

People Shaping Places: HIGHAMS PARK

A report commissioned by Waltham Forest Council.

May 2016



Introduction

Waltham Forest Council commissioned Kaizen and Social Life to carry out four engagement pilot projects in the borough in order to develop a better understanding of how it can engage with residents across the borough in planning and designing new developments.

This summary sets out the activities carried out, key emerging themes and the implications for future community engagement in the Highams Park area.

The research strategy devised to structure this project was mixed in approach and included two different engagement methods - street interviews and pop-up focus groups for adults and youth. Additionally, the team reviewed the Highams Park Planning Group's (HPPG) engagement activities to date. In total, 295 people were interviewed for this research, 105 young people and 190 adults.

This research aimed to:

- Identify the major challenges facing residents and businesses today.
- Engage young people in the discussions about their neighbourhood and identify which services and facilities they feel are needed in the area.
- Complement ongoing outreach work occurring in the area and talk with people who have not yet been reached through HPPG's engagement activities to date.
- Better understand residents' priorities for the HPPG's neighbourhood plan.

To receive a copy of the full report, please contact Waltham Forest Council at consultation@walthamforest.co.uk.

THE RESEARCH TEAM

This report was written by Social Life with contributions and research by Kaizen and Social Life.

Kaizen is an award-winning social business that specialises in designing and delivering projects in the community sector.

Social Life was established in 2012 by The Young Foundation. All its work is about the relationship between people and places.

For more information visit:
<http://wearekaizen.co.uk>
<http://www.social-life.co/>



Figure 1: Larkshall Road level crossing in Highams Park

The Highams Park area

Highams Park - located in the northeast of Waltham Forest - is a well-established neighbourhood. It is more suburban in character than the south of the borough and is close to Chingford and Essex to the north. Highams Park borders Epping Forest to the east, which forms a natural boundary for both the neighbourhood and the borough of Waltham Forest. In recent years, new housing has been developed in the area, and a new Tesco super-store has opened.

The area already has an active neighbourhood group - the Highams Park Planning Group (HPPG) - which was formally constituted in 2014 (<http://highamparkplan.org/>). It has been designated by the Council as the planning group for Highams Park for the next five years.

The planning group is currently working on a neighbourhood plan, with input from local residents and businesses, which aims to address both land use and planning issues in the area, as well as community projects identified as priorities by residents¹.

Alongside the work of the planning group, the council is carrying out a small intervention scheme to improve the physical layout of the area. This will include shopfront and wayfinding improvements, focusing on the Broadway and Broadway Parade, and a commission for art walls.

