

# APPENDIX 2



## Whitecross Street and the Open Spaces Strategy

PRESERVING AND PROMOTING THE FUTURE AND THE PAST

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## Executive summary

- The design team comprises muf architecture/art working with Arup
- The client team comprises LB Islington, Corporation of London, EC1 NDC
- The brief combines a scheme design for the public realm of Whitecross Street with an open spaces strategy to identify projects in the immediate area

The aims are

- To promote the market as an amenity for those living and working in the area
- To promote the historic status of the market and the HERS grants available to traders
- To strengthen north south walking routes to make stronger connections to the Barbican and the City beyond. To improve the walking routes east west to exploit Bunhill Fields as a route from City Road westwards
- To identify members of a steering group for the project

## The final scheme comprises

### Whitecross Street

- A 1.8 metre strip of granite which runs for the entire length of the street following the historic kerb line. This strip is licensed for trade by the stall holders and the shop units. The strip creates a visible and legible link between Old Street and the market
  - A lighting, signage and planting strategy which highlights the qualities of the street but does not introduce extraneous clutter
  - A simple palette of materials that follows the rules of the Islington Street Book whilst creating a unique design.
  - The creation of social spaces in appropriate locations
  - A step free environment which acknowledges the presence of Richard Cloudsley school and the demographics of the area
  - Strategies to promote the market
-

### **Movement/Parking**

- Reinforce Whitecross Street as the preferred North South pedestrian route for the area, taking advantage of the low levels of existing traffic.
- Promote the multiple routes that exist due to the surviving historic network of streets.
- Encourage the economic success of the market and traders through a series of discreet moves to expand parking provision for traders.

This can be achieved in the following ways:

- Exploring the relocation of the crossing point at the junction of Old Street and Whitecross Street to reflect the axis of Whitecross Street.
- Closing Whitecross Street to traffic between Banner Street and Old Street except for servicing and deliveries on a timed basis.
- Create raised tables at junctions principally on the western side of Whitecross Street
- Narrowing the one way eastern approach at Banner Street and Whitecross Street and so reallocating road space to the footway, creating a social space
- Make the design responsive to the specific activities of the street - for example creating meeting space outside Prior Weston School
- Create a new crossing to the Whitecross Street, Silk Street and Beech Street Junction with a single North South crossing and a reallocation of road space to the footway
- Removing street clutter

### **Open Spaces Strategy**

- A strategy which identifies a number of discrete projects that can be implemented separately but together form a coherent whole
- A strategy which applies equally to open spaces within housing as well as highways
- The process involved consultation with traders, residents and the major stakeholders in an on going dialogue which resulted in a successful take up of grants, new members on the steering group and residents taking on the project management of small projects

## Summary of consultation findings (refer to Appendix 1)

### Consultation on Whitecross Street specifically and the area generally uncovered:

- A belief that the market is an essential part of the area
- A belief that the market is not supported by LBI
- No apparent conflict between the market stalls selling cheap commodities more normally associated with London street markets and newer traders
- Widespread anxiety about the activities of young people (aged 10-14)
- Widespread anxiety about the lack of facilities for young people (10-14)
- A generosity amongst older people to provide spaces for young children
- An interest in community gardens where there is an opportunity to be involved in gardening
- A strong sense of identity as a neighbourhood
- A fascination in the history of the area
- Some anxiety between different groups manifests itself in an anxiety to where public highway should begin and end
- Residents report strangers lost in the area looking for the LSO and the Barbican

(For detail on the scope of consultation and individual comments see appendix)

# APPENDIX 1: Consultation Report

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"WHAT ABOUT THE DERELICT BUILDINGS IN THE STREET? THEY ARE ABOUT TO FALL DOWN AND THE OWNERS DON'T RENT THEM. IT GIVES THE STREET A VERY ABANDONED IMPRESSION."

"WE'VE BEEN HERE FOR TWO YEARS... WE'RE WORRIED ABOUT THE GANGS OF YOUTH."

