Public Health Response to Camberwell SPD: vision and issues
Author: Alex Trouton

Our comments:

Do you agree with the SPD boundary?

It seems useful and comprehensible to have the SPD mapped to the community council area.

As there is a long shared border with Lambeth, the finished SPD will need some discussion of how design, development and town centre management etc will be handled to ensure a coherent streetscape across the two boroughs. Also there are a number of issues that impact on the amenity of the area (e.g. proliferation of fast food outlets, ASB, alcohol cumulative impact area) and although Lambeth and Southwark may not deal with these matters in quite the same way, it will be helpful to seek a common approach where possible. Are there any documents from Lambeth dealing with the adjacent area that might need to be referenced/summarised in a later iteration of this document?

Should we update this vision to cover the whole of the community council area or focus on the area where most change will take place?

As the SPD covers the whole community council area, it seems appropriate to update the vision to cover the whole area. This will ensure an even handed approach to development in the area rather than privileging new build and particular areas.

Also, it does not appear that a huge amount of change is currently anticipated in the area but, where possible, improvements to existing buildings, housing, open space, retail sector and transport. Presumably many of these improvements will be piecemeal, undertaken by private investors (e.g. businesses, developers, home-owners or landlords), and so a clear overall vision for the area will help in creating some kind of coherence and identity.

What aspects of the local character are important to you?

Camberwell has an interesting history and there are many vestiges of its past in terms of Georgian houses and its development as a Victorian suburb/shopping area. Camberwell Green was an early example of town planning – a small park set up after the rowdy Camberwell Green Fair that used to take place on it when it was just common ground was closed down. The area was heavily bombed in the war losing a number of buildings of character as well as housing.

It would be good to see an SPD that encouraged a strong sense of place and promoted historical continuity where possible. This should not inhibit development or change but ensure the area does not lose its memory. It would be a shame if its past is only respected and maintained within the conservation areas.
Which Public Spaces need improving and how can the experience and identity of Camberwell be improved though changes to its public realm?

One of the issues that needs consideration here is the status of Camberwell town Centre as a saturation area for licensed premises. The Camberwell area has historically been an area associated with street drinking, and alcohol related violence, hence its status as a licensing saturation area.

In January 2012 there were 63 premises licensed to serve alcohol in Camberwell. By January 2013, this figure had increased to 67. 23 of these sell alcohol for consumption off the premises

Community Safety analysts provide annual reports monitoring all the alcohol saturation areas in Southwark and providing data on patterns of crime and disorder. Currently it is estimated that alcohol related violent crime in the Camberwell saturation area cost £819,928, an increase of 35.3% from 2011 figures.

Police reports show that in the daytime period, alcohol related disorder typically takes place in the street, most notably in Camberwell Green, Milkwell Yard, Camberwell Church Street, Butterfly Walk/Denmark Hill and Camberwell Grove. Premises of note remain hostels, cafés restaurants, though bookmakers are fast emerging as significant contributors to the daytime calls. In the evening, the main venues of note are nightclubs/late night public houses and the late night eateries surrounding them. Transport links in this area are hotspots for disorder, particularly in Denmark Hill. In addition to violent crime, there are other offences such as rowdy behaviour (515 calls to the police in 2012) and street drinking, although this has declined substantially over the last 5 years.

Clearly this level of (often alcohol related) crime and disorder affects people’s experience of Camberwell whether they are residents or passing through and it will be important to work with the Community Safety Team/Licensing/the Night time Economy Team/Police/Safer Neighbourhood Teams to ensure that their perspectives and expertise are incorporated in to the SPD to prevent any changes that have the unintended consequence of increasing these problems. We also hope the SPD will be able to help decrease existing problems in this area.

We are strongly in favour of urban greening, introduction of trees, other planting and soft landscaping within the wider area if feasible recognising that this has a favourable impact on the experience of pedestrians, and on mental well-being as well as more generally helping with sustainability, biodiversity and water conservation. There is even evidence that green space can reduce crime.

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Transport

We are aware of a great deal of ongoing work and a large body of consultative responses to the issue of improving transport in the area and will not make detailed proposals here. As the report notes, the volume of people seeking to board or leave buses at Camberwell Green can create a congested and confusing experience for pedestrians and cyclists as well as creating opportunities for street crime.

Recently the proposal to bring the Bakerloo Line to Camberwell seems to have been revived – if this were to happen it could be beneficial for the area, its residents and commuters in many ways.

