

Ekin Road Liaison Group Meeting – Thursday 16th March 6pm to 7.30pm
Notes

Staff attendees:

Fiona Bryant (FB), Director of Enterprise and Sustainable Development
Jim Pollard (JP), Senior Housing Development Manager
Andrew Johnson (AJ), Regeneration Manager
Nacer Dali (ND), Housing Officer
Alan Small (AS), Repairs Operations Manager
Molly Savino (MS), Development Officer
Mandy Powell Hardy (MP), Tenant Representative sits on the Housing Scrutiny Committee

Welcome (FB):

The Council agreed at the last liaison group to review the concerns raised in the summer consultation and feedback received since, including mould and condensation and daily repairs. We continue to receive communication from residents regularly including requests on estate improvement which we are reviewing. We cannot deal with them all immediately and some will take time.

The Council will not take decisions without engaging with the tenants and homeowners first. This process will take a long time and we continue to work with individuals.

Condensation and Mould (AS):

There is an email address to report damp/mould: condensation@cambridge.gov.uk and a dedicated team who will respond.

The Council have received reports of damp and mould that have since been addressed. Work carried out includes treating the effected walls, repairs to extractor fans and some have had their cupboard insulated. The customer liaison officer then follows up with the resident 8 weeks after the works have been completed.

A tenant spoke about damp in their property and AS agreed to follow this up following the meeting.

Introductions (FB):

Staff introduced themselves.

Question: Resident asked if the staff roles could be added to the minutes.

Response: This is being including in the meeting notes.

Comment: it's possible that some people are hesitant to report damp/mould with the uncertainty of the future of the estate. The Council asked residents at the meeting to encourage those not attending to report issues so that they can be addressed.

Housing Officer Update (ND):

The Housing Officer has recently been visiting residents on the estate and has noted issues with damp and mould were occurring on those visits.

Tenancy audits continue to take place and are unannounced. These are very important to the Council so that they can more fully understand the tenants' views and any issues within the homes.

Question: Resident asked if the damp and mould is the same on top floor as the ground floor, or is there a difference?

Response: There doesn't seem to be a difference.

Options Appraisal (JP):

The council are reviewing different options

These will cover a range of options from 'do nothing' to comprehensive redevelopment. To move forward some specific intermediate options have been identified. Consideration of these options does not mean that they have been found to be feasible or viable. The full range of options currently being considered are:

1. 'Do nothing' – In practice this would mean continuing with repairs and cyclical maintenance with some limited estate improvements from the Council's general programme
2. Refurbishment of the existing properties – The initial issues here will be the extent of improvements that are possible, the benefits that can be achieved and the cost. A further issue is that this will not deliver additional homes. One of the Council's objectives is to consider the c2000 people in need of homes in the City
3. Comprehensive redevelopment of the site – Work on this has indicated that there could be a significant gain in the number of homes, the provision of high-quality sustainable homes, environmental improvements including the provision of a new open space and an improved layout for the estate. A sketch of this option is at Option E below.
4. A number of intermediate options have been identified which may, if feasible and viable, deliver some of the benefits of redevelopment while preserving parts of the existing estate. Options outlined were selected in the light of:
 - knowledge of existing conditions,
 - consultation feedback and
 - likely impact on development potential

The options are set out at A – D below. They are:

- A. Redevelop the areas occupied by the six blocks of flats (3 storey walk up blocks - 72 flats in total)
 - B. Redevelop the areas occupied by the six blocks of flats plus the area occupied by the bungalows and the maisonettes (10 bungalows plus the 8 maisonettes at Ekin Walk)
 - C. Redevelop the areas occupied by the six blocks of flats plus the area occupied by the bungalows and the maisonettes plus the eight houses in the centre of the estate
 - D. Redevelop the areas occupied by the six blocks of flats plus the area occupied by the bungalows and the maisonettes plus the eight houses in the centre of the estate plus the four houses on either side of Keynes Road
5. Sketch plans showing these areas are below – together with some initial comments on them and questions that were asked at the meeting.

