

Our Future Charlton

Newsletter, Autumn 2023



Message from the Chair

Dear reader, welcome to the second newsletter from Charlton Forum, which is distributed to all households and businesses in Charlton. I hope that you find the articles and information in this newsletter interesting and informative. We're to produce these twice a year, funding permitting. 'Local planning' looks at so many things - from housing and shops to green spaces - and how we as local people can affect the quality of these things. But we also want to influence how new developments will fit in with existing communities. This includes new homes in our industrial areas in Charlton Riverside. To start this process off, we've begun a series of workshops (covering topics that will become sections in a neighbourhood plan for Charlton. The first of these, held in October, was well attended and thought provoking (see review right). Our next workshop will focus on places for people. I welcome all to consider becoming a member of Charlton Forum and to come along to our annual general meeting for 2023, see details below.

Clare Loops, Chair, Charlton Forum

EVENTS



The Charlton Forum AGM will be held on Saturday 25th November 11.00am-1.00pm at the Old Library in Charlton House and includes the yearly election of Officers and the Committee. All are welcome and Forum members can stand for election.

COMMUNITY

Workshop Review

Green Spaces and the Natural Environment

was the topic under discussion at the first of a number of community planning workshops, held at St Richard's Church Centre on Saturday 14th October. Workshops are a chance to discuss a particular theme in depth and we welcomed residents from across Charlton. Together we enjoyed each others company and learnt a lot about our surroundings; from the River Thames to the north to Shooters Hill Road to the south, west to the A2 and east to the boundary of Woolwich, Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the Royal Artillery Barracks.

Many ideas were discussed and issues raised **linking green spaces**, access along the **River Thames**, **wildlife corridors**, the best use of **wasteland**, inaccessible **woodland** and identifying little-known **amenity spaces**. There was also discussion of the importance of **street trees**, and which areas in Charlton could do with some trees being planted. Having prioritised the many topics discussed, the workshop ended with several annotated maps that are being consolidated for further discussion with residents. This will form part of our evidence when it comes to writing the **Charlton Neighbourhood Plan**, showing how priorities are underpinned and formulated through local knowledge and participation. Thank you to all who contributed. Our next community planning workshop will be on the topic of **Places for People** to discuss community facilities and services, places to play and to come together as a community. Details to be announced.



Local shopping parades are an integral part of neighbourhoods, offering a blend of convenience, familiarity and a sense of community. The relationships formed between shopkeepers and customers are invaluable and larger retailers struggle to replicate this. For some time shops have faced challenges, competition from supermarkets, retail chains and the growth of e-commerce.

Recent government changes have lessened the ability of local authorities to manage shopping parades that can now change use without planning permission. Locally we have seen an increase in 'permitted development' applications for a change of use from retail to residential for shops that did not survive the pandemic (visit Charlton Church Lane to see how many shops are now a door to a flat).

An Article 4 Direction has been brought into force by the Council in August 2023 which removes this permitted development across parts of a number of town centres and local parades, including in Charlton. Retaining local shops is about preserving the heart of communities. Neighbourhood parades represent a connection to the past, an investment in the present, and a promise for the future.



For further information, please click [here](#)

The Neighbourhood Forum

There are currently about 2,800 Neighbourhood Forums across England. They exist in both rural and urban environments. A neighbourhood forum is a group of people who have come together through a shared interest in their area. A forum can express an interest in how they would like to see their area develop. This can extend beyond the built environment to issues associated with open spaces, local shops and other issues that matter to people. Charlton Forum was formally designated by Royal Borough of Greenwich in February 2022 as the qualifying body to produce a neighbourhood plan for the Charlton area. Charlton Forum aims to empower the community through this work.

PLANNING

The Riverside

It is over 6 years since the Council agreed the Masterplan for developing Charlton Riverside, including all the land between Woolwich Road and the River Thames that is inside the Forum's area (Westmoor Street pictured). It sought a mixture of housing and modern workplaces for 5-7,500 new homes and 4,400 new jobs by 2031 and beyond. After extensive consultation the Masterplan was widely supported; apart from just 4 sites near the river, the rest of the development area was to be no more than 6 storeys high with some sites earmarked for 3-4 storeys. The plan included community facilities such as schools, a health centre, parks and playgrounds.

