



Annual General Meeting 2022

Notting Hill East Neighbourhood Forum

18th May 2022, St. Stephens Church

Attending Committee Members	Primary Role	Abbr.
Richard Perkins	Chair	RP
Penny Bagnall-Smith	Vice Chair	PBS
Annabel Noth	Secretary	AN
Andrew Pilkington	Planning	AP
David Rea	Planning	DR
Steven Clutton	Website	SC
Suzanne Forte	Liaison Westminster Forums	SF

Apologies

Glenn Taylor	Treasurer
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Minutes

1. Welcome from the Chairman

Chairman Richard Perkins (RP) opened meeting by thanking those attending then handed the floor to representatives of Clean Air Bayswater

2. Presentation from Clean Air Bayswater

(Local community group working with Breathe London have air quality monitors installed in the local area). The speakers from this group informed the meeting that two air quality monitors are now active in our neighbourhood and that live and historic data can be reviewed at <https://www.clean-air-bayswater.co.uk>. They invited all attending to a public meeting hosted by themselves at St Stephen's Church June 15th at 7pm.

3. Introduction

Chairman Richard Perkins briefly explained the history of and distinction between NHENF and WNA and spoke of his personal motivations for joining both groups. RP commented how fortunate we are to live in such a quiet, green, and beautiful part of London, but also

pointed out areas for improvement, particularly in comparison to other major cities. RP spoke briefly on the role community groups can play in the improvement process.

RP also noted that NHENF/WNA is invited by Westminster Council (WCC) to comment on local Planning Applications. The Chairman stressed that NHENF/WNA have published planning guidelines to provide transparency to local residents on how NHENF/WNA will respond. He explained that these planning guidelines can be found on the website (<https://nottinghilleast.org.uk/planning/>) and praised the Planning Sub-Committee for their consistency and commitment to these guidelines.

Chairman Richard Perkins spoke of the desire to improve our neighbourhood through targeted projects and how these projects might be funded by Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds. He explained that when large development projects within Westminster area are approved the sponsors must contribute to a general CIL fund. This fund can be accessed by community groups within Westminster to fund projects, provided they have feasible plans and can demonstrate community support.

4. Accounts

(In the absence of the Treasurer the presentation of accounts fell to Chairman RP).

A single page document was presented showing bank account balances at 31st March for three prior years (2022, 2021, 2020) and all transactions for the period 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022. The balance at 31st March 2022 was £8,701, up £98 from the opening balance of £8,603. Only one expense was recorded for the current period (£412 accountancy fees), and donations totalling £510 were received. No questions or objections were raised by those attending.

5. Approval of Minutes from prior AGM

Chairman Richard Perkins asked for approval of the minutes from the previous AGM (2019). RP explained the minutes had been published on the website and no questions or objection had been raised. RP noted that NHENF/WNA has had some difficulty emailing all members as changes in privacy laws mean that we need all members to opt in to receive communications. In the absence of questions or objections from those attending the minutes of prior AGM were approved.

6. Election of Committee Members

RP informed those attending that all current members of the Committee were standing for re-election and invited all those attending to nominate prospective Committee members. RP declared that Nicole Bange had been proposed by the current committee for the role of Business Liaison.

Questions/comments from attending

- a) Who decides the roles for Committee members?
- b) How do we decide that a new role is required?
- c) Are the positions advertised in advance?

- d) Could a more formal system be introduced to determine what roles are required?
- e) How often does the Committee meet?

Responses from committee members

- a) RP stated that the Committee members discuss their personal and professional experience, and the group decides collectively. He noted that roles are rotated occasionally. SF stated that this process is in line with the NHENF constitution, but constitutional amendments are possible if members wish to change the existing process.
- b) PBS stated that roles arise organically when the committee becomes aware of work that needs to be done
- c) SF stated that two newsletters are published each year calling for nominations to the Committee, and that this call is repeated at all hosted events.
- d) AP suggested that we could use the website to advertise specific roles if we become aware of them. SF pointed out that committee members generally contribute across all issues as the committee is so small
- e) RP responded that meetings of the full committee happen four times annually, but sub-committees meet more regularly citing the example of weekly meetings for the Planning Sub-committee.

Following the Q&A session no new committee members were put forward by those attending. Chairman RP asked for a formal proposal to re-elect the of existing committee plus Business Liaison, Nicole Bange. Proposal received from Howard Raingold and seconded by David Stockley.

