

BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.00 pm on 1 November 2022

Present:

Councillor Yvonne Bear (Chairman)
Katy Woolcott, London Biggin Hill Airport (Vice-Chairman)
Carol Arnfield, LBB Head of Service for Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education
Russell Clarke, Sundridge Investments Limited
Nigel Court, Mytime Active
Christopher Evans, Community Links Bromley
Frances Forrest, Your Bromley BID Company
Mark Haynes, The Glades
Gary Hillman, N. Hillman & Sons
Michael Humphries, Handelsbanken
Liz Lakes, London South East Colleges
Lorraine McQuillan, LBB Place Shaping & Local Economy Manager
Chandra Sharma, Federation of Small Businesses
Lee Thomas, Fairlight Group
Chris Travers, Orpington 1st BID Company

Also Present:

Councillor Jeremy Adams
Ose Akpom, LBB Economic Development Manager
Ian Drew, LBB Urban Design Officer
Councillor Colin Hitchins
Ben Johnson, LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy
Hal Khanom, LBB Head of Economic Development
Sarah Murray, Local London
Councillor Tony Owen
Ben Terry, LBB Urban Design Officer

15 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Louise Wolsey – London South East Colleges and Jason Stanton – Mytime Active, and Liz Lakes – London South East Colleges and Nigel Court – Mytime Active attended as their respective substitutes.

Apologies for absence were also received from Chris Glover – Churchill Theatre, Lesley Holland – Bromley Education Business Partnership, Mike Lewis – Michael Rogers LLP, Helen McIntosh – South East London Chamber of Commerce, Caroline Tatchell – Splash Damage and Bruce Walker – Lansdown Asset Management.

16 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING

No questions had been received.

17 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19TH JULY 2022 AND MATTERS OUTSTANDING

The Chairman noted that there were no matters outstanding.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19th July 2022 be agreed.

18 INDUSTRY CASE STUDY

The Chairman informed members that apologies had been received from the Treval Engineering representative, and this item would be deferred to the next meeting of the Partnership.

19 URBAN DESIGN GUIDE AND BROMLEY TOWN SPD

The Partnership received a presentation from Ian Drew, LBB Urban Design Officer, Ben Johnson, LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy and Ben Terry, LBB Urban Design Officer, providing an update on the Urban Design Guide and Bromley Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). A copy of the presentation is attached at Appendix A.

The Urban Design Officer highlighted the following points in relation to the scope and purpose of the Urban Design SPD:

- Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) built upon and provided more detailed guidance on policies in the Local Plan. SPDs could not introduce new policy but were material considerations in determining planning applications.
- The purpose of the document was to provide clear design guidance to inform and engage developers, architects, planners, and all other parties who had an interest in bringing forward development proposals in Bromley.
- The document set out the key principles for achieving good design with the aim of significantly raising the quality of development in the borough.
- The document was not a Design Code and did not set specific parameters but aimed to provide an overarching vision outlining key design principles that should be followed.
- The aim was to promote good design for buildings, landscape and public realm, establishing the desired characteristics for successful places and providing a quality benchmark for how new development should look and feel.

The document was divided into the following five sections:

1. Introduction (purpose and status)
2. Planning policy framework / planning application process (overview)
3. Character appraisal (understanding Bromley past and present)
4. Principles of good design (key design principles for Bromley)
5. Design guidance (application of key design principles)

It was noted that section 4 introduced six key design principles which were considered to be essential for delivering good design:

- Contextual – *Character and Identity*
- Responsive – *Architecture and Landscape*
- Connected – *Movement and Connectivity*
- Inclusive – *Access and Inclusion*
- Healthy – *Health and Wellbeing*
- Sustainable – *Sustainability, Adaptability & Resilience*

These principles were also included in the emerging Town Centre SPDs for Bromley and Orpington and aimed to adopt a consistent approach, or “golden thread”, across all design guidance. The borough-wide Urban Design SPD sat alongside the Town Centre SPDs, and its content would inform an integral part of the Local Plan review and future workstreams such as characterisation studies, site capacity assessments and design coding. The Urban Design SPD was a comprehensive document which demonstrated the commitment to improving design quality in Bromley.

The LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy informed members of the Partnership that the Bromley Town Centre SPD consultation had launched the previous week. This was an emerging document which provided guidance for development within Bromley Town Centre. The document set out the relevant local, regional and national policy frameworks which underpinned the guidance and referenced the six “golden thread” key design principles previously mentioned. The SPD divided Bromley Town Centre into a series of character areas (Bromley North, West, East and South, and further sub-areas) which were derived through context of the wider area and represented those parts which were considered to have similar characteristics. General guidance notes were provided which were applied consistently across the areas including density, tall buildings and sustainability. For each of the sub-areas detailed design considerations were provided in terms of guidance on building heights, public realm and green connections. A plan was also provided for each sub-area which visualised the guidance.

The LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy advised that the consultation on the Urban Design SPD would run until the 9th December 2022, and the Bromley Town Centre SPD until 27th January 2023. It was highlighted that any feedback on the documents would be welcomed, and the SPD consultations could be accessed via the following link: <https://www.bromley.gov.uk/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-guidance>

The Chairman encouraged members of the Partnership to view the SPDs as it was important that a wide spread of voices was gathered to inform the final

documents. It was noted that the consultation on the Orpington Town Centre SPD had closed in July 2022. In response to a question from the Chairman, the LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy advised that nearly 1,000 consultation responses had been received – officers were working their way through these responses, which was a big undertaking, and it was anticipated that the final document would be adopted in spring/summer 2023.

In response to questions from Lee Thomas – Fairlight Group, the LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy emphasised that the SPDs could not create new policies – steps were taken within the SPDs to try and encourage certain uses, but this was not binding. Residential use was suitable in town centres; however they had looked to balance this with other uses as far as possible. The introduction of Class E provided flexibility and, if a suitable commercial use was identified for the ground floor, they were unlikely to discourage residential use on upper floors. It was noted that the Local Plan review could be used to try to influence uses, but this was not guaranteed. The Chairman advised that funding for the revision of the Local Plan had been approved and evidential studies would soon be starting. The SPDs provided a clear direction of travel which would be reinforced in the Local Plan. The LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy highlighted that the review of the Local Plan would be a lengthy process – however the Plan would gain weight throughout, and they would not need to wait until the final version was adopted to start using the document in planning determinations, albeit the weight given to emerging policies would be reduced.

In response to questions from the Vice-Chairman, the LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy advised that the SPDs would be a ‘material consideration’ when planning applications were assessed. In terms of how the Local Plan was progressing, members of the Partnership were advised that a ‘call for sites’ had been undertaken. This was the preliminary stage of the process but, as the budget for evidential work had been approved work, would move forward at pace. Consultation responses would be invited throughout the process, with at least two further rounds of consultation planned. The Vice-Chairman said that research had been undertaken by London Biggin Hill Airport, looking at things such as their clients’ businesses and growth plans. The LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy said that there were various considerations to be taken into account and they would welcome the submission of any research produced by London Biggin Hill Airport as part of any future consultation exercise.

Mike Humphries – Handelsbanken enquired if the SPDs would apply to existing planning proposals, and whether they would apply to developments over a particular size. The LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy advised that the SPDs did not have emerging weight and would only become a relevant consideration once adopted. In principle, both SPDs would apply to any scale of application – with regards to the Urban Design Guide, the scale of the application may influence the amount of information that they would expect to be provided. In response to a question from Zoe Carr – Penge SE20 BID Company, regarding an application that would soon be submitted for a large development in Penge, the LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy

advised that if the Urban Design Guide was adopted by the time the application was determined it would be a relevant consideration. The Urban Design Guide was a tool aimed to improve design and quality, and pulled together existing national and regional guidance and best practice and this information could be used to inform an application.

Russell Clarke – Sundridge Investments Limited noted that no potential sites had been identified within the SPDs. The LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy advised that the SPDs could not allocate sites – however guidance on existing site locations within the current Bromley Local Plan had been included, as well as potential opportunities that had come forward since. Mr Clarke noted that, due to the recent pressures around town centre allocations, the SPDs would be important documents. From experience, it was requested that the Urban Design Guide was not made too prescriptive as it was considered that it could be used by objectors to frustrate developers. The LBB Urban Design Officer said they were mindful of not being too prescriptive, but stressed that the document was not a Design Code. The purpose of the document was not to set strict parameters, but instead provide key principles – it was left open for architects to be creative whilst quality was ensured. Gary Hillman – N. Hillmans & Sons echoed Mr Clarke’s comments and questioned if there was any weight on the commercial and economic benefits, or just the visual aspects, of a development. The LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy advised that economic benefits were a material consideration, but so were building designs within a Conservation Areas, and it was about achieving a balance.