*"We'd like a community garden. I know another 3 people who'd want to be involved."*

**"I believe this area is up and coming... publicity about the shop brought customers in was in Soho before...pedestrianisation would help the street..."**

*"I have been in business 18 years...I have complained about parking regs many times, there are no exceptions for shopkeepers."*

"I worked there 16 years, I remember it as more vibrant in past. Improvements should include tidying up, extra security (including CCTV), improved lighting, doing up the shop fronts. It's a mess at the moment."

*"Revive the once successful and colourful street market. We need good parking at a good rate"*

"It's unique, it hasn't been touched by developers and greedy landlords."

*"I've been looking down the street to see what's going on. I've seen a lot of things that I don't like. I've seen a lot of things that I like. I've seen a lot of things that I don't like. I've seen a lot of things that I like."*

"I THINK PEOPLE ROMANTICISE THE GLORY DAYS OF THE MARKET."

*"It's nothing special, since the vintage shop change it has gone down the hill - dirty roads and too much traffic. It needs parking spaces, toilets and improved pavement."*

"And more lights in the street would make me feel much safer."

"THE STREET IS UP AND COMING."

## **Conclusion**

The consultation informed the design of Whitecross Street and the Open Spaces study in many ways:

We avoided any extraneous and superficial design conceits e.g. purpose designed market stalls and concentrated the budget on creating a simple, accessible backdrop for a future which would accommodate a thriving market if all those other issues were addressed.

We identified individuals who wanted to take on the management of smaller projects in the Open Spaces strategy, specifically Braithwaite House and Coltash Court and so made informal vertical planting a motif that could be extended to all flank walls on the street and within estates.

We confirmed the commitment of local residents in being involved in gardening and the potential for the St Luke's Garden society not only to be revived but expanded.

We encountered widespread interest in making more provision for children of all ages throughout the area. Generally people complained about the intimidating behaviour of older children with the proviso that there should be more activities for them.

When the scheme was presented there was unanimous support for it.

But the other issues remain:

### **Parking**

New business permits are being introduced in September, but despite repeated requests there are no permits available for the type of casual, weather-based use that stall owners need.

### **Promotion and support of the market**

The GLA, the LDA, the London Tourist Board all stress the importance of London's markets. There have been success stories but these have always been championed by a local authority. In many ways market trading could be a first step into employment and trading and so could be promoted and funded by a number of different agencies.

### **Partnerships**

Through the six months of active dialogue with traders and residents constructive relationships have been made. At present there is no structure in place for ensuring that proper feedback will be given.

If these other issues are not pursued the project to improve the market might prove counter productive.

## **Who we spoke to:**

### **Stakeholders**

We identified the following stakeholders and interviewed representatives of each on site, at their offices or at our offices.

#### **USB Warberg-represented by Adrian Dack of Chestertons**

These are the agents for the owners of shopping city on Whitecross Street. The supermarket was just changing hands from Safeways to Morrisons (since then to Sommerfield). In the longer term they are interested in finding new uses for the extensive vaults which lie below their site but also to reconfigure the ground floor to reinforce the street line whilst encouraging pedestrian links through. They had a positive response to the plans for Whitecross Street.

#### **Peabody**

Peabody are a significant landowner. We met with Mathew Frith who expressed Peabody's commitment to improving their common spaces and adjacent streetscape but also how their funds precluded them from any contribution in this financial year.

They drew attention to Dufferin Street and the area opposite the YMCA. In Allan Court because of the sheltered housing they had avoided play equipment and seating but they could envisage having these in another context.

#### **Prior Weston school via Fortune Park**

We were not able to meet with the head of Fortune Park Early Years Centre but we met with Caron Rudge head of Fortune Park Early Years Centre one of the three schools due to merge on the site. We promoted the consultation event within the school and met with the Parents and Teachers Association representatives. They supported the scheme especially the emphasis on level access and social spaces. We also met with Feilden Clegg Bradley Architects who were preparing the feasibility study which formed the brief for the new school to be built on the site, this brief included reference to the design principles of the scheme.

