



8 March 2013

Feedback from community
workshop held on February 9th at
Dexter's Playground: *analysis*

Lambeth has agreed to transform Somerleyton Road in partnership with the community

Feedback from first community workshop, 9th February 2013, Dexter's playground

Workshop participants were asked:

Question 1: What do you think about the plans and the vision you've see?

Question 2: What can the project do for the neighbourhood and communities around Somerleyton Rd?

Question 3: What would you like to see in 10 years' time?

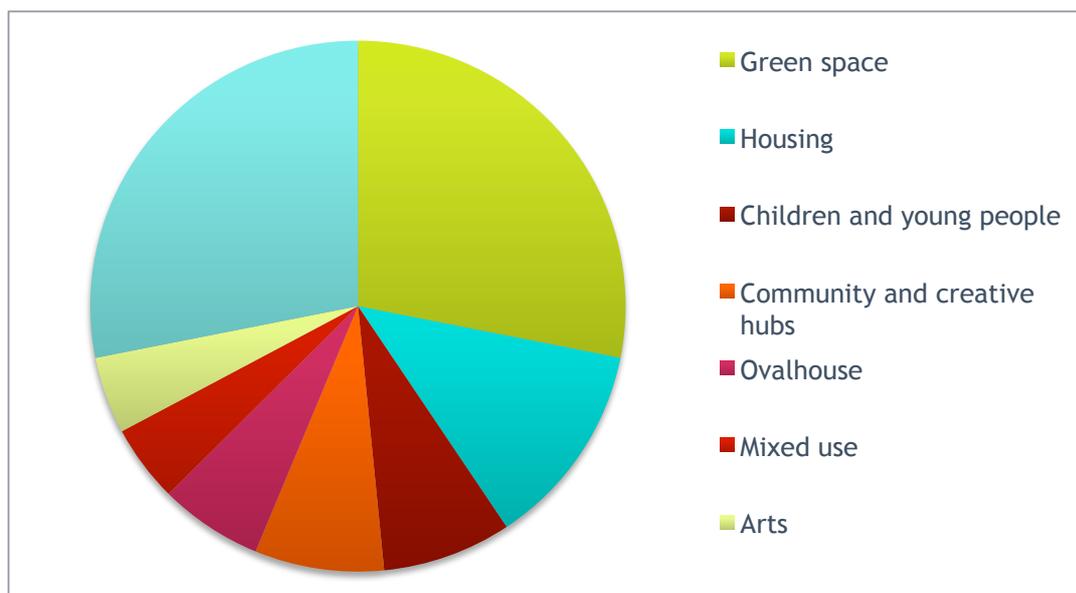
They replied by filling in a form, by writing on maps, by hanging tags on the wall and by leaving other written comments.

Question 1: What do you think about the plans and the vision you've see?

- 64 people answered this question
- 25 supported the plan, characterising it as "great", "fabulous", impressive".
- 10 of them used the words "good", "very good", "interesting", "positive", but no one was negative.

The comments, positive and negative, divided into eight categories:

- Green space and trees
- Housing
- Children and young people
- Community and creative hubs
- The relocation of Ovalhouse
- The mixed use plan
- Arts and culture
- Social integration and resilience



Green space and trees

“Green Space and Trees” received the most comments. There were no negatives; people expressed the fact that they liked the idea of having food growing in their neighbourhood and more green space.

“The fruit trees are great: connecting people with nature and not supermarket’s “all available all year” attitude”

“Yes to more trees and green space”

The ecological aspect of the plan and the need for a sustainable future were mentioned by people who were sceptic about the project, or were emphasized by people who made further suggestions:

“Really don’t want to see hideous plasterboard flats in hideous colours. Brixton needs a development that is sustainable”

“Some buildings are too high and block out the sky to the existing homes. People get depressed in long dreary winters so no light eventually should be lost. Therefore Ovalhouse should not build up against Carlton Mansions. Noise is a big issue for residents and Lambeth have repeatedly failed to take this seriously - therefore it needs to be well built/sound insulated and managed very well against anti-social behaviour”

Housing

Housing was much discussed. People appreciation the provision for older people, although many felt it should be at the top end of this site, closest to shops and the centre of Brixton. There were considerable concerns about affordability (including the impact on rent levels for people living on the Moorlands estate) and worries about rent levels for social housing under the new affordable rent regime.

