
MEETING NOTES
HEREFORD ESTATE SATURDAY 29 October 2016

ATTENDANCE.

Councillor John Pierce	Councillor Weavers Ward, LBTH
Councillor Abdul Chunu Mukit	Councillor Weavers Ward, LBTH
John Coker	Acting Divisional Manager Regeneration, LBTH
Ann Sutcliffe	Service Head, Corporate Property & Capital Delivery, LBTH
Yasmin Ali	Development Project Manager, LBTH
Will Manning	Head of Property Services, THH
Tim Bell	Director Bell Phillips Architects (lead architect).

Fifteen residents attended the meeting.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The meeting was chaired by Councilor John Pierce. He explained that the purpose of the session was to follow-up on the previous community consultation on the proposed in-fill housing development scheme for the Hereford Estate.

He reminded the meeting that Tower Hamlets was facing an unprecedented housing crisis. There are nearly 20,000 households, with over 50% in high priority need, on the waiting list for housing; 2,000 homeless families (1,000 of which have had to be rehoused in temporary accommodation outside the borough); and a serious lack of affordable homes for local people. The Council is committed to provide 5,500 new affordable homes for local residents to rent in the borough, 1,000 of which will be delivered through its own programme of house building.

One of the ways the Council build those homes is through in-fill development on existing council estates. The Hereford Estate is one of four schemes that were in both the previous Mayor's and the present mayor's manifestos. The present Mayor's draft housing strategy aims to deliver 100% rented housing, combining traditional social rents and the 'London Living Rent', on those sites.

2.0 BUILDING CONDITION – PLANNED WORKS AND INVESTMENT

Will Manning introduced himself, as the Head of Property Services for Tower Hamlets Homes, he is responsible for the Council's building maintenance programme for the housing stock.

He reported that the survey for the Hereford Estate had been completed. The main problems it identified were as follows:

- Roofs and tank rooms

- Although the roof structures of the buildings are fine, roof repairs are required. The roof overlay needs stripping and replacing.
- Tank rooms require waterproofing.
- Fire risk assessment
 - A full overhaul of the communal doors is required to ensure that they close properly and form a good seal.
 - All the ducting in the blocks requires a full examination and the appropriate works undertaken to ensure that it is properly sealed.
- Other repairs/maintenance issues
 - Spalling concrete has been observed in places on the external walls of the buildings. Scaffolding will be erected on both buildings and a full inspection carried out, with remedial works carried out where necessary.
 - The glazing in communal areas requires some works, which will be discussed with residents in more detail.

In response to questions from residents, Will Manning confirmed the following points:

- The housing building works programme has slipped by 6 months. Work on the Hereford Estate is anticipated to start in the early summer 2017 and they will take 8-12 weeks to complete.
- The building works to the Hereford Estate are not part of the Council's Decent Homes Programme but are funded through major capital works. The programme on the estate will be carried out by contractors who have been appointed under the major works framework agreement, which was procured five years ago and the schedule of rates was fixed at that date. The framework agreement provides good value for money as the Council is buying services in bulk and that reduces costs.
- Both Kinsham House and Westhope House will be included in the programme of works.
- The capital charges for the building works to be levied on leaseholders have not yet been estimated and there will be a statutory consultation period. The Leasehold Team from Tower Hamlets Homes will be in contact with leaseholders.

Various residents raised concerns about the estate maintenance and management service provided by Tower Hamlets Homes. One resident stated that the conditions of her building has made it impossible for her to remortgage her home and she was unable to take advantage of the low interest rates currently available on the market. Other residents complained that very little planned maintenance work has been carried out on the blocks over the last forty years, and when it had been carried out (for example, the lift replacement programme) the costs had been excessive, resulting in unreasonably high charges for leaseholders.

A resident leaseholder reported that her property has suffered repeated cracking in the walls and ceilings over the years, and she had been told that it was caused by

movement in the building. Several residents expressed concerns about the fire safety of the buildings and the lack of fire escapes. Will Manning reassured the meeting that the buildings were constructed in line with a “stay-put protocol” which ensured that fires could not spread. Therefore, the building did not require fire escapes. He advised all residents to stay put in case of fire unless otherwise advised by the fire services, except in those circumstances where a fire had started in or in close proximity to their dwelling.