Those targets have since been revised by the **London Plan 2021**, which acknowledged the Masterplan as the planning framework for the **Charlton Riverside Opportunity Area** and identified the area as 'ready to grow,' with 8,000 'indicative' new homes and 1,000 'indicative' new jobs being delivered in the area by 2041. Developers are proposing taller buildings and 3 of these schemes have been granted planning permission, however, little has happened in terms of infrastructure; there are no new roads and the opportunity for a through bus route and a new school is in abeyance. The main challenge is that the area has many different landowners and the Council is short of resources and land of its own in this area. Meanwhile the Council has just started a review of its local plan that was adopted in 2014 – a process set to finish in 2025. This winter the focus will be on major development sites in the borough and the Riverside will feature prominently.

ANALYSIS

Social Housing

For many years, local councils have faced increasing restrictions on their ability to build their own housing. They have had to rely on private developers to address local housing needs through their own proposed developments. But the accommodation has never been affordable for most people, and very rarely designed for families. However, changes in government policy, including removal of limits on local authority borrowing, means that Greenwich has at last been able to take the matter into its own hands, and as a result has set up an initiative under the banner of **Greenwich Builds – new council homes for local people**. At its heart is a commitment to building at least 1,750 new homes for local people on the Council's housing waiting list. As there are over 25,000 households on the list, this is only a start but it is a good start and should give local people much more say in how we design and develop our local communities and public realm. The Council has already raised £200m in borrowing to fund the new homes and has also received support from the GLA. Varied schemes are already underway, including two in Charlton, Harvey Gardens (4 courtyard houses) and Gollogly Terrace (2 bungalows).



For further information, please click [here](#)

The Neighbourhood Plan

A neighbourhood plan is a formal planning document written by local people and businesses. It must be considered when the local planning authority makes decisions on applications for new developments in the designated neighbourhood area. There are many aspects to a neighbourhood plan from considerations of the historical context to environmental issues. As we develop the plan we need people from diverse backgrounds to contribute to its aims and policies. If you have an interest in local history, urban design, the natural environment, community facilities and services, infrastructure such as transport, then there are many ways that you can be involved in our work to help ensure our plan is robust.



OPINION

Allotments

Growing your own food has never been so popular. A better understanding of how nutritious fresh, locally grown food can be is gaining ground, from benefits for your health and wellbeing, working outdoors, learning, helping and making friendships on the plot. The food produced can reduce the household food bill and often there is enough to share.

A big environmental gain is fewer food miles and you know what has gone into the food that you are eating. In Charlton there are two allotments sites, **Cherry Orchard** and **Highcombe** (pictured above). However the chances to rent an allotment in Greenwich are very slim; there are 18 allotment plots across the borough, all of which are full and the waiting lists are shut.

Under the 1908 Small Holdings and Allotments Act county councils have a legal duty, if requested by more than 6 residents, to provide allotment sites. London is excluded from this legal duty due to the London Government Act 1963. So, here in Charlton residents are not able to make this legal demand.. This is where the importance and power of a neighbourhood plan becomes clear. At the recent **Forum workshop on green spaces and the natural environment**, we considered whether we want or need more allotments.

As we prepare the neighbourhood plan we can examine the designated area to identify suitable sites for allotments, community orchards, meadows and gardens. With a well-researched case and a clear community wish list we can then incorporate our ideas into the **Charlton Neighbourhood Plan**.

