



Chairs Report Norwood Forum 2023-24

The purpose of Norwood Forum is to “promote local involvement in public policy making and service provision at community level”. In its pursuit of that objective, the Forum operates on multiple levels, from answering daily enquiries by email through to facilitating large scale community campaigns. Run by a group of annually elected local volunteers, we ‘pay attention’ beyond our personal interests to what is happening in and to our neighbourhood, and our ever expanding network helps us to be as effective as we possibly can in helping make our neighbourhood the very best it can be.

Since we last met in July 2023 it’s been a very busy 12 months, as ever.

Lambeth Forum Network

In order to do the work that we do, as a member of the Lambeth Forum Network we are eligible to apply for up to £5000 funding each year. This money is to support our basic costs – our part time administrator, website, insurance, printing, and fees for things such as Zoom. With prudence we are able to amass every few years enough of a surplus to run a small community grants scheme.

To be successful in our annual bid for funding we have to meet certain criteria that are closely aligned to the councils Borough Plan, provide stats on all our work and a full financial record. Each Bid is peer reviewed, and we are delighted that for 2023/24 we were once again successful in receiving a full grant. There are currently 13 Forums across Lambeth, each shaped by its own local priorities, but together we form a strong advocacy group. Though still not having the widespread recognition in every corner of the council, this has shown some improvement during 23/24 and we have been at the forefront in driving that.

The LFN meets monthly, often with invited guests to brief us on particular issues, and this past year we were fortunate to be able to take advantage of a dedicated diversity and inclusion workshop. Representing our community is at the core of everything we do.

Projects

Thriving Norwood

Your community led local health and wellbeing network connecting you to people, projects, organisations and support across our neighbourhood.

We are incredibly proud with the continuing development of our major project: Thriving Norwood. Initially started in 2021 when we were approached by Lambeth Public Health to launch a grass roots health and wellbeing funding scheme with a £100K grant, we funded 13 projects in 2021/22 and a further 23 projects in 2023/24. In total we received 66 applications and funded 39 projects. Several are still ongoing and the final evaluation report is in the process of being completed as they all draw to a close. Projects have ranged from cycling to gardening, drama to mental health support, boxing to GCSE maths confidence boosters, maternity support to digital drop-ins to forest schools. All delivered free to the community.

Going forward we have been successful in obtaining funding from the Changing Lives scheme to fund the appointment of a dedicated Coordinator who will be tasked to expand the project in multiple ways as well as support the core Stakeholder Group made up of both NHS and NFP organisations and individuals working in the health and wellbeing sector, as well as local councillors and Lambeth officers. The Stakeholder group meets monthly with invited guests speaking to a theme, the most recent in July being cancer awareness. Sharing knowledge, making new connections and solving problems, the Stakeholder Group, which we co-chair with Cheryl Alfred, the Project Support Assistant and Health Equality Champion at the Hills, Brook and Dales PCN, has also been a further reason for our pride in this project.

The Thriving concept was initiated by the Stockwell Partnership (home of the Stockwell Forum another member of the Lambeth Forum Network), and there are now five Thriving Networks across Lambeth, with more in the planning. We shared our methodology and provided detailed support to both Thriving Streatham and Thriving South Bank and Waterloo with their funding schemes. This Thriving network plays a front-line role within the full spectrum of health provision in our borough, but without the unswerving support of Lambeth Public Health, not just financially, our growth would not have been possible. Identifying how impactful grass roots schemes – by the community for the community - can be, is something we wish that Lambeth would more widely acknowledge, and something that we continue to advocate for.

Norwood Community Safety Partnership

Over the past year the main work of the Community Safety Partnership has been making introductions between community, education, health, wellbeing, and youth engagement groups across the four wards of West Norwood and between them and potential funders, supporters and volunteers. This has been done by organising cross-group invitations (e.g. between Ward Safer Neighbourhood Panels and Patient Engagement Groups) and the production and circulation of a monthly newsletter covering activities, plans, consultation and funding opportunities relevant to groups in the four wards of West Norwood.

Wild Norwood

But - it's not all this kind of serious work at Norwood Forum, we also know how to fun too, and our main creative project is Wild Norwood, celebrating nature in our urban, inner London neighbourhood.

