

## **BETTER ARCHWAY FORUM NEWSLETTER No 5 May 2007**

*Apologies for the gap in newsletters. A great deal has been happening over the last few months and we have been waiting until we had a better idea of how things were moving before sending an up-date, even though things are still moving, in some cases pretty quickly.*

### **1. ABOUT THE BETTER ARCHWAY FORUM**

The Better Archway Forum (BAF) was set up in January/February 2005 in response to the Council's plans to promote redevelopment at Archway. We have been working since then with the Council and others to improve the Archway area.

To find out more about us please see [www.betterarchway.info](http://www.betterarchway.info), or come along to one of our public meetings.

### **2. PLANS TO DATE**

The council consulted on potential schemes for Archway last summer and published results which surprised BAF as they did not appear to reflect public opinion. Skipping the usual stage of producing a master plan for the area, the consultants working on the plans went straight on to create an outline Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This usually only outlines general principles but in this case included a recommendation for a 40,000sq ft supermarket – around 25% larger than the Holloway Road Waitrose. At the same time it planned to remove the existing 1,500 office jobs on the site. BAF pointed out that it was an odd way to regenerate an area.

The draft scheme contained a number of contradictions. At one point the document said rebuilding would generally be of four to six storeys. Elsewhere it permitted buildings higher than 30 metres – ie around nine storeys.

The draft also said that only one developer could redevelop the site. This would mean no improvements could be made to the area until that one developer is chosen and is able (expensively) to buy out the 50-plus existing interests.

Under these conditions, even though London Underground is going to be working on Archway Station in less than two years, they wouldn't get planning permission to improve the surrounding buildings, because that could only happen as part of the big redevelopment.

The statutory consultation on this plan in January/February 2007 was low key, offering limited access to the full document, and key details like the proposed size of units only in an officer's report to the North Area Committee.

Despite this there was a big response, with BAF estimating that more than 150 people wrote in with their comments. The overwhelming majority urged the Council to reject the scheme.

### 3. NEXT STAGES

The Islington planning department has been asked to rewrite the plan. It is not yet known when this rewritten version will be released. It is possible that it will be presented at the North Area Committee on the evening of Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> July (in the Postgraduate lecture theatre in the basement of the university building on Highgate Hill, entrance almost opposite Magdala Avenue).

BAF has suggested that because a very different approach is required, it would be better to make sure that the plan is really well drafted and covers all the issues than to rush to produce a framework for development almost from a standing start.

In particular, abandoning the promotion of a scheme paid for by a supermarket and other chain stores at the expense of jobs and housing is a big change. But it is a good one and it is what councillors have publicly promised the people who live in Archway.

What we don't now want is council officers drawing up the new plans to produce another scheme which makes similar assumptions about big business ('inward investment') solving all the problems, without looking at how to properly regenerate the wider Archway area. Archway deserves better and we hope we are now closer to getting it because the councillors are listening.

The GLA economics report on retail of December 2006 says that any retail-led town centre regeneration is very risky and that the important elements are housing, employment and accessibility, which must all work together. The GLA case officer therefore believes that for long-term success the SPD must specify that Archway should see housing-led regeneration, including local 'district centre' facilities, keeping most or all of the existing office space, and protecting small retail by a limit on size.

To get everything working properly, the plan needs to include the wider area (the estates nearest to the tube and the overground, the UCL Archway campus (hospital and medical school) to make sure that you don't have development that, like the current one, doesn't connect to anything around it.

While we are waiting for this to be produced we are looking to:

- a) Work closely with London Underground and Design for London to ensure that the step free access at the tube station includes an overhaul of the station itself and work on the tower (freehold held by TfL), and is coordinated with any plans for the Overground at Upper Holloway (which comes under Transport for London's control from this Autumn).
- b) Work with TfL Buses to remove the ill-designed bus stand and move termination points to other more functional points around the area.
- c) Campaign with the GLA to get the gyratory sorted out (i.e removed).
- d) Work on additional projects such as a possible arts centre, and on town centre management (which aims to support and promote local businesses and boost the area's economic success).

#### **4. BAF ACTIVITIES**

Over the last few months BAF has been meeting with both officers and councillors to discuss different and more sustainable approaches to Archway, using the results of the community planning sessions to demonstrate what people in Archway really want when they consider the various options.

We also put together a Symposium with big name speakers including architect Sir Terry Farrell, Professor Ricky Burdett, whose Global Cities exhibition is at the Tate, Bill Hillier of Space Syntax which redesigned Trafalgar Square, David Ubaka, the chief of Design for London who works to make sure TfL produces well thought out designs, and more, including speakers on social housing, sustainability and community enterprise.

This was a useful way to raise the issues and to make sure that we were working with the most cutting edge thought about all forms of planning. We also aimed to 'raise the bar' by showing a range of best practice approaches which could be crucial to successfully regenerating Archway.

Terry Farrell pointed out that the trend is turning against putting traffic first now that people have worked out that 90% of users on busy roads are actually pedestrians, even if they might only have 10% of the space. Ricky Burdett made it clear that design has social consequences – bad design leads to social exclusion and an increase in crime. Bill Hillier demonstrated how important it is to make sure that public spaces work and encourage pedestrian access to local facilities. He also showed how Archway's road layout and public spaces not only reduce access to our local facilities (which we all know) but also drive people away from Archway's natural centre, preventing it becoming a successful focus of local economic activity.

BAF has been looking to work further with the council regeneration department, cleansing, and green space, and have had input to the Archway Arts Advisory Group which is looking to see whether the council can obtain grant funding for arts activities in Archway.

A recent success has been the widening of the pavement in front of the Co-op, suggested by BAF member Alain Chiaradia, where just an extra foot and a half has made the pavement considerably easier to use.