John Coker and Ann Sutcliffe also responded to the concerns raised by residents. John Coker accepted that there had been a lack of investment in the Hereford Estate, but that had been the result of the failure of successive governments over the years to make sufficient investment in council housing. However, local authorities had now been granted more control over their resources and Tower Hamlets Council has agreed a 30 year business plan that will deliver real improvements to its housing stock.

Ann Sutcliffe said that she had been positively tasked to look at a building works programme for the Hereford Estate in response to the concerns raised by residents at previous meetings. There was no link between the building works programme and the in-fill development proposals.

Leaseholders had concerns about how they would afford new bills for the works; John Coker went on to say that the Council has introduced an improved payments options scheme for leaseholder charges for capital works.
http://www.towerhamletshomes.org.uk/Leaseholders/Decent_Homes_Major_Works/Your_payment_options_for_decen.aspx

3.0 SUMMARY OF STUDIES

At the previous consultation meeting, held on Saturday 23 April 2016, it was agreed that the architects should rework the L-shaped design of the new buildings and to explore the possibility of creating access to the new blocks from the walkways of the existing buildings.

Original design L-shaped block

The key points of the design were:

- 38 dwellings
- 5-9 storeys
- 39 metres between blocks
- Roof terrace
- Moderate reduction of daylight to closest dwellings
- Access is from a new stair and lift core.

Tim Bell presented the results of the three feasibility studies:

- I. Using existing external walkways
- II. Using a new stair and lift core

III. Using a new stair and lift core.

All three options showed the new blocks were slightly wider than the building lines of the existing buildings, with option 3 being the widest.

Common features to the 3 feasibilities are -

- 38 dwellings
- 10 storeys
- 48 metres between blocks
- No roof terrace
- Minor reductions of daylight to closest dwellings

Feasibility Study 1

In addition to common features above had -

- Access from existing external walkways.

However creating access from the walkways would require all the properties to be three-bedroom maisonettes and this would not give the required mix of dwelling types to address fully local housing needs. The floor to ceiling heights would be difficult and the upper floors would be mezzanines.

Feasibility Study 2

In addition to common features above had -

- Access from a new stair and lift core.

Feasibility Study 3

In addition to common features above had -

- Access from a new stair and lift core
- One block is 1.1 metres wider than option 2, giving more family dwellings.

Although, residents accepted that there had been some changes from the original design - in particular, the removal of the roof terrace and removal of the L shape - there was still considerable concern about the impact of the new buildings on the light and views of nearby homes. Several residents were disappointed that all the revised design options still projected beyond the building lines of the existing buildings and Tim Bell explained that such an option was not feasible as it would produce only 1-bed homes.

Several residents also questioned the principle of building new homes on the estate and suggested that they should be located on a Weavers Field site that was previously occupied by housing. Councilor Pierce suggested that this was a political decision and it was more appropriate that residents raised this directly with the Mayor.

After a lengthy discussion, the meeting concluded that it needed more information to be able to give the various feasibility studies proper consideration. In particular,

residents felt that they needed more information on the daylight and overshadowing impacts on the homes affected by the scheme, and it was agreed that daylight studies should be carried out on those properties.

A suggestion was also put that the options of moving the new builders closer to Vallance Road, and it was agreed that this should also be considered. Other issues of concern were around car parking in the area, traffic management and moving the position of the bus stop.

4.0 NEXT STEPS AND ACTIONS

Agreed notes of this meeting will be circulated amongst the attendees.

The council will issue a newsletter to all residents summarizing the issues discussed.

THH will have a timetable of consultation events this will begin early next year report to all residents their findings and the capital works they will investigate.

A meeting with residents will be held mid-December 2016 to update them on the further detailed work by Architects on Option 3, this will consider the results of the daylight studies and further iterations of the design (which should show dimensions).

THH will hold regular meetings with residents to address ASB and other concerns.

Councillor Pierce will arrange a meeting between the TRA and the Mayor to hear resident concerns.

Damian Tissier
31/10/2106