
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel was held on Wednesday 21 April 2021.

PRESENT: Councillors M Saunders (Chair), B Hubbard (Vice-Chair), R Arundale, D Branson, D Coupe, T Furness, L Lewis and S Walker

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Chris Proctor, Programme Manager, Enjoy Waltham Forest,

OFFICERS: S Lightwing, S Bonner, S Fletcher, R Horniman, J McNally and C Orr

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor M Storey

20/56 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

20/57 **MINUTES - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL - 24 MARCH 2021**

The minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel held on 24 March 2021 were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

20/58 **MIDDLESBROUGH REGENERATION POST COVID-19 SCRUTINY REVIEW - LIVEABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS - WALTHAM FOREST COUNCIL**

Chris Proctor, Programme Manager, Enjoy Waltham Forest, gave a presentation in relation to Waltham Forest Council's Mini Holland and Liveable Neighbourhoods Programmes.

Waltham Forest was an outer London Borough in north east London. It was a diverse Borough from land use and geography, through to demographics. South of the Borough, towards inner London it was more dense, with a predominantly Victorian road network. To the north the Borough was a lot more suburban with less density of properties and increased green infrastructure.

In 2014, Waltham Forest had polluted residential streets, traffic congestions, lack of cycling facilities and green spaces, a poor walking environment and few places to sit and enjoy.

Waltham Forest Council set out its objectives to address the issues as follows:

- Join up cycle routes into a network.
- Rebalance streets to be safer for everyone.
- Reach 10% of journeys by bike by 2020.
- Create better public space and environment for everyone.
- Make Waltham Forest better connected for everyone.
- Demonstrate best practice – nationally and internationally if possible, by looking at what had worked on the continent and how that could be applied.
- Attract growth into the area by enabling growth and regeneration and ensuring policies were car free and supported with the necessary transport infrastructure.
- Support other Council objectives.

The Mayor of London introduced the Mini Holland funding programme in 2014. The programme included the introduction of cycle superhighways in London and the quiet network. A number of outer London boroughs that were traditionally car dependent areas, were awarded funding to transform infrastructure and encourage behaviour change. Waltham Forest Council was successful in obtaining funding from the Mini Holland programme, originally for 3 years but eventually for 5 years.

The vision for Waltham Forest Council's Mini Holland included:

- Lea Bridge Road – a street for everyone.
- Four Walthamstow Village schemes.
- Four Town Centre Schemes.
- A network of high quality cycle routes.
- Complementary measures.
- Secure cycle parking.

The north circular road cut the Borough in half and provided quite a neat boundary to separate the higher and lower density housing. There needed to be an integrated and holistic set of improvements, rather than just a route or an area based scheme. The scheme tried to invoke a step change in terms of how people would travel around the Borough.

A core grid of high quality cycle routes was implemented on the primary or main road network and given the nature of traffic they were separated from vehicles and pedestrians. There were also some quieter routes, using lower volume residential streets and green spaces, to build a skeletal network so that people had a real choice.

Around the town centre there were some local area based schemes designed to make roads in these areas better for walking and cycling without putting in dedicated infrastructure. So not necessarily having formal segregated cycle lanes, or crossings but looking at traffic reduction measures and making areas more suitable for walking and cycling so that theoretically, local trips could be made without using a car. Schemes were also implemented in the secondary town centres to make them more accessible and attractive and try to reduce the need for cars for these trips by joining up areas with cycle routes and public transport. Some of the key barriers as to why people did not walk and cycle included: way finding, cycle parking, training, road safety awareness and education.

It was important to have strong policy backing and documentation setting out the process and the objectives for the scheme as well as working with stakeholders, community, developers and partners. There was an annual cycle and walking count which was a snapshot of each year and in total since the project began.

The Panel were shown photographs of before and after views of several schemes implemented by Waltham Forest Council including residential areas, a public square and a major bus interchange. A total of 50 small schemes had been implemented, working with the community to encourage ownership of the spaces created and involve the public in maintenance where appropriate.

The project also tried to enable multi-modal journeys. Cycle parking was a major barrier to people both at work and at home. Secure cycle parking had been provided at all train stations so that people could cycle in for their daily commute. There was a £25 annual fee to access the cycle hubs and also secure parking hangars. Spaces for adapted bikes were also provided.