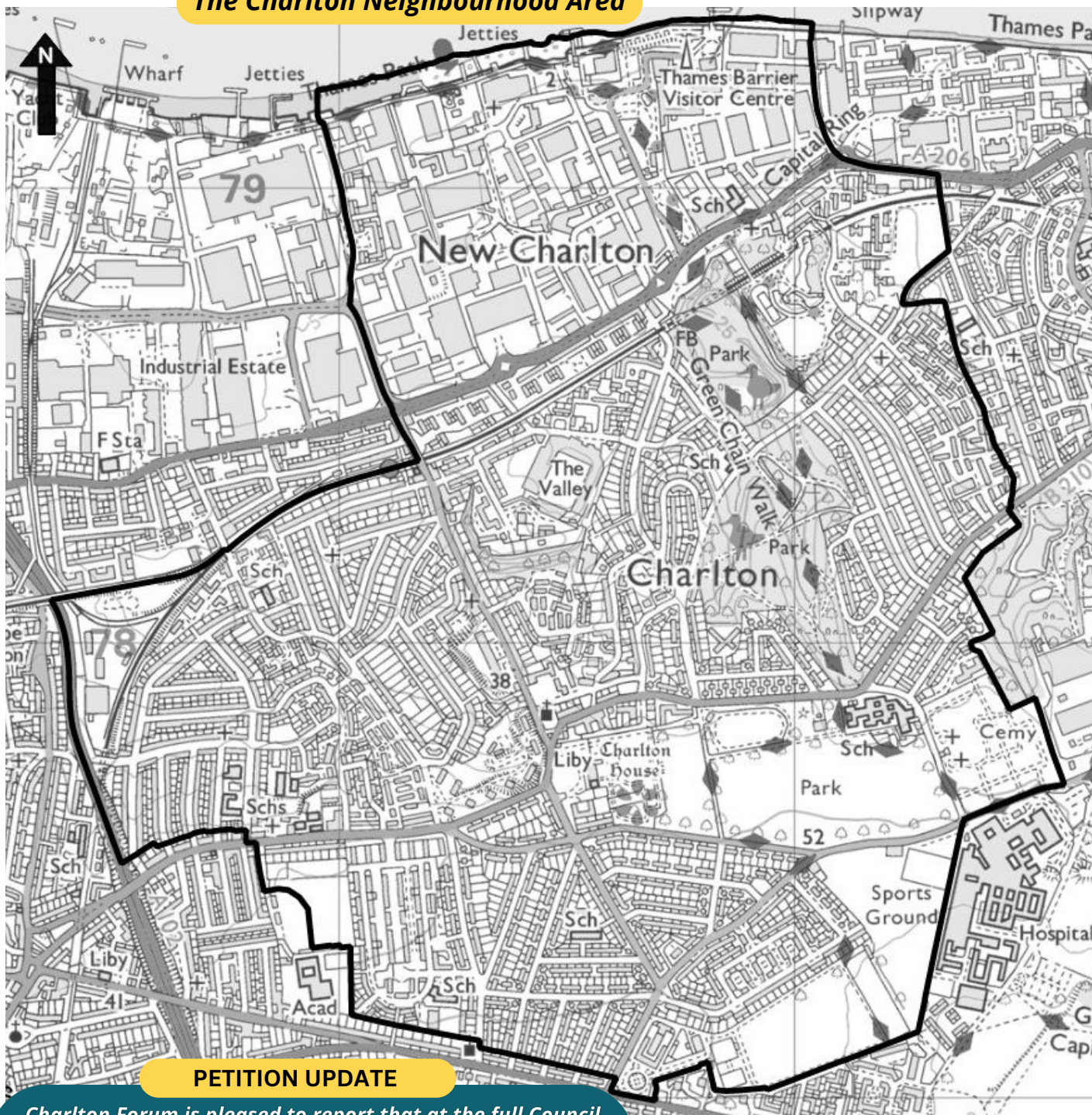
Please watch this short video from the National Allotment Society detailing different types of allotments that could be part of Charlton's future neighbourhood.



Please click [here](#) to view video

MAP

The Charlton Neighbourhood Area



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PETITION UPDATE

Charlton Forum is pleased to report that at the full Council meeting on 25th October the petition contesting the exclusion of part of Charlton from the Neighbourhood Area, reported on in our Spring Newsletter, was presented to Royal Borough of Greenwich by Councillor David Gardner, a ward councillor for this excluded area. The petition was signed by over 200 residents. We will keep you updated on the Council's response via the [Forum website](#).

JOIN THE FORUM

Do you live or work in Charlton and want to know more about Charlton Forum? Then become a member! It's free to join and you can do so via our [website](#).

MEET THE CURRENT COMMITTEE

Officers: Clare Loops (Chair), Paul Chapman (Vice Chair), Helen Brown (Treasurer)

Committee: Jane Bland, Philip Connolly, Ruth Dodson, George Galbraith, David Gardner, David Gayther, Richard Gunningham, Suzanne Hunt, Carol Kenna, Rick Newman, Lakshan Saldin, Brenda Taggart

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