

SOMERS TOWN WALKABOUT

24 February 2012

Key points and observations

- **Whole area strategy for security on estates. Suggested approach to focus on external gates / entrances and keep central communal areas open for residents. Example on St Mary and St Anne flats of internal security grills possibly creating fire safety issues and interfering with residents circulation and social uses of communal courtyards. External gates still allow drug users and other ASB in. Human faeces, used condoms visible around blocks that have ASB / drug use problems.**
- **Drug users use tradesmens entry system to get in. Fob keys seen as solution. Do these work / stop the problem on blocks that have them? Cameras seen as having affect when pointing in right direction or in right place. The blocks with easiest access to stairwells are said to attract ASB. Phone boxes in close proximity also provide way of coordinating drug deals and make nearby flats more likely to be used.**
- **Access issues in blocks without lifts for older / less mobile residents.**
- **Under used green / open spaces. Square in Walker House planted and landscaped but use primarily for dogs (despite prominent no dogs allowed signs). Suggestion that residents with young children could use this for planting vegetables / making their own garden.**
- **Locked paved 'garden' at St Annes flats wasted space that residents could use. Particularly those with young children as it is a 'safe' space (fenced / gated and in good repair). If well used could eventually be developed with equipment, plants or residents could enhance space themselves. Would a residents key holding scheme work?**

• **Locked children's play area at Levita House (11.30am). Point made that if children and their parents were using areas like this at a young age it would help to combat ASB later on. Importance of social spaces, and use / interaction to community well-being. Key holding by residents?**

• **Chalton Street Market. More vans than stalls. Abuse by other vehicles of access and parking for market. Non compliance with road closure from other traffic (moving signs out of the way to get through). No sign of grocery stalls. One pet stall and a haberdashery stall seemed to attract customers, but very few people shopping in the street. Extension of market towards Euston Road is a local priority but perhaps use issues should be addressed first. Residents stall suggested – to fundraise / sell local products / etc. If busy pedestrian route develops between the two stations along Phoenix Road it could have an impact on use of the market and other shops and facilities in Somers Town.**

Walkabout notes

Walker House Estate (Camden Council)

- Insufficient door security enables drug-users to gain access to stairwells via trade access and take drugs.
- Locks constantly break on external security gates and at £600 each, are expensive to replace.
- Council have received offer from local businessman to fit secure intercom and key fob system for £5K but offer was declined.
- General consensus that security cameras deter anti-social behaviour but unruly-children now tend to accumulate at security blind-spots (flat no. 7 + 8) and on one occasion a knife was confiscated from them by a local resident.
- No lift access despite being a four storey building; some residents have health and other mobility issues making it difficult to climb stairs.
- Garden/recreational area in the centre of estate not loved or used by residents.
- Misuse of rubbish collection point- some bins partially locked therefore rubbish dumped in the wrong place for ease of disposal; prostitution and defecation around internal rubbish collection area are also a problem

Suggestions

- Install effective security systems at the entrance to each block and on external gates to prevent access of unwanted guests.
- Install more security cameras to prevent security 'blind' spots'

- Get young local residents involved in the maintenance or re-development of recreational areas so they feel a level of pride about the area in which they live.

Oakshott Court Estate (Camden Council)

- Mainly elderly single people on ground floor
- Mainly families (2-3 bed) on first and second floors
- Kids use the many exit points and narrow alleyways throughout the estate as a rat-run
- Non-gated estate
- 1 x CCTV camera at the top of the stairs on the Phoenix Road entrance- no CCTV elsewhere

Alleyway between Phoenix Road and Doric Way

- Used by drug-users
- Lots of dog poo

St Anne's Flats - Doric Way (Origin)

- Access in and out can be problematic due to heavy, faulty gate and lock on Drummond Crescent entrance- again cost £600 to replace.
- Inefficient security to prevent unwanted visitors gaining access to estate.
- Drug dealers come off the main streets into the inner layout of estate to sell drugs undetected
- Permanent fixed railings in front of ground floor flats are unsightly and pose significant risk to escape routes in the event of a fire.
- Children complain of feeling 'caged-in'.
- Residents forbidden to lock bicycles to Origin-owned railings outside ground-floor flats. No other place to lock bicycles!
- No lift in St Anne's flats
- Aluminium window frames lose heat during winter and attract heat in summer months; they also look unsightly.

St Mary's Flats- Doric Way (Origin)

- As for St Anne's flats, plus:
- Internal children's playground permanently locked and has been concreted over.

Suggestions:

- Remove all railings from in front of ground-floor flats. Sell the metal and use funds to buy an effective and efficient security system with an intercom, to prevent unwanted access to and through estate.
- Set-up a key-sharing system between local residents to enable resident children to use the playground.
- Turn concreted playground back into somewhere fun for the children to play.

Somers Town Market/Local shops- Chalton Street

- Not many stalls, variety of produce or customers!

- No fruit and vegetable, other food stalls.
- Looks closed even when open!
- Local shops not utilized much by local people who prefer to go elsewhere to do their shopping
- Most likely down to lack of variety and expensive products.

Suggestions:

- Needs drastic make-over
- Get younger people involved to bring fresh ideas and add more diversity

Levita House - Ossulston Street (Camden Council/Origin)

Block 1 (south-end)

- Block split between Camden Council and Origin Housing.
- Origin part has been partly renovated but not the Camden Council part.
- Internal area used by drug-users
- Defecation marks on walls remain un-sanitised for 18 months!

Block 2 (middle)

- Flats rented out to British Library and other larger institutions/business at market rate inflating rates for other tenants.
- Better secured than other blocks of Levita House with intercom and fob key security system

Block 3 (north-end)

- Drug-users in stair wells
- Dog poo

British Library- Chalton Street

- Parked cars frequently broken into and motorcycles stolen.
- Security cameras don't work
- Lack of communication between Library security staff and local residents, SNT's/SNP's etc

Hadstock House- Ossulston Street

- Gated garden and playground area usually locked!
- Inability for children from different areas to mix with each other from an early age.
- Area frequented by prostitutes and drug-users
- Identified as a potential cause of rivalry in later life between different groups of Somers Town youths.

Chalton Street- nr New Horizon Youth Centre

- Area frequented by prostitutes and drug-users
- Misuse of rubbish collection point- some bins partially locked therefore rubbish dumped in the wrong place for ease of disposal.

- Bins located on pavement takes up space and forces people to walk into the road

Main issues

- **Estate security**
- **Locked playgrounds and children's spaces = Lack of space for children to integrate and play from an early age- fuels divisions at a later stage.**
- **Street cleaning- animal and human faeces, plus other undesirable human waste left on streets**
- **Lack of local shops/decent market place**