



NOTES OF IDEAS GENERATED IN THE OPEN AND GROUP DISCUSSIONS IN THE OPEN HEART SURGERIES, 1 - 28 JULY 2010

These notes are a summary of the wide variety of ideas and information contributed by participants during the Surgeries in the plenary sessions and in group work. We have tried to include the main ideas from the discussions, but if important ideas have been left out, please let us know by emailing us at info@vitlkingston.org. (N.B. No attempt had been made to check the accuracy, currency or relevancy of the contributions so their inclusion should not be taken as acceptance by Vital Kingston that the input is correct.)

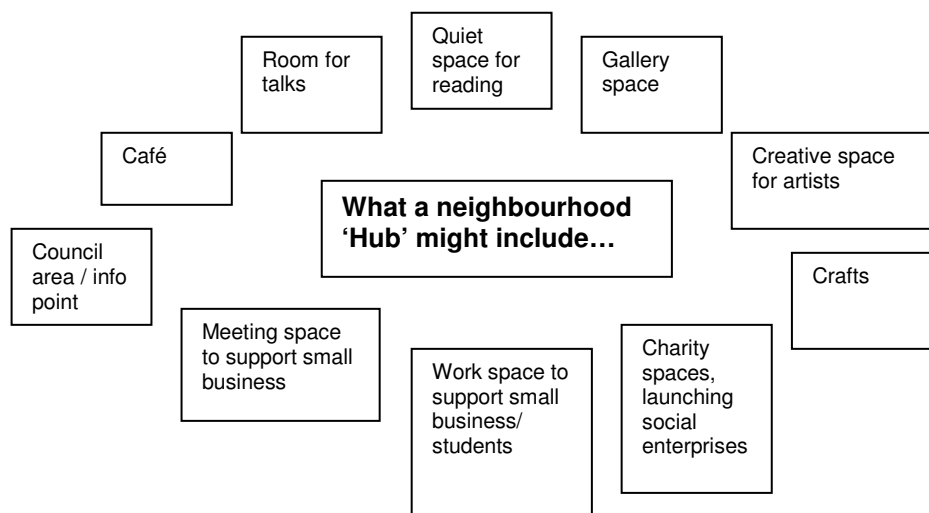
KEY –

- ① - Note for information
- ⓪ - Idea for Kingston development in general
- ↘ - Idea for Vital Kingston to consider taking forward

Surgery 1 – It's OUR Place Our Powers as a Community

- ① - The Mayor's Great Spaces project is funding developments in the Market Place, Riverside and Tolworth Broadway.
(<http://www.designforlondon.gov.uk/what-we-do/all/mayors-great-spaces-1#ideas/kingston-riverside>)
- ⓪ - The Thames riverside, at its best, is a wonderful place for all ages to mix.
- ⓪ - A consultation is in progress for the All Saints Kingston community centre development project.
- ① - Hawkes Road NHS centre is to become a healthy living centre with a community gym.
- ↘ - 'The Triangle' in Norbiton is run down and needs regeneration.
- ↘ - There is an empty property on Grafton Road, New Malden and interest in using it for long-term community space for disabled people to socialise, do arts, etc.
- ↘ - Each neighbourhood needs its own cultural anchor, New Malden, Tolworth, etc.
- ↘ - Group Questions: What specific third places would you like to see in Kingston and how would you like Vital Kingston to assist? (See also diagram below) –
 - We need a creativity and community 'Hub' - mixed use, a place that's wheelchair, family and elderly friendly.
 - We need a central green space (bring your own food / entertainments place) where people want to sit about.

- Help individuals to find a place where classes could be run, a place where sessions can be booked.
- Create an area where businesses and charities can be opened; think about the idea of mixing business uses together with social uses.
- A crafts place: a more social based atmosphere to be created rather than a commercial one.
- There is the need for somewhere that individuals can go to without having to join (a place where you can reflect).
- A lot of individuals within the community might work from home therefore a place they may attend after work, to relax and not have to worry about things (be away from the kids).



