

Will French

From: Will French [willdfrench@btinternet.com]
Sent: 30 June 2011 18:17
To: 'pat hayes'
Cc: 'Martin Smith'
Subject: Neighbourhood Planning in Ealing

Dear Pat

Progressing Neighbourhood Plans under the Localism Agenda

At our meeting on 1st June we agreed to keep each other updated on our preparations for the enactment of the Localism Bill. You said that you were instructing Tony Burton of Civic Voice to facilitate a workshop that would bring together the various stakeholders around Ealing Centre with a working title "What makes a good town centre?". You aimed to hold this in September and you suggested SEC should be closely involved both in the planning and execution of the event, particularly as we had already made contact with Tony through our own network.

So we are looking forward to working with Tony when he gets started.

From our side, and the main reason for writing now, is to advise that we have just had a meeting with Greg Clark, the Minister for Decentralisation, facilitated by our MP, Angie Bray. Our aim was to seek his advice on how the Bill was shaping up and how it might best apply within Ealing where the London Plan will play an important role. The Minister was very interested in the work that SEC has done and in our achievements over the last few years, and I think it fair to say he was particularly impressed with our Vision for Ealing Centre as an example of what local initiatives can achieve. During what was quite a lengthy discussion he made a number of suggestions on how we might bring together and work with other local stakeholders, including businesses and, of course, Ealing Council.

One of the most important outcomes of our meeting was that the Minister indicated there is to be a further tranche of funding later this year to create more Front Runner Neighbourhood Plans. The Minister committed that we would be advised – through Angie – when they would be calling for candidates. Certainly, he agreed that Ealing Centre would make a good pilot as there are no such examples in the current Front Runner programme.

We think there could be great advantages in applying to CLG to be included in the programme. We imagine that special funding could be very attractive to your department as it would be a way to support your team's activities – not to mention the kudos that Ealing would get from being a Front Runner. Would it be helpful then if we put our heads together and pulled together a putative neighbourhood forum, centred on a combination of SEC, Council and the BID Company, representing local businesses, to apply when we get the signal from the Minister? The SEC team know that we must get all stakeholders together in order to apply for Front Runner funding – and this would need to be done sooner rather than later, as a separate exercise to Tony Burton's work.

At this early stage we imagine that the different stakeholder groups which the town centre brings together may suspect that the others are unduly fixed in their views and opinions for the future. Certainly this is not the case as far as SEC is concerned. Our Vision for Ealing Centre has not been drafted as fixed blueprint, but as an opening position for discussion with other groups. The final Neighbourhood Plan will no doubt look very different as the inputs from the broader group are fed in.

So with good prospects of obtaining Government funding to support the exercise, I am proposing we should meet again shortly to discuss how we might develop such a programme? Would you be interested in such a meeting and, if so, in suggesting some dates?

My best wishes

Will French