

NORWOOD ACTION GROUP AND NORWOOD FORUM

DRAFT

Localism Act 2011

APPLICATION FOR THE DESIGNATION OF THREE NORWOOD WARDS AS A NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA AND FOR THE “NORWOOD PLANNING ASSEMBLY” TO BE THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING FORUM FOR THIS AREA

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1) INTRODUCTION

This document is an application to Lambeth Council, as the local planning authority, to designate three wards in Norwood as a neighbourhood planning area and for the “Norwood Planning Assembly” (NPA) to be a planning forum for this area. The NPA has been constituted by the Norwood Action Group and the Norwood Forum for the purposes of creating a Norwood Plan under the Localism Act 2011. The governing body for the NPA is in the form of a joint meeting of both bodies, hence the term, assembly. Set out below is a statement explaining why the three wards are appropriate as the neighbourhood area. There is a statement explaining how the NPA meets the conditions for a neighbourhood forum. This is supported by a draft constitution and a map indicating the area to be designated.

2) DESIGNATION OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

Norwood is a town centre which has an identity which is regarded by the council as distinct. There is a Norwood Masterplan which has been used as the working guidance on planning matters. This contains detailed policies which are within the three local government wards of Knights Hill, Thurlow Park and Gipsy Hill. The current draft Lambeth Local Plan is consistent with this area and treats the three wards as comprising West Norwood. The population is about 30,000. West Norwood is classified as a “district centre” according to the London plan. There was in existence for ten years a council-defined Area Committee of the nine councillors from these wards which was part of the council’s constitution. This was the “Norwood Area Committee”. The Lambeth wards next door (Streatham Wells, Streatham Hill and Tulse Hill) fitted into the Streatham and Brixton area committees. There has been no suggestion that wards in Bromley or Croydon should link with West Norwood. It should be noted however that cross-boundary liaison between the boroughs is an important issue which a Norwood planning forum should consider.

There are two community groups in particular, of the several in existence, which have long operated in the West Norwood area and acted in the general community interest. Norwood Action Group, which continuously

includes planning matters in its activities, is one. The other group, the Norwood Forum, has evolved over several years and represents a continuity of local voluntary activity. It fits into a council-approved network of town forums across the borough, corresponding to town centres. These two groups both have open memberships available to residents and stakeholders in Norwood.

West Norwood is a “community” which easily identifies itself as such. The area is distinctive with landmarks and features such as St Luke’s Church and West Norwood Cemetery. The West Norwood train station is more or less at the centre of the area and it is this train station which gave the area its name (before the station was built, the area was known as Lower Norwood). The ribbon development of shops along the High Street and Norwood Road runs north – south through the middle. This follows the valley of the Effra River (now underground) in which the town sits, with hills sloping down to the Norwood Road axis. West Norwood is an area which has administrative, community and geographical identity. It is proposed that the West Norwood Neighbourhood Planning Forum should comprise the three wards of Knights Hill, Thurlow Park and Gipsy Hill.

Lambeth Council has consulted on and drawn up a policy for the designation of “Co-operative Local Infrastructure Plans” (CLIPs). Such local plans would receive a proportion of monies available from Community Infrastructure Levies arising from local property developments. This corresponds to the provisions made for neighbourhood planning forums. The borough has been divided into suitable areas to operate CLIPs. The three wards requested here to be designated for the purpose of a Norwood Planning Assembly correspond to the council’s recently agreed CLIP area for Norwood. The map of the area for the designated neighbourhood is appended.

3) APPLICATION FOR NPA TO BE THE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

The Norwood Forum receives grants from Lambeth Council for local activities and is a member of the council-sponsored Lambeth Forum Network. It describes itself as “The Voice of Norwood” and is open to Norwood residents and stakeholders. The Forum meets to consider a range of local issues as determined by its elected officer group and as raised by individuals or groups in Norwood. The Norwood Action Group is independent and there is a £3 membership fee. It has an elected committee and exists to further specific campaigns or projects in Norwood from time to time, the emphasis being on active promotion. Both bodies have constitutions and elected officers with bank accounts and suitable accountability to members. The officers of these two groups have worked jointly on setting up a planning forum since 2013 when they called a joint public meeting to consider planning matters.

This public meeting of over 200 people held at Chatsworth Baptist Church on 9 September 2013 agreed to the setting up of a Norwood Planning Forum. This initiative under the Localism Act reinforced the primary purpose

of the meeting which was to protest about a planning application for flatted housing on Avenue Park Road, Tulse Hill and objections to Lambeth planning policy for “intensification” and higher permitted building in Norwood. Consequent to the meeting, there were reductions in scale to the Avenue Park Road development (now going ahead) and modifications to the Draft Lambeth Local Plan. This was a crucial meeting for Norwood and enabled a clear expression of local public opinion.

The meeting was a catalyst for concern about planning policy Norwood-wide. There is popular agreement of the need for building and development in Norwood to meet future housing, social and economic requirements. However, people do identify strongly with the Norwood community and value its character. The mass meeting declared its interest in, and desire for local planning powers available under the Localism Act. Essentially the demand is for better planning and design to enhance rather than detract from West Norwood’s character and built environment. There has been a continuity of objections to planning applications which pre-date the 2013 meeting such as the West Norwood Tennis Club scheme which has been scaled down three times, to the Avenue Park Road development itself and to subsequent applications such as the tyre depot application on Tulse Hill. There have been consistent objections to “over-development”, to high density and to unsympathetic design with poor amenities.

The Norwood Action Group and Norwood Forum therefore agreed an intention to develop a Norwood Plan under the 2011 Localism Act and to create a “Norwood Planning Assembly”. It made sense for the two groups, which are complementary, to continue to cooperate and use their combined efforts. The governing body for the intended NPA will therefore comprise both bodies, thus promoting wide participation. The operating group producing a Norwood Plan would correspondingly be accountable to this separate assembly representing Norwood as widely as possible. The area to be covered by the plan is the three wards of Knights Hill, Thurlow Park and Gipsy Hill. A draft NPA constitution is appended.

4) LIST OF DESIGNATED MEMBERS

PENDING