

Cllr Alison Butler - Homes and Regeneration

December 2017

Latest News – Regeneration

Whitgift Planning Decision

On Tuesday 14th November the Council's Planning Committee unanimously resolved to grant planning permission for the redevelopment of the Whitgift Shopping Centre. Officers are now working to finalise the Section 106 Legal Agreement and the application also needs to be referred to the Mayor of London and the Secretary of State prior to the decision being issued. This is a significant development that will provide substantial public benefits to the town and will act as a catalyst for regeneration across the wider town centre. The development will provide up to 967 new homes, 20% of which will be affordable, increased retail and leisure floorspace (including 2 new department stores), up to 7,048 new jobs and a £1.4 billion investment.

Let's hear it for the Girls! –

I would like to particularly thank the teams that worked incredibly hard to deliver this planning application, right across the council and beyond including –

- Sarah Jones MP – Croydon Central
- Helen Furnell – Deputy Team Leader, North
- Heather Cheesbrough – Director of Planning & Strategic Transport
- Shifa Mustafa – Executive Director of Place
- Fiona Fletcher-Smith - Executive Director of Development, Enterprise and Environment – GLA
- Jo Negrini – Chief Executive
- And I understand the Cabinet Member was a woman too! (just in case, anyone thought it was all down to the men)



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The Local Plan

Following the completion of the Croydon Local Plan Examination in Public Hearings in June 2017, the Planning Inspector's Main Modifications to the Local Plan were consulted on for a period of six weeks. The consultation on the Main Modifications concluded on the 10th October 2017. The Planning Inspector will consider all representations made on the Main Modifications before issuing his final report. Subject to the Planning Inspector finding the Local Plan 'sound', it is anticipated the Local Plan will be adopted by Council in January 2018.

Long Lane Gold Driving Range

Following the Council's refusal of planning permission for the redevelopment of the current golf driving range in Long Lane earlier this year on grounds of inappropriate development of Metropolitan Open Land, the subsequent planning appeal is scheduled to be heard (by way of a public inquiry) on the 23rd January 2018. The inquiry venue will be Bernard Wetherill House.

Latest News - Homes

Update on Sprinklers

Work has begun in the first tower block, College Green in Upper Norwood and alongside our contractors Mulalley, successfully created a demonstration flat within this block, to exhibit how the sprinklers will look in our residents' homes. There has been positive feedback from residents, especially those who may have initially been apprehensive about the system and how it may look.

You can find the before and after photos also a timelapse video of the installation process on the Croydon website <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/housing/firesafety>

Following the success of the demonstration flat, work is now underway, in order to install the sprinkler system within the entire block. The programmed work commenced 23 October 2017 in the communal areas, from the ground floor up, fitting sprinklers and conducting any preparatory work needed.

The sprinkler alarm system, which will alert the London Fire Brigade in the event of fire, water tank and pumps will be installed between 30th November – 6th December 2017; with work starting within each individual flat (top floor down) from 4th December 2017 and it is estimated that the overall completion of works will be 24th January 2018.

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Taking Pride

A very successful clean-up day undertaken on housing land at Hillars Heath where over 20 people (residents, the local Cllrs, and Council housing and Veolia staff) cleared two 7 tonnes truck worth of fly-tips and cut back vegetation. The residents hope that we can now turn the area into an orchard. Two more clean up days are planned at Longheath Gardens and Wooderson Close.

Working with partners

Following the tragedy of Grenfell Tower fire Tenancy and caretaking have been working alongside the London Fire Brigade and the Repairs Technical team delivering letters to residents who are storing items outside their flats. The LFB have insisted that all communal areas for the safety of the residents should be free of items that could cause obstruction or could accelerate the spread of fire. The letters ask that all items are removed. In cases where items are still there they are removed by the caretaking service.

The Launch of the Community Food Club: The Food Stop

The Gateway service has supported the Family Centre and its Alliance members with the development of Croydon's first FareShare local collection point and community food club known as The Food Stop.