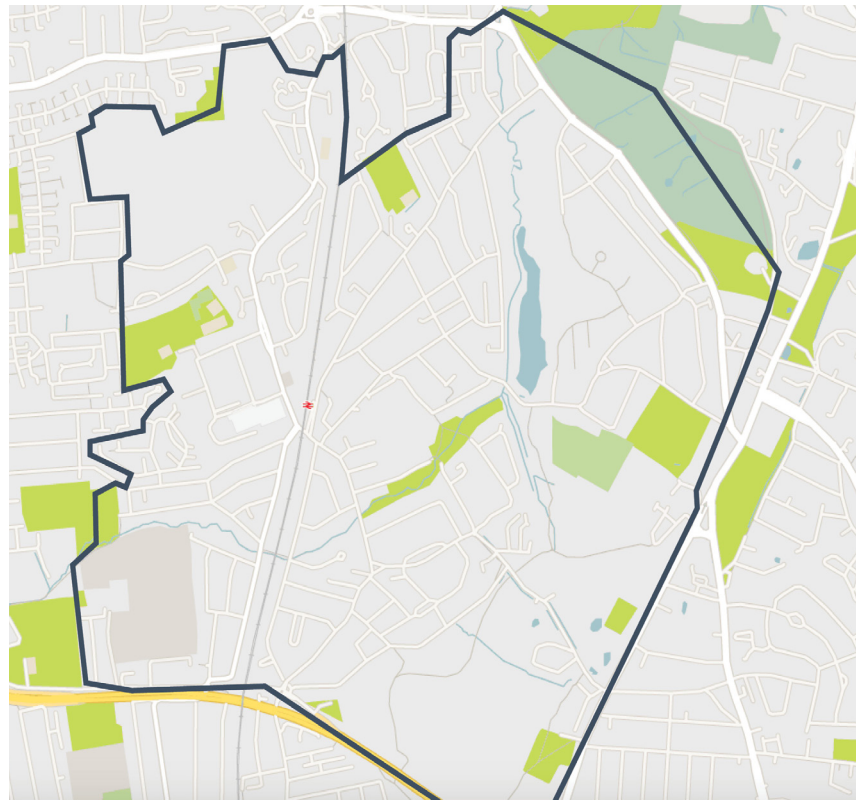


Figure 2: Highams Park survey area.

1. These five areas of the neighbourhood plan were identified from previous consultation and outreach by the HPPG. These five areas are: 'natural environment,' 'business, employment and community facilities,' 'traffic, pedestrians, and the public realm,' 'sustainability, estates and housing for multiple occupation,' and 'new housing development.'

Key findings

The following key themes emerged from the resident survey and pop-up focus groups.

Feelings about Highams Park today

1. **There is general satisfaction with the neighbourhood.** The majority of young people and adults who took part in the street interviews and focus groups are satisfied with the local area as a place to live. They spoke of the friendliness of people, safety, transport links and diversity of people as key reasons for liking the area.
2. **The high street could be improved, and people reported that they would like to see a greater variety of shops.** Many residents interviewed said that although there were many shops in the area they were poor quality or lacked variety. There was a desire for more retail offerings to enliven the high street. Adults generally wanted to see local, independent shops while young people voiced a desire for more chain restaurants, a cinema, and high street clothing stores.

Challenges facing residents

3. **The shortage of youth facilities and provision is seen as the leading cause of anti-social behaviour among young people.** Some adults interviewed spoke of feeling unsafe when seeing young people hanging out in groups, noting the lack of things to keep youth entertained and off the streets. The young people reported that they are bored and that there is nowhere to socialise outside of school, especially in the winter months.
4. **There was a general feeling that the area needs more community facilities and activities.** Both young people and adults interviewed noted the lack of community facilities, particularly for young people, as a key challenge. More parks, leisure spaces, and youth facilities are in high demand. Young people also voiced a desire for more after-school programmes, arts and craft classes, skills and sports training.
5. **Public transport is viewed as a strength of the area, but there are frustrations with traffic, parking, and roads.** While public transport access was mentioned positively, there is widespread frustration with the lack of parking, the condition of the roads, and traffic. There is a need for safer pedestrian crossings (specifically the level crossing at the railway). There was also a desire for more buses serving the area and a direct linkage to the underground from the existing train station.
6. **Public areas need more attention.** Residents of all ages interviewed noted dog fouling, rubbish and general uncleanness of public areas. Residents wanted to preserve open green spaces and improve existing parks.



Figure 3: Tesco in Highams Park.



Figure 4: The Regal building. Plans are now devised to reopen the space as a cinema



Figure 5: New housing development in Highams Park.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES:

“[Young people are treated] good because I like the schools and kids are great; people aren’t rude to you and no one gets in trouble.”

“We are treated okay but there’s bullying here; if we are at Tesco or playing around in the community, people get angry.”

“[The community] is scared when we are hanging around as they think we are up to stuff...like we are causing trouble when we are not... we are just bored.”

Community and safety

7. Generally people interviewed feel safe in the area but noted occasional anti-social behaviour. Many adult residents reported that young people get into trouble because there are not enough youth groups and facilities. The young people interviewed view Highams Park as a fairly safe place but did note that bullying, crime, and drugs exist locally.
8. Some young people in Highams Park feel they are treated well, while others said they are stereotyped as “trouble causers” by the community. The teenagers interviewed, particularly males, felt stereotyped by police, shopkeepers, and the public and said people are scared of them, especially when hanging out in groups. These teens said they are bored, but not doing anything wrong. The youngest children interviewed said they are sometimes bullied by the older children, and that a few troublemakers can give all young people a bad reputation.
9. People interviewed believe residents should be held responsible for improving their neighbourhoods. Nearly all of the adults and youth interviewed believe that people should do their part in improving their neighbourhoods. However, only half of adults interviewed were interested in being more involved in influencing development in the area and only 30% were interested in local volunteer opportunities.