SURGERY 2: Landlords as Partners

- ① - The Area Action Plan (K+20) is expanding the retail industry within Kingston but these businesses are also providing very low levels of income. Homes within this area are expensive; therefore a standard of living in keeping with the area is hard to achieve by working locally.
- ① - Independent businesses are not sustainable in Kingston due to the extremely high rents, whereas in France, they are very common.
- ① - Apart from the River and the retail centre, Kingston has other endowments - intellectual ones which could help to diversify the economy. Town and University need to think both 'locally' and 'globally' to find new markets (e.g. Kingston University international centre for criminology, working alongside Metropolitan Police). Well-educated community can then work locally and benefit.
- ✎ - Academy of Urbanism project called 'UniverCities' (<http://univercities.ning.com/>) works in 10 cities around the UK (including Bristol and Reading). The aim is for each local borough to work with their university to improve the local area. Kingston can be a UniverCity.
- ✎ - With the high rental prices within Kingston, other ways of working must be outlined e.g. drop-in offices for businesses and community members.
- ✎ - There are so many empty buildings that no-one is using for anything. Much office space is not being used.
- ✎ - Bringing Kingston out into the streets should be done collectively, one coffee shop won't change habits but a row of them it would attract people - "people love people".

- ⌚ - Having local residents living in the centre will help to extend the time that it is used.
- ⌚ - Actions to improve the attractiveness of Kingston for visitors
 - Walking routes within Kingston need to be revived with better access to river – there is no proper signage - no form of direction for newcomers within the area.
 - Kingston 'doesn't hold together', it is confusing to navigate and extremely cluttered. The environment needs to be tidied-up and redundant structures removed.
 - There needs to be proper seating, especially on the Riverside.
 - More mixed use development of the river: extending rowing and dragon boat racing to schools.
 - Rose theatre: expanding on the leisure and activities/ more cultural activities to take place.
 - 5 big events to put Kingston town on map (promote Kingston town).
 - There needs to be improved access to the library – you can't get there safely by bike.
- ✍ - Vital Kingston should patrol Kingston town asking local people what they would like to see in and around Kingston. It would be ideal if this patrolling was fortnightly, and the responses of the public are the foundation of V.K's work.
- ✍ - Vital Kingston should 'Think big'. Think about maybe doing something that has not been done before/ something unique/ different.

Just for Fun! - *What are the 5 buildings in Kingston you would like to see lit up at Christmas?*

Group 1

1. Market House/ Market Place
2. Guild Hall
3. Kingston Bridge
4. All Saints Church
5. Telephone Boxes sculpture, 'Out of Order'

Group 2

1. All Saints Church
2. Market House
3. Guild Hall
4. Riverside
5. Kingston Bridge

Group 3

1. Market House
2. The Rose Theatre
3. Kingston Bridge
4. Kingston Police Station
5. The King's Stone

SURGERY 3: Tenants as Partners

- ① - Third places are a fundamental part of a community. Their ability to create a 'feeling' and spirit with an area makes them invaluable.
- ① - Borders (1998-2009) played a vital role within the Kingston Community. Not only did it cater to the residents needs, it was a form of social integration within Kingston.