“Yes to more social housing, especially for older people”

“Should/must be ALL social housing - no private development!”

“Houses for rent or sale - as soon as everything can be kept clean and maintained I would be happy to invest myself in a house and/or office”

Children and young people

Education and youth were raised frequently. People wanted to see more provision of space for children and young people. Their ideas included a primary school, nurseries or public spaces for teenagers.

“Need safe places for young people to hang out safely, to study, etc, would also welcome more education and training opportunities in the area - for children for adults and not limited to English as a second language - older people - education in all areas of F.E.”

“I would love to see there to be a primary school. I know three families that have had to move out of Brixton because they couldn't get their kids into any schools nearby (they didn't want to move)”

Community and creative hubs

“I really like the idea of the community hub with nursery. I think it would be great for my children to grow up in a multicultural environment that can teach them diversity and the beauty of all cultures. I also love the project of the creative hub”

“It would be nice to see the social housing be pulled more into the centre of the scheme and perhaps a connection made with the community hub”

The relocation of the Ovalhouse

The relocation of the Ovalhouse to the top of Somerleyton Road site generated some debate. Supporters liked the idea of it attracting more people to the area, while there were some concerns that it would be primarily for people from outside the area.

“Oval House Theatre coming to Brixton is very exciting”

“Theatre: it is for locals or just sounds good but will be used and aimed at North Londoners like the trendy new Brixton Market - which is not used by locals?”

Mixed use

The fact that the project included various different uses within its borders was positively received.

“I think it's a great idea to regenerate an under-used area. I also like the mixed use proposals; e.g. elderly community spaces with arts and housing”

“Good ideas for mixed development - social/private/affordable housing.”

Arts and culture

People were really interested in the cultural aspect of the area. Their suggestions included the development of the area into a cultural hub and the connection with the music industry:

“There should be as much focus on more arts as possible and more attention to music. Maybe a space for youth to learn how to play instruments and record songs. Building on the strong connection Brixton has with the industry - it's well known for its music venue”

“I'd like to see a music venue”

“I am in full support of developing the area as an artist's/cultural hub”

Social integration and resilience

Some general issues were raised about whether the proposals would work for local people. There were fears that it would reinforce existing divides between newer residents and longer standing residents, particularly of the Moorlands estate. There were favourable comments about better integration of the Moorlands Estate into the wider area. One person suggested the expansion of the regeneration project to Loughborough Junction.

Finally, a general demand for the involvement of the community in the final plans was requested.

“Who will own the freehold of the land? - Who will be the development partner? What will be the affordability criteria?”

“Great ideas but what is the reality of it all? Would it push out local people? Or add to gentrification currently happening? Lots of great ideas but who meets the cost of them?”

“Sommerleyton Rd become less silent and Moorlands Estate more integrated”

“There could be an opportunity to extend a similar scheme to Loughborough Junction which is as highly populated, yet ALWAYS neglected”

Question 2: What can the project do for the neighbourhood and communities around Sommerleyton Rd?

