THE WORK OF THE NORTH SOUTHWARK COMMUNITY PLANNING CENTRE

The Urban Aid grant that covers the cost of staffing and premises for the North Southwark Community Planning Centre has been terminated by Southwark Council from December 31st 1978. No evaluation of the work of the Centre has been undertaken by the Council.

The purpose of this report is to describe what the Centre does, who runs it, what work is undertaken there, who staffs it, who uses it, and how it links in with the community. Also the details of the Urban Aid grant and cost of the Planning Centre to the Council are included. Finally, there is a description of the work still to be done. The report concludes with a Question and Answers section about the Community Planning Centre.

HISTORY

In 1972, as a result of changes taking place in North Southwark and in response to public participation in plans produced by Southwark and the GLC, tenants associations, trades councils, church groups and settlements along with individual residents not belonging to associations came together to form the North Southwark Community Development Group. The present composition of the NSCDG and its Aims and Objectives are given in Appendix I and II.

This grouping of local organisations and individuals is concerned about changes taking place in the area known as Borough District and Thames-side, that is from Blackfriars Road in the west to the Rotherhithe Tunnel in the east and south to the Elephant and Castle. Many of the issues within this area are planning problems - the alarming loss of jobs and local shops, the shortage of open space and community facilities. Above all, the community wished to be involved in the planning process by presenting their views on plans and planning applications and making representations on policies for jobs, shops, homes and open space.

The NSCDG initially shared premises with the old Southwark Community project in 68 Southwark Bridge Road but when that left the area, the Group was required to fend for itself and in 1973 put in an application for an Urban Aid grant to set up a Community Planning Centre in North Southwark. This application which was for premises and two staff was successful. Premises were at 22 Marshalsea Road for the first year and at 108 Great Guildford Street, SE1 ever since.
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The Urban Aid application was based upon the wish by the community to be involved in planning applications and plans, to provide information within the community about these issues, and thus to help in providing a community input into planning in North Southwark. It was a recognition of this need by the Council that led to the approval of the Urban Aid grant.

**THE URBAN AID GRANT**

The successful Urban Aid application ran from January 1974. The details of the grant are as follows: the annual cost of the Community Planning Centre is £9030 (1977 figures) of which 25% or £2257 is contributed by Southwark Council and 75% or £6773 by the Department of the Environment. How is the grant spent?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent and rates for premises</td>
<td>£1908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries for two workers (+NI)</td>
<td>£6096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running costs</td>
<td>£1026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL (1977)</strong></td>
<td><strong>£9030</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Community Planning Centre has regularly submitted audited accounts to the Borough Treasurer.

The Urban Aid programme was established to support community initiatives with no fixed time limit for the length of projects. Support would be given as long as the local authority thought the project was important. Under Circular 9 of the Urban Aid Programme under which the Community Planning Centre was funded the grant was to run for five years with automatic renewals given by the Department of the Environment as long as the local authority was willing.

In Appendix III to this report we include a a document written by the Southwark Council for Voluntary Service which explains what the Urban Aid programme is, what it is for, and what Southwark's contribution is. This SCVS paper answers some of the questions that have been asked about Urban Aid support for voluntary organisations.

**WHO RUNS THE COMMUNITY PLANNING CENTRE?**

The North Southwark Community Planning Centre is run and managed entirely by the voluntary organisations that make up the North Southwark Community Development Group. As we have shown in Appendix I the NSCDG is a federation of local associations. It is a constitutionally based body which has monthly general meetings, and elects officers to run the Planning Centre on a day to day basis. These officers, all volunteers, have lived most of their lives in North Southwark. The officers are:
Chairman, Ted Bowman, a newspaper worker
Vice-Chairman, Wally Warby, a bank messenger
Secretary, Kath Mitchell, a primary school teacher
Treasurer, Irene Biles, IPC marketing
Publicity Officer, John Holsgrove, messenger
Minutes Secretary, Sue Jordan, a nurse.

The two full time workers who have been employed in the Community Planning Centre since the project began are Bob Colenutt and George Nicholson.