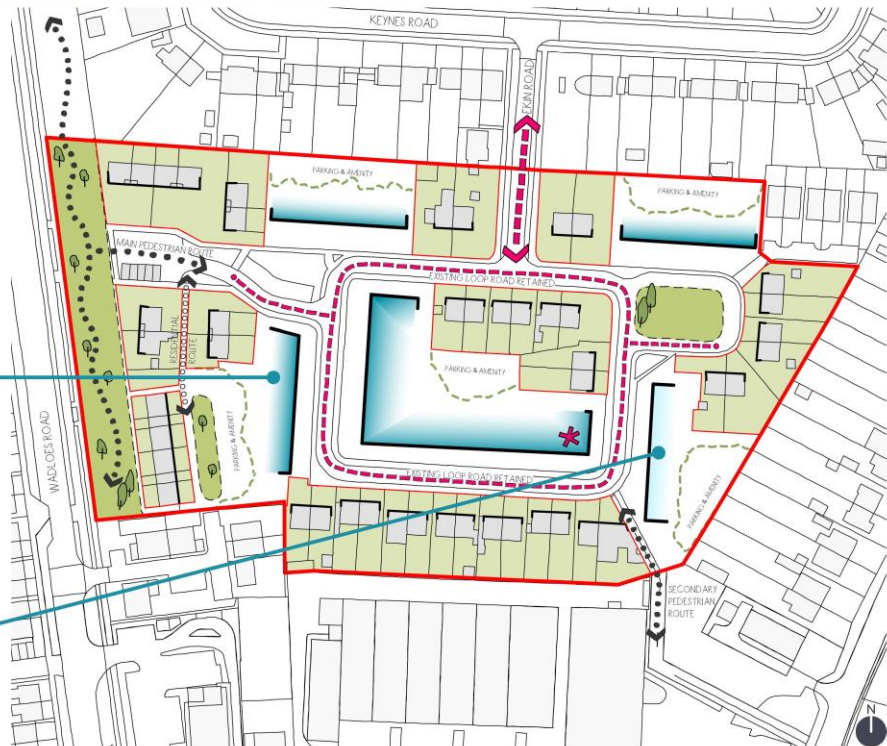
Option A

Demolition of flats only (retention of all houses, bungalows and maisonettes)

Summary

- Existing flats in poor condition replaced by new high-quality homes.
- New buildings to be of low-mid rise height and density, houses and stacked maisonette - no increase in number of homes.
- All existing roads and pathways retained - no scope for public realm and amenity improvement

New homes typology:



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Demolition of flats only. Retaining all of the houses, the maisonettes and the bungalows.

This is the smallest, and arguably least intrusive redevelopment option but also the most limited option. We need to consider other homes that remain on the estate and the risk of overlooking/overshadowing.

Stacked maisonettes might work on this option. The constraints are unit numbers and financing the development with such little unit gain.

Question: Resident asked if the Council are obliged to keep the roads in the same place?

Response: Ekin Road is an adopted Road, there are challenges with changing it in terms of cost, services that run underneath the road, emergency services, refuse and traffic flow that the County would need to consider.