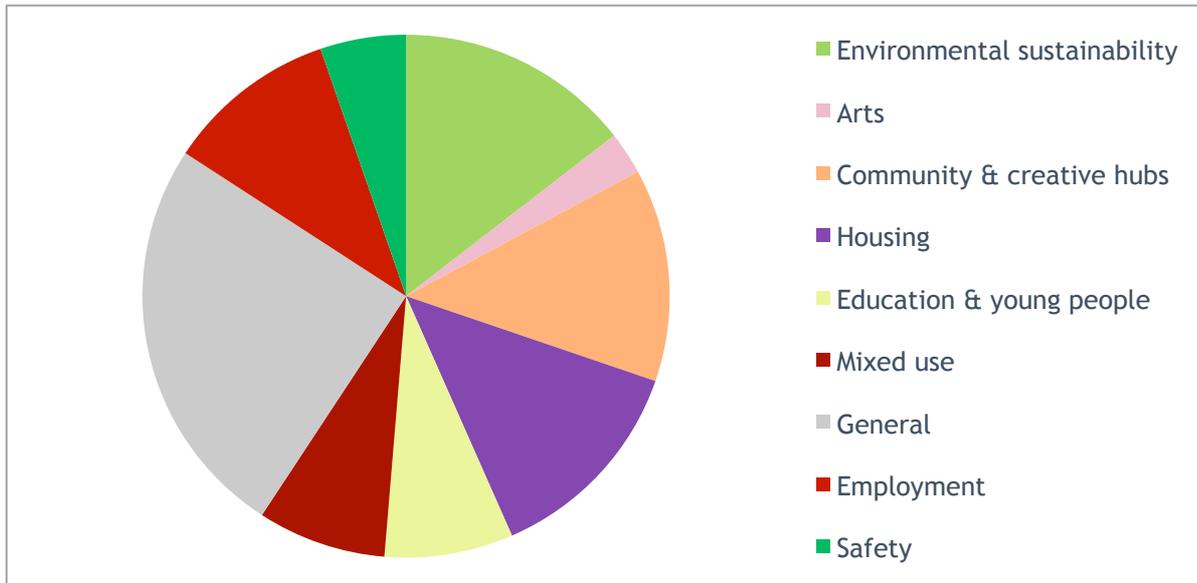
62 participants answered this question. The majority of were positive. Priorities that emerged were: the integration of the different cultures that exist in this part of Brixton; safety; employment opportunities that can be created in the neighbourhood; the future of local businesses. However, doubts were raised about the impact of, and fears of, gentrification.

“It could be positive but I think that it's important not to have any unintended consequences that push local people out of the area”

The comments, fall into nine categories:

- Environmental sustainability
- Arts and culture
- Community and creative hubs
- Housing

- Education and young people
- Mixed use
- Social Integration
- Employment
- Safety



Environmental sustainability

People expect the project to bring green and public space to Somerleyton Road and create a new street life that attracts locals. They are very enthusiastic about the potential of open space for social interaction and integration, by creating usable gardens and public spaces where people can meet each other.

Expectations are also high of a sustainable built environment.

The existing playground, and the space in front of Southwyck House were points of particular focus. There was a strong feeling these should be improved, to add to the rest of the regeneration project.

“Make a lot of things around the area like an open space to do things”

“Create street life - engage with streetscape at Moorlands”

“Create space for gardening and social interaction. For there to be as much green as concrete. Need “usable” communal gardens”

“Not push people out, ensure council/affordable housing, environmentally friendly and sustainable project”

“Build new passive housing - insulated and with low impact”

“Work on getting the existing playground and the rail for the road to be better used”

“I would like to link the space in front of Southwyck House (barrier block) to the Brixton Green proposal. I would like the whole site between Somerleyton Road to be park/recreational use”

Arts and culture

“Working in the arts already I think it would fantastic if the creative hub could become a community arts centre with recording/mixing/mastering facilities and rehearsal spaces at low cost for young musicians of the area. I would also love the idea of workshops: music/photo/languages”

“I want to see cheap artists space”

Community and creative hubs

People were excited about the idea of a community hub. They wanted a specific space for the community to meet. A creative hub offers the chance to develop interests and meet people that enjoy similar things.

“Hopefully bring the community together”

“Bring a sense of community”

“Provide a hub or centre for community events - hall and space hire, petting zoo, offices and workshops for rent.”

