

Camden Local Strategic Partnership

Meeting	9 July 2009
Report Title	Note of “Responding together to the recession” seminar
Report by	Mike Webb Senior Policy Officer, London Borough of Camden tel. 020 7974 4328 e-mail michael.webb@camden.gov.uk
Purpose	This is a note of the LSP seminar held on 17 June 2009 at the Heatherwick Studio.
Recommendations	The LSP is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• note the report

Present

- Keith Moffitt, Leader of the Council, London Borough of Camden
- Professor David Latchman, Birkbeck College, Master
- Stephen Jordan, London & Continental Stations and Property, Managing Director
- Mick Hickey, Job Centre Plus, External Relations Manager – Central London District
- Pat Stack, Camden Community Empowerment Network and Disability in Camden
- Moira Gibb, London Borough of Camden, Chief Executive
- Michael Quy, London Fire Brigade, Camden Borough Commander
- Chris Shaw, Camden Town Unlimited, Chair

Also in attendance

- Thomas Heatherwick, Heatherwick Studio
- Maisie Rowe, Heatherwick Studio
- Judith Hunt, Chair, King’s Cross Business Forum
- Sarah Mullen, London Borough of Camden, Assistant Chief Executive
- Kevin Millington, Acorn Consulting
- David Powell, David Powell Associates
- Finn O’Brien, London Borough of Camden, Head of Performance
- Fiona Dean, London Borough of Camden, Assistant Director, Culture and Sport
- Dean Stokes, London Borough of Camden, Head of Strategy and Projects
- Mary Burguières, London Borough of Camden, Head of Policy
- Mike Webb, London Borough of Camden, Senior Policy Officer

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Thomas Heatherwick welcomed the LSP to the Heatherwick Studio.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Cllr Andrew Marshall, Rob Larkman, Karen Wilson and Ann Baxter.

2 Recession recovery fund update

- 2.1 Sarah Mullen highlighted the main points of the report to the LSP on the recession recovery fund.
- 2.2 The main impact of the recession in Camden is still rising unemployment although the latest figures released that day showed a smaller increase than the previous month. Sarah noted that it was too early to say if this was significant. There was little other evidence of the impact of the recession in the council's recession dashboard.
- 2.3 The recent Camden Talks survey which asked residents about the impact of the recession on their lives showed a polarisation, with more people reporting they were not struggling and more people reporting they were struggling, perhaps revealing differential impacts according to income.
- 2.4 One of the most visible impacts of the recovery fund so far is Love Your Local High Street, a year-long marketing campaign focused on seven key high streets and designed to encourage residents to discover their local shops. This is particularly important as a third of visitors to Camden are visiting friends and relatives. Another achievement is the opening of two "pop up shops" in Camden Town.
- 2.5 The council has reviewed its flagship Camden Working employment and skills service in light of changes to the recession and welfare reform. It is still fit for purpose but will work more closely with other agencies and provide a more personalised service including a flexible training fund. Other work includes the launch of a single advice number and a new approach to town centres.
- 2.6 Two areas for further work are the impact of the recession on the 20-24 age group and the opportunities presented by the creative and cultural industries and the visitor economy. The latter was the focus for this seminar.

3 Recession discussion

- 3.1 The launch of the Love Your Local High Street campaign featured on "London Tonight" and is giving residents and businesses a sense that the council is on their side.
- 3.2 Job Centre Plus has a number of new initiatives targeted at the newly unemployed both professionals and non-professionals, people claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) for six months and over and the 18-24 age group. The LSP has received information about the latter, the Future Jobs Fund, which provides funding for employers to take on long term unemployed young people. King's Cross Business Forum is working on a consortium bid to the Fund. Job Centre Plus is increasing its staffing levels by 55% from April 2008 levels and is working with the council to find temporary offices in the borough to house them.