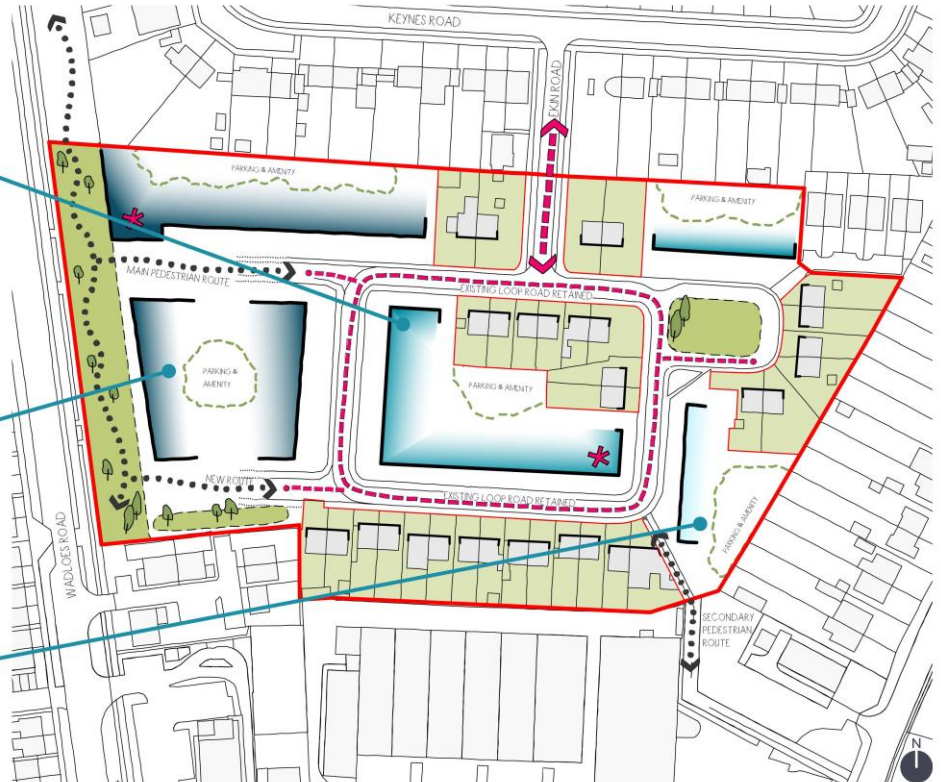
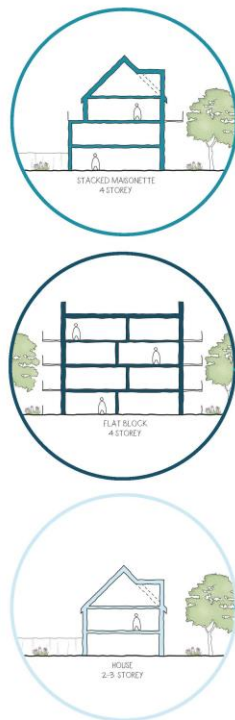
Question: Resident noted that the flats already overlook the houses and many don't mind the height as long as they get privacy.

Response: Whilst there may be an assumption that the current heights set a precedent, any future plans will be considered under the current higher standards than those in place when Ekin Road was newly built.

Option B

Retention of all houses

New homes typology:



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Demolition of the flats, maisonettes and bungalows. Retaining all of the houses.

We have received feedback that condition in the maisonettes and bungalows is not good. This option has a larger area and there is a greater possibility on the west.

Resident noted that they wouldn't want to close the road route as would cause issue for refuse vehicles.

The Council are keen to keep the verges along Wadloes Road.

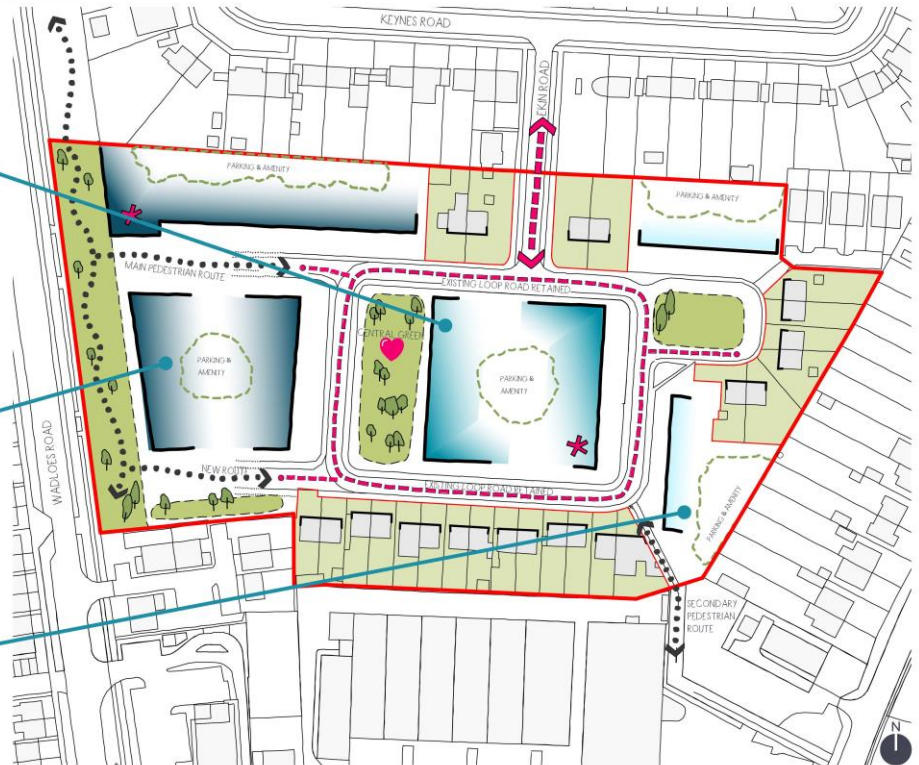
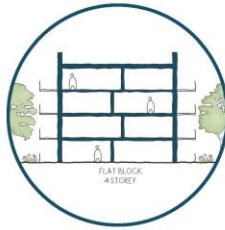
The footpath leading to Ditton Lane is important. Residents fed back that this is used a lot. Lighting could be improved to make it safer.

