

BBEST Forum. Report of the meeting held on 1st July 2017

Around 20 BBEST supporters attended a lively Forum meeting held in the Beacon Methodist Church on Saturday 1st July 2017. After an update from the Chair, the meeting discussed ongoing support for BBEST through volunteering and funding. A presentation on the developing BBEST Design Guide (DG) followed.

Introduction

Pete Marsh, Chair of BBEST, updated the group on BBEST progress

He reminded the meeting of the possibilities for BBEST:

- Power to shape (future) development
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) income from major projects will help develop the area through BBEST projects such as the Boulevard Project and the Library garden. There is very little of this money available currently.
- Developing interest and engagement with our neighbourhood and community. One example of this has emerged from liaison with Sheffield City Council (SCC) Planning Officers who have agreed, after a study of data, that the BBEST area has a high density of HMOs (houses of multiple occupation), and that no additional conversions will be allowed. A second example is community interest in developing the Library garden.

Progress with the plan has been delayed by two factors. Initial estimates of the time to develop the Plan were optimistic. Secondly, the BBEST Plan needs to refer to the Sheffield City Plan which has itself been delayed.

The new timetable is as follows:

2017

Late July - informal advice from SCC on current draft Plan

September - make draft plan available for initial views from the community.

21st October - Forum meeting to discuss the Draft Plan

December – alter plan as needed

2018

Early – Forum and other meetings to refine plan

Mid – consider timing in relation to Local Plan

Late – formal community consultation on plan

2019

Submission to Council

Community Consultation via Council

External examination of the Plan

2019-2020

Referendum of all residents.

Q - What does BBEST need to take the Plan forward?

A - Volunteers and cash!

Volunteers

There is still a lot of work to do to in keeping BBEST moving forward. We've tried to identify areas where supporters could commit time, perhaps over a limited period, to carry forward some of this work. Examples are noted in an appendix to this report.

During discussion of volunteering opportunities the following points were raised:

Broomhill Library holds documents prepared by members of BANG over many years and these form an excellent resource for the history of the BBEST area.

Air quality: Vehicle emissions should be taken into account when finding a contractor to replace the current highly polluting green buses. Councillor Mah advised BBEST to write to him in relation to the contract for him to take forward.

Air quality measuring devices are available from the Sheffield Climate Alliance, who are doing a log of work particularly around Tinsley

Collection of student waste at the end of the academic year. A great deal has been done on this and the availability of red bags has made a difference. Clear bags will be used from next year.

It was also suggested that pressure could be put on landlords to ensure that rubbish is removed appropriately.

It was suggested that the Council may be able to help with recruitment of volunteers through the regular emails from the Central Area Bulletin. BBEST to investigate.

Finance

The second requirement is to raise funds to support the essential work carried out by professionals in the fields of planning, urban design, ecology and heritage. BBEST is grateful for support in the past from Locality and the Broomhill Festival, Moor Oaks Association and Ward Councillors. BBEST is now looking for support to continue its work into the future.

Discussion centred on the availability of funds from BANG and the Broomhill Forum which were raised to further community issues and could reasonably be used for this purpose. BBEST to contact both organisations. Other possible sources are: Town Trust, Graves Trust, Church Burgesses.

A further suggestion was to organise a fundraising event such as a Ceilidh.

Action: BBEST to contact BANG and the Forum

The Design Guide and what it can do - Pete Marsh and Rob Turner, Urban Design Consultant

Travel - How the Retail Centre works

We are all aware of the traffic issues through the Retail Centre. In fact there are around 23,000 'car passenger units (CPU)' per day. Protection for cyclists is required if there are 2,000 CPU per day, giving some idea of just how much traffic comes through the centre.

A daytime survey carried during term time out by a student at Sheffield Hallam University showed how people come to the centre:

Car - 28%

Bus - 31%

On foot - 35%

% spend by method of travel: bus + on foot = 80% of spend.

During discussion the following points were made:

Pedestrians have the most journeys but are least provided for - a walking strategy is needed.

Many pedestrians, for example students who live in the BBEST area, walk through the retail centre.

Design Guide - What it looks like

Rob Turner outlined the format and role of the Design Guide (DG).

The DG will centre on the 8 'character areas' which have been identified. Following a description of the area, analysis is carried out against a list of criteria such as colour palette, materials, architectural details, boundary treatments etc. The DG will support the Neighbourhood Plan by influencing design and acting as a framework to determine planning applications, since analysis of requirements has been carried out in advance. An example might be the recent recladding of the pub on Nile Street which could be assessed against the criteria of colour palette and materials.

The DG highlights important buildings, connections and the role and function of buildings. In relation to the Retail Centre for example aspects such as the positioning of roller shutters etc will be highlighted. The availability of a colour palette should lead to improvements over time as changes to shop fronts are carried out in line with the guidance.

A survey of shops has indicated that the number of empty premises is about the national average. The DG would hope to influence the appearance of empty premises - spruce and inviting rather than heavily graffitied chipboard.

In discussion the following points were noted:

The nature of retail is changing rapidly and is already affecting local high streets. An example is banking, where one Broomhill bank has already closed and others have reduced hours. What will happen to the empty premises and what impact will this have on the local community? Banks form an important part of the community, and although cash handling is reducing, access is still important for shopkeepers to bank their takings

The City Centre has a Design Guide which has helped in planning decisions.

