

## **Notes of a Meeting of Kennington, Oval and Vauxhall Neighbourhood Forum held on 18 March at Bolney Meadow Community Centre**

### **Presentation on the formally adopted Kennington, Oval and Vauxhall Neighbourhood Plan**

Michael Keane, in the chair, welcomed all to the meeting, in person and on line, apologising for the technical difficulties. He covered the information as follows, to be issued in full detail to all attendees and those on the mailing list following the meeting.

He first thanked supporters for their help and encouragement to ensure the Neighbourhood Plan was now *made* and in force. He was pleased to confirm that the Lambeth Council website stated as follows: *'On 23 January 2026 the Council made the decision to make (formally adopt) the Kennington, Oval and Vauxhall Neighbourhood Plan. The referendum on the Kennington, Oval and Vauxhall (KOV) Neighbourhood Plan took place on Thursday 11 December 2025. The referendum had a turnout of 10%. 1,972 (83%) voted in favour of the KOV Neighbourhood Plan being used by the Council to help deciding planning applications within the KOV Neighbourhood Area. 398 voters (17%) voted against.'* The KOV Neighbourhood Plan forms part of Lambeth's Development Plan and carries full weight in planning decisions within the KOV Neighbourhood Area

The Neighbourhood Plan was the result of substantial work by many committed individuals, with the encouragement and participation of the community.

The KOV Neighbourhood Forum was established many years ago. It gained a reputation for consulting on local issues and giving the community opportunities for democratic engagement in the work of the local authority and other agencies which influence the local environment and the wellbeing of local people.

When the possibility of creating a Neighbourhood Plan was introduced the Forum held detailed discussions over a considerable time to explore and understand the process and the potential benefits. In 2015, following enthusiastic agreement to embark on preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan, the Neighbourhood Forum applied for designation and was approved by Lambeth Council as a Neighbourhood Planning Forum

The first draft KOV Plan, including ambitious detailed policies covering many community aspirations was consulted on in 2018 and revised in the light of comments received.

The Covid pandemic brought a temporary pause to the project, as did the requirement for the Forum to seek redesignation by Lambeth: plus the adoption of the new London Plan and the Lambeth Local Plan Work was continued in 2023 when it was decided to review the draft KOV Plan given the time since its publication. The wide ranging consultation and comments for the previous version remained relevant.

At this time new planning consultants joined the project offering excellent advice and support to review the NP. The Forum remains extremely grateful for their essential highly valued contribution. The Plan still covered the areas within Oval and Prince's Wards as identified before local government boundary changes. The newly constituted Vauxhall Ward was within the area of the Plan.

It was confirmed that Neighbourhood Plans must meet certain basic conditions. As such, the KOV Plan must

- have regard to national planning policy
- be in general conformity with relevant London and Lambeth planning policies
- promote sustainable development, and
- meet various legal obligations

On examination the independent examiner was satisfied confirming that the Forum successfully engaged with the local community in preparing the KOV Plan.

Many challenges and setbacks were faced and overcome. For example, in the latter stages, the Steering Group of five volunteers guided the Plan through several years of challenging negotiations with Lambeth Planning with expert advice from consultants.

The Kennington, Oval and Vauxhall Neighbourhood Plan is one of the only two Neighbourhood Plans formally approved in Lambeth.

The Chair repeated thanks to all who supported the complex process of preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and all who voted Yes in the referendum. The Chair offered warmest thanks to Helen Monger for exemplary leadership in the early stages of preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan,

### **Implementation and benefits of the Kennington, Oval and Vauxhall Neighbourhood Plan**

The key relevant information was presented as follows:

- ✓ Lambeth will use a combination of the Lambeth Local Plan policies and this Neighbourhood Plan policies to inform and determine its planning application decisions
- ✓ The KOV Forum is now a statutory consultee on planning applications made in this area and the Forum will be made aware of any future planning applications or alterations to those applications
- ✓ The Forum will seek to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan policies have been identified and applied correctly by applicants and by officers in decision reports
- A "made" (adopted) Neighbourhood Plan gives local communities statutory power to influence development, ensuring that policies reflect local needs rather than just top-down directives
- Once adopted, it becomes part of the local planning framework, influencing decisions on planning applications for the next 10 years.
- Benefits of the Neighbourhood Plan include:
  - Influence Development**
  - Protect Green Spaces**
  - Increase Local Funds:** Areas with a made plan can retain a higher percentage of funds (such as the Community Infrastructure Levy) to spend on local projects.
  - Greater say for residents:** It provides a legal, and community-led voice in tackling local issues and guiding development to align with community aspirations as identified in the Neighbourhood Plan policies
- **However.** Neighbourhood Plans cannot propose less development than the local authority's strategic plan, but can propose more and guide its design and location.