7. Presentation of Project Proposals

Suzanne Forte (SF) started with an overview of public realm projects recently completed in our area citing a new countdown crossing at Talbot/Chepstow roads, installation of table tennis table and noticeboards in St. Stephens Gardens, and major improvements to Shrewsbury Gardens. SF discussed the negotiations with WCC on the Shrewsbury Gardens project noting unless we used the bins and benches provided by WCC we would need to supply and assume responsibility for maintenance of any non-standard items. SF used this experience to discuss the wider topic of how design can influence the public realm and provided a summary of recent discussions with WCC on this topic. SF commented that Westminster, with its many tourists, was London's public face to the world, and its Public Realm should be on a level equal to its extraordinarily beautiful buildings and green spaces. SF showed examples of how phone boxes, electric relay boxes, bike stands, streetlamps, water fountains, tree planting choices, retail signage standards, and residential lighting can negatively or positively impact a community. SF stated that WCC admitted they had limited power to prevent installations by utility companies with statutory rights and commented that via an approved Neighbourhood Plan the local community might be able to designate specific areas for these necessary but unsightly installations.

SF noted that there is currently £12,000 of CIL funds available for local public realm projects and asked those attending to review a list of potential projects that had been prepared through community consultation. The NHENF committee had attempted to place rough cost estimates against the listed projects and SF invited all attending to help prioritise expenditure by ranking the suggested projects (ballots provided for this purpose). It was noted that some projects would require waiting for more CIL funds and this was an option. Various committee members spoke briefly about each proposed project and invited comments and questions. The project proposals can be viewed in full at <https://nottinghilleast.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan/> under "Section 4 – Our Projects".

Questions/comments from attending

Shrewsbury Gardens, road works, electric vehicle charging

- a) After the improvements to Shrewsbury Gardens is it still intended to be a haven for dogs?
- b) Will a dog toilet be installed at Shrewsbury Gardens?
- c) Digging up of roads by utility companies does not appear to be co-ordinated, Chepstow is continual dug up, multiple times in a year. Who is in charge of this? Does the council have a requirement to co-ordinate road works? Can NHENF comment on this?
- d) Attendee stated opinion that WCC is behind schedule on installing electric car charging points
- e) Attendee disputed that WCC is behind on electric charging points, stated that in fact it is ahead of the rest of the UK and seen a leader in this field. He stated that as a community we should push for overnight chargers rather than fast chargers as these are more beneficial to the local residents and take up much less street space.
- f) Attendee asked if each electric charging point could have two outlet plugs instead of one.
- g) Attendee responded that due to 5kw power limitations only one plug per charger unit was possible in his opinion.

Five Ways Project

- h) What will the currently vacant corner building at the Five Ways become?
- i) Proposed corner extensions and tree planting for Five Ways project may conflict with bus routes

- j) What is a “domed central road section” mentioned in the Five Ways project?

St Stephens and Shrewsbury Gardens Project

- k) Can we install a bench plaque in one of the new Shrewsbury Gardens benches honouring Pat Burns?
- l) The gate springs for the play area in St Stephens Garden are too strong and have caused injury to children already and WCC will not respond to complaints on this issue.
- m) Attendee commented that knives have been found concealed in the foliage of St Stephens Garden and police allegedly said that this is common practice for drug gangs

Needham Road Project

- n) Manager of the Cock & Bottle pub was attending and stated that the pub has a much better relationship with local Needham Road residents since instituting greater control on noise and disturbance. He further alleged that the residents who previously opposed changes to Needham Road had expressed regret and would now be in favour.

Other Projects

No direct questions or comments were raised about the following projects.

Wessex Garden Entrance, Pedestrian Crossings, Air Quality Monitoring, Street Lamp Replacement, Business Support and Branding, Drinking Fountains, Additional Street Trees, Notting Hill East Design Guide.

Responses from committee members

Shrewsbury Gardens, road works, electric vehicle charging

- a) SF noted that dogs are supposed to remain on leashes, but the community see this park as “dog friendly”. SF stated that if dogs off leashes presents a problem, then we could petition WCC for stricter enforcement, but at present the attitude of NHENF would be to try to accommodate all users as it is a nice space for dog owners to meet and socialise. SF also noted that the dog population grew during the covid lockdowns, and this might be placing more pressure on the other users of the park.
- b) Not planned but SF noted that WCC rules allow dog litter to be placed in all bins, not just the ones for this specific purpose. Not all residents are aware of this so perhaps we should place a “dog litter” sign on at least one bin. And signs on the entrance asking park users to watch their dogs so they know when they need to pick up litter. SF invited suggestions to solve these issues.