- 3.3 A recent article in the Evening Standard described an initiative in Sutton which brought unemployed professionals and graduates together for mutual support, to avoid isolation and help them find work placements. Something similar on a sub-regional basis had been discussed at Central London Forward. The council will find out more about the work in Sutton as networking is crucial for professionals. It will also explore the possibility of linking them up to local volunteering opportunities. Job Centre Plus is referring its professional clients to a network of 200 specialist recruitment agencies. The local branch of the Federation of Small Businesses was asked for recession-busting ideas by the LDA and one recommendation was an online system for professionals to register their availability.
- 3.4 Tony Travers's gloomy predictions at the first LSP recession seminar in January about London being hit worst have not been borne out. London does still have some "froth" - the strength of the Euro has helped to bring in tourists and the breadth of the service industries in London is often underestimated. The marketing of London as a series of villages and offers is gathering pace but Visit London has a tiny budget, less than half that of Visit Scotland.
- 3.5 Traditional retail particularly outside London is being hit by the recession but Camden Town's markets are going from strength to strength with the boom in the canal side market is spreading to others in the area.

4 Visitor economy and creative and cultural industries

- 4.1 Kevin Millington and David Powell provided LSP members with the headline findings of their studies.
- 4.2 The visitor economy generates £566m for Camden each year. The visiting friends and relatives (VFR) market is particularly important. The main recommendations of the study are:
- A visitor website independent of the council website
 - Resident-focused marketing which will also impact the VFR market – already taking place with the Love Your Local High Street campaign
 - Highlighting niche retailers and walking trails beyond the Museum Mile
 - Build on success of the KX Hotels Network to support accommodation, particularly with accreditation
 - A single council contact point for the sector
 - Remind residents that visitors are good news
 - A possible visitor centre at St Pancras International
- 4.3 There are 62,000 people working in the creative and cultural industries (CCI) in Camden and 3,700 VAT/PAYE paying businesses. Although the majority are micro businesses, there are about 40 companies employing over 100 staff, which bring connectivity in addition to direct value and employment. The main sectors by numbers of businesses are publishing, advertising, radio/television and leisure software/electronic publishing. About a third of businesses are located in Bloomsbury with

other important clusters in Camden Town, Hatton Garden and King's Cross/Euston. There are also a number of smaller companies and freelancers in the north of the borough.

- 4.4 The main recommendations of the CCI study are:
- More affordable workspace
 - Co-ordination between Camden's market operators
 - Building practical links between training providers and employers
 - Improve access to training and professional supply chain networks for freelancers
 - Networks for growth companies
 - Build senior relationships with Camden's top 40 companies
 - Better understanding of Camden's knowledge intensive clusters, particularly HE institutions

5 Reflections from a creative business

- 5.1 Thomas Heatherwick reflected that part of Camden's attraction for creative businesses is that it is a nice place to live. Creative people are fortunate that their effort is appreciated much more immediately than in the past. Creativity should be part of everyday life in places like high streets. Camden Council could be more open to creative work given the perception that it is unwilling to grant planning permission for anything artistic. It should go beyond temporary arts events and use creativity catalytically, to provide "a point of spice" in high streets suffering from the recession and competition from supermarkets and the internet.
- 5.2 St Pancras is an arrival point for London but intellectual life is hidden. We should welcome people in an unexpected way. The key is to do a few special and unusual things rather than lots of mundane, "me too" things.
- 5.3 The recession is an opportunity for creative people to set up their own businesses. They are trained with the expectation they will be self-employed but often end up working in an organisation. If they are let go from that organisation, they need support to set up their own business. Many interesting people have set up their businesses during past recession, which pushed them to do what they might have been scared of doing.
- 5.4 Start ups also need low cost workspace. This brings future benefits as businesses frequently seek to stay in the same area as they grow, as the Heatherwick Studio did in King's Cross.