We have also been looking to see whether the old Methodist Hall/cinema, which is much more attractive inside than out, could be turned into a community arts centre.

We have been invited to join a pilot scheme run by Agenda 21, linked to University College London, which is looking to create a toolkit for communities seeking to research environmental inequalities in their area, starting with pedestrian counts and 'opinion' maps of issues in the area.

## 5. TRANSPORT FOR LONDON

BAF has had meetings with London Buses about solutions to the bus stand, and we are lobbying for them to move northbound terminating routes to outside the old hospital entrance where there is now space for them, and where they would connect better with a key destination for many passengers.

We have also met with London Underground over their plans for step free access at the station. We are hopeful that out of the £40 million (yes that's right) that they are planning to spend they will be able to find money to improve the station itself.

Finally we are delighted to see that the Mayor's transport advisor and the Green Party in the GLA have listed the Archway gyratory as one of 12 to be removed in London. We have asked our elected GLA member Jeanette Arnold to ask a question about this in the Assembly to encourage the powers that be to tackle this as soon as possible. Please do drop her a line to encourage her in this. Her email is [jenette.arnold@london.gov.uk](mailto:jenette.arnold@london.gov.uk) and it's really useful if you can copy [contact@betterarchway.info](mailto:contact@betterarchway.info).

## 6. DEVELOPERS

We have spoken to several potential developers, notably one who approached us to arrange a meeting and also brought Tesco.

The schemes they referred us to were the Woolwich town centre redevelopment [www.lovelanewoolwich.co.uk](http://www.lovelanewoolwich.co.uk), and Tesco's development in Streatham, where Tesco made it clear that they do not actually pay for the 're-provisioning' of any community facilities demolished to make way for their new building, just make a contribution. The council has to find the rest of the money.

An alternative suggested by another developer was tall residential blocks above a two-storey B&Q, as is planned at Lewisham.

To get a feel for alternatives we are also arranging meetings with providers of social housing who increasingly are beginning to do complete developments, including the provision of private housing within mixed schemes.

They are particularly good at something called 'blind tenure' where private and social housing is entirely mixed and you can't tell which is which – a really useful way of avoiding what is known as social polarisation. It means that the social housing is built to the same architectural and build quality as the private, avoiding the creation of the kind of low quality housing which become problem estates.

## **7. TOWN CENTRE MANAGER**

We are delighted that the council is now going to be employing a full-time town centre manager in Archway from around September, and is paving the way with initiatives like a joint cleansing, police and council blitz day.

While we are waiting for the full-timer to start BAF has conducted its own retail surveys of the area and has had two interns working to build up a business network and work with local businesses on things like grant applications for improvements to shop frontages.

Already the officer who is setting up the town centre management scheme is at work in the area and is already looking into issues like parking, litter, improvements to shop frontages and more, while one of our interns is still working on a range of issues alongside him and passing on our findings to date.

## **8. PRESS COVERAGE**

Archway has been getting a growing amount of press coverage, and not just in the local papers.

The Newsagent – considering the effect of a supermarket on the local shops

Regeneration and Renewal – the Second Opinion column carried a piece on Archway and BAF, which indicated that far from regenerating the area, the supermarket-led scheme initially proposed by the Islington planning department would cause major blight.

Newstart magazine - an article referring to Archway and research which indicates that communities are usually better at making choices than a small team of experts.

Building Design - the termination of the contract with consultants BDP who recommended the supermarket-led scheme ran under the heading 'Archway rethink as BDP exits'.

## **9. AGM**

The next BAF event is the AGM on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> July at Hargrave Park School at 7.30pm. All members are welcome to attend. Please email [contact@betterarchway.info](mailto:contact@betterarchway.info) 10 days before the event if there is anything you wish to raise at the meeting. We plan a presentation by London 21 of their project to

## 10. HELP NEEDED

Yes, there's a great team working on the Archway issues (thank you to everyone who responded to appeal on fund raising – there are now five which means the work can be spread out), but if we're going to be able to follow through on everything, we do need more help.

As a community group, whatever your skills, it's likely we can put them to good use, so if you would like to help, just let us know. In all cases, the more volunteers the better as groups working together seem to be particularly successful in achieving results.

- One small way you could help is by joining our network of street reps. It's a good way of getting to know other people living in the area, and of making sure that we are keeping people up to date about what is going on. If you would be willing to do something like deliver leaflets two or three times a year and perhaps chat a little with your neighbours, do get in touch with Alan Perry (020) 7272 3530 [baf@f2s.com](mailto:baf@f2s.com). Even if your street already has a rep – you could share the task.
- If you'd prefer a specific job with a start and a finish, the London 21 research group have a long list of things they'd like to cover and any help there would be very gratefully received.
- We really could do with some help working with TfL and the GLA to get all those issues moved on. Relevant experience and contacts / suggestions welcome. If things don't start moving fairly soon we may yet need to resort to some public protest or stunt to draw attention to our road-blighted plight and make it clear that dealing with this is a priority
- We want to see if we can get more art into the area. We've advertising for artists who might be able to raise their own funding for example. The aim is to change perceptions about the area with things like temporary arts installations for the gyratory, as well as looking more long-term to get the community arts centre project off the ground.

If you might be interested in any of this, please, do get in touch. Every little helps. Email [contact@betterarchway.info](mailto:contact@betterarchway.info) for more details.

## 11. HELP US STAY IN TOUCH

Have we got your details right? If we've got any part of your name or address wrong, please let us know. You can leave a message on 020 7272 3989 or email BAF at [contact@betterarchway.info](mailto:contact@betterarchway.info).

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