#### **SureStart coordinator and parents group**

We presented the scheme to Helen James coordinator of Islington South SureStart and to the parents group. We also attended a fun day in September organised by Sure Start in Fortune Park where we spoke informally to parents attending. They were enthusiastic about the proposals. It was the conversations with Helen James and parents that convinced us that the high ambitions for the streetscape and open spaces to be seen as a continuous amenity linking smaller spaces for constructive dawdling was possible.

#### **Barbican**

We met with Iain Simmons who was particularly interested in the Whitecross Street/ Silk Street junction. He presented their scheme for the new entrance to the Barbican Centre and new cycle



lanes to Beech Street, which we incorporated into our scheme. He is very supportive of the improved pedestrian access to the centre proposed in our scheme. He recommended that we spoke to the residents organisation once we had detailed proposals for the proposed scheme for lighting the ramp at the end of Whitecross Street. They had been alerted to the plans by Barbican Exhibition halls.

### **Barbican exhibition halls**

There was concern that the plans for Whitecross Street might compromise deliveries to the Barbican exhibition halls but it was conceded that articulated trucks should not be backing up the street.

### **Corporation of London**

Patrick Hegarty was responsible for the improvements to Fortune Park. We went on a walk about of the area. He spoke of the consultation work done on Fortune Park. He was supportive of the principles of our scheme. He shared the specification for the successful vertical planting in Fortune Park. We spoke of the necessity to provide a different range of equipment in Quaker Gardens. He referred to a podium scheme that they did in Whitechapel. He lives on the Golden Lane estate and is aware of interest in a community Garden in the area.

### **Quakers**

We met with representatives of the Quakers they spoke of their ambition for Quaker gardens to become a meditative space. There have been repeated use of the space by young men with scooters. They spoke of the various discussions around the disposition of elements. Their frustration with the delay in implementing the improvements

### **St Luke's Garden Society**

We met with Eleanor and David Stephenson. They are the funding members of the St Luke's Garden Society and have initiated a number of gardening and planting schemes in the area which they are also maintaining. They are the only permanent members and are about to move away. Their neighbour Sonja Andermahr, who we spoke to at the one-day event in December, would like to take a leading role. The St Luke's Garden Society would benefit from an office, which could be part of the proposed "lumber room" next to the entrance to Quaker Gardens P2.

### **LBI Transport unit**

We had regular meetings with Chris Bowers of LBI transportation and with Stephen Crabtree of Greenspace early in the design phase. We had access to the Street Book whilst still in draft and then responded to comments on the scheme by Will Dorman. We responded to comments by Chris Bowers and adjusted the scheme accordingly.

On 7th February 2005 we presented the scheme at LBI to 16 relevant officers. We took account of comments both during the presentation and subsequently.

### **LBI Homes for Islington**

We met with Danny Doyle of Homes for Islington at an early stage. The area in front of Coltash Court which extends to the edge of the pavement is owned and managed by LBI property

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services. The space between the rails and the property line is where market traders dump their rubbish. He would therefore like to see the railings in front of Coltash Court to be removed. The other Homes for Islington property within the study area is managed by Tenant Management Organisations.

Homes for Islington have approx 5k set aside for removal of the barriers, which they would like to spend in accordance with our proposals.

### **The Steering Group**

We visited every trader in Whitecross Street. Through this and other encounters we recruited traders -but also residents living on Whitecross Street- for the steering group. Most notably they were owners of new businesses in the street and pub owners.

We attended all steering group meetings and presented the scheme as it progressed, but also tabled issues that had been raised during our ad hoc meetings with a range of groups.

The members of the steering group saw and commented on the scheme as it progressed.

Over the months it became clear that the greatest concern was the economic infrastructure of the market rather than the potential for physical improvements, namely

- a lack of parking for the market.
- the effect of the congestion charge.
- a lack of promotion of the market.
- the cost of stalls.

In addition to this we encountered an initial hostility to LBI proposals in short the consultation fatigue that does not come from being asked to comment but being asked to comment without signs of your view having an effect.

Residents were most concerned about noise and light pollution and garbage collection in Whitecross Street and were enthusiastic about possibilities for community gardening.