### **Comments/discussion in response to information presented on the Neighbourhood Plan**

With reference to the influence afforded by a Neighbourhood Plan, a resident explained that the emerging Neighbourhood Plan had been cited in a public inquiry conducted the previous year. Evidence was given quoting the Local Views Policy of the Neighbourhood Plan and its relevance to refusal of the appeal. The Neighbourhood Plan was referred to in the Planning Inspector's report refusing the appeal. Even though the plan was still in draft form during the inquiry, the Inspector gave the Plan's protection of strategic views significant weight in her decision. The Plan provided statutory power to influence development decisions.

A resident who had a professional interest and expertise in relation to open spaces confirmed the importance of designation of green, open spaces in the Neighbourhood Plan. Precious open spaces were under threat and designation giving extra protection at the level which applied to green belt status was important and welcome. Six local green spaces now had statutory protection.

The proposal for an inappropriately tall tower at 409 Kennington Road was identified, as was the over supply of purpose built student accommodation in the area. PBSA pushed out the potential for using development sites for social rent and otherwise affordable housing. There was widespread agreement that there was a critical shortage of social rent housing. Also, student accommodation was not liable for Council Tax, a disadvantage in terms of much needed revenue for the local authority. Residents also expressed concern in relation to the number of new, mostly high rise, flats in the Vauxhall Nine Elms area which appear to have been bought as an investment and remained unoccupied.

A resident of Kennington Oval expressed concern in relation to the Kennington Oval Reimagined (Healthy Neighbourhoods) traffic management scheme imposed by the Council in the face of the clear objections of the local community. It significantly disadvantaged residents due to the reduction in on street parking provision and the lack of parking for tradespeople, visitors, etc. This perspective was supported by a resident from the major traffic artery on the other side of the Oval who also found that day to day life was impacted due to the restrictions imposed by the St Mark's school street and lack of parking for important deliveries, etc. The resident reported some success in lobbying the Council resulting in a commitment to reinstate a loading bay and exempt residents from school street parking restrictions. It was noted that some 12 different forms of parking restrictions existed within a few streets near the centre of the KOV area creating confusion.

Concern about empty shops and loss of essential services was raised. It was noted that the Council had identified Brixton for potentially taking over properties empty for extended periods under a recently announced government initiative. There were high street/ retail/office properties in the KOV area which had been vacant for many years affecting economic viability in general. Loss of community infrastructure and essential services, such as post offices and banks, adversely impacted community wellbeing.

It was confirmed that, while not in the plan, the Forum regularly addressed and responded to issues involving, for example, Thames Water, TfL, MHCLG, developers. Traffic management was outside the scope of a Neighbourhood Plan but remained a Forum priority. It was agreed that public realm issues including parking, streetscape, and infrastructure required constant review/attention.

Maria Thacker introduced herself as representing Brixton Neighbourhood Forum which was about to embark on a preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. She acknowledged it appeared to involve a lot of work but the Forum was enthusiastic. She thanked KOV for the invitation and offered congratulations on achieving a made Neighbourhood Plan.

## **Community Priorities**

The Chair introduced the opportunity for the local community to submit community priorities to Lambeth Planning for consideration in the forthcoming review of the Lambeth Local Plan.

The increased influence as a statutory consultee on planning applications (afforded by a made Neighbourhood Plan) meant that local community priorities can be more effectively represented to Lambeth Planning. It was confirmed that early 2026 marked the start by Lambeth of the process of review of the Lambeth Local Plan. At an early stage, residents had the opportunity to make clear to Lambeth priorities for their area. For example,

- \*an explicit commitment to genuine partnership and co-production with residents/the community:
- \*creation of lifetime neighbourhoods:
- \*provision of good social infrastructure, e.g. post offices, health services, community facilities, retail, town centre functions, financial services, social care, public/community spaces:
- \*services which promote social networks, wellbeing, intergenerational dialogue, opportunities for volunteering and community involvement,
- \*increased care provision:
- \*controls on density and height:
- \*controls on office speculation:
- \*designated sites for social rent housing:
- \*potential office sites to be designated for mixed use:
- \*market sale housing to be a very low priority:
- \*vacant buildings to be designated for meanwhile uses such as low cost workspaces

The Chair invited discussion and comment with a view to submission of community priorities to Lambeth Planning on behalf of the community of Kennington. Oval and Vauxhall Neighbourhood Forum. Review of the Lambeth Local Plan presented an immediate opportunity for community involvement in the future of the Lambeth planning policy environment. In response to government initiated changes, the planning process was likely to involve fewer opportunities for public consultation, therefore, early policy engagement was critical. Members of the community were invited to offer proposals for key community priorities to include in a submission to Lambeth Planning with reference to the new Lambeth Local Plan.

## **Summary**

The Chair thanked all attendees and all who contributed to the formal adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan.

In conclusion it was agreed to:

- Post the PowerPoint presentation on the website
- Distribute meeting minutes to all on the mailing list and post on the website
- Date of Neighbourhood Forum AGM to be published at the earliest opportunity
- Publicise invitation to contribute to key community priorities to submit for inclusion in the review of the Lambeth Local Plan
- Website to include invitation to volunteers to work on issues including green spaces, public realm, traffic management, streetscape, local services, etc.

