

Central Brixton Public Realm (Streets & Places) Workshop

Tuesday 15th October , 6:30 – 8:30pm St. Vincent's Community Centre, Brixton



SUMMARY: ISSUES & COMMENTS (draft)

ATTENDANCE

Sixteen people attended, including all three Coldharbour Ward Councillors. Representation among local cyclists was high; there were a few older but not elderly people present. Less well represented were BME's, and youth. The discussion was lively, with many participants well informed and clear in their opinions, living in the area for many years and sharing a strong interest in welfare of Brixton

BRIXTON SETTING/ ECONOMY

There was general agreement that Brixton's markets anchor the economy of Brixton and give it meaning; they need to be celebrated and invested in. A larger core with more shops and many new residents was viewed as good for Brixton but there was wariness from some attendees regarding the gentrification that may be inherent in this.

There was general assent that people should be encouraged to 'journey' around Brixton – find out more about what it has to offer.

No disagreement was raised to the general analysis, eg lot of travel to and from by bus, large catchment within 15' walk, roads act as barriers to pleasant walking and cycling, etc.

TRAFFIC

The volume and effect of car travel in central Brixton, and the nature of the link between car use and market health was a recurrent topic of debate.

The majority of attendees felt vehicular traffic not conducive to sociability, and was an inefficient use of space. The market trader Federation representative stated that Brixton markets needs a central car park and parking near retailers; in particular, this is necessary for the bulk purchasing that integral to some businesses. He suggested cars are represent movement of people and goods. This point was contested:

- vehicular traffic going through and not stopping in Brixton does not support its economy
- pedestrians support markets in number far higher than drivers.
- fewer than half people in Lambeth don't have cars , most don't use them often [figures not corroborated yet]

Lambeth Cyclists noted that 'sustainable' travel (walking and cycling) was given top priority Lambeth's CIL [transport planning and funding document]priority. Conclusion to be drawn from this Council needs to encourage these modes of travel and make travelling by car less inconvenient - e.g. indirect routes, expensive parking.

Council indicated that 22 parking spaces were to be included in the brief for redevelopment of the Ice Rink site.

A tangential point was made noting some car ownership in this area is within low income households where employees would have a difficult public transport commute, due to direction and hour of travel.

PAVEMENTS/ ROADWAY DESIGN

Another recurrent topic was how streets encouraging walking and cycling might be shared with vehicles. There was agreement that more pedestrian friendly streets were in the town's best interest but no consensus was reached on how to achieve this; it is expected that this debate will be focus of next workshop.

Initial comments on Brixton streets focused on Brixton Road, with note made of the difficulties posed by congested pavements around town centre bus stops. Several people agreed it was the location of stops that is to blame and requested that LB Lambeth Transport bring this matter to Transport for London [G. Wright has relayed note to department head]. There were also complaints about the short duration of pedestrian crossing lights at the Coldharbour and Effra Rd crossings of Brixton Rd.

Several options for making central Brixton – the triangle between Atlantic Rd and Coldharbour Lane – more pedestrian friendly were discussed:

- shared surface
- widened pavement with low kerbs
- one way traffic system
- closure of triangle to through traffic

Shared surface was viewed warily – particularly for the young, old, poorly sighted – and Exhibition Rd is an example of where this treatment feels unsafe. Widened pavements were welcomed but several cyclists said this left less room for cyclists and preferred dedicated, separate lanes be provided. Closure of streets to through traffic has been successful in nearby residential areas.

CYCLING

Points made about cycling:

- In general, if '8 to 80 yrs comfortable on bike' goal in the Lambeth's Cycle Strategy is to be achieved, some areas will require separate bike lanes; widening pavements has negative effect on cyclists if they then have to share road surface with cars.
- Interest was expressed in making it less difficult for cyclists to cross Brixton Rd from CHL to Acre Lane
- Atlantic Rd is a well used commuter route but not cycle friendly when cars back up at CHL junction.
- more cycle parking is needed, this should be in an area where 'natural surveillance' or CCTV is present; agreement too that tiered parking would be useful short term goal.

