

635 – Somers Town Neighbourhood Forum

On Matter 6, Policy SC4, on a standards based approach versus sports facilities calculators, cost at the point of access is vital in a deprived and overcrowded area such as Somers Town. Because of the number of schools in our area, we have multiple ball courts. Out of hours they cost £40 to £60 per hour to hire. Community access agreements as part of planning permission have to take into consideration that schools and play services need to be able to charge for caretaking and wear and tear. During school holidays in my area the ball courts are shut, whilst children play in the road. Cost needs to be a consideration when looking at sports provision, and in an area such as Somers Town courts have to be free at the point of use.

I didn't mention the Knowledge Quarter in my original submission, but as someone who lives beside the Francis Crick Institute and British Library I would say on Matter 2, Question 6 that the Knowledge Quarter is a relatively new and very powerful organisation, with the ability to bring many benefits to the area. It also is land hungry and has a tendency to dominate or push out more traditional land uses, including homes, open spaces, and other work space. It is also rather fickle. Two years ago, there was a huge demand for wet lab space. Then Merck pulled out of Belgrove House, the new 10-storey building being constructed opposite the exceptional set of railway buildings that includes King's Cross Station. Now other developments are cutting their wet labs, Belgrove House is looking for a new tenant, and local people are bemoaning the loss of a well-used Post Office. I don't know whether the Knowledge Quarter needs its own policy, but I would say the Local Plan should resist development that is out of character, even if it comes with a remarkable package of financial and social benefits.