

Britannia Village Hall Development

Public Meeting on 11.02.2021

Facilitators: Helen Fernandes (HF), Dan Hill (DH), Dave Mann (DM), Alice Hamlin (AH), Chris Carthy (CC), Meredith Bowles, Chris Brown, Jennifer Gutteridge, Sophie Linton, Alyson Moore, Emily Bowyer-Zaryi

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| 1 | <p><u>Welcome and introductions</u></p> <p>HF thanked everyone for coming and expressed her appreciation for the number of people that have shown an interest in the project.</p> <p>HF introduced herself; Community Development Manager for WSF and explained that she would be hosting the evening and we will be recording this meeting for our records - so we can ensure we get an accurate record of the meeting. She said we would not publish any audio or video of the public but we may use some anonymised quotes for publicity.</p> <p>HF explained that the premise of the meeting would not be a traditional consultation where we show plans and ask opinions, as we are not at this stage yet. This is about us sharing how we got to where we are and genuinely listening to the thoughts of our community.</p> <p>HF stressed that we do not have any drawn up plans, we have not even decided if we will definitely go through with this. We are coming here today to show you what we think our community needs and want to know if you agree or disagree. HF explained that there would be a chance to share thoughts and ideas in the breakout rooms, as we want the evening to be as interactive as possible. In addition, there will be a presentation element to this evening.</p> <p>HF then passed over to the rest of the team, who introduced themselves.</p> <p>Dan Hill: Client lead for this project at WSF.</p> <p>Dave Mann: Started working for the foundation in 2008, initially managing BV Hall, and more recently exploring the redevelopment.</p> <p>Chris Carthy: Works for Igloo regeneration, working with WSF on this development project, advising on issues, and doing the project management.</p> <p>Alice Hamlin: Works for Mole architects and her and Meredith Bowles are going to be the architects working on this project.</p> |
| 2 | <p><u>Breakout Room</u></p> <p>Attendees introduce themselves, said where they live, how they use the hall, and how they heard about the session</p> |
| 3 | <p><u>Presentations</u>- please note that a video of this section of the meeting is also available to view on our website</p> <p>DM</p> <p>Britannia Village hall was built just over 20 years ago and was never really built for purpose or well built.</p> <p>WSF took over the management of the hall on 2007 from the subsidiary; Wimpy, who were running it for commercial gain and for no real community benefit.</p> <p>At the beginning WSF focused mainly on youth work as at that time Britannia Village had the highest crime rate in Newham. We were able to address that and gradually build up a</p> |

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| | <p>whole host of activities in the hall, but the building was never really ideal and has been getting more and more battered over the years.</p> <p>The Hall been well used more recently with Tiny town Daycare, and the GP surgery, which just left after ten years.</p> <p>A few years ago we had a survey which showed we are going to have to invest a substantial amount of money just to maintain the hall in its current form.</p> <p>The landscape is changing and in 2019 we were able to take on a second community centre in Royal Wharf. The most used rooms there are our meeting rooms.</p> <p>Royal Wharf primary and Oasis Academy Silvertown have both been designed in a way that will enable community use in the evenings and weekends, and we are working with them to make that happen. This will give residents access to more large halls, a sports gym, and a 7-a-side football pitch.</p> <p>With all of the new community facilities coming, we are not sure that £500k to bring BV hall to its current standard is the best use of money.</p> <p>We would love to have a real intergenerational community hub that can be used by a range of people throughout the day, and for this building to be part of a network of community buildings throughout the neighbourhood.</p> <p>We also know that despite the level of redevelopment in the neighbourhood, housing is still a real issue for many local people</p> <p>HF explained we appointed architects for the initial stage of the development, but have no plans drawn up yet. The architects have been speaking to the main stakeholders such as the nursery, schools, and regular hirers at the hall - asking what they would like to do with the space.</p> <p>DH What we have now is alright, but could be so much better. It's important that the hall is somewhere that looks good and where everyone feels welcome. DH outlined aims for the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide a welcoming, uplifting, flexible and long-lasting community centre - Provide a welcoming, uplifting, flexible and long-lasting community centre - To be community-led at each stage and long into the future - To provide continuity for existing users (such as Tiny Town Daycare, Vibrant Minds etc.) - To complement the other community facilities and homes in the area - To be financially viable <p>DH then showed some slides about community spaces, houses and public realm for inspiration (slides available on our website)</p> <p>HF Spoke about the survey results. She explained that 196 people had completed the survey – which had been advertised with flyers through 1000 doors in BV, posters in most blocks of flats, through our social media, e-newsletter and WhatsApp.</p> <p>HF spoke through the breakdown of respondents and findings from the survey (slides available on our website).</p> |
| 4 | <p>Breakout rooms for questions and discussion.</p> <p>1. What would people like to see on the site and in the local area? Do you have ideas or concerns? 2. Anything to add to the survey results? 3. How would you like to be kept involved?</p> |
| 5 | <p><u>Feedback from the groups</u></p> <p>Room 1 Dan Hill</p> <p>A very wide-ranging discussion in terms of thoughts around additional greenery as part of the development. Some questions and concerns about how the finances would work in terms of the development and its relationship with WSF as an entity. There was a potential proposal to look at whether the service charge could help to pay for the improvements.</p> |

