

Lister & Treves House

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

September 2017

BACKGROUND

1. What repairs are needed to Lister & Treves Houses? Can we see the stock condition survey of the blocks?

Yes, residents will be allowed to see the stock condition surveys. The Mayor agreed that a working group will be set up with residents and supported by council officers to examine the detail of the works the council has been advised are required. An extensive list of renewal and refurbishment items were identified in the report (a condition survey) carried out for the Council by professional structural engineers and chartered building surveyors in 2016.

The working group's first meeting was held on the 13th September 2017.

2. How much will it cost to bring the existing buildings up to a modern and sustainable standard?

An estimate of the costs of each element of works needed for each block will be provided. These will be detailed and shared on the Council's website in the weeks ahead.

The estimates from the consultant's condition survey of 2016 provide the most recent level of potential costs. These now need to be scrutinised by the working group to arrive at an agreed package of essential works to bring both buildings up to a good standard for a whole maintenance lifecycle of 30 years. Given the basic design and basic quality of construction materials of Lister House, the costs here (and the recharges for leaseholders) will certainly be well in excess of any of the previous Decent Homes projects. Even though the costs of refurbishing Treves House for a full maintenance lifecycle will be considerably less than for Lister House, we expect the costs to be above average leaseholder recharges.

The working group will be examining the costs in further detail and any findings will be reported back to residents.

3. Why are the costs for the work so expensive?

The costs of works are high because of the extent of works needed to the building. Both Lister House and Treves House are 58 years old and are now beyond their component life cycles, this means refurbishment and major component replacement is now required.

4. Why didn't the council maintain the blocks?

Even though the council has been carrying out responsive repairs, it was recognised at meetings with officers and the Mayor that there have been long delays to carrying out major works refurbishment to the blocks under previous administrations.

The council, and more recently Tower Hamlets Homes, have always carried out full routine repairs on the flats and the common areas. Council tenants also received internal refurbishment of their kitchens and bathrooms as part of the Decent Homes programme. A new door entry system was also installed recently at Lister House to provide security and prevent anti-social behaviour.

There have been a long series of discussions with residents and contractors to try to agree the best approach and scope of works for the major works needed at these blocks. It is recognised that this has gone on for too long and the working group will need to reach a view on whether a package of works can be identified that provides a modern standard of housing at an affordable cost both for leaseholders and the council.

5. Why have the costs of refurbishment increased so much since previous refurbishment estimates in 2011 and 2014?

Earlier estimates were not based on full condition surveys and underestimated the full extent of works required. For example, as more survey work was done it became clear that the windows at Lister House could not be replaced without removing and renewing the entire cladding system. Changes to the specification of works include communal fire doors, and intrusive works to the structure and services have resulted in an increased estimate.

6. The council received grant funding for the originally proposed Decent Homes works, where has this funding gone and why can't it be used now?

Decent Homes funding was used to provide internal refurbishments to all tenants in Lister & Treves Houses to the value of £248,304.

Regarding works to external and communal area's funds allocated to the blocks in previous years were reallocated to other blocks in the council's wider Decent Homes refurbishment programme, following decisions to remove Lister and Treves from the Decent Homes programme. The wider programme covered a large number of blocks managed by THH across the borough. The share of costs relating to the leasehold units would have been funded through contributions from leaseholders, in line with terms of their leases. The decision about how to allocate funding was made by a previous Council administration.

7. Has the decision to demolish been taken already?

No. There will be no decisions made until the condition issues of both Lister House and Treves House are both fully understood and residents have been fully consulted. A working group will be established with residents to explore the refurbishment costs and any redevelopment options in details.

8. When will residents be consulted?



The first working group met on 13th September 2017 to explore the refurbishment costs and any redevelopment options in detail. Details of these meetings will be made available to residents on the council's website and through a newsletter.

9. Are all options going to be looked at before a decision is made?

It is important that Council understands the condition issues of both blocks and sets out clear plans as to how they intend to address them. There will be no reports on proposals for Lister and/or Treves House to the Mayor's Cabinet until residents have been fully consulted on them.

10. Why did the Council recommend demolition as opposed to looking at refurbishment?

The Council carried out a stock condition survey of Lister and Treves Houses in 2014 which identified the need to carry out high value works to bring the buildings up to modern standards.

The report in 2014 identified various risks and challenges in connection with the refurbishment works to Lister and Treves. These works were estimated to cost in excess of £7m, resulting in an extensive recharge to leaseholders. The buildings were reported to be in need of extensive repair and the cost of a full refurbishment was estimated at a high level. The reports concluded that such a refurbishment programme would present poor value for money, and as a result the option of demolition was explored. There is therefore no current decision to demolish and any conclusions will be fully examined and challenged.

11. What Fire Safety works have been carried out?

Following a residents meeting held on 28th November 2016, Health & Safety/Fire Risk Assessments have been carried out on the buildings.

The followings works have been completed on Lister House:

- Fire rated panelling fitted near to lifts with joints/gaps filled.
- Hardwood door fitted to the top of the stairwell leading down to the basement.
- Self-closers fitted to lobby doors leading to stairwell.
- Fire rated letterboxes replaced to flat entrance doors.
- Fire resistant panelling fitted to flat entrance door fanlights.
- Fire resistant cover panels fitted to lobby side panels where trunking penetrates through to stairwell.
- Lockable steel fire door fitted to entrance lobby leading to basement
- Gaps/holes fire stopped where trunking exits walls at high level to fanlight on ground floor to basement has been completed.

A survey has been carried out which has identified some 'meanwhile works' on the buildings, i.e. work that is absolutely essential. These works are part of the Health and Safety checks to ensure the building is wind and weather tight. These works are estimated to take 4 months to complete; further detail on these works will be discussed with residents in the coming weeks.

NEXT STEPS

11. What happens next?

The Mayor has confirmed that consultation will need to take place with residents over the coming months so that options can be properly explored and discussed. At the end of this dialogue process, a decision will need to be made by the Mayor about the future of the blocks, having considered the options and listened to resident's views and preferences. It is critical that a decision be made not delayed indefinitely.

There will be no reports on proposals for Lister and/or Treves House to the Cabinet until residents have been fully consulted on them. For the avoidance of doubt, this includes the proposals which you may have previously heard were being considered.

A working group has been established working with residents to explore the refurbishment costs and any redevelopment options in detail.

The council will be open in its discussions with residents and will make available records of works undertaken to both Lister and Treves House over the last few years. The Mayor would be happy to meet residents again to discuss the proposals as part of the consultation process.