Always running in November, the core of Wild Norwood is a Window Wanderland festival where residents, shops and schools put silhouette designs in their front facing windows which they backlight by leaving their lights on when its gets dark. There is a map that helps people discover their neighbourhood in a whole new light. There is also a community window display in the windows of West Norwood Library and this year a partnership project with South London Botanical Institute who could not hold their usual Glowing Garden event due to their home being a building site. Strengthening our connections with West Norwood Cemetery and their ongoing Heritage Lottery Project: A New Beginning, we drew all these threads together and co-produced a Glowing Open Day on 10 December 2023 in the cemetery forecourt full of twinkling lights and free workshops and activities for all ages to enjoy. The Brixton Tatterjacks Morris Dancers also came along to liven up the afternoon. In the early evening there was a magical, illuminated guided walk accompanied by our sleigh bells, through the cemetery, finishing up at the Chapel for a wintery and interactive storytelling evening. Unfortunately, the star gazing that was to end the evening, was not possible due to a cloudy sky – next time.

History and Heritage

This is a particular area within which we work on a number of projects, including:

Blue Plaque Trail

Have you taken our [blue plaque self-guided walk](#) yet? There are 21 blue plaques across our neighbourhood in shop and office windows, each with a snippet of social history about the location. A further tranche is planned for next year.

Lambeth Local History Forum

We are a member of this group and attend its quarterly meetings. Each September the group run a month long Heritage Festival of events and activities, spearheaded with a. In 2023 it was finally the turn of West Norwood to host the fair and together with The Norwood Society, West Norwood Cemetery and the Friends of West Norwood Cemetery we programmed a wide range of walks and talks. We took a leading role in organising the fair in West Norwood Library with more than 40 stalls by other local history groups, and especially curated an hour long film show of heritage footage of West Norwood.

West Norwood Cemetery

We have a seat at the Council's quarterly National Lottery Heritage Fund West Norwood Cemetery Implementation Board meetings which monitor progress on the various packages of capital works:

- Package B: Drainage and path works
- Package A1: St. Stephen's Chapel (Greek Enclosure) and 14 monuments
- Package A2: Visitors Centre, Hubbard Road and Robson Road entrances and boundary wall works.
- Package D: interpretation package – opening up and guiding visitors to the Crematorium and graves and for heritage visits.

We provide regular updates on our website and our latest is [Spring 2024](#). The Project is currently targeted to finish one year late: 31 March 2025.

The Council intends amending the governance arrangements for the Cemetery, and we look forward to being able to help widen access for its use by the local community and beyond.

And what else do we do?

These are just some of things:

Planning Applications

Norwood Forum receives every planning application made across our area – that's Brockwell Park to Crystal Palace – Leigham Court Road to South Croxted Road. We have a sub-committee comprising members of our committee, with members of Norwood Action Group and The Norwood Society who review each one and decide if comments need to be made – both for and against. Some are quick to deal with, others like the Planning Application for the scrap metal facility on Windsor Grove take over our lives for several years – and are still not resolved. On average we deal with around 300 applications a year, plus other ones relating to licensing for instance.

We strongly opposed the application to build an Aldi supermarket off Knights Hill, which was refused permission. This site is designated as a KIBA - Key Industrial Business Area and that was the main reason for refusal, a supermarket is not light industry. But for us, with Lidl at the top of Knights Hill and Norwood Road full of supermarkets, Aldi did not adequately convince us in our meetings with them that they could demonstrate demand, yet with a planned car park we could see the store would readily attract business away from our existing town centre traders.

General Election Hustings

As we usually do, we co-hosted a hustings for the General Election with our colleagues at Herne Hill Forum. All six candidates attended a packed (250+) Baptist Hall in Herne Hill. Additional

security was necessary but with more than 20 volunteers between the two Forums we were able to handle the additional tasks such as bag searches. We asked for questions in advance, and also took some from the floor and Giles Gibson from Herne Hill Forum chaired the meeting with professionalism and imagination.

Remembrance Sunday

Christ Church Gipsy Hill invited us once again to lay a memorial wreath as part of the service held at the Vincennes War Memorial. Thriving Norwood grant recipient Nadeen Collington along with Anne Crane, Norwood Forum committee member laid the wreath on behalf of the community.

Banking facilities

We offer our support to other organisations to act as their bankers. These past twelve months that has included West Norwood Feast for the period when they changed banks and Streatham Action Group with their second round of Thriving grants. We also hold the campaign surplus from the Windsor Grove campaign, funds to support the continuing administration of the Streetworks project and a modest amount on behalf of the Friends of West Norwood Station.