For the cost of just £3.50 per week residents in need will be able to have access to food worth around £15- £20 per week. Not only will residents benefit from affordable and fresh food but they will as part of the membership conditions commit to engage with the Community Connect project to help them identify a clear pathway into employment, housing and financial stability.

The local collection point is already supporting charity organisations offering 6 local charities the opportunity to start collecting Fareshare (charitable provider of surplus food) from the Family Centre once a week. Community organisations can pay as little as £19.38 per week to receive 67kg of fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy and cupboard staples.

The Family Centre officially opened the Food Stop doors to the New Addington and Fieldway Community on Friday 27th October 2017 with a community fun day in partnership with its alliance partners. For more information regarding The Food Stop and how residents can become members please contact Julia Pitt, Head of Gateway Service Development at Julia.pitt@croydon.gov.uk

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Croydon calls for urgent Government help over Universal Credit

Soaring council payouts to prevent families on Universal Credit from becoming homeless have led to Croydon asking the Government for urgent extra funding.

Last year Croydon Council gave a total of £2m in emergency rent money to families on benefits who would otherwise have risked losing their homes – by next March that figure is set to be £3.1m. Croydon Council uses the discretionary housing payments (DHP) fund to help by reducing arrears, paying deposits for those moving into the private sector, and topping up residents' rent while the council's Gateway service provides employment training and budgeting support.

Now the council has written to ask the Secretary of State in charge of Universal Credit for extra money to manage these “unsustainable” costs. In my letter to David Gauke MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, I have highlighted concerns about the impact of Universal Credit and related current pressures on the council's DHP contributions, including:

- Clearing each Croydon resident's arrears costs £800 more this year because Universal Credit has caused higher rent debts through its six-week payment delay
- Croydon has helped 494 more customers than last year – an 84% rise. Of these 494, 370 are on Universal Credit
- From April to August this year the council made 958 extra DHP awards, up from 529 for the same period last year
- Croydon has 1,782 residents on Universal Credit living in temporary accommodation with unpaid rent totalling over £2.5m.

In 2016-17, the Department for Work and Pensions gave £1.5m towards helping struggling Croydon families and the council topped that up with £500,000 from its own reserves. For 2017/2018, the DWP contribution rose by £200,000 to £1.7m, while the council's rose by £900,000 to £1.4m.

As little as £1,500 per household over three months can help a household avoid homelessness. In contrast, it costs councils an average of £6,750 to accommodate a homeless household.

For the last three years we have had to contribute additional money to the DHP fund and this year we have an unprecedented pressure as a direct result of the roll out of Universal Credit. Therefore we are requesting a further DHP funding release from Government to help us to minimise the impact on our residents. Without this extra DHP support, Croydon Council's costs will continue to increase at an unsustainable rate. This would both affect the vital support we give Croydon residents at risk of homelessness and further highlight the flaws requiring urgent fixing in the Universal Credit policy.

CROYDON LAUNCHES COMMERCIAL ARCHITECTURE PRACTICE

The Council has established a commercial architecture practice to help realise it's ambition to design and develop high quality homes of all tenures. The new venture will form part of Brick by Brick, the award winning development company established by the Council in 2016.

Any profits generated by the practice will be returned to Croydon Council as sole shareholder to be reinvested in the borough.

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The newly formed practice is to be called Common Ground Architecture and will initially focus on working with local authorities and other public sector clients to realise the full potential of their land assets by creating beautifully designed, commercially efficient housing schemes. The practice will be led by Chloë Phelps, who has headed up the in-house design team at Brick by Brick for the last few years following spells at Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands and Croydon's own Planning department.

The first scheme to be delivered by the practice will involve the development of new homes on Station Road in the South Norwood Conservation Area. The design has been strongly influenced by the Art Deco cinema that once stood on the neighbouring site and will also accommodate a new community space. Planning was secured for the development in May 2017 and work is set to commence on site in early 2018.



LGC Awards 2018

Croydon Smaller Sites Programme from Brick by Brick has been shortlisted in the Housing Initiative category for the LGC Awards 2018

The judges had a difficult job scoring the entries and have commended the high quality of entries this year, so to be shortlisted is a fantastic achievement!