The Planning Centre is open five days a week from 10.00 am to 6.00 pm. It is the policy of the management to keep the office open all the time. It is always properly looked after and hospitable. The quality of the local management of the project is widely regarded as an achievement in public involvement in planning.

**THE WORK OF THE COMMUNITY PLANNING CENTRE**

A wide variety of work with the community is undertaken at the Planning Centre. A full list of reports and papers is given in Appendix IV.

(i) RESEARCHING AND INFORMING LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS, FIRMS AND INDIVIDUAL RESIDENTS OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS. North Southwark has been unique in the Borough is having experienced a very large number of planning applications for redevelopment and change of use. Between January 1974 and June 1978, just 4½ years, there were 1477 planning applications for the SE1 postal district in Southwark which is roughly the area covered by the Planning Centre. Many of these applications were large and complex, others though smaller have had important implications for streets, small areas, industrial employment areas and conservation areas. Each application must by law be accompanied by public consultation and since it is impossible for officers of the Planning Departments at Southwark and the GLC to undertake this work in any detail it is the function of the Community Planning Centre to notify people who may be affected, research into the background and implications, and arrange meetings about them where possible. The results of this work can be found in the Council files in the number of letters and representations sent in about planning applications for the North Southwark area.

These applications are still coming in. In some cases new applications are coming in on sites that have been awaiting development for years, in other cases detailed applications are being submitted. Several applications are now subject to extra public consultation because they are considered premature in relation to the North Southwark Local Plan. This activity is a major part of our work.
(ii) PREPARATION OF SURVEYS OF LOCAL OPINION, FIRMS, AND SHOPS.
Surveys have been undertaken with residents of Bankside, with the Tooley Street Tenants Association and with the Millpond Tenants Association. The Bankside survey, involved a survey team of over 20 local people who prepared a questionnaire of local views on shops, homes, open space and jobs. A report was published giving the results of the survey and the implications for planning the area. The report was included in the Agenda of the Planning Development Commitee on February 18th 1975. In addition staff from the Planning Centre have conducted surveys themselves to help in various community campaigns on the decline of chemist shops, the loss of historic buildings in Borough High Street, the loss of residential accomodation over shops and commercial premises, and the shortage and use of open space. (see Appendix IV). There was a complete survey of the premises and leases of firms in Union Street, SE1 - a General Employment Area. This was published in July 1977 as "Union Street - a Plan to Protect Industrial Jobs". There was also a survey of vacant office space, a study of planning benefits in Borough High Street, and a study of empty property. The results of each of these studies was reported to the Southwark and GLC Planning Departments and were included in discussions on Local Plans, the Borough High Street Conservation Area, and as the background for considering particular planning applications. The chemist report became part of a national campaign about the decline of local chemist shops.

(iii) ENABLING PUBLIC CONSULTATION OVER LOCAL PLANS. One of the major responsibilities of the Planning Centre is to stimulate public participation in planning. Plans for the South Bank, and for North Southwark as a whole have been the subject of public consultation that has required the distribution of 1000s of leaflets, the organisation of public meetings, and the presentation of written responses by local tenants associations, church groups and individual residents. The Planning Centre has assisted in this process at every stage by leafletting, arranging public meetings, and helping community organisations make written responses. Consequently, we have taken notes of meetings, typed up minutes of Local Plan meetings arranged by tenants associations, and have helped tenants associations put forward proposals for particular sites. This work was the reason for the high response rate from this area at Stage I and Stage II of the North Southwark Local Plan consultation, and during the preparation of the GLC Plan "The Future of the South Bank". Thus, at Stage I of the Local Plan consultation there were 18 responses by groups from Cathedral Ward and 6 from Riverside compared with 2 from Rotherhithe and 4 from Bricklayers. This shows the involvement of
local residents in planning issues in the areas where most of the development and changes are taking place. Similarly at Stage II of the public consultation where residents were asked to give their views on sites, again the greatest responses were from Cathedral and Riverside Wards (see Planning and Development Agendas 27th October 1976 and 20th December 1977).