Mr Thomas considered that the positives should be taken from the SPDs, and worked with, as he believed they may be beneficial in the long run. In response to a question, the Chairman noted that there were a number of vacancies in the Planning Department, which they had looked to address. A third party had been tasked with processing some of the planning applications, but had also struggled to recruit promising more resources than they were able to provide. The LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy advised that this was an issue across the country. Liz Lakes – London South East Colleges informed members of the Partnership that, in collaboration with Bromley Council, they would be holding a borough employment event in January 2023 for ‘hard to fill’ positions, and the need for Planners would be highlighted to the organisers. Mr Thomas emphasised the need for members of the Partnership to be positive and proactive in encouraging people/businesses to come to Bromley. Mr Clarke considered that having planning staff back in the office would also have an effect, and suggested that planning officers could be shadowed by a trainee.

The Chairman thanked the LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy and Urban Design Officers for their presentation to the Partnership.

RESOLVED that the update on the Urban Design Guide and Bromley Town Centre SPD be noted.

20 GREEN ECONOMY - LONDON SOUTH EAST COLLEGES (LSEC)

Liz Lakes, Development Director – London South East Colleges (“Development Director”) provided an overview of the Local London Green and Digital Strategic Projects.

The Development Director informed members that these projects focussed on two areas – becoming net zero by 2030 and ensuring digital progression and embedding digital skills.

- *GLA funded: Local London Green and Digital Mayoral Academy (£237k)*
A sub-regional project which would collaborate across 11 further education providers, 9 London boroughs and 30+ employers in the Local London region to ensure the GLA had a central delivery mechanism to improve its Green and Digital offer.
- *DfE funded: Local London Green Academies Partnership (£2.46m)*
A sub-regional project which aimed to increase inward investment across the Local London region. Through an intensive capital and revenue investment model would see 13 further education providers collaborate to improve the regions Green skills offer.

These strategic projects were intrinsically linked and would be managed together to ensure that efforts were not duplicated. It also ensured that commitment to improving green and digital skills across the Local London patch remained. The Development Director highlighted that this work focused on collaboration – working with providers, local authorities and employers to ensure that Further Education (FE) curriculums were driven by the need of industries. This was linked to the Local Skills Improvement Plans which aimed to ensure that, in addition to traditional skills, residents were prepared with the skills for the emerging needs of the green and digital sectors. The Development Director advised that the College were looking for local organisations to be part of the drive to develop green and digital skills, and maximise development opportunities. Members that were interested in participating were encouraged to contact Andrew Cox, Group Director of Strategic Growth and Partnerships – LSEC via Andrew.Cox@lsec.ac.uk.

Councillor Hitchins enquired what work had been undertaken to identify where the skills gaps were within the borough. The Development Director advised that this question would be referred to the Group Director of Strategic Growth and Partnerships, and a response provided following the meeting.

The Development Director noted that the Group Director of Strategic Growth and Partnerships – LSEC would attend the next meeting of the Partnership to report on progress made. The Chairman thanked the Development Director for her update, and noted that the Partnership would be interested to hear how the projects developed.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

21 LOCAL LONDON SUB-REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

The Partnership received a presentation from Sarah Murray, Director – Local London (“Director”), providing an update on the Local London sub-regional partnership, and its key priorities and activities. A copy of the presentation is attached at Appendix B.

The Chairman informed the Partnership that the borough had recently become a member of Local London, which would provide greater collaboration with other London boroughs, regional partnerships and access to funding.

