

## NORWOOD ACTION GROUP AND NORWOOD FORUM

Localism Act 2011

### DECLARATION OF INTENT TO CREATE A WEST NORWOOD PLANNING FORUM AND REQUEST FOR DESIGNATION OF THREE NORWOOD WARDS AS THE PLANNING NEIGHBOURHOOD

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#### BACKGROUND

1. A public meeting of over 200 people held at Chatsworth Baptist Church on 9 September 2013 agreed to the setting up of a Norwood Planning Forum. This meeting was jointly organised by the Norwood Action Group (NAG) and Norwood Forum. This initiative under the Localism Act reinforced the primary purpose of the meeting which was to protest about a planning application for flatted housing on Avenue Park Road, Tulse Hill and objections to Lambeth planning policy for “intensification” and higher permitted building in Norwood. There is a report on this meeting on the NAG website here: <http://nag.verystudio.webfactional.com/perch/resources/nag-localism-next-steps-1.pdf> Consequent to the meeting, there were reductions in scale to the Avenue Park Road development (now going ahead) and modifications to the Draft Lambeth Local Plan. This was a crucial meeting for Norwood and note was taken of local public opinion.
2. The meeting was a catalyst for concern about planning policy Norwood-wide. There is an explicit agreement of the need for building and development in Norwood to meet future housing, social and economic requirements. However, people do identify strongly with the Norwood community and value its character. The mass meeting declared its interest in and desire for local planning powers available under the Localism Act. Essentially the demand is for better planning and design to enhance rather than detract from West Norwood’s character and built environment. There has been a continuity of objections to planning applications which pre-date the 2013 meeting such as the West Norwood Tennis Club scheme which has been scaled down three times, to the Avenue Park Road development itself and to subsequent applications such as the tyre depot application on Tulse Hill. There have been consistent objections to “over-development”, to high density and to unsympathetic design with poor amenities.
3. In parallel with Norwood’s planning battles and unease with planning policy, Lambeth Council has responded in its own way to the 2011 Localism Act. Community groups borough-wide were invited to meetings about the council’s intention to set up “Co-operative Local Investment Plans” (CLIPS). NAG and Norwood Forum officers have attended meetings and contributed to discussions about how to designate areas and groups and how to manage local spending. Essentially the council intends to grant approved groups a 25% share of funding available from developers known as Community

Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Such funding would go to a neighbourhood fund for local spending. The amount would depend upon how much development had occurred in that area, so would vary considerably. This 25% share of the levy on developers matches the requirement of the Localism Act where Local Planning Forums would get this 25% funding instead of 15% otherwise available. The council proposals set up a borough-wide network of approved groups which would be granted the 25% funding but would not have the planning powers available under the Act. The Norwood Action Group has adopted the term “localism lite” for the council’s CLIPS alternative.

4. The council’s consultation on CLIPS took place during spring this year, but so far there has been no follow-up. If Norwood goes ahead and forms a West Norwood Planning Forum so as to produce a “Norwood Plan” this would have to be approved by a Norwood-wide referendum. However, assuming Lambeth council does create its network of Co-operative Local Investment Plans, it would be helpful if the Norwood neighbourhood fitted into the council network. In effect Norwood would then have a fall-back position of obtaining 25% funding whatever happened with the formal planning powers and the Norwood Plan. The take-up around the country of such planning powers is steadily increasing with over 700 groups developing local plans. There is a national body known as “Locality” which supports local groups with neighbourhood planning and other rights available under the localism Act. Graham Pycock attended a Locality Symposium which included information about neighbourhood planning. A report on this and a recommendation is available on the NAG website here:

<http://nag.verystudio.webfactional.com/actions.php?s=localism-planning-forum-is-your-chance-to-shape-our-future> .

## DESIGNATION OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

Norwood is a town centre which has an identity and is regarded by the council as distinct. There is a Norwood Masterplan which is used as the working guidance on planning matters. This contains detailed policies which are within the three local government wards of Knights Hill, Thurlow Park and Gipsy Hill. The population is about 30,000. West Norwood is classified as a “district centre” according to the London plan. There was in existence for ten years a council-defined Area Committee of the nine councillors from these wards which was part of the council’s constitution. This was the “Norwood Area Committee”. The Lambeth wards next door (Streatham Wells, Streatham Hill and Tulse Hill) fitted into the Streatham and Brixton area committees. There has been no suggestion that wards in Bromley or Croydon should link with West Norwood. It should be noted however that cross-boundary liaison between the boroughs is frequently an important issue which a Norwood planning forum should allow for.

There are community groups which have long operated on the basis of West Norwood, of which Norwood Action Group is an obvious example. The

Norwood Forum represents a continuity of local voluntary activity over several years and fits into a network of forums across the borough corresponding to town centres. West Norwood is a community which easily identifies itself as such. The area is distinctive with landmarks and features such as St Luke's Church and West Norwood Cemetery. The West Norwood train station is more or less at the centre of the area and it is this train station which gave the area its name (before the station it was known as Lower Norwood). The ribbon development of shops along the High Street and Norwood Road runs north – south through the middle. This follows the valley of the Effra River (now underground) in which the town sits, with hills sloping down to the Norwood Road axis. West Norwood is an area which has administrative, community and geographical identity. It is proposed that the West Norwood Neighbourhood Planning Forum should comprise the three wards of Knights Hill, Thurlow Park and Gipsy Hill.

Discussions and consultations took place during April this year about Lambeth Council's proposed Co-operative Infrastructure Investment Plans (CLIPS). The briefing document for the main meeting on 7 April proposed (in Appendix 3) that there would be a Norwood CLIP area comprising the same three Norwood wards proposed above.

## CONCLUSION

The Norwood Action Group and Norwood Forum declare their intention to develop a Norwood Plan under the 2011 Localism Act and therefore wish to create a "West Norwood Planning Forum". The area to be covered by the plan comprises the three wards of Knights Hill, Thurlow Park and Gipsy Hill. We therefore apply to Lambeth Council for agreement to this neighbourhood designation and request assistance with the establishment of the planning group and with development of the Norwood Plan.