Residents discussed that currently CUFC fans do not park on Ekin Road because it is closed off.

Option C

Retention of most houses (except central houses)

New homes typology:



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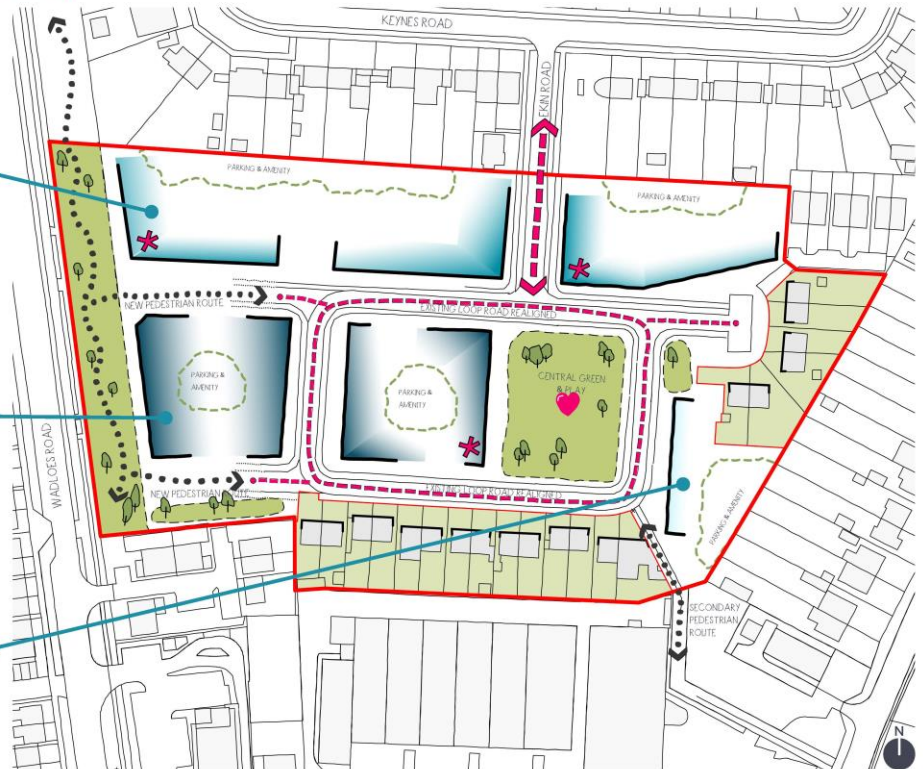
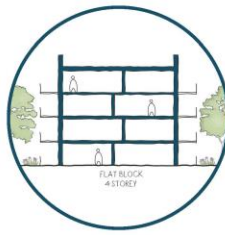
Demolition of the flats, maisonettes, bungalows and the central houses. Retaining houses to the North, East and South.

This area has greater opportunity to build higher buildings and more homes.