The Director advised that Local London was a voice for the sub-region where key decisions were being made about the future of the region and/or there were proposals, plans or projects affecting the sub-region. It would build capacity by working together and generating income for the boroughs of the partnership – bidding for grants and other financial resources for specific purposes where it was appropriate and agreed, and delivering externally-funded programmes across the sub-region and in boroughs. Areas of focus would include:

- careers, employment and skills;
- digital infrastructure and digital inclusion;
- economic recovery and green growth; and,
- Levelling Up, local economic development, devolved funding.

The Director informed members of the Partnership about the UK-wide ‘Project Gigabit’, which was a £5 billion government infrastructure project that brought together everything the government was doing to enable and deliver fast and reliable digital connectivity for the country. Local London boroughs had been included in lot 37 of an Open Market Review (OMR) which took place between March 2022 and June 2022 by BDUK (Building Digital UK, part of Department of Culture and Media). This public consultation was seeking to provide additional detail about the proposed eligible area for government investment. Local London was a key focus of growth for both London and the country as a whole, and an absence of digital infrastructure would constrain this. It was noted that information from the Local London boroughs would be pooled that week. Over 163, 000 premises in the region were unable to receive gigabit capable broadband and of these over 19,000 premises were a ‘not spot’.

Local London had grown and changed dramatically since 2018, and now had:

- o Seven programmes with a value of £85m supporting boroughs and other partners; employment and skills, careers for schools and colleges, digital for SMEs and digital infrastructure;
- o Significant input into the Thames Estuary Growth Board and input into the UK Innovation Corridor programmes; and,
- o Several new partnerships and initiatives underway.

Local London also led the sub-region on lobbying central and regional government on funding such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF). The Director advised that future work would include:

- Working with Business London and Employer Representative Bodies to develop new Local Skills Improvement Plan;
- Updating Local London Data Warehouse;
- Careers Fair, November 2022;
- Contributing to Pan-London Infrastructure Framework;
- New Local London Plan 2022-25;
- Bidding for UK Shared Prosperity Fund (competitive calls); and,
- Bidding for EV Infrastructure roll out.

In response to questions from Lee Thomas – Fairlight Group, the Director advised that the UK SPF was a national programme which replaced the EU structural funds. There were three main strands – community and place; people and skills; and supporting local businesses. The funds would mainly be allocated directly to boroughs, and each borough would decide how they would be invested. The Chairman informed members that a presentation on the UK SPF would be delivered to a future meeting of the Partnership.

The Chairman thanked the Director – Local London for her interesting presentation to the Partnership.

RESOLVED that the update on the Local London Sub-regional Partnership be noted.

22 PARTNER UPDATES

The Vice-Chairman informed members of the Partnership that London Biggin Hill Airport (LBHA) had recently undertaken a stakeholder survey. Feedback received had included:

- Demand for accommodation on site;
- The need to have good, high quality welfare facilities to accommodate staff during the week;
- Mobile phone reception, digital connectivity and data capability for broadband;
- Public transport, staff bus service, and challenges in terms of reliable airport taxi services;
- Training facilities – Bombardier working with Marshall Skills Academy to provide apprenticeships and proposals for a building to be converted into a training centre for jobs needed on the airport site; and,
- The need for companies to work sustainably.

A visiting Member noted that a ‘Futures Week’ had recently been held at London Biggin Hill Airport – this had been attended by 14–18-year-olds, who had visited LBHA to experience the job opportunities that could be available to them in the future. Over 100 applications had been received from children living in the borough – this highlighted the need for a training centre which allowed children to take up opportunities to learn skills for the future. It was

considered that children needed to be encouraged to aspire to these types of roles much earlier, and become aware of the opportunities offered within the borough. Lee Thomas – Fairlight Group highlighted that the work undertaken to planes on site was also a good story to tell – the businesses using these industrial units would stay and spend money within the local area. The Vice-Chairman noted that electric aviation would allow planes to become quieter and highlighted the need for ensuring that the borough maximised its opportunities.

Mark Haynes – The Glades advised that they were seeing shoppers return. Footfall in the shopping centre had been buoyant with around 1.5m visitors each month for the last three months which was 20%, 25% and 12% up on the previous year – these increases were ahead of the published industry figures, which was extremely positive. There had been lots of interest from retailers looking to open stores within the shopping centre. Recent openings included Mint Velvet, Itsu, NHS Vaccination Centre and Lulu's. Nike would be opening a store during the first week of December, and early next year Bread Ahead, two high-end watch retailers and a shoe brand would be opening stores too. There had also been further interest from ladies' beauty and leisure and fitness operators.