“Provide outside and inside communal space and opportunities to interest”

“Make people all involved, part of a community where people love about their surroundings and each other. Provide housing, jobs and kids’ groups”

Housing

The proportions of social housing and private housing created some debate. More people supported social housing across the entire site than wanted a balance between private and social housing. However, everyone wanted local characteristics to be taken into consideration so that the community is enhanced and not just gentrified.

“Housing should be affordable (maybe all social?)”

“Make sure any housing is affordable - social housing - protect heritage”

“For me, most importantly I think it could best serve the community at this time by providing council housing, i.e. owned and serviced by the council at rents affordable to those in low pay”

“New affordable homes”

“Not push people out, ensure council/affordable housing, environmentally friendly and sustainable project”

“Homes that are for everyone, a mix of private and council”

“Ensure a mix of social/private housing in new developments”

“Mixture of sizes of family homes ... sheltered housing.”

“Make people all involved, part of a community where people love about their surroundings and each other. Provide housing, jobs and kids’ groups”

Education and young people

There was a wish for the community and cultural hub to offer the training, sports, cultural activities and recreation for children and young people so that they can develop their skills and talents.

“Education and training for young people”

“Health and fitness centre/community centre that focuses on “youth at risk”/a place for sports mentoring workshops, fitness and team building activities can help to build a stronger young community”

“I believe that it is important to have more things out there for the younger generation. Things that will put them on the right track to help them in the future. Creating a space that people will want to come to.”

“It can create things for younger and aged individuals, which will elevate the positive energy, create more aesthetically pleasing buildings and provide necessary services”

Social integration and resilience

Two of the main characteristics of the area that were praised are the diversity of people and their ability to co-exist and co-operate. People recognised the need for the regeneration of this part of Brixton. Concerns were voiced about future gentrification.

“Shops below, flats above - do it right”

“Aim for a mix of uses and housing tenures as best basis for a diverse and stable community”

“Hopefully engage with residents of Somerleyton Estate, perhaps initially offering reduced prices for local community as an introduction. Hopefully it will encourage different people use/engage with services. Hopefully will be mixed communities accessing services”

“Better relationship with each other - youth centre - gym - better relationship with all cultures”

“It is important that the facilities it provides to be intergenerational - from housing to leisure”

“You are ignoring a lot of the people who live there already and try to appeal to the outsiders who don't live in Brixton”

“It could be positive but I think that it's important not to have any unintended consequences that push local people out of the area”

“Nice extension of existing Brixton centre. I am happy of buy a house (within a year) and/or have an office in the creative hub. I may be also happy to develop an alternative therapy centre for counselling, massage, kinesitherapy, acupuncture”

“Any positive development of this road will help, but on-going dynamic presence will help”

“I think the project can breathe new life into Brixton's communities and make things better for visitors and people living in the area”

“Bring life at a curiously “dead” strip of Brixton. There is so much vibrancy in the area - however currently Somerleyton Road is a “wasteland”

“Ensure there is community consultation and buy-in from Moorland Estate.”

“Tie together the Moorlands side and the Railton Road side at Somerleyton Passage”

“Improve services, hopefully. There should be co-production”

“Unfortunately, it could contribute to the general gentrification of Brixton, even if Brixton Green is supposed to be for “regeneration” and “anti-gentrification”. Gentrification just happens. Some of the people getting involved in this could lose their homes as a result. PLEASE DON'T FORGET THIS!”

“There is much level of gentrification in Brixton and little prospect of change. Somerleyton Road needs very careful treatment”

Employment

As well as jobs created by the development, there was a wish to nurture the local economy, to accommodate local businesses and enterprises.

“Provide jobs/activities”

“Shape ops - for the young professionals moving to London”

“There should also be room for businesses or small organizations as it is important that they are integrated into the communities they dwell in”

“Provide employment”

“Increase the vibrancy, bring more jobs, offer a safe community”

“Create a sustainable, mutually supportive community with spaces for small local businesses”

“I think it will help with employment opportunities etc”

Safety

Concern about safety is of great importance.