In terms of encouraging behaviour change, the following had been made available:

- Cycle skills training and maintenance.
- All ability Cycle Club.
- School Travel Plans.
- School Streets.
- Community Walking and Cycling fund.
- Zero Emissions Delivery (ZED) Service.

ZED was a fleet of electric bikes that ran deliveries to quite a few businesses in the borough both in the supply chain and providing goods to residents. ZED was now almost fully self-sustaining in terms of the operating finance.

The Liveable Neighbourhoods programme was introduced in 2018 and work had started on several programmes, taking principles from the Mini Holland schemes from previous years. Delivery was just about to start when the Covid-19 Pandemic reached the UK which had impacted on funding. The Coppermill Scheme included some large development areas in

terms of sustainable new housing growth and linking it into the Mini Hollands. The Coppermill Master Plan included interventions such as new crossings, cycle infrastructure, road closures to through traffic, walking improvements along some of the main roads, looking at the walking environment. It was an area based scheme with 40 or 50 interventions in it.

Key achievements included:

- More than 40km of segregated cycle lanes.
- 80 modal filters (road closures to through traffic).
- 160+ Copenhagen Crossings (continuous footways).
- 35 new formal crossings, 61 upgraded pedestrian/cycle crossings.
- Planted more than 700 trees and created 40 pocket parks/public spaces.
- 1,850 metres square of land returned back to the forest at Whipps Cross.
- 540 cycle hangars
- Provided 7 station cycle hubs with 546 secure parking spaces. 4 more in construction.
- Over 10000 school children and 7500 adults had received free cycle training.
- 311 people had taken part in All Ability Cycling sessions.
- Almost 4000 bikes had been serviced by Dr Bike.
- 392 residents had utilised the Community Bike Loan scheme and 101 residents had utilised the Cargo Bike Loan Scheme.

In terms of the economic benefits there had been some case studies about the economic benefit of public realm improvements. One study had looked at vacancy rates in shops and whether they had changed since schemes were implemented.

There had also been a review of the first village scheme in the area which showed a reduction in vehicle numbers and increases in walking and cycling. Most people were accepting of the measures although some wanted them reduced or removing altogether. A study by the University of Westminster found that people living in Mini Holland areas were walking an extra 32 minutes and cycling an extra 9 minutes per week compared to the outer London average.

In the last 6 to 9 months there had been a study on the impact of low traffic neighbourhoods, changes in car ownership, road traffic, road traffic collisions, crime, emergency service response times and research started to show that there had been some change and positive outcomes.

Some of the key arguments and reasons for opposition to the schemes included:

- Impact on emergency services.
- Displacement – concerns over increased traffic, pollution and congestion on some roads..
- Longer journey distances and times for those who needed to drive.
- Only intended to benefit the few.
- Community severance.
- Impact on businesses.
- Lack of consultation.

Strategies employed to overcome the challenges included:

- Strong political leadership and senior leadership team.
- More data and research needed to myth bust/outline benefits.
- Continually adapting and enhancing engagement approach.
- Part of wider transport/behaviour change strategy to reduce traffic volume and impact.

It was acknowledged that the availability of different transport modes in London was greater than in Middlesbrough. It was important to try and form an understanding of what trips took place in the town and how infrastructure could be designed.

AGREED that the information provided was received and noted.

MIDDLESBROUGH REGENERATION POST COVID-19 SCRUTINY REVIEW - MIDDLEHAVEN MASTER PLAN

Following investment from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and Middlesbrough Council, clearance work had taken place at Middlehaven to provide a blank canvass for development. There had been several masterplans for the area but none had come to fruition due to several factors including; the global recession, lack of funding, development values and much of the land being in different ownerships.

There had been some successes including Middlesbrough College campus, Boho 1 and Boho 5 and My Place. However a large area of Middlehaven was still undeveloped. Circumstances had changed over time but accelerated in a positive direction over the last couple of years. The Council now had control over the area although there was still some land from which the proceeds of any sale had to be shared with the HCA.

The Council had been successful in bringing funding into Middlehaven and it was easier to sell to Developers now because it was a blank canvass. Almost £30 million had been secured through the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) for various projects and the Towns Fund project was focussed on Middlehaven. The Council had also recently secured £7.9 million from the Brownfield Housing Fund to spend on site preparation.