AREA BY AREA ANALYSIS

There was no disagreement with the team's 'Assessment' slides of current condition and use, in any of the study areas. In order of their presentation, comments received regarding 'Opportunities' were:

ATLANTIC ROAD / COLDHARBOUR LANE

When considering Atlantic Road, don't leave out shopping area south of CHL [included on diagram]; this area is struggling a bit though the evening economy there is reasonably vibrant; it was suggested that the adjacent streets (to CHL side) are quiet and considered 'no go' areas because of high levels of drug dealing.

Sections of the market on Atlantic can get 'grotty', in part because shops flush animal wastes into street gulleys.

Coldharbour Lane has bus route on it, and is a priority route for emergency vehicles. This is particularly important if proposals to stop traffic under the viaduct are being considered.

ELECTRIC AVENUE / POPE'S ROAD / STATION RD

Everyone agreed Electric Avenue should a highlight of Brixton markets and in present condition is disappointing; cluttered, buildings in poor repair, and paving deteriorated (it is claimed recent tarmac installation was done to low standard). Bollards or some sort of boundary is needed to keep heavy vehicles away from building's cellars (maybe subject of an arts project?) and periodically retailer's wares creep well into the pedestrian pavement. The latter is a subject that stall holders and retailers periodically argue about, leading to cyclical enforcement notices from LB Lambeth.

Markets need anchor points in paving to keep canvas covers steady in high winds; other 'wish list' items can be provided in tour offered by BMTF representative.

Concern was expressed about viability if existing stalls along Pope's Rd are moved in to new Station Square area; in shorter term BMTF not sure the public toilets can be kept running, due to lack of revenue funding.

There was general agreement that the new paving on parts of Pope' Rd and Station Rd has improved its appearance and the changes to vehicle access and materials at the corner works well, making the area more attractive to shoppers.

There was agreement that the Rec and square near Brixton Road could feature artwork, particularly as there is a base of artists living and working in the area. It was noted that the Rec is being renovated, not redeveloped.

POPE'S ROAD LEISURE AREA

There was no objection to expanding outdoor leisure opportunities in this area. Points of stopping (places to sit) are needed – especially for older people and with an aging population.

Some people were not aware of development plans for area (e.g. the Canterbury Arms and International House sites).

QUIET AREAS (BRIGHTON TERRACE.

Generally, it was reported that pedestrianised areas to edge of town centre (including Windrush Square) suffer from use as public urinals. Provision of toilets (or temporary urinals) would help made these places pleasant. These areas also could have an arts focus.

ST. MATTHEWS CHURCHYARD

Discussion focused on the off-putting effect of persistent street drinking; there was agreement that this needs addressing with a holistic, interactive approach (including social services, partnership working, more 'natural

surveillance' from more different users) going forward, rather than simply moving them on. Some participants supported provision of 'single' seats, rather than benches, in order to limit possibility of mis-use.

ACRE LANE

There was support for redressing the imbalance of large amount of paving dedicated to vehicle use; some people agreed planting strip would be best, others want a dedicated cycle lane. Consideration could be given to combining these two items.

Appendix: ATTENDEES

ATTENDEES (/REPRESENTING)

Andrew Beale
Jo Sloman
Sandy Lloyd
Aminah Borg – Luck
Charlie Holland / Lambeth Cyclists
Shola Davies / LBL Townscape Heritage Initiative
Alan Piper / Brixton Society
Simon Still
Jean Kerrigan
Stuart Horwood / Brixton Market Traders Federation
Chris Foges
Anonymous (x2)

COLDHARBOUR WARD COUNCILLORS

Rachel Heywood
Donatus Anyawu
Matt Parr

PROJECT TEAM

Tom Bridgman/ LB Lambeth Regeneration
George Wright / LB Lambeth Transport
Bridget Snaith/ Shape Lanscape Architects
Richard Peckham/ Shape
Stephen O'Malley / Civic Engineers