“Provide safe place of refuge if you are being chased by gangs”

“Unite them and build a stronger, safer place to live”

“Bring allotments, safe spaces”

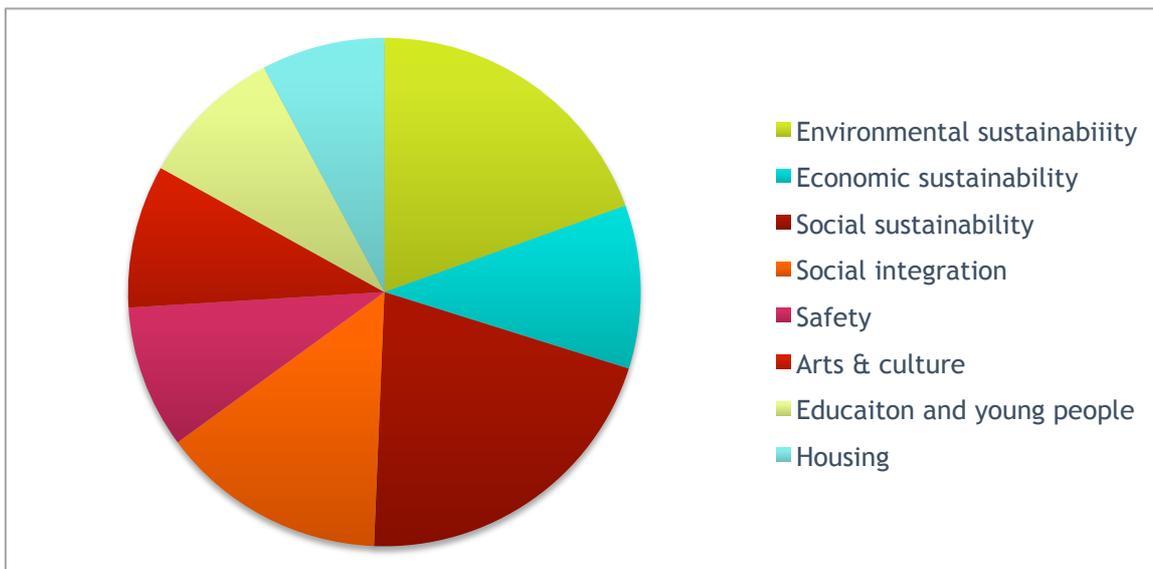
“Stop the crime and depressed feel of the area”

Question 3: What would you like to see in 10 years' time?

57 people shared their opinion on how they would see their neighbourhood in 10 years' time. The focus was on the environmental, economic and social sustainability of Somerleyton road. People want a safe environment where the diverse population will be integrated into the community. With educational and employment opportunities for young people combined with appropriate housing for the elderly in a sustainable environment.

Responses fell into eight categories.

- Environmental sustainability
- Economic sustainability
- Social sustainability
- Social integration
- Safety
- Arts and culture
- Education and young people
- Housing



Environmental sustainability

Responses focused both on the creation of more green spaces and the use of sustainable architecture. Participants would like to see in ten years' time a neighbourhood full of open spaces that allows them to grow food and become self-sufficient, and buildings that will last through time with the use of sustainable materials.

“Mature trees”

“Well built, designed, good architecture. Not just cheap crap badly designed homes”

“A greener Brixton with more public spaces”

“New building which add to the area’s landscape, current heritage repaired, maintained and enjoyed. Affordable housing for all. A more friendly road - looking used”

“Gorgeous homes/flats in the style of the grand villas that used to be there and are still on Loughborough Road. Tree lined avenue/boulevard. Use of brick to build homes so that they last. This is more expensive than wood and probably less sustainable but at least they would last as the Victorian buildings that have survived in other parts of Brixton. Wrought iron - Italianate balcony’s - no Perspex please”

“Replace the cold carwash with a free open air gym”

Economic sustainability

There was a wish to create jobs and boost the local economy. This was linked to fears of rising housing costs.