Support for the development of this scheme was mixed. There was a discussion around proportion of houses verses other uses; some people saying there should be less housing and more of the other things. A need to make sure the building was sound proof for all the activities taking place as well as secure and safe. There was also a real plea for better facilities and varied amenities for all ages.

Room 2 Chris Carthy

Spoke about how this process may work, how the decisions would be made, and what the uses should be. There was a discussion around whether the scheme would make a profit and if so, what this would be used for and whether the new development would be able to sustain itself financially. Very strong views on how the area is lacking amenities; spoke about a gym, café, shop and other things, the potential scope for those things on this site, and what the revenue generating sources could be. People were generally more in favour of community uses rather than housing. Spoke about the changing population with Covid and Brexit and what this means for the area. Spoke about the Village green and making this into a playground, improving trees and plantings. The group spoke about how we can make residents proud of the area and how pride can be instilled through this project; potentially including art.

Room 3 Meredith Bowles

There were a few issues regarding parking in the area and the surrounding development has had quite an impact on local facilities. It is generally felt that there is not enough to do in the area for both adults and children and there was difficulty in hiring spaces. Many people were keen to see some sort of leisure facility and groups that are more social. There were concerns about how the hall and the homes would fit on the site. There was some concerns about how previous hirers and payments were not enough to be able to pay for the refurbishment. There were questions over the finances:

What would be the profits from the development?

What has happened to all of the money over the years that has been given to the centre?

Why there was not any money put aside or why was there not an investment policy to pay for itself?

“Unhappy with the implication that we need to agree to the housing otherwise we don’t get an upgrade. I don’t agree with that”

There were some conditions put in place when Barnwood Hall drew up the lease for BV Hall about the size and use and they also gave money each year for the hall to be run; what has happened to that?

Wanted to reemphasise there is a real issue with parking in the area.

Room 4 Alice Hamlin

There was a strong sense that the community centre should be a real village hall, like a living room for the community. It should host a range of activities that would attract different demographics. The concerns were mainly about the footprint of the building, the height, how that would feel, and whether it would be in keeping with the existing village. There are a lack of amenities in the area. The idea of having a café seemed quite positive. Another key issue was the security and the lighting - making sure in the evenings it was well lit; the place should not feel unwelcoming and unsafe. In terms of ongoing engagement, people would very much like to see the scheme as it progresses and not just at the end when it has been finalised.

Room 5 Chris Brown

Chris was really struck by the real positive community attitude in his group, felt it was brilliant. The character of Britannia Village is low-rise. The group spoke of wanting the village hall to feel like a village hall and still part of that character. A big point was a lack of outdoor playground and the fact that the playground situated at BV Hall has been out of service. In response to that, one group member suggested that the community might be willing to pay a higher charge for better facilities, in comparison to the money spent on the cranes for example. There was a discussion about the Village green, it was acknowledged that it is great to have the space but it could be better maintained and better protected and maybe the community could come together and help find the money and put pressure on the management agents.