- c) RP noted that the utility companies have a statutory right to carry out these activities. DR stated that Chepstow Road was recently dug up multiple times due to an error in the road reinforcement materials used that had to be corrected. SF offered to write to Highways department at WCC explaining resident concerns.

Items (d) (e) (f) (g) were resolved directly by those attending in a group discussion. No further comment was required by NHFNF/WNA committee members. AN pointed out that it is possible to request an electric charging point from WCC for your street, and AP stated that Google Maps now displays charging point locations.

Five Ways Project

- h) Proposal is currently for a private members club, which committee supports in preference to a vacant property, but has petitioned to allow some form of public access. (AP,DR)
- i) Proposal has considered the impact on traffic, but design is not final and Highways department will be involved in the design process. All input and comment on the design is very welcome. (AP,DR)
- j) This refers to a gentle rise in the road level towards the centre of the diagonal crossing. Similar to what is seen at Oxford Circus. (AP, DR)

St Stephens and Shrewsbury Gardens

- k) We have already written to Parks department requesting this and will follow up. (SF)
- l) We will bring this matter to the attention of WCC for comment. (SF)
- m) Perhaps we can prune the proposed shrubs to sit off the ground so as not to offer hiding places. (SF)

Needham Road Project

- n) Encouraging to hear that relationship with residents has improved and support is growing for this project. (SF)

Project Voting

Ballots were distributed to all attending to allow them to vote for project priorities. Each voter was asked to allocate 10 points across all possible projects, allowing them to choose multiple projects of equal weight, or to allocate all points to a single project if they strongly preferred just one. The committee agreed to tally the points for each project and provide feedback.

8. Presentation of Neighbourhood Plan

Committee member Penny Bagnall Smith (PBS) explained the steps involved in creating a Neighbourhood Plan and outlined the steps already completed and those still to achieve. PBS noted that feedback from previous AGM had already been incorporated into the Plan via revisions and that the next step was consultation with WCC. It was noted that in essence the Plan had two major focuses, maintaining greenery and maintaining character/beauty. These can be roughly interpreted as limiting development to protect rear gardens and maintaining front gardens and restoring architectural details to facades.

Penny explained that a questionnaire on specific policies within the Plan was recently distributed to WNA/NHENF members. The limited distribution was to help the committee understand if the questionnaire had been clearly written before circulating it more widely. The questionnaire is now live on our website for all local residents to give their feedback and help shape the final revisions to the Plan.

Committee member Anabel Noth presented the results from the initial questionnaire distribution and started by noting that from 200 invites 40 full responses (20%) were received and this was a good result. AN noted that many people opened the survey link but did not complete the questions indicating that we need the first page to be more inviting.

Survey Questions and Results

Q1: Should anyone be allowed to have a rear terrace (52.5%) or only those with no other outdoor space (47.5%) ?

Q2: Should mansard extensions follow the current WCC guidelines (71.4%) or should more freedom of design be permitted (28.6%) ?

Q3: Should a minimum "square" of rear garden be maintained ? Yes= 87.5%

Q4a: Should rear extensions be limited in size and projection at upper levels? Yes = 87.8%

Q4b: Should a greater variety of styles and materials be permitted on these extensions? Yes = 54.8%

Q5: Should small bay, oriels, and projections be permitted at any level on backs of terraces? Yes = 70%

Q6: For infill extensions do you accept the principle that the bigger the existing extension the smaller the infill should be to preserve the garden "square"? Yes = 87.2%

Questions/comments from attending

- a) Attendee commented that he is in favour of many of the Neighbourhood Plan policies presented but believes WCC's planning officers would not be. Question asked was how do we influence WCC planning decision makers to adopt our policies?

