoped that the Neighbourhood Forum was a good way forward that the Council would approach positively. The Leader responded that the Council wanted to be clear and helpful and would be as adaptable as possible.