The work on public consultation is recognised by the Council Planning Department who have sent planning officers up to the Centre for discussions on the best way to go about organising the Stage I and Stage II consultation. These officers were sent up on the suggestion of the Chairman of Planning. Given that the Council has recently decided not to appoint planning officers to assist in public consultation over Local Plans, this function of the planning Centre is critical.

(iv) PREPARING EVIDENCE ON BEHALF OF LOCAL GROUPS FOR INQUIRIES AND APPEALS. The Planning Centre has enabled local tenants associations to appear at public inquiries, present written evidence and make representations on written Appeals. For example, the Dickens Estate Tenants association, the Tooley Street TA, the Millpond TA and the Arnold TA each gave evidence to the public Inquiry into the riverside land at Deveralls Wharf, Bermondsey Wall East. They argued with the help of research and support from the Planning Centre that the site should be used for public open space, and the Inspector in his decision accepted this case. Similarly, tenants groups were able to save local shops at the Flat Iron Square Inquiry, to oppose successfully loss of residential accommodation at 12 Trinity Street and 91 Southwark Bridge Road, to prevent the loss of open space at the War Museum, prevent loss of industrial premises at 114-118 Southwark Bridge Road, and help local firms give evidence at the 45-47 Westminster Bridge Road inquiry. In all, evidence by local associations has been given at 21 planning inquiries and appeals over the last five years. This is all part of enabling local residents to become involved in the planning process. (A complete list of Appeals involving the Planning Centre is given in Appendix V).

Also, the Planning Centre has helped to prepare evidence for local groups appearing at the House of Commons Expenditure Sub-Committee on Development Control in November 1976, Electoral Boundary Review in November 1976, the Dobry Review of the Development Control System in March 1974, and the Royal Town Planning Institute Working Party on Inner Area Land Values (June 1977).

(v) PREPARATION OF SPECIAL REPORTS ON LOCAL ISSUES. Particular problems affecting the community have been researched by the Planning Centre as part of community campaigns. We have already referred to the chemist campaign. A carefully researched report on Fire Cover was written for Firemen of Southwark Fire Station as part of
their case against closure of the Station. A major report was written in 1977 called "Family Housing for the Riverside" which describes in detail the social and community facilities in the North Southwark area, especially along the riverside, which could support family housing. School rolls, shops, open space, community centres and road crossing points were examined. This was fed into the North Southwark Local Plan consultation process. Another report was written on "The Rates Argument" which investigated how much of Council services was financed from commercial rates. The Borough Treasurer's Department devoted a section to this problem in the 1978 edition of the Community Plan - Corporate Section. A representation was made in 1975 to the Government's consultation paper on Neighbourhood Councils in England.

(vi) THE COMMUNITY PLANNING CENTRE IS A GENERAL RESOURCE FOR LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS. The Centre is able to provide information and statistics on the area on behalf of tenants associations, settlements, church groups and trades councils. For example, it has helped Tooley Street Tenants Association with information on housing, Arnold Tenants with the ownership of buildings which could be used as community centres, Bermondsey Adventure Playground with filling in planning application forms, Blackfriars Settlement with statistics on population trends, and the Trades Councils with data on firms and employment. A lot of work is done for Rockingham Estate Tenants, Mint Street Adventure Playground, and Tooley Street Tenants in terms of typing minutes and letters. The Planning Centre itself is a meeting place for Mint Street, Peabody Buildings Marshalsea Road, and when issues come up meetings of tenants of Summer Buildings and Peabody Southwark Street and Bear Lane. Sir Reg Goodwin, the GLC councillor for this area, makes regular visits to the Community Planning Centre for briefing on what is going on in the area. Bob Mellish MP has been to the office, as has the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Planning, and the Industrial Employment Officer.