Your Street Your Way

We came across this council project completely by chance and this was its second iteration. The council commissioned architects based in London Bridge, We Made That, to run a competition inviting community members to redesign ten selected street locations across the borough. The location in West Norwood was at the end of Chestnut Road, where there is a blank wall backing on the Aspire Community Centre. We were too late to influence the location or promote the competition but we were able to get Aspire's MD Keith Edmondson on the selection panel, along with one of our Thriving grant recipients Ryan Spence of CSC, providers of high quality sports and health & wellness programmes with the main aim of combating violent and knife crime, and gang violence. The selected landscape scene celebrating the Great North Wood was designed by Ioana Andrada Calin. Whilst cautious at first to have such a project dropped on the community without any consultation, the mural has been painted professionally, and it has ultimately been well received by its neighbours. Nevertheless this does not demonstrate best practise in council/community collaborative working.

Consultations

As you can see elsewhere in this report, we work very hard to make detailed responses to consultations, especially those that come out of the council. As well as Dockless bikes and SADPD (see below), we have contributed in detail to the Housing consultation, Voluntary and Community Infrastructure Support Contract, and Lambeth's Kerbside Strategy this past year. LTN's and CPZ's are very much on our radar. We also regularly engage with developers such as on Site 19, the Aldi development, and the housing association development on Avenue Park Road.

Friends of West Norwood Health & Leisure Centre

We play an active role in this group, run by the Leisure Centre Manager Cate Devar. The focus on this work is on the external areas, the most important part being the park and playground at the front of the building. There was a competition in 2022 to name the area which was won by local 7yr old Sophie W who name 'Peregrine Park' honoured our peregrine family that have roosted in past years in St Lukes clock tower. The sign was unveiled on 21 July 2023.

Promotions

And of course we run Events and News webpages listing everything we get to hear about on our website. We use Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to further promote our work and that of the community and are just beginning to get to grips with the new local app ChooSE27, brought to the community by Station to Station BID, with whom we work very closely.

Relationships

We also build and nurture relationships across the community and wider, including:

Elected representatives

We often, but not always, host hustings when there is an election coming up. For wards we might hold one husting in each ward, for a General Election as described elsewhere, we usually jointly co-host with Herne Hill Forum as the constituency area of Dulwich and West Norwood is vast.

This work brings us into contact with all our local councillors. Due to new ward boundaries we now have four in our area: Gipsy Hill, Knights Hill, West Dulwich and St Martins and we work closely with all nine councillors. Similarly with our local MP, Helen Hayes.

Station to Station: West Norwood & Tulse Hill Business Improvement District (S2S)

Throughout this report, there is frequent mention of Station to Station. Norwood Forum works very closely with them, virtually on a daily basis. They serve our local businesses and we the residents, so there is much cross over in our work. We often directly collaborate on projects such as the SADPD campaign and the Grantham Clean Air Art Prize, but we also are constantly sharing information, contacts and resolving day to day problems – problems such as reporting graffiti or fly-tipping. In the past year S2S have also introduced an electric van for local businesses in the BID network to use for collections and deliveries, and have also launched a fantastic neighbourhood App: ChooSE27. This lists events and activities as well as info from our local businesses, including special offers.

Other close local relationships we have include with West Norwood Feast, Rathbone Society, West Norwood Cemetery, South London Theatre, Lambeth Horticultural Society, South London Botanical Institute and many, many others. We also have contacts with all of the local schools.

Integrate CIC

Integrate is the borough wide organisation commissioned by our council to deliver support to the voluntary sector. They send out regular newsletters packed full of helpful information and can provide 121 support on many issues including fund raising.

London Borough of Lambeth

And of course we come into contact with a lot of Lambeth Officers, not least Catherine Walsh who facilitates the Lambeth Forum Network and Lambeth Public Health with our Thriving Norwood project. Other departments we are frequently in contact with include planning, environment especially parks and trees officers, graffiti and fly-tipping, various VCSE related officers, and so on.

Campaigns

Lambeth Site Allocation Development Plan – Draft (SADPD for short)

This planning document sets out a collection of individual sites across the borough that the council have identified as suitable for development. Using this framework, the council has drawn up outline plans for each site to showcase to developers what kind of development they would welcome.

In Norwood, the council identified two development sites: Site 19, the triangle between railway lines off Knollys Road, and Site 18 which is the area bordered on the west side by Norwood Road stretching between Lansdowne Hill and York Hill and reaches back to the borders of York Hill Estate.

