

Press Release from Highgate Neighbourhood Forum

Highgate Neighbourhood Plan launched for residents' views.

The Highgate Neighbourhood Plan, the result of two years of work by the Highgate Neighbourhood Forum was launched this week with an appeal to Highgate residents to 'tell us what you think'.

The Forum, a new body elected by the local community as a result of the 2012 Localism Act, is running a series of workshops and informal consultations, open to all, to collect as many comments as possible. It has published the plan on its website, www.highgateneighbourhoodforum.org.uk, where it is possible to comment on the Plan.

Rachel Allison, Chair of the Forum, said, 'This is a historic moment. Highgate is split between different boroughs, with different planning policies. This is the first time there has been a comprehensive plan, drawn up by local people, which covers Highgate as a whole, regardless of which side of the High St you live'.

'Over the next six weeks, we are inviting as many people in Highgate as possible to read the plan and to let us know what they think on the website or in person. We shall be holding workshops on the next two Saturdays and we will be out and about on the streets to explain what is happening, and collect ideas. We want to hear the views of everyone who lives or works in Highgate'.

The plan's 'Vision for Highgate' says, 'It should be a vibrant place that protects its unique character and heritage, while embracing new ideas and beneficial change. It should be home to a community that can work together to meet local needs, while respecting its differences and diversity. It should be a neighbourhood that complements and connects with neighbouring communities. All of these factors combined should make Highgate a better place both to live and work.'

The plan covers everything from traffic and economic policy to preservation of open spaces and sites where sustainable development for commercial and housing purposes might be permitted.

It comes out strongly in support of maintaining the old horticultural land in the Highgate Bowl, including the former garden centre, as publicly accessible open space. But it also identifies key sites for potential

development including the builders' yards off Muswell Hill Road, and railway land close to Highgate Wood, as well as what it calls 'Highgate's forgotten station', the disused surface line platforms above Highgate Tube Station. Here it suggests sensitive reuse of the old buildings and floats the idea of a knowledge or business centre, as well as improved pedestrian routes through the adjoining open land.

The Plan says, 'Highgate is an area, in planning terms, which is split between a number of London Boroughs and has never benefited from a cohesive and singular set of development guidelines that recognise and seek to preserve the unique character and needs of the neighbourhood area.

'The people of Highgate therefore felt that they should seize the opportunity presented by neighbourhood planning through the Localism Act to define their boundaries and provide a set of statutory policies that can genuinely influence the quality and quantity of development within Highgate. This Plan has set out to identify the issues and opportunities that exist in Highgate and create clear policies that seek to overcome them or embrace them.'

The Plan is the result of a process which began with leaflets being delivered to 8,000 households in Highgate to seek people's views about the issues which mattered to them. A series of workshops and consultations followed and more than 50 people were involved in drafting the conclusions into a coherent neighbourhood plan, one of the first in the country.

After the six week consultation, the Forum will draw up a revised plan taking public comments into account. The Plan will then go to an Independent Examiner appointed by Camden and Haringey Councils. If he or she says it complies with the Council's Local Plans and the National Planning Framework, the Councils will conduct their own Consultation and then organise a referendum on the Plan of all those on the electoral register in the area.

For further information –

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