“Local economy and local products”

“I would like to see Brixton raised up for the people living here and Brixton having a more positive name than it currently has Brixton people want to work and jobs, jobs is what people want”

“Support for individual small business and fewer phone shops!”

“Young business village (12 month subsidised offices/shops for people to get their business off the ground)”

“I would like to still be able to afford living on Somerleyton Rd and not see that I have been pushed out by rising rents with half my neighbours, because Brixton had become a “nicer place to live””

“That Brixton has protected its lower income residents as a result of this”

“Small creative businesses and I don’t mean web-designers and commercial techie stuff, but crafts people and artisans.”

Social sustainability

Social sustainability, strengthening the existing community, along with social engagement and integration were great concerns in this question. A better street life, a stronger community and positive people were voiced as aspirations.

“Stronger community”

“I would like the area to be positive”

“We have to make sure that not all the town centres become the same. We have to keep Somerleyton distinct”

“I would like to see Brixton raised up for the people living here and Brixton having a more positive name than it currently has Brixton people want to work and jobs, jobs is what people want”

“All the visions have come to life and it still be animated and alive - not have become run down”

“Vibrancy- harmony”

“All projects to have long-term engagement and sustainability in Somerleyton Road.”

“Major improvement on the current status of the proposed area. Myself being a current member of the area, I am fully aware of the past history it currently represents”

“Successful implementation of the project. Less talk and more action to the council”

“Development in Brixton which benefits the community that is here now and that this is still the case in 10 years’ time”

“A thriving neighbourhood, energetic community, street - life, exemplar environmental housing, yearly show-casing event for social sustainability”

Social integration

People recognised the diversity of cultures and background that Brixton residents come from.

“A community that is held as a benchmark for social image, engagement, forward thinking and challenging the social norms”

“A thriving community with a mix of people, culture, business”

“A more integrated, prosperous, vibrant community”

“I would like Brixton to maintain its current diverse aspect - as that is what drew me here in the first place. I would like everyone to be able to live here, without it becoming not affordable. I’d like the sense of community to be strong”

“Communities and people taking more personal responsibility - not expecting councils to solve ALL problems (this won’t be possible anyway because of cuts). We each have to care - walk around help and ACT to create the city we want to live in”

Safety

A peaceful community is one of the priorities of the participants.

“Less crime - people feel safe there - an allotment - integration with rest of Brixton”

“A peaceful, happy community in Somerleyton Rd”

“A safe and diverse lived in space”

“Peaceful community”

“Brixton being known as a safe environment”

“Cleaner, safer more cohesive.”

Arts and culture

“Brixton Green developed as a hub for culture and wellbeing”

“Street festivals hosted by the participants of the arts organisations.”

“An upbeat place with loads of culture flourishing out of it. People working and playing together and a space where people would like to come to”

Education and young people

“We could get quite a few other cultural/creative/health/training/educational/restaurant/nurse school/dance school and a HOTEL!!! (no proper hotel, nor bed and breakfast in Brixton!!)”

“A vibrant community where the youth are included as unemployment is high among them”

“Young business village (12 month subsidised offices/shops for people to get their business off the ground)”

“All segments of Brixton community using all the place together/alongside each other. Workshops held by former participants to offer long term sustainability and development of skills.”

Housing

The debate between social housing and mix of private and social housing also featured.

“New building which add to the area's landscape, current heritage repaired, maintained and enjoyed. Affordable housing for all. A more friendly road - looking used”

“Renting is important”

“Homes still in council ownership - nuclear dawn mural preserved/restored and celebrated on site - view of it enabled by the Oval House Development. Glass wall?”

“More social housing”

“Housing for young people born and grown up in the area”

“Decent, affordable, well managed social housing and artists' studios.”