

Draft Response to petition RE: Lister House to Mayor Biggs, dated 27th July 2015, their ref: 1-96251289

Dear Mayor Biggs,

RE: Petition from the residents of Lister House addressed to Mayor Biggs, dated 27th July 2015, their ref: 1-96251289

Mr. Ali and Mr Bloxam are correct in their statements that Lister House (and Treves House) have been planned for some time and the buildings were originally planned for inclusion in the 'pilot' stage of Decent Homes.

However, as the project was developed by Tower Hamlets Homes and its construction partners, substantial technical difficulties were identified which put into questions both the technical and economic viability of any major works.

A detailed briefing note (which is referenced in Mr. Ali and Mr. Bloxham) was provided to the former Cabinet Member of House, Rabina Khan. This report is entitled "Project Update Report: Lister and Treves", dated 3rd October 2014. This report is available upon request and the highlights of this report follow;

- That the costs required for the investment works exceed the cabinet approved estimate due to works that were not identified until detailed design work was nearly complete;
- That the building would contain residual risks, chiefly in the form of fire protection, that the proposed investment would not adequately address and was not accounted for in either the current projected costs or the adopted estimate
- That funding from the Energy Company Obligation ("ECO") had been obtained, but was withdrawn after changes to the ECO scheme were announced in the Autumn Budget of 2013
- That consultation had been expansive (a chronology of consultation was provided) and that priority items for the works had been difficult to agree with the Tenants Resident Association (TRA)

Following the publication of that paper work continued to construct a viable package of works for Lister House. The projected costs for this work continued to rise, for appreciable works items that were identified by THH and its designers.

It also became apparent the land upon which the building is situated contained cavities that could lead to subsidence.

With both the expended design costs and the projected works costs rising THH suspended the design works to raise this issue with LBTH.

A decision was taken jointly between LBTH and THH in a 'Decent Homes Planning Workshop' on Thursday 2nd April to explore other development options for the building and for the plot of land on which Lister House is situated.

The decision was later ratified by LBTH's Major Projects Board, in the April sitting of the Board.

The decision to pursue other investment options was predicated on the following factors:

- Investment in the building was appearing economically unviable to provide a satisfactory level of accommodation versus the likely investment need
- The building contained architectural risks, chiefly around the arrangement of dwellings and escape routes that presents a potential fire risk. The costs to rectify this were not included in the projected costs and would, to express in an informal estimate, treble the costs of the current projected costs.
- The plot rests on the edge of the Whitechapel area, directly abutting the boundary line of the "Whitechapel Vision"
- That it is possible that other development options may be possible to increase the quality and quantity of accommodation on the plot whilst simultaneously eliminating future maintenance costs.

Following the decision Tower Hamlets Homes took the following actions:

- Prepared and formulated a briefing document

- Negotiated fee's, based on the tendered rates of the Decent Homes Consultancy Framework
- Conducted site-visits to tour the site to back-up the briefing document

Following a procurement exercise through the [THH] Decent Homes Consultancy Framework, John Rowan Partners (JRP) were awarded the commission to conduct an Options Appraisal.

The brief for this commission requests that JRP recommend upon the costs, impact and potential of:

- Retaining and investing in Lister and Treves House(s) using current funds
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- Developing the plot of land with a new development and using any income from the development to fund works to Lister and Treves House
- Regenerating the site with new Affordable Housing, including the deconstruction of Lister and Treves House, in the context of LBTH's strategic vision for the Whitechapel area

The initial stage of this strategic options appraisal was commissioned on the 26th May.

John Bloxham, chair of Lister House TRA was advised of this commission via email by Neil Wilson-Prior (THH [investment] Programme Manager) on 21st May 2015.

The work is detailed and will require:

- Tenure Searches and Land Registry Searches
- Economic Modeling
- Technical and Topological studies of the site
- Cross-referencing with "The Whitechapel Vision" and other local developments

The commission is divided into three separate phases, with each phase being authorized only after satisfactory conclusion of the previous phase. The activities required under each phase are listed below:

PHASE 1 – Information Gathering

1. Visit site and surrounding area and take photographs
2. Overall project management, co-ordination, meetings, monitor progress and report, develop and coordinate reports
3. Desk top planning appraisal . Site context planning history and policy, site constraints and opportunities. Undertake planning considerations form the basis of the future potentialof the site. Initial observations.
4. Download digital map data of the site and surrounding area
5. Review Whitechapel Vision document
6. Prepare Constraints and Opportunities diagrams
7. Prepare context pages – aerial photos, photos of surrounding area, historical maps, local amenities etc.
8. Prepare diagrams of surrounding building heights/massing as existing and as suggested in the Whitechapel Vision document, pedestrian/vehicular routes and desire lines
9. Refurbish the existing buildings – Option appraisal of existing structures. Review Net Present Value over 30 years. Analyse and review income and proposed expenditure.
10. Obtain information related to current cost, social data, CPO procedures, decanting information, and other associated information and review.

STAGE 2 – Site Options

1. Prepare massing model showing surrounding area as existing and as proposed in master plan Vision document
2. Design four options in sketch form – hand drawn at 1:500 showing perimeter of flats set on a proposed site plan:
3. Option OP1 – Complete regeneration of the plot involving the demolition of one or both of structures to provide more bed spaces on the plot.
4. Option OP2 – Complete regeneration of the plot, involving the demolition of one or both structures to provide an equal number of bed spaces on the plot.

5. Option OP3 – Retention of existing structures with erection of further structures to increase the number of bed spaces on the plot.
6. Option OP4 – Regenerate (retro-fit) the existing stock with no other programme of works.
7. Internal meeting with client planning team to review options
- 8. Change options based on planning feedback**
9. Financial appraisal, costing , feasibility for different mixed tenure and carry out options appraisal
10. Prepare initial findings to the client and review each option.

STAGE 3 – Feedback and report preparation

1. Prepare massing model for of two chosen options in 3D showing new buildings as semi-transparent blocks without detailed elevations.
2. Render these two options to show more context for presentation
3. Develop draft report with additional details
4. Present the schemes in a desktop published A3 document with text partly supplied by JRP.
5. Meeting client for Gateway approval process
6. Obtain feedback and select preferred options and develop further information for development board
7. Develop strategy for public documents, consultation

It is important that due-diligence is exercised and that any recommendations and proposals arising from this exercise are based on the full range of factors impacting the site.

The preparation of the report, assuming all Stages are commissioned is December 2015.

I hope this provides some insight into the context and difficulties surrounding this project.

To address some of Mr. Ali's and Mr Bloxhams other points in general terms:

1. The TRA have been provided with timelines and proposed start dates for works. Where these have been moved, for the reasons described above, the TRA has been kept informed.

2. The original capital allocation and cabinet approval remain and the scheme remains budgeted for, pending the outcome of the Options Appraisal
3. At no point have residents been “blamed” for the evolving investment strategy for Lister House; providing context on the lack of consensus for investment priorities, is however, an important part in the history of resident involvement in the proposals
4. Lister House has been removed from the investment forward-plan whilst a detailed look at the best investment options are considered

I hope this satisfies your enquiry.

Yours Sincerely,

Jamie Carswell