

Ekin Road Liaison Group Meeting – Wednesday 7th December, 5.30 to 7pm

Notes

Council staff attendees:

Fiona Bryant (FB) Director of Enterprise and Sustainable Development
Jim Pollard (JP) Senior Housing Development Manager
Nacer Dali (ND) Housing Officer
Molly Savino (MS) Development Officer
Mandy Powell Hardy (MP) Tenant Representative
Alan Small (AS) Repairs Operations Manager

Group member attendees:

5x tenants, 4x leaseholders, 2x freeholders

Welcome and Introduction (FB)

A consultation event on the future of the Ekin Road estate was held earlier in the year which included an early look at what options might be for major improvements or redevelopment. Feedback was mixed, some positive about redevelopment and some concerns

Staff and member introductions: The Housing Scrutiny Committee process was explained – council decisions are debated in a committee and Executive Councillor makes the final decision. This committee is the only one in the UK with tenant and leaseholder representatives – Mandy was introduced as one of the elected tenant representatives

Principles (FB)

Participants are asked to speak one at a time and everyone is asked to respect the opinions of others
MS to take notes - not personalised

Term of Reference (FB)

The Terms of Reference explain the purpose of the group and the way it will work (Copies were handed out).

This is not a decision-making group. It is one way to get feedback. This group does not replace any formal consultation. There will be this group and other engagement with residents on the estate
Any final decisions will be made at the relevant committee

Question: What is the difference between a 'Steering Group' and 'Liaison Group'?

Answer: JP – There was concern from some residents that a decision had already been made. A Liaison Group is more appropriate as no decision has been made whereas a Steering Group is generally linked to delivering a project.

Question: Will this group be resident run or council run?

Answer: FB - This is a Council chaired group. There are many opinions and we want to engage with all of those views. If people want something particular on the agenda they can say. This group will be flexible and responsive throughout project.

Question: Is the chair to be chosen by Council for future meetings?

Answer: FB – yes

Background (JP)

The Council commissioned a report from Potter Raper. This is a starting point, not a finishing point. The term 'fair' comes up a lot within the report in describing the estate. The report does say there are some problems. There are particular concern about sustainability issues and we are aware that there is an immediate concern about repair issues. There are opportunities to improve the layout of the estate, provide new facilities and provide new housing.

With this background we held the consultation event to gauge views on the estate and to start a process of considering options in more detail

Question: Potter Raper report mentions that the City Council doesn't have green field sites - are there options for brownfield sites, instead of entire residential estates? Word 'good' comes up a lot. EPC is band C - positive terminology.

Answer: JP – The houses are significantly better than flats and this is reflected in reports. The houses can generally be improved above C but the report suggests that this will not be possible for the flats. Other sites – The City Council has significant waiting list and problems with homelessness. We're looking all the time for available sites to develop. We have developed a number of carparks/garages.

Resident comment: There are problems with parking, anti-social behaviour and foul language.

Question: Are planned repair works on the flats on hold? Leaseholders have been billed £7k for previous work.

Answer: FB - We need to get to a decision about the works to be done but essential works will continue to be done.

Question: We are only 2 years into major work and now redevelopment is being considered. Leaseholders have paid for very poor work. Cracks appeared. Painted rails now rusting. Standard of work to balcony is poor. How much will leaseholders pay if the estate is not redeveloped?

Answer: FB – We understand the concern and these comments will be taken into account.

Current Picture of the Estate (AS)

We are still responding to daily repairs that are reported. There is a new DMC (Damp, Mould, Condensation) process with dedicated surveyor starting on Monday (12th December 2022), dedicated email address and team of operatives.

Question: Is this for houses too?

Answer: AS - yes.

Resident comment: TSG was excellent. But there is rise in prices that the Council have to consider AS – Yes, prices are rising for everything.

Resident comment: I have a friend in a flat that is washing the walls daily due to mould. Spent £50 on special paint. And has been waiting for a new front door for 8 years. AS agreed to look into this

ND: There are clearly two types of properties on the estate - we have done tenancy audits to learn more and the issues in flats differ from houses, but houses aren't without problems.

Has seen 2/3 reports of subsidence which require investigation.

Flats complain about damp and mould. Lack of living space, especially when families grow
Complaints on use of communal areas, but generally houses are more satisfied than flats

Question: What has been commissioned to find out Mould and damp?

JP – There are a lot of things to explore more in depth. Damp and mould issue are linked to insulation and the fabric of building. Wouldn't be easy to improve the fabric beyond a certain point, but we need to explore it further.

Question: The costings we have seen are 2020 costings. They don't include costs of purchase of properties. Can we see actual cost of building and purchases now?

JP: We need to investigate costs and benefits of these options; this will include updating the costs.

FB - for one scheme, we have redone the financial costings 4x times this year alone.

Question: Potter Raper states there are complexities with PV panels – it didn't say why you can't put PV panels on roof. Why are they complex to install?

Answers:

FB – Regarding the panels, this is normally an issue of roof structure capability - the required angle – and the system for establishing the benefits - it's about usage, charging and supply. Not that it can't be done, just saying it's complex to set up.

Question: Can we have further information about lining of flats and why mould is coming in?

Answer: JP – This is something we will investigate. In new flats we use MVHR (Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery) units

FB confirmed that Planned works need to be investigated by council officers

Question: Do we have to provide proof of investment in flats if asked to move out?

Answer: JP - What we have done elsewhere is we have paid people the market value of property as it stands which will reflect any improvement work carried out. There is also a compensation package on top of that. Surveyors value each individual flat and don't use the same value for all.

Resident comment: There is a problem with parking, not enough space. Dropped kerbs would help with this.

Answer: FB – The Council has experience of managing parking issues - for example at the Mill Road development. The general expectation is for the Council is to reduce the need for people to use cars.

Resident comment: There is ASB almost every day including drug use. Police just turn their head.

ND agreed to look into this.

Question: What flexibility do you need from us, to ensure you can get the projects done without the need to take our homes? Without our homes being collateral damage in the process?

Answer: FB - Helpful to have this group with your input. We're trying to get the best for everyone. There are number of things we must consider. We will continue to look at options with your engagement. We will do our best to reduce impact. Nothing specific right now, but as we look at options.

JP - challenge is the layout is complex. The configuration is not helpful when considering partial development.

FB – Regarding the ASB comments, there are ways to design that make it less conducive to gather. We know this is a problem.

Question: can we get docs on how these things are designed out?

FB - Were not there yet for this scheme.

JP – There is a public document Secured by Design which our design team work to

Resident comment: There is an apple fruit tree. It is dangerous, causes a slip hazard, apples fall on cars and kids throw them.

Closing

FB: Closed discussion, meetings will take place Quarterly, but this is flexible. Might not always be 2x meetings. Workshops may work better as one meeting instead of two.

Question: What is the timescale?

Answer: FB - can't outline this part of the process. Depends on how long the options appraisal will take.

Example for redevelopment: Draft scheme > HSC > Planning permission > 3/4 months > Discharge of conditions > start on site

JP: Fiona has explained the process for a development scheme that requires planning permission. As far as the options appraisal is concerned there is a need to make progress but there is also a need to consider the issues carefully and to consult. We will seek to complete the options appraisal in months rather than years.

Finished meeting at approx. 7.15pm