Priorities for the neighbourhood plan

10. There is a lack of knowledge about the Highams Park neighbourhood plan. The majority of adults and young people interviewed had never been consulted before and did not know anything about the Highams Park Planning Group. The majority of youth and adults wanted to learn more about the plan.
11. The natural environment is the top priority area for the neighbourhood plan. When asked how they would rank priorities within the plan, the ‘natural environment’ emerged as the highest priority, followed by ‘business, employment and community facilities’, and ‘traffic, pedestrians, and the public realm’. ‘Sustainability, estates and housing for multiple occupation’ and ‘new housing development’ were given the lowest priority.
12. Housing and affordability were of concern to a few residents but not the majority. Affordability of housing, and of the area in general, were not viewed as high priority items for the area’s neighbourhood plan, yet some concerns around affordability were reported, and hopes that if any new housing is built, it should be “genuinely affordable.” Many adults interviewed thought the area was already overpopulated or that services should be increased before new residents move to the area.
13. There is a desire for more information. Most residents interviewed, young people and adults, expressed a desire to be more informed about local development plans and prefer online and print materials for information. Emails are the preferred method for internet users, while printed materials are preferred by those of whom do not use the internet regularly.

OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

172 adults

80 youth

GENDER

53% female **47%** male

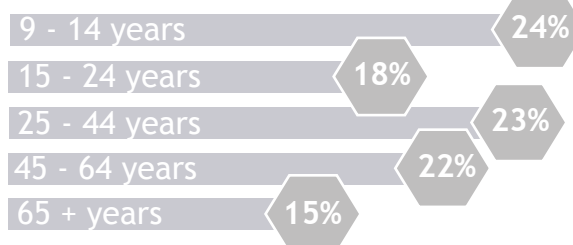


42% female **58%** male

ETHNICITY

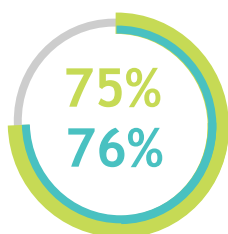
57%	45%	White British
15%	22%	Black or Black British
15%	6%	Other White
6%	12%	Asian or Asian British
6%	15%	Mixed
1%	0%	Prefer not to say
1%	0%	Other

AGE



SURVEY RESULTS

Are satisfied living in the area



Believe people have a responsibility to improve their neighbourhood



Had never been consulted



Would like to know more about the neighbourhood plan



PREFERRED METHOD TO RECEIVE INFORMATION

47%	Email updates
26%	Newsletters
22%	Waltham Forest News

CONNECTION TO AREA

33%	0%	21+ years
21%	21%	11-20 years
14%	31%	7-10 years
11%	19%	4-6 years
13%	21%	1-3 years
8%	8%	<1 year

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE PLAN	59%	84%	Nothing at all
	19%	7%	Not very much
	16%	7%	A little
	4%	3%	Quite a bit
	3%	0%	A lot

VOTED THEMATIC AREA 'HIGH PRIORITY'	84%	80%	Natural environment
	63%	66%	Business, employment & community facilities
	58%	54%	Traffic, pedestrians & public realm
	31%	29%	Sustainability, estates, multi-occupation houses
	30%	38%	New housing development

THINGS WORKING WELL FOR AREA



Transport Links
57% **41%**



Friendliness
55% **44%**



Feels safe
53% **42%**



Location
40% **36%**



Diversity
32% **41%**

39%	27%	Parks/Open Spaces	19%	13%	Health services
27%	36%	Schools	16%	23%	Leisure facilities
26%	35%	Shops	16%	17%	Cultural facilities
25%	19%	Access to nature	15%	10%	Facilities for children
21%	24%	Cafes/restaurants/pubs	12%	23%	Health provision

*Two different surveys were conducted - one with youth ages 9-18 (responses in blue) and one with adults (responses in green). Age of respondents has been combined from both surveys. Due to rounding, some percentages may not add up to 100%. Some sections like 'things working well for area' and 'preferred method to receive information' allowed residents to select more than one answer. Not all residents responded to each question.