

James Frankcom,
Chairman of the Spitalfields Neighbourhood Forum

via email
info@spitalfieldsforum.org.uk

Place Directorate

Tower Hamlets Town Hall
Mulberry Place
5 Clove Crescent
London
E14 2BG

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk

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Dear Mr Frankcom

This letter sets out the current situation with the Spitalfields Neighbourhood Plan and the next steps available to the Council.

The examiner's report on the Spitalfields Neighbourhood Plan was received by the Council and the Spitalfields Neighbourhood Forum on 15 July 2021, and recommended that the neighbourhood plan be put to a public referendum subject to a number of modifications being made to it. The Council accepted this recommendation.

Under section 61H of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, an LPA may designate a neighbourhood planning area as a 'business area' if they consider the area to be wholly or predominantly business in nature. This was the case for the Spitalfields Neighbourhood Planning Area. In such cases, two referendums must be held on the neighbourhood plan that is prepared – one of residential voters, and one of businesses.

Accordingly, two referendums were arranged for 11 November 2021 – one for residents and one for businesses. The voters in the residential referendum voted 'yes' to the adoption of the neighbourhood plan; the business voters voted 'no' to the adoption in the business referendum.

Following this split outcome, the law now puts the onus back on the Council to decide whether or not to adopt the neighbourhood plan as part of the development plan for the Borough.

This is understood to be an unprecedented situation in the history of neighbourhood plans. As a result, the Council has been considering carefully how best to proceed.



Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area in ways that are aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the borough. It is clear that the Spitalfields Neighbourhood Forum has invested significant time and resource in developing the Spitalfields Neighbourhood Plan. However, the contrasting outcomes of the business and residential referendums suggest that significant elements of the business community in the area have concerns about the content of the plan.

In the spirit of neighbourhood planning, the Council would like to invite the Spitalfields Neighbourhood Forum to engage further with business representatives from the Spitalfields Neighbourhood Plan Area to explore the concerns that led to the outcome of the business referendum. This would be with a view to the Neighbourhood Forum preparing a written position statement for the Council by 20 May 2022 setting out (i) the main concerns raised by business representatives in these discussions; and (ii) the Neighbourhood Forum's answers to those concerns.

After receiving this position statement, the Council will make a decision about next steps.

It should be noted that Development Plan Documents such as Neighbourhood Plans are required to be approved by full Council. It is important that this item has sufficient time for debate and discussion and given that the Council meetings for the early part of 2022 will focus on budget setting, we will aim to discuss the item at the June or July full Council meeting.

Yours sincerely



Ann Sutcliffe
Corporate Director - Place