Frances Forrest – Your Bromley BID Company said that a number of new businesses had opened on Bromley High Street and in The Mall. Footfall in the town centre was up, and people felt positive and optimistic.

Chris Travers – Orpington 1st BID Company advised that footfall in Orpington Town Centre was fairly good following a decent summer period. The occupancy rate was strong, in line with the Greater London average and above the national average. It was anticipated that the winter period would be challenging with a bigger hit to consumer spending power and higher costs for businesses. The tenants of the Walnuts Shopping Centre, and businesses in the immediate surrounding area, "were in limbo" but it was positive that they were committed to the town centre and were planning to stay. Orpington 1st BID Company represented the businesses, and they considered that the site needed to be regenerated, and would continue to consult with them if plans came forward. Members of the Partnership were informed that Orpington 1st BID Company had secured a 'yes' vote for their third 5-year term, which would start from April 2023.

Chandra Sharma, representing the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) informed members that the Local Government Awards had been held recently and Lewisham Council had won the local and national awards for COVID-19 Support and Recovery. The FSB Local Leadership document had been circulated to all London borough Councils and key highlights from the FSB Small Business Index report were shared (a copy of the full report is attached at Appendix C) including:

- Small business confidence was the lowest on record outside of lockdown.
- 89% of small businesses reported higher costs and ambition for growth was falling, with only 47% aspiring to grow over the next 12 months.

- Only 45% of financial applications for accessing funds were successful during quarter 2.
- Confidence was lowest in the wholesale/retail sector, followed by the manufacturing and construction sectors.
- London had a 32% low confidence rating.

Issues regarding the Bromley Business Hub website were raised in terms of it being kept up to date and difficult to navigate. The Chairman requested that feedback be provided directly to the LBB Head of Economic Development. It was noted that funding would be coming forward and used to maintain the website.

Lee Thomas – Fairlight Group advised that in terms of flexible work space it was challenging, with low demand. This was due to a combination of some businesses doing well during the pandemic and outgrowing the space, and other businesses folding. Demand for Grade A offices space in Bromley was strong with lots of enquiries being received, however there was a worry for the market in general if stock was not available for 2024.

Russell Clarke – Sundridge Investments Limited considered that, economically, businesses would struggle over the next few months. They had not seen the transition of the offices they let becoming vacant, but some businesses were struggling more than others.

Christopher Evans – Community Links Bromley advised that a briefing note would be circulated to members of the Partnership following the meeting, and is attached at Appendix D.

Carol Arnfield – LBB Head of Service for Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education informed members that the Adult Education Service was already connected with the Local London network and would be focussing on delivering employability skills for adults with special educational needs (SEN). A provision was also now being delivered at Bromley Central Library, working with adults who had English as a second language to prepare them for entering employment. It was noted that Bromley Adult Education College had recently recruited an Employability and Digital Skills Manager who would contribute to the curriculum from spring 2023.

Mike Humphries – Handelsbanken advised that business was very “up and down”. Interest rates would have an impact, and the next 12 months would be tough, however there may be opportunities when they came out the other side. Demand for borrowing had generally reduced – many were used to interest rates being artificially low and it would be challenging for people when their fixed rate mortgages came to an end.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

23 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman extended congratulations to Zoe Carr, Penge SE20 BID Company, and her team for the success in securing their second 5-year term. Members were shown the BID Company's 'Penge and Proud' film: <https://pengese20.co.uk/penge-bid/>

Christopher Evans – Community Links Bromley suggested the following items of interest for subsequent partnership meetings:

- Shared Prosperity Fund: Status, themes, governance etc.
- Digital Inclusion – What does this look like for Bromley? Who is excluded? Strategy/plans to meet the challenge.
- Green Economy: What does this look like moving forward and local implications.
- SE Integrated Care Board: How can we support the Board in its commitment to the development of more resilient communities, as well as meeting its social and economic object.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

24 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

4.00pm, Tuesday 31st January 2023

4.00pm, Tuesday 18th April 2023

The Meeting ended at 6.13 pm

Chairman