6 Discussion

- 6.1 St Pancras is more attractive than the Gare du Nord and its environs as an arrival point although perhaps New York is a better comparison and example to follow, with its bohemian districts as big an attraction as its landmarks. The "Arrivals" programme of events to mark the opening of St Pancras International was very successful and there is a musical

programme planned for the summer. The issue is more when they leave the station. We need to encourage people to stay in Camden when they arrive, to walk to Camden Town or Bloomsbury. Since most first time visitors want to see the main landmarks, we should focus on second or third time visitors and encourage them to seek out the authentic London. The networks exist in King's Cross but we need to activate them. The King's Cross Business Forum has done work to improve the offer of fast food restaurants in the area, although planning permission has been an issue.

- 6.2 Camden is a contested place and the perceived conservatism of the Development Control (DC) Committee reflects the views of many residents. However businesses feel that the pendulum has swung too far to the detriment of architecture and creativity. While senior officers are more open, case officers still tend to be very cautious. The DC Committee does not offer the opportunity for developers to present their projects beforehand, as is the case in other boroughs. The council does recognise the issue and is looking at how it might improve how the Committee operates.
- 6.3 Pop up shops need to be "extraordinary" and involve the creative community e.g. the Fashion Retail Academy in Tottenham Court Road. Areas like King's Cross Road need a spark and a reason to linger. Although clusters cannot be created, we can create sparks. Facilitating inspiring, funny little things can have more of an impact than traditional improvements to the public realm. For example, organisations like Artangel bring in the media and create a buzz about an area.
- 6.4 Promoting Camden to visitors is bound up with promoting London. For example, the spend of overseas students and their visitors far exceeds that of other visitors. We need to promote the benefits of studying in Camden rather than other HE institutions in the capital. One of the presentations at the first meeting of the new Promote London Council was from Film London, which suggested making more of London's appearances on film to promote it as a destination. The council could make a line identifying a film as "made in Camden" a requirement for filming in the borough.
- 6.5 A large chunk of central London is in Camden and is an integral part of the Central London creative cluster that stretches from Hammersmith to Hackney. Camden does a lot for London as a whole.
- 6.6 Camden along with other central London boroughs contributed £100,000 from the Recovery Fund to the Only in London campaign running in the UK, Europe and North America. It includes shots of the British Museum and the Roundhouse and as the title suggests, focuses on the uniqueness of London. It is too early to measure the impact as there is always a lag between a campaign and resulting visits. Camden's involvement with the campaign also brought more conversation space with Visit London. Camden is a unique place with Camden Lock and the British Museum in close proximity to each other. As previously mentioned, the visiting friends and relatives sector is important in

Camden and the council's Your Camden magazine will be promoting attractions in Camden over the summer.

- 6.7 The council will now be focusing more on the creative and cultural industries, particularly promoting networking in the sector. Camden Town Unlimited has run a series of dinners which have been successful in bringing people together in similar sectors who surprisingly hadn't met before and in creating a village atmosphere. It now plans to bring some post-production space to Camden Town. The key is to create connectivity – the borough has a series of assets which should be linked together as in a property portfolio.
- 6.8 The Olympics have provided a focal point for both sectors. The Javelin train to the Olympic site will bring hundreds of thousands of people through Camden. Many will be staying in the borough and we need to ensure they enjoy the local London around them.
- 6.9 A key theme of this seminar and the recent LSP seminar on infrastructure is connectivity. The council can provide the connections to bring people together, both businesses and residents. This is a growing role for the local authority. In terms of the creative and cultural industries, the council could convene a "Club 100" network of businesses with the potential for growth to help them achieve that growth while remaining in Camden. As well as interacting with businesses, the council's core work is on the education and social agenda and it is well-placed to ensure they benefit one another.
- 6.10 In summary, the three key themes of the discussion were:
- The importance of networking and connectivity for the two sectors
 - A role for the excellent/iconic/extraordinary that the creative arts can bring to everyday life in Camden
 - The tension between the creative arts and the planning system
- 6.11 The seminar ended with a tour of the studio led by Thomas Heatherwick.