Shopping

Altogether there are about 270 hot food takeaway outlets across Southwark, 35 of which are situated in the SE5 area which gives an approximate notion of the scale of their presence. This total does not include cafes and restaurants offering a takeaway service or other business such as bakers that sell food to take away. There are 54 cafe/restaurants in the SE5 area. Undoubtedly hot-food outlets can provide a useful service; however they can have a negative impact on the vitality and variety of shopping parades as well as a detrimental effect on the environment in terms of litter, food and drink spillage etc. Although they are only one factor amongst many in terms of an ‘obesogenic’ environment, there is no doubt that the kind of high calorie/fatty food on offer on take-away poses a challenge to health and for these reasons we are in favour of limiting further development to promote a healthier environment.

A number of local authorities have, in consultation with their residents, begun to take action to manage and control the number of fast food outlets in areas where there are significant concentrations. An example of this approach in Waltham Forest is discussed on the Planning Advisory website at [http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/core/page.do?pageId=590384](http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/core/page.do?pageId=590384)

The Canada Water Action Plan, the emergent Peckham and Nunhead Action Plan and the Elephant and Castle SPD seek to limit the numbers of new hot food takeaways and their proximity to each other. Consultation carried out for those documents suggest that there is public support for this policy development.

It would be useful if, in a subsequent iteration of the document, hot food take-ways and cafes/restaurants offering a take away service can be mapped, perhaps also showing schools, so that it becomes easier to understand the issue in Camberwell and assist consultees in deciding how best to address this issue.

We recognise that, as mentioned, at the local level, it is not possible to exert any control on the on numbers of betting shops and payday loan shops whose numbers in recent years, have grown markedly in more deprived high streets.

A recent survey from the CAB indicates the extent of the presence of these establishments:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Camberwell Road</th>
<th>Cash Generator payday loans</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Money Transfer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>William Hill betting shop</td>
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<th>Denmark Hill</th>
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<td></td>
<td>William Hill betting shop</td>
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<td>Albermarle Bond pawnbroker</td>
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<td>Pawnbrokers</td>
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<td>H&amp;T moneylender / pawnbroker</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paddy Power betting shop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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There are 20 such premises in the Walworth Road and a further 9 in the Peckham Road.

We hope that the very least the SPD can help to promote Camberwell as a destination of choice for new retail and business opportunities so that when vacancies arise there are options other than betting shops and pay day loan shops. It needs to be noted too that these shops are able to take advantage of the withdrawal of mainstream financial services and thus are indicators, and to some extent drivers of, financial exclusion for some groups, undermining some of the good intentions of regeneration. It is possible that the arrival of the Bakerloo Line in this area might help with improving the retail offer however this is highly conjectural and only a long term aspiration.

We are uncertain if Southwark Council is the landlord of any of the buildings housing retail businesses within the area covered by the Camberwell SPD, but would very much hope that where the Council is the case, strenuous efforts can be made to promote vacant shops to businesses that can offer greater amenity to local people and visitors. This is one of the aspirations of the Economic Health and Well-being Strategy.

**Business and employment**

We support the general intentions of this section.

The Economic Well-being Strategy (2-12) has a very clear section on the issue: Southwark – the place of choice to start and grow a business with a clear statement that the council itself can play an active role in business success. Ambitions are set out in the strategy together with what is needed to achieve them and Camberwell offers a wonderful opportunity to try and put the strategy into action. It would be good to see a real drive on this.

Is a brief business development strategy needed for the area in terms of what can be realistically achieved? It would also be useful to see a profile of the existing businesses in the area with some kind of indication where particular area of business are growing or where there are new types of business begin to arrive in the area. Has thought been given to capitalising on the presence of the two hospitals and Kings...
College Hospital which may have satellite businesses, outsourced services etc that would be convenient for them in the local area?

The Bakerloo extension would certainly give a boost to such economic development.

**Environmental Standards and Open Spaces**

Is there further guidance that the SPD should include that is specific to Camberwell?

Yes. Just as the Camberwell SPD offers an opportunity to operationalise the Economic Well-being Strategy, it would be helpful to see a fuller treatment of the issues identified in the Open Space Strategy. This strategy did more than suggest better links between spaces as mentioned in this section. Camberwell is given more detailed treatment on P.72-75 of the Open Space Strategy.

**What the Open Space Strategy said:**

The sub-area has a total of 0.27ha of park provision per 1,000 population, which is below the standard of 0.72ha per 1,000 population. This is expected to fall to 0.23ha per 1,000 population in 2026 as a result of population growth.

The area is also deficient in the amount of natural green space available, with 0.47ha per 1,000 population (which will fall to 0.42ha per 1,000 population in 2026) compared to a standard of 1.5ha per 1,000 population.