Would the DG influence the positioning of tables outside cafes?

The increase in the number of takeaways and night-time use of the centre was noted.

Why is Broomhill poorly provided with 'quality' shops compared with, say, Sharrow?
Reasons put forward included:

Rents are cheaper - premises tend to be smaller and owned by small scale landlords. Business rates are lower. (Broomhill rates date from when there was a department store - could they be revised in line with current occupancy?)

Broomhill has fewer landlords who have more properties. This can mean less flexibility, particularly in the 1960s Centre.

Larger retailers appear to think that the centre is mainly used by students and so are reluctant to commit to it.

Licensing issues can be flouted by businesses.

Would a policy to freeze the balance at 50/50 between food and retail be the right way to go? Would it work in the current retail climate?

Some shops close in the summer when the students are away. Can BBEST influence this?

A national chain can undercut local retailers, for example in the sale of greetings cards.

However, despite these problems it was noted that there are a number of specialist shops in Broomhill which add to its character -eg Wish Again, guitar shop etc.

Parking.

The spaces outside the 1960s Centre are awkwardly laid out, and improvements could add a great deal to pedestrian experience, but any suggestions to reduce the numbers or replace them would need widespread discussion (and a source of finance). In addition the roof carpark is not used to capacity. Development of the roof space and the rear of the building would be welcome.

Heritage

A number of sites of significance to the community have been identified.

The sites are:

A Northumberland Road - University Sports Ground

B Northumberland Road - sports facilities

C 'Harcourt Hole'

D Hallam Towers

E Oriel House

F Crookes Valley Park

G The Mount Car Park

H Tapton Hall/Masonic Hall

I TA Centre/Endcliffe Hall

J Tapton Court

K Pisgah House

L 9-13 Ashgate Road

The Plan will provide views about some of these which are potentially 'at risk' or which could form major developments with a substantial impact.

Pisgah House - the meeting was delighted to welcome the new owner of the building who will be renovating it as a family home.

The Mount is not included in the list but only the car park. This is because of the car parks' impact on views of The Mount itself and the fact that the grassed area on top has been used for community events.

Northumberland Road: the Chair noted that BBEST has lodged an objection to the University Planning application for the Social Sciences Building and new sports facilities based on the lack of a master plan for the area, and failure to consider the necessary provision of better public realm and better ground floor planning given the substantial impact of 4000 students, and staff, coming to the area.

Appendix

BBEST volunteering opportunities

These notes are taken from the BBEST Neighbourhood Planning Forum meeting held on 1st July 2017.

BBEST the importance of volunteers

There is still a lot of work to do to in keeping BBEST moving forward. We've tried to identify areas where supporters could commit time, perhaps over a limited period, to carry forward some of this work. Examples are:

The initial consultation - preparation and evaluation

When? March - May 2018 approx

The initial consultation with the community will primarily take place online, with print copies for comment held in the Library for those who prefer to reply in written form. Responses will need to be collated, analysed and prepared for presentation to SCC in an appropriate format.

Outcome

A well presented and thought through response to comments from the community which will contribute to the success of SCC official scrutiny of the Plan.

What is required?

To join in this work you will need to have time to monitor the BBEST website, download comments from the website and collate them for the Planning Group. There will be at least one meeting to discuss community comments and prepare a view from BBEST on how to take them forward for presentation to SCC.

Parking issues

When? Ongoing from now.

Discussion with retailers and users, surveys etc

Outcome

Proposals for improvement to parking facilities in the BBEST area which meet the needs of all parts of the community.

To join in this work you will need to be willing to carry out surveys, discuss issues with interested parties and summarise results.

Heritage development

When? Ongoing

BBEST is keen to develop the heritage aspects of the planning process by collecting photographs and designing walks in the area which can be led and carried out during the year.

Skills required include: interest in the area, photographic skills, web skills to prepare material for the website, ideas for other aspects.

Outcome

Materials for the website and increased community engagement through participation in collecting information and developing web materials.

Air quality

When? Ongoing

Air quality in many areas of the BBEST area is poor, including Fulwood Road, the area around the public schools and taxis waiting for fares in the evening, coach parking in Oakholme Road.

Skills required

Willingness to carry out surveys of air quality, research the effects of pollution and make recommendations.

Publicity and fundraising

When? Ongoing

Look for opportunities to promote BBEST in local press and through the community. Organise fundraising events. Liaison with the BBEST Web Manager would be important.

Skills involved include experience in contacting the press and events organisation.

Development of ideas in relation to bin storage

When? From now

Refuse bin storage was identified as an issue early in the consultation process. This strand will look at practice elsewhere and innovative options for storage.

Skills required are an interest in the topic and willingness to research and discuss and present options.

Note: There was discussion about collection of student waste at the end of the academic year. A great deal has been done on this and the availability of red bags has made a difference. Bags will be clear from next year.

It was also suggested that pressure could be put on landlords to ensure that rubbish is removed appropriately.

It was suggested that the Council may be able to help with recruitment of volunteers through the regular emails from the Central Area Bulletin. BBEST to investigate.