- b) Attending committee member of the Hereford Road Association asked for clarification of how NHENF will work with WCC planning department if the Plan is ratified and whether the views of NHENF will “trump” those of WCC. Stated that the Hereford Road residents are especially concerned with requirements to re-instate “architectural detail” and expressed concerns over who would decide what details are appropriate and whether the additional costs imposed are reasonable. Linked the concerns over administration of the Plan with concerns over NHENF governance, which he viewed as having “serious” need for improvement and labelled as “cosy” and “opaque”.
- c) Further comment re: Hereford Road, why NHENF is seeking to impose further restrictions and bureaucracy on owners of Listed Buildings?
- d) When questioned whether the concerns (b) (c) were cost driven the attendee responded that the concern was not cost, but rather having another organisation injected into the planning process.
- e) Attendee expressed concern that WCC planners would ignore the Neighbourhood Plan even if approved via a local referendum.
- f) Attendee asked if the attending group would be approving or proposing the Plan at the AGM?
- g) Is there a minimum quorum for the Neighbourhood Plan referendum?
- h) Hereford Road resident wished to clarify why the residents of this street are so concerned about planning regulations. There was a legal battle with WCC over burglar alarms some years ago, and although the residents won the case, they felt WCC had attempted to “bully” them. They are now sensitive to all planning issues and don’t wish to be bullied again.
- i) Attendee passed on an apology from a newly elected councillor (unnamed) for not attending the AGM as it conflicted with a full council meeting. The councillor requested (via this attendee) a copy of the minutes.

Response from committee members

- a) Once the Plan is ratified via a referendum it will have legal status, until then we can only point out resident concerns via engagement with WCC (DR). As we progress towards ratification the Plan will acquire more status with WCC. Through our regular engagement with WCC they already recognise that the objectives of the Plan are aligned with the environmental goals of the Westminster City Plan and have agreed to direct planning applicants to our existing planning guidelines (PBS). Once the Neighbourhood Plan is ratified WCC will have to refer to the “local policy” when making planning decisions, although WCC have already expressed the opinion that their own planning process will “sit on top” of the “local policy” (AP).

- b) Once the Plan is ratified it will be administered by WCC, not the NHENF. Similarly, it is not up to NHENF to decide what architectural details are appropriate, this would be a WCC responsibility (PBS). *Attendee responded that this is not clear in the Plan and should be stated.* PBS further noted that one of the proposed CIL fund projects is to create a local Design Guide to help WCC planners in these decisions.
- c) Listed Buildings would fall under existing rules and planning decisions would continue to be made by Heritage Officers. If this is not clear in the Plan then it should be revised to make it clear (PBS).
- d) The Forum seeks to capture the views of local residents and turn them into policies for the Neighbourhood Plan. In this role we have solicited the views of local residents and one view that emerged was that restoration of architectural detail was desirable. NHENF is not seeking to control the planning process but rather to reflect the expressed views of local residents (SF).
- e) Committee member (SF) who attends the “Forum or Forums” meetings (which are attended by organisations proposing Neighbourhood Plans within Westminster) commented that all Forums are keen to ensure that WCC planners are paying attention to Neighbourhood Plans, and they are, and this is increasing as more Plans are approved.
- f) The purpose of the AGM is not to approve the Plan. We first need to circulate the Plan questionnaire to the local neighbourhood (currently has only been circulated to NHENF / WNA members) and use the feedback to finalise the Plan submitted to WCC, who will then formally consult local residents and organise a referendum (PBS).
- g) No minimum threshold for voting participation, simple majority vote required.
- h) NHENF has invited Hereford Road Association to provide alternative policy wording in respect of the architectural details policy and is happy to work collaboratively on this. The context of the policy on architectural details is that it applies to renovations where the property is being expanded and the costs are already likely to be significant (SF). There is already a similar policy in operation within WCC planning that is referred to as “heritage benefits” whereby proposals are looked upon more favourably when they include restoration of architectural details (DR).
- i) No direct response given to this comment, but minutes of the meeting will be publicly available. *Committee member (SC) also took the email address of the attendee to pass on the minutes directly.*

9. Closing remarks and upcoming events

Chairman RP thanked the committee members for all the work associated with hosting the AGM and creating the Neighbourhood Plan. The following upcoming events were announced

- “Bring your own dish” Jubilee Party at Needham Road Sunday 5th June
- Guided neighbourhood historic walk in September
- Next formal meeting of NHENF will be near Christmas
- Annual Garden Competition is approaching, and volunteer is required to act as competition judge.

10. Another Other Business

Local artist announced exhibition at the Porchester Library on Friday 20th May and invited all attending to join the exhibition