The community response is led by a campaign group of key organisations in the community: Norwood Forum, Norwood Action Group, Station to Station BID, The Norwood Society, Friends of West Norwood Station, members of the former Norwood Planning Assembly, Knollys Road Community Group, and individual members of the community.

As has been consistently stated, the campaign is not against new development, Site 18 has been designated for a decade or more for development under various schemes and the council have done very little towards making this a reality – until 2022 and their SADPD plans. The main problem is that the council refuse to properly consult and work with the community, even though it has previously commended our community for its active willingness to be involved and agreed a master plan on development of site 18.

Why are we against the plans for Site 18 and Site 19 in the first place? Because of the density, the overly tall buildings, and the scale of the impact on our town centre. We, along with 100's of other stakeholders and individuals, made representations in March 2022.

You can read the full story on our [dedicated webpage](#), but in short, 2023 ended with an email from Councillor Danny Adilypour, Deputy Leader for Sustainable Growth and New Homes, informing the West Norwood and Tulse Hill Community Stakeholder Group that the SADPD policy would be presented to Cabinet in January 2024 in order to authorise its publication for Regulation 19 consultation and subsequent submission to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination.

He also advised that the report would show that Site 19 was to be removed from the SADPD, and that the boundaries of Site 18 would be redrawn.

Getting Site 19 removed from the SADPD was unquestionably a huge success. The redrawing of the site 18 boundaries had the advantage of protecting some existing residential properties but the severe impact on the town centre through the bulk and number of the mooted new tall blocks and loss of many of our existing businesses remains. We do feel the Council is not listening enough to the community or showing any willingness to work with the community in partnership as it embarks on minimal statutory consultation at each stage of the process. We remain very concerned about the impact of large-scale and high-rise development especially on Norwood Road. No other of the SADPD sites across the borough will bring such significant change.

Where are we now?

On 12 June this year, Lambeth Council advised that due to a technical matter not everyone on their Planning Policy consultee database received the notification of the previously published SADPD: Proposed Submission Version under Regulation 19. This means that the consultation period has been reopened and we all have until 5pm 13 August to send in new comments.

We urge the community to read the objections made by individual members of the Stakeholder Group, which are all on [the dedicated webpage](#) on the Norwood Forum website, and to send in their own comments by the deadline.

We are also looking at other avenues to protect our important shopping street and our retailers that saw us through Covid and Lockdown, and that includes potentially seeking local listing status for what we believe are the oldest terraced sections along Norwood Road.

We need genuinely affordable housing, especially for local people, we want a collaborative approach to Site 18 development that truly meets our community's needs, and we want our main shopping street businesses protected.

If you want to join the Stakeholder Group or have any questions or want clarification on anything, please do get in touch: info@norwoodforum.org

Are You Ready To Vote

The recent local and general elections are mentioned earlier, and we launched our own 'Are you ready to vote' campaign in September last year. We felt it was extremely important to raise the profile of the need to have photo ID to vote going forward, especially for new 18yrs old voters with very few options on ID they could use. Lambeth gave us some leaflets on photo ID and we

also printed our own. We handed these out at various key locations in Tulse Hill, West Norwood and Gipsy Hill before the London Mayor/London Assembly elections took place. We were also planning a stall at West Norwood Feast in May, though unfortunately that was cancelled due to the extreme weather forecast. Our website, newsletter and social media all heavily promoted this issue. We revisited all of this again when the general election was announced.

Working Towards a Greener Norwood

All of our work falls under this banner, but here are some of the specific projects we have been involved in this year:

Dockless bikes and scooters bays

As part of our ongoing focus on our 15min Neighbourhood, we prepared a detailed response to the council's dockless bike and scooter bay consultation. A huge amount of work through our Streetworks project has gone towards improving walking and cycling facilities in our community, and with that experience we asked that the Council involve the community in suggesting the locations for these new bays. We received no response, but finally after much following up, a walk-about with Lambeth officers was arranged. One big area of concern is bikes and scooters cluttering up the pavements and we have now received confirmation on the different penalties each of the four providers serve up to their users. They are paltry. The council admit that these companies are not easy to deal with. We also asked how the public can report dumped bikes. A single phone number has been discussed and we await further news on this essential element.