(vii) DEALING WITH RENT, RATE AND WELFARE CASES. The Centre deals with over 400 welfare cases a year, made up of local people especially pensioners who come into the office with a need for help with pensions, heating, supplementary benefit, and rent and rate rebates. The Planning Centre also helped give evidence on behalf of Peabody Tenants of Blackfriars, Southwark Street, and Marshalsea Road at Rent Assessment hearings in 1974. Help was given to residents of Ayres Street seeking compensation for disturbances caused by builders, and to residents of Copperfield Street and Union Street about dangers to the future of the All Hallows Church garden.
(viii) PROVIDING A RESOURCE FOR STUDENTS FROM LOCALSCHOOLS AND COLLEGES. The Planning Centre has provided information and help to local school projects, planning courses at Polytechnics, and to students doing research projects on the area. Talks and guided tours have been given to local schools and colleges. Planning students have visited the office from colleges all over the country and several from overseas. A film was made with the ILEA called "People and Planning".

THE WORK STILL TO BE DONE

It is clear from the headings in the previous section of this report that the work of the Community Planning Centre is not finished. Most of the activities of the Planning Centre are continuous. Much work remains to be done - planning applications are still coming in, planning Appeals take place at regular intervals, many campaigns over shops, chemists jobs and open space are long term issues that require continued community involvement and research.

The Council identified a total of 175 potential development sites in its Stage II Local Plan consultation, of which 71 are in Cathedral Ward, 31 in Riverside Ward, and 20 in Chaucer Ward. The future of these sites is not yet resolved and one of the functions of the Planning Centre will be to assist in presenting local views on these sites. There are several more stages yet to come of the North Southwark Local Plan consultation - there will be an Options Stage and a Draft Plan Stage, then a Final Plan Stage and probably a Public Inquiry Stage. These stages will require extensive public consultation which the Community Planning Centre is equipped for and necessary for.

In addition, there is a need for continued public vigilance over changes taking place in the Borough High Street Conservation Area, the Bermondsey Street Conservation Area, the General Employment Areas in North Southwark and within community enclaves such as Bankside, Redcross Way, Tooley Street, Long Lane, Blackfriars, and Rockingham.

CONCLUSION

The need for a community run planning centre in North Southwark is as vital now as it was five years ago. Much remains to be done - North Southwark still has many major planning problems. The Planning Centre is a community resource supporting a network of local associations, individual local residents and workers. This network which has developed during the life of the Planning Centre will suffer if the Planning Centre is forced to close.

July 3rd 1978
APPENDIX I

NORTH SOUTHWARK COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP
108 GREAT GUILDFORD STREET, SEL
TEL: 928-8165

Groups formally supporting the Aims and Objectives of the North Southwark Community Development Group and regularly sending representatives to the monthly meetings:

Arnold Estate Tenants Association
Bermondsey and Rotherhithe Society
Bermondsey Trades Council
Blackfriars Settlement
Charterhouse in Southwark
Dickens Estate Tenants Association
Douglas, Ilfracombe and Monarch Tenants Association
Lake, Ley and Lefroy Tenants Association
Millpond Tenants Association
Mint Street Adventure Playground Association
Peabody (Southwark Street) Residents Association
Rockingham Estate Community Tenants Association
South London Industrial Mission
Southwark Fire Station
Southwark Forum for Single Homeless People
Southwark Trades Council
Tooley Street Tenants Association

Groups formally supporting the Aims and Objectives of the North Southwark Community Development Group:

Association of London Housing Estates
Bede House Settlement
Corporation of Wardens of St Saviours
Trustees of the Borough Market

Residents of the Borough, Bankside, Bermondsey and Rotherhithe who do not belong to the above organisations also make up the Group.

CHAIRMAN
E. Bowman
5 Thorold House
Pepper Street
SE 1

SECRETARY
K. Mitchell
10 Winchester Buildings
Copperfield Street
SE 1

VICE-CHAIRMAN
W. Warby
7 West Lane
SE 16

TREASURER
I. Biles
c/o 108 Great
Guildford Street
SE 1

MINUTES SECRETARY
S. Jordan
89 Meakin Estate
Decima Street
SE 1

PUBLICITY
J. Holsgrove
22 Douglas Bldgs
Marshalsea Road
SE 1

The North Southwark Community Development Group was formed in May 1972.