Option D

Retention of houses to the south and east only

New homes typology:



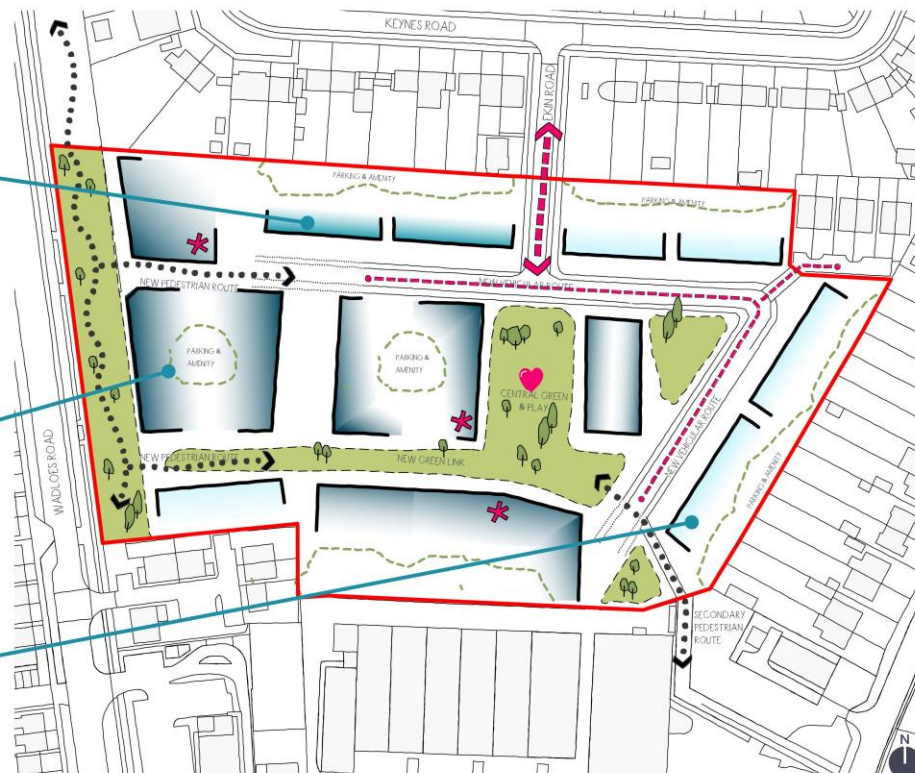
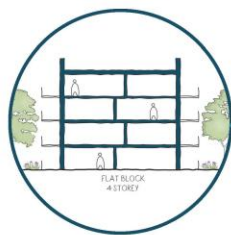
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Demolition of the flats, maisonettes, bungalows and the central and northern houses. Retaining houses to the East and South.

This option moves the northern road downwards, giving more space for taller buildings. Opportunity for a bigger open space.

Option E

Total redevelopment
New homes typology:



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Total redevelopment of Ekin Road and Ekin Walk
Opportunity for height in the south as it backs onto commercial use.

The team has consulted urban designer from the planning team and discussed principles of these options.

Timeline shared on screen:

Spring 2023 – Identified a range of options
Autumn 2023 – Shortlist of options
Spring 2024 – Identified preferred option
Scheme development and consultation
Summer 2024 – Housing Scrutiny Committee
Winter 2024/5 - Planning application if required
Spring/Summer 2025 – Planning approval if granted

The Council's main aspirations are to improve accommodation and provide more of it. We need to address accessibility as current flats have no lifts.
The external company will be introduced to assess climate, community safety, economic impacts vs benefits of each option.

Questions:

Question: What will the cost be (of refurbishment) to the leaseholders? Noted that they would like to sell/leave as soon as possible.

AJ: Explained the decanting process for homeowners and tenants. The first step is to form a plan based on individual circumstances. This may involve working with other agencies, particularly Social Workers or Occupational Therapists where there are additional needs, particularly in terms of property adaptations. With leaseholders, we arrange for a market valuation to be undertaken and discuss with tenants as to where would be a suitable location to move to. We do not rush this as we understand that this process takes time. There is a financial package which includes statutory compensation payments and disturbance payments for