Streetworks

This is a project that began as long ago as 2015 as a community led (yes it can be done!) project to improve the Norwood and Tulse Hill public realm infrastructure with funding from Transport for London and support from the council. Co-design workshops and lots of meetings realised some early successes, not least the widening of Norwood Road pavements. Come 2019 TfL funding was heavily reduced and key elements such as the resurfacing of Norwood Road was delayed by the extensive water main works. Norwood Forum eventually succeeded in getting the project restarted in 2020 and since that time, the following has now been completed:

- resurfacing of Norwood Road
- depaved planting beds along Norwood Road installed and the plant beds are now maintained by Open Orchard commissioned by Station to Station BID
- pedestrian priority crossings are in place at every side road coming into Norwood Road
- signage for the orange mural under the Tulse Hill railway bridge
- new cycle cage at the junction under the Tulse Hill railway bridge
- Waylett Place car park brought back into public use after Covid
- complete review of parking regulations, with new traffic orders now in place – and (we are told) upgraded enforcement.

What's still outstanding?

- diagonal crossing road surface at the junction of York Hill, Norwood Road and Lancaster Avenue
- public art competition using catalytic banners
- installation of street furniture
- snagging.

and greatest of all, the removal of the Tulse Hill Gyratory.

We are indebted to the incredible lobbying work being carried out by local St Martins ward Councillor Olga Fitzroy. TfL have found funds to commence the initial traffic management research towards the main goal of removing the gyratory, but in the meantime an interim streetscape improvement scheme is going to be installed. A presentation meeting by TfL is to

happen shortly. The community have also taken the problem into its own hands, building new planters and maintaining existing ones. If anyone would like to join the Tulse Hill Gyrotory Stakeholder Group and get involved, please get in touch.

Wellbeing Walk

Norwood Forum increased its insurance in order to take over running the local weekly health and wellbeing walk whilst the management of this long running scheme is resolved between Guys & Thomas's and the Ramblers. This is a free, guided walk led by a trained volunteer, leaving West Norwood Health & Leisure Centre at 12.30pm every Wednesday. The walk uses the 40 Grade II listed acres of West Norwood Cemetery to enjoy an hour immersed in nature, and also includes a short social history stop at a different monument every week. No need to book, just turn up and register on arrival.

Lambeth Civic Awards

We were delighted and amazed to be shortlisted for the relaunched community and volunteer awards scheme run by the council, now called the Lambeth Civic Awards. We were nominated in the Commitment to Climate Justice Award for our ongoing campaigning work, some of which is described above. We also work closely with Mums for Lungs who now write a regular column in our monthly newsletter, we are working to develop a local Green Alliance that will bring all local organisations and individuals working towards a sustainable future together – with at least one aim to make collaborative project funding bids, we sit on the Lambeth Biodiversity Forum, and we have run annual COP events to coincide with the international COP meeting each year – focussing on what we can do at grass roots level, that doesn't cost the earth.

Grantham Clean Air Art Prize

Together with Station to Station BID we were also delighted to be invited to work with the Grantham Institute on this annual national art project. The Grantham Institute sits at the heart of Imperial College London's work on climate change and the environment. They drive forward discovery, convert innovations into applications, train future leaders and communicate academic knowledge to businesses, industry and policymakers to help shape their decisions. Each year they run a competition that invites young people, who will be most affected by climate change, to create bold designs for outdoor public murals focused on the solutions needed to tackle the climate crisis.

It was not easy to find a location, but finally the blank wall behind the bus stop on Norwood Road close to the Hoopla Garden was identified, and now the beautiful winning mural in the 15–18 age group designed by Janet Aloa, 17, from Rochdale in Greater Manchester, can be enjoyed by everyone. Painted by specialist mural artist Micheel Meola, the design is entitled Use Your Voice and is aimed at empowering young people to speak up to those in power and demand action to tackle climate change.

Which leads me finally on to the subject of our community discussion this afternoon:

Public Transport/Active Travel

The whole of the second half of today's public meeting will be devoted to discussing this important topic. We have already asked the community to send in their comments and concerns via our newsletter, website and social media. We were also at Feast last Sunday gathering more input, and today we will be discussing all of this to come up with the bones of our next major campaign. I will explain how this is going to work when we come to that moment in the agenda.

Thank you

I hope my report gives everyone a sense of the breadth and depth of the work we do as your local community forum.

And finally, I would just to take this opportunity to thank the committee for their tremendous support over these past three and a half years. Today I am standing down as Chair, though not leaving the committee altogether. It has been an absolute privilege to have held this very special position. No two days are the same with the Forum, and I thoroughly recommend getting involved. Its enriched my life to an extent I wouldn't have thought possible. It has brought me an incredible amount of joy and satisfaction – and not a little heart-ache too, and made me dozens of truly life-long friends. Thank you.

Kim Hart
Chair