

## **Stirchley Urban Resource Network: Stirchley Summit**

**11<sup>th</sup> August 2012, 1 - 4 pm at the Hazelwell Pub, Pineapple Road**

### **Present:**

Mat Brockington (SPSNF), Karen Cheney (BCC), Sandra Cooper (Stirchley Neighbourhood Forum), Pete Evans (Friends of Stirchley Park), Rowena Evans (SNF), Naomi Fisher, Sue Ford, Tony Fox (Cannon Hill Park Friends), Sandra Green, Karl Greenwood (Multistory), Nabeel Hamdi (Oxford Brookes University), Joe Holyoak, Emma Larkinson (Place Prospectors), Steve McCabe MP, Councillor Karen McCarthy, Graham Mitchell, Felipe Molina (Friends of Hazelwell Park; South Birmingham Food Co-operative), Wendy Mooney, Jayne Murray (Place Prospectors), Karen Stevens (BCC), Chris Swann (Stirchley Happenings; Stirchley Community Market), Brenda Thomas (SNF), Margaret Walker (SNF), Peter Walker (SNF).

This was the third meeting to be chaired by Nabeel Hamdi: the first meeting focussed on the work of Place Prospectors and the second proposed a strategy for developing an element of their successful Stirchley Prospects project. The popularity of the shop as a space for meeting and information sharing was acknowledged, and this, in conjunction with the awareness that Stirchley was home to a large number of community groups led to a proposal that a Urban Resource Centre should be created through which these disparate associations could better network for the benefit of Stirchley. At the outset this would be a virtual network that might at a later date have a physical presence in the village.

The structure of this third meeting was for an initial session mapping local assets and aspirations followed by a session focussing on Stirchley's parks and open spaces. Nabeel briefly explained the concepts of asset resource mapping and the sustainable livelihoods model of urban regeneration, and the need for the creation of new models of public/private/civil society partnership working which are less reliant on state support or intervention.

Stirchley's assets (physical, spatial, financial, social, political, natural and human) were mapped and an initial aspiration was devised – the creation of **a safe, balanced and prosperous community**. Although many residents feel that Stirchley has a strong identity as a village, and are positive about their experience of living there, it was acknowledged that this impression is not transmitted to people travelling through Stirchley on the High Street.

**Physical/Natural** assets: the problem of empty sites and unoccupied shops was raised, and also the challenges posed by the arrival of possibly two supermarkets. Nabeel proposed

that a supermarket could become an asset, if their arrival was linked to the delivery of a local aspiration. Steve McCabe MP suggested that this would require a different type of interaction with local communities, with the supermarkets offering longer term engagement rather than a one-off exchange through 106 monies.

Stirchley is well placed for both the city and countryside, well served by public transport, a canal and cycle route, it has parks, springs and allotments and offers some great views.

**Human/Social** assets: Stirchley is well networked, with both traditional and entrepreneurial networks, such as the Community Market, and the recent links that have been forged through the Portas bid. Stirchley also has a significant proportion of long term/life long residents. The importance of a central place/public space was discussed, such as the public square proposed by ASDA and also the possibility of a Community Asset Transfer for the Baths; although funding is extremely limited, the current trend towards devolution and localism offers opportunities for local communities.

**Aspirations:** a more general feeling was that Stirchley would become a destination of choice rather than a place to pass through. This was linked to the relatively homogenous housing stock with a surfeit of 2 bedroom properties – opportunities for housing development exist in Stirchley, with vacant sites adjacent to the canal, but developers are reluctant to invest. In addition to becoming a great place to grow up in, it was also important that Stirchley could become a great place to grow old in.

Nabeel cautioned against contriving attempts to boost an area, as initiatives could only be capitalised on if they were rooted in a community; this ties into the concepts of resilience and sustainability.

Suggestions were then made as to how Stirchley's assets could be mobilised to make Stirchley's green and open spaces safe, balanced and prosperous: these could be categorised as initiatives to mobilise usage, ownership, maintenance, facilities, information and productivity.

- There is an opportunity to engage with Tesco to improve local facilities and support activities. However Tesco will not invest in initiatives unless they bring their business some advantage: mutual gain/risk.
- Better signage/information would increase usage of open spaces, even just as routes to pass through.

- Nabeel suggested social enterprises operating in parks, involving local youth and increasing a sense of ownership and safety; building civil society from the lowest level. Each new organisation would become an additional resource in the Stirchley Urban Resource Network.
- Possibility of combining production/growing and trading in the parks – bring Community Market into parks or develop the fun day as a harvest celebration.
- Animate the strip of land along Hunts Road adjacent to Hazelwell Park – promenade, market.
- Lifford Water Basin: the only location in Birmingham where a canal crosses a high street, there is an opportunity to link Stirchley to Kings Norton and Bournville by canal and cycle route, partnership working with British Waterways.
- ASDA: Fields in Trust – corporate commitment to invest in playfields and sports activities for young people.
- Stirchley Park/Hazelwell Park: importance of not replicating facilities and bids.

Next step: develop a manifesto, set up a website/blog.

Next meeting at the British Oak, 15<sup>th</sup> August at 8.00pm.

**Stirchley Urban Resource Network: meeting to come up with a mission statement**  
**15<sup>th</sup> August 2012, 8 pm at the British Oak, Pershore Road**

**Present:**

Liz Boyd, Mat Brockington (SPSNF), Roxie Collins (Stirchley Happenings), Sandra Cooper (Stirchley Neighbourhood Forum), Pete Evans (Friends of Stirchley Park), Rowena Evans (SNF), Naomi Fisher, Judith Jones (SNF), Mick Jones (Stirchley.co.uk website), Emma Larkinson (Place Prospectors), Graham Mitchell, Felipe Molina (Friends of Hazelwell Park; South Birmingham Food Co-operative), Jayne Murray (Place Prospectors), Chris Swann (Stirchley Happenings; Stirchley Community Market), Brenda Thomas (SNF), Margaret Walker (SNF), Peter Walker (SNF).

There was a lively discussion but we have now come up with a mission statement:

We are a network of people and organisations that exists to empower people to take part in Stirchley's future.

Our aims are to

- Make the most of Stirchley's human, natural, social, political, physical and spatial assets to generate opportunities for Stirchley.
- Create a more vibrant and resilient community for residents and businesses
- Promote Stirchley's unique identity.

We will deliver our aims by

- Sharing skills, resources and information
- Working collaboratively and contributing time

The network comprises:

Stirchley Prospects [jayne/emma@prospectors.org.uk](mailto:jayne/emma@prospectors.org.uk) [www.prospectors.org.uk](http://www.prospectors.org.uk)  
@placeprospector  
etc etc

The next step is to develop a Wordpress blog/site and get individuals and groups to sign up. Mick Jones of the Stirchley.co.uk website - [Stirchley Home Page for Stirchley Birmingham](#) – also offered a board on the online forum that could be used either publicly or privately for members only; this would be a fantastic boost to the Network as [stirchley.co.uk](http://stirchley.co.uk) is the first point of contact for many online visitors to Stirchley.