Market opportunities had changed with a shift to more urban living as well as a lot more interest in commercial development through the growth of the digital sector and others. As the College had expanded there was more interest in educational opportunities and a new secondary school would be built there.

BCEGI, one of the world's biggest building companies, as well as being a Funder and Developer, had been brought on board to provide expertise that was not available in-house or locally.

One of the key issues about developing a masterplan for Middlehaven was that it had to be planned in a coherent way, so that different schemes would not be competing against each other. As different schemes came forward they were all working within their own boundaries and the spaces in between: public realm, transport infrastructure, open space, all needed to be planned properly. It was also vital that new developments were phased properly. Bringing lots of property to the market at once could depress values and dampen some of the enthusiasm for Middlehaven. However, due to various funding streams, the Council did need to bring developments to market at a slightly faster pace than would have been the ideal.

The masterplan needed to tell a clear story so that anyone who was thinking about investing in Middlehaven could see what was happening and when. The masterplan would give the area an identity and guide investment decisions as well as helping prioritise project delivery and secure further external funding. It would also assist in convincing investors who were currently interested in Middlehaven, as well as those who were not currently interested, that there was big development happening and there was potential to deliver it all.

The Council wanted to be proactive about the spaces in between developments so that there was good public realm and public transport infrastructure and it became a good place, rather than a series of good projects. Transport links were a critical part of that. The new masterplan was not a change of direction, it was about making sure that the Council's direction was deliverable. The masterplan was a mixture of residential, commercial, and education developments and making sure that it was a coherent place with all of those component parts.

The dock bridge had opened the site up from the east and there was close proximity to the A19 and A66 corridors. Investment in the Rail Station and direct trains to London were also a good selling point. Middlehaven was also close to the town centre and retail and leisure offer.

In terms of current progress, Boho 8 which was 10,000 square feet of new modular commercial space for new companies, had been completed and demand for space was high. Bohouse North, which was Thirteen Group's second development, comprising 40 new live/work properties for digital and creative professionals, would be finished by May. Also, site works had started on Boho Bright Ideas which was 60 homes for families and young professionals. A total of 60,000 square feet of Grade A commercial space for the digital sector was in the pipeline and Boho X would be on site in August 2021. The Outwood

Riverside Academy, a 900 place secondary school specialising in technology would also be built.

There were some challenges as to how people would move around the area and how the educational offer fitted in. The biggest challenge was the five brownfield housing sites that would take 634 units of housing. This development required careful planning so that it sat as a coherent place to live rather than five separate housing developments that bore no relation to each other.

Funding had also been obtained to restore the Old Town Hall and the Captain Cook Public House. Work had started on the public house and Officers were planning how the Old Town Hall could sit as the centrepiece of Middlehaven again. There were also proposals for an urban farm to the northwest of Middlehaven which would be coming forward soon. The draft masterplan would be submitted to the Executive in summer 2021 for approval.

A Member queried the fact that the park in Middlehaven had been neglected and that did not send a good message to potential investors. It was confirmed that this issue would be picked up by Environment Services.

It was clarified that following the recent completion of legal proceedings, the former scrapyard site would be cleared and any additional costs for the clearance would be forwarded to the previous owner.

In relation to transport there was an infrastructure plan as part of the masterplan that considered bus, walking and cycling routes and peoples' ability to move around without always using a car. Commercial buildings usually wanted staff car parking spaces so there was a balance to be struck. People would not necessarily have a parking space on their drive so there had to be provision for electric charging points.

There was some interest in the area previously earmarked for the Snow Centre and the dockside was particularly attractive for residential and also offices.

One of the proposals for the Old Town Hall was a market place with a food and drink offer. Funding from the Towns Fund was available to renovate either the Old Town Hall or the Captain Cook Public House to a state where the building could be brought to market. There was no decision as to which project would take priority as it depended on the market interest.

In relation to a query regarding land contamination it was explained that a large area of the land had been remediated to a standard, although not necessarily the standard for housing. Funding of £7.9 million was available to complete remedial work on the five housing sites over the next 18 months.

There was also a proposal in relation to combined heat and power and energy generation from the water. Net zero buildings would be a good selling point.

AGREED that the information provided was received and noted.

20/60 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE**

The Chair provided a verbal update on items considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 8 April 2021.

20/61 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED**

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for their contributions to the Panel over the last two years.