Although Ruskin and Burgess Parks lie just outside the borders of the area, the sub-area itself does not meet the quantity standard for parks or natural green space. There are also deficiencies in the quantity of allotments and community gardens. New community garden space could be created within Nairn Road Nature Garden, or within a section of other open space. There is also potential to bring Benhill Road Nature Garden back into use for community gardening/natural greenspace.

The SPD needs to note this deficiency as it pulls down the quality of life in the area and more people will be adversely affected as the population density rises. Clearly it cannot be remedied by the creation of new open space but it does mean that green space in the area needs to be managed well and in such a way as to maximise its amenity and usage.

The Strategy goes on to note:

Camberwell has a number of spaces that are not fulfilling their current potential, many of which are located in the south of the sub-area closer to Dulwich. Figure 7.6 shows all spaces which are below the borough average for quality and value. Quality improvements are particularly required to:

- Nairn Grove Nature Garden (OS134)
- Greendale Playing Field (OS128)
- Benhill Road Nature Garden (OS97)
- Greendale Artificial Pitch (OS129).

Given the paucity of green space in the area, it would helpful if, in the next draft of this document, there was a map of the whole area giving some indication of existing trees and open spaces and where and how there is the scope to improve on this. As well as public open spaces, it would be useful to see the amenity spaces of social
housing estates included as they could play a valuable role in maximising the impact of the existing green space in the area. Do new developments need to be provided with guidance on how open space will be handled in development in the area to try and mitigate the impact of increased density?

The report also used information from GLA Population Projections (2010) showing that Camberwell has the second highest density of 0-15s (19%) after Peckham and Nunhead (20.4%). Taken in conjunction with the deprivation in parts of the area, this has real implications for ensuring that there is enough play space suitable for the different age ranges.

Finally, the fact that Ruskin Park is also a green space asset for the area needs some acknowledgement/discussion even though it is not part of the SPD. Can the next iteration of the document specify briefly a. How it is being maintained/developed by Lambeth. B. How Southwark and Lambeth collaborate over this resource?

**Housing**

Although this is not exclusively an issue for housing, we would like to see a lifetime’s homes/neighbourhood approach supported by this SPD. If there are sheltered, extra care homes in the area, it would be good to see them prioritised for improvement (e.g. in terms of green/amenity space as discussed above) if needed.

Although the aging population is not so visible in Southwark as in other areas of England, approx 10% of Brunswick Ward, 11.6% of Camberwell Green, and 7.9% of South Camberwell are aged 65 and over (approx 4000 in all).

Within Southwark generally there is an increase in the over 80s proportion of population with greater concomitant frailty and need for support. Although there are several care homes in Camberwell, the trend is for people to live in their own homes until a greater age with as much independence as possible. Town planning in the area needs to support this population in as many ways as possible: inclusive/universal design/ making being a pedestrian easier and safer; reducing street clutter; providing seating and public loos; ensuring that opportunities for street crime, ASB are minimised etc.

Where issues of disabled access are concerned, there is useful and detailed guidance at Accesscode: a Code of Practice on Access and Mobility\(^2\). Many of these topics will be dealt with in existing guidance however some more detailed tightening up in terms of design and maintenance might help enhanced the domestic and public environment as well as making it safer for people with disabilities.

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\(^2\) Accesscode: a Code of Practice on Access and Mobility
An advisory code of practice reflecting current statutory requirements and best practice within the UK for the design of buildings, structures, highways and transportation. Available at: [http://www.accesscode.info/index.htm](http://www.accesscode.info/index.htm)
Community Facilities

The SPD will offer a useful opportunity to consider the existing spread of community facilities in the area and identify gaps and needs. The definition is wide as they can include: primary healthcare facilities, children's play and recreation facilities, services for young people, older people and disabled people, as well as libraries, sports and leisure facilities, open space, schools, early years centres, nurseries and other childcare provision, training facilities, fire and policing facilities, community halls, meeting rooms, places of worship, public toilets, facilities for cyclists, convenience shops, banking facilities and post offices.

There is also the matter of the accommodation of voluntary and charitable organisations working in the area. Southwark Council commissions a number of services from the voluntary sector. We hope the next version will be informed by a more detailed picture of the current situation in the area. This could be provided via consultation with the local organisations themselves and also with Community Action Southwark (CAS) as one of its priorities is to represent members’ interests effectively at the local level.

There are a number of ongoing changes to community facilities, e.g. closure of some post offices and police stations, thought in some case there are proposals to offer substitute services in other settings, e.g. supermarkets. Co-location of services appears a promising and pragmatic direction so may be further explored in the next version of this SPD.

\[\text{Community Action Southwark more information at: http://casouthwark.org.uk/}\]