All members of the steering group supported the scheme but the refrain was "this market isn't dying its dead".

But it should also be said that there was widespread support at the consultation event for the principles of the scheme and a great deal of interest in making applications for HERS funding.

### **Traders small shop owners and stall holders**

At the commencement of the project muf visited every trader introducing ourselves and leaving a questionnaire for traders to fill in. It was at this meeting that we identified individuals who were interested in attending the steering group meetings. Sample questionnaires are included in the appendix. We then followed this up with further meeting where detailed descriptions of the heyday of the market and concerns about the present were voiced. At these second

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interviews we presented a précis of the elements of the scheme and invited comment. There was particular support for greening the area

### **Residents**

We had formal meetings through Tenants Management organisations most successfully with the Braithwaite Estate TMO. Other groups were only contacted through telephone calls and discussions with individual residents. We were unable to organise formal meetings with Peabody and Quaker Court residents.

We spoke to residents attending events organised by other organisations, at 2 SureStart organised 'fun days' one in September in Fortune Park the second at the Fortune Park campus in December.

Residents met via muf organised events.

Residents attended the steering group.

### **Young people**

We made use of muf's contacts with young people through Toffee Park and Rhythm for Life. Young people talked of their anxiety about being outside; a perceived lack of safety on the streets, there had been a number of incidents including murder. They also reported a lack of outdoor amenities for their age group.

## APPENDIX 2 - Examples of consultation

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muf architecture / art

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Email studio@muf.co.uk Website www.muf.co.uk

muf are a collaborative practice of artists and architects commissioned by EC1 New Deal for Communities and London Borough of Islington to design improvements for Whitecross Street and the adjacent open spaces.

Improvements to the fabric and facilities of this area will invigorate the market.

We would like to share in the experiences and expert knowledge of local residents and visitors and are posing some questions in order to begin a dialogue. We would be very grateful for your responses and additional comments.

*What is it that makes Whitecross Street and the adjacent open spaces special ?*

quite street and away from the main road. Traditional and community setup.

*What is it that you like most about Whitecross Street and the adjacent open spaces ?*

IT'S UNIQUE AREA, NOT BEEN TOUCHED BY DEVELOPERS and greedy landlords.

*What improvements could be made to the fabric and facilities of Whitecross Street and the adjacent open spaces ?*

like to see the revival of the market

Please contact us with any queries or thoughts.

26<sup>th</sup> August 2004

PEDESTRIAN, A BETTER STORAGE FOR LITTER.

muf architecture / art

49-51 Central Street, London EC1V 8AB Telephone 020 7251 4004 Fax 020 7250 1967

Email studio@muf.co.uk Website www.muf.co.uk

Mr Burrett - cobbler

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*What is it that makes Whitecross Street and the adjacent open spaces special ?*

at the moment not special at all. need to fetch more life in. locals are annoyed, going to chapel market established businesses going - no bakers.

*What is it that you like most about Whitecross Street and the adjacent open spaces ?*

history, convenience, local vibrant part of borough. used to be happy go lucky market. no faith in it anymore.

*What improvements could be made to the fabric and facilities of Whitecross Street and the adjacent open spaces ?*

need more people to sell stuff. not food/cafe's wandering whether to renew lease. always penalised

Please contact us with any queries or thoughts. Imagine

renew ew/05

26<sup>th</sup> August 2004

muf architecture / art

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*What is it that makes Whitecross Street and the adjacent open spaces special ?*

LOCATION, EASY TO GET TO BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT, LOTS OF CHARACTER IN THE SURROUNDING AREA.

*What is it that you like most about Whitecross Street and the adjacent open spaces ?*

TO REVIVE THE ONCE SUCCESSFUL AND COLORFUL STREET MARKET.

*What improvements could be made to the fabric and facilities of Whitecross Street and the adjacent open spaces ?*

ACCESS TO GOOD PARKINGS AT GOOD RATE

Please contact us with any queries or thoughts.

26<sup>th</sup> August 2004