- ⌚ - Third place attributes (always open, attractive space, entertainment) require money so they need to be constantly 'on-the-go', i.e. events 30 days a month, 360 days a year is the way to cover expenses (£4m per year in a space the size of Borders).
- ⌚ - Integrating cafes, performance spaces and places to hang out can be a first move to an integrated community within Kingston, c.f. *Duke of York Square* pedestrian precinct (near Sloane Square).
- ⌚ - There needs to be a balance of large and small (independent) businesses in Kingston. Council leaders have the power to make those necessary changes to create a balance in ownership.
- ✍ - John Lewis integrates and mixes with its community; therefore it would benefit Vital Kingston to make use out of this, but the drive has to come from the community.
- ⌚ - The role of independent/family businesses is crucial because of their role in community cohesion. Why?
 - They 'give a lot back' to the community.
 - They carry the benefits of being there for the long-term and they would have more of an understanding towards a community and put more effort into it. This makes them well known/ popular with local people
 - They can develop strong philanthropic associations; they have even built/sustained towns in the past, e. g Cadbury's.
 - Family businesses can be niche *destinations*. People will travel to spend if they know they will get personal service value for money.
 - The main reason some family businesses survive is due to their being 'niche'.
- ⌚ - Family/independent businesses do not have to be run by 'blood relatives'. For example, a young group of graduates from the university could decide to start up a business and it could last for generations.
- ✍ - It has been clearly emphasised in all three sessions so far that third places can be used for a number of mixed uses during the day, for example a fire station with a day care centre.
- ✍ - It is important to involve senior council leaders when trying to negotiate space for a business to ease the path to starting up a new business.
- ⌚ - To sustain successful Third Places, the surroundings need to be vibrant. We need to create an environment that makes Kingston come alive and in which more people want to/feel able to participate. How?
 - Create events that resonate for the whole community, e.g. developing the *International Youth Arts Festival* and the *Kingston River Festival* celebration, other ideas:
 - 'Edinburgh Festival' of the South*
 - Food Festival
 - Chocolate Festival
 - Book Festival
 - Mini-Marathon
 - Grand Prix
 - Cycle Festival
 - Neighbouring councils could do more to advertise what's going on in each other's boroughs; making them aware of festivities and activities taking place – they tend to circulate 'What's On' in their own Borough only. Richmond upon Thames produces a guide and Twickenham a small fold up map and a guide for their festival too. Hampton Court have the flower show. Hampton Hill have a small traders association and festival.

- Boroughs can also compete, via events etc. to promote themselves (like cities compete in the USA).

* *Edinburgh Festival*' of the South: There was much discussion about building on the success of the International Youth Arts Festival and somehow professionalising and extending it to a wider commercial audience. The idea is to create an attraction that will appeal to visitors whilst preserving its 'Youth' values and using the example of the Edinburgh Fringe to evoke a lively, popular Festival.

SURGERY 4: Tourism and Culture strategy, what do we think?

(This workshop was cancelled as the speaker was indisposed.)

SURGERY 5: Café Society and Kingston after Dark

- ✎ - We need to replace vibrancy lost as a result of Borders closing. We need Interesting places and night time activities that attract residents from different social to go to 'buzzy places', and it will attract tourists too.
- 🕒 - Cafes should be open later into the evening.
- ✎ - The challenge is to find the enthusiasts to deliver the concept of round the clock chameleon café/ social hub.
- ✎ - A laid back café-Third Place has a broad market. Teenagers suffer because they are too young for pubs and have nowhere to go.
- 🕒 - Certain groups need places where you do not have to pay to get in.
- ① - Holy Trinity Church, Brompton (HTB) - of the most influential churches in the Evangelical wing of the Church of England - has created a church plant in Hampton Wick and plans for a popular new church near Kingston Bridge which will be a vibrant social and spiritual meeting place.
- ① - Non-Christian churches are also major social investors; in the North of England this includes Muslim and Sikh faiths.
- ① - The 'Shisha' café in Fife Road is a good 3rd place in Kingston.
- ✎ - Group Questions
 - Question 1 - What sort of places should be part of the new '*Café Society*' in Kingston?
 - *Druid's Head* pub, Market Place
 - Market House - Multi-use, Community aspect, Funding not to detract from local businesses
 - Market Place (outdoors)
 - United Reformed Church
 - The Riverside (outdoors)
 - Café Society should be a multi-site community project- various venues around town.
 - New Kings Church Eden Street (Old Empire building)
 - Free up 1 room in the Working Men's Club
 - Old Post Office
 - Community Café – Attract sponsors
 - Virtual information centre
 - Question 2 – How would you fund/organise a co-ordinated introduction of '*Café Society*' in Kingston?
 - We should have a '*Café Society Committee*' – A project to have the people involved meeting regularly with existing businesses and 'get the message out' about attractive venues. Share in communication work; dissemination of information.
 - Project should integrate an *agency* to match venues with live content providers - local artists, comedy, philosophy cafe, choir, etc.; and maintain a listing of live content.

- Existing local venues to volunteer to join the initiative, promote themselves and share the costs/benefits.
- Also get larger (supporting) local business involved, e. g John Lewis.
- The businesses benefiting most from café society should sponsor as a business improvement project.