Room 6 Helen Fernandes

Spoke in depth about parking, and how some people have had negative experiences of car free developments in the past. Noted that it is good to have more things on for children, even if that doesn't directly affect everyone. Spoke about how this scheme would be funded, and what it would cost. Questions around why housing was decided - as opposed co-working space and other income generating community amenities. Spoke about what the balance would be between housing and community, and the fear that this might just become a block of flats and would no longer be a community centre at all. This led onto how we would make sure that the houses are affordable if the development is really expensive to build.

Room 7 Dave Mann

There was real concern about the Village Hall site and how 40 or 50 homes sounded like a large number, might affect Right to Light and not fit in with the current community feel. Also felt the village hall is providing a reasonable service as it is so why the need for all this construction? A BVG director questioned what impact this would have on BVG'S relationship with WSF concerning the Service charge. The playground is also an issue, it is disappointing that it is not up and running. It was suggested that this would be best placed on the Village green.

Room 8 Sophie Linton

The group echoed so much of what had already been said. A strong feeling that this was a really special place and unique amongst all the other high-rises buildings that are around. Again quite a lot of interest in the community centre being a place people could come to - whether for an exercise class or a café; both options would help bring people together. Concern that the development didn't overshadow the feel of the community or was out of sync with the low-rise village feel.

Room 9 Jennifer Gutteridge

Again, many points from earlier feedback reiterated and were the same. The group spoke of a real lack of amenities in the area. There are not enough spaces for people to meet and socialise. Thoughts about the design of the café included whether it could also be a place to work rather than just a café where one would have to buy something. Interested in affordability and how it would be genuinely affordable; shared ownership flats tend to have quite high service charge. There was an interesting chat about how segregated the area feels between Britannia Village Hall and Royal Wharf. The centre should try to address some of this difference and integrate things. Major concerns about the height of the building being too tall, this would impact infrastructure, drainage etc. The group spoke about making sure these homes are well accommodated.

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| | <p>Room 10 Alyson Moore The group talked about many points people have already covered. Generally, people were pleased about the concept, including housing, with the usual caveat about low-rise. Concerns about the impact in terms of infrastructure. Interesting conversation about the possibility of underground parking. Concerns about the Village green and how there are not any seats on there and some of the reasons why this was the case was talked about. Discussion around lack of play area, especially for the under 5's. Other places like Thames Barrier Park and Lyle are aimed at older children. Café and Gym popular amongst the group, also spoke about outside gym stations. It was suggested that the café and gym should be local enterprises rather than chains so that it kept money within the communities and maybe some of the people that are running them are local as well.</p> <p>Room 11 Emily Bowyer-Zaryi Important to bridge the gap between Britannia Village and Royal Wharf, people need to realise that BV is just across the road and not a dessert or river. The group wanted to make sure the facilities are welcoming and cater to all age groups. There should be better use of the outdoor space particularly gardening activities, which are a great space for kids. The main points were about drawing people in; the presentation was generally well received.</p> |
| 6 | <p><u>CC what happens next</u> Said one of the people in his group seemed a little disappointed that we did not have the final plans drawn up. CC explained to him that this was intentional, the idea of this project is not to come up with the answer and sell that to you, but to get everyone in the local community who wants to be involved to have their say from the very beginning, which is where we are now. Presented a flow chart of where we are now, and plans for the next 5 years. (please refer to the slides on our website)</p> |
| 7 | <p>HF encouraged people to come to our events, follow us on Social media and check the WSF Website to read FAQs and sign up for the development emails. Encouraged people to contact development@wsfroyaldocks.org with further questions or to arrange a meeting. Next step is for a Steering group of local residents to meet monthly. 68 people have indicated an interest in this on the survey, and although the steering group can't be that big we will contact them and form a smaller steering group of representatives. HF thanked everyone for attending and said it was great to see so many people invested in what they see as the best for this community even when people have different opinions. She advised that this was the official end to the meeting, but that the call would remain open for another 10 minutes if people had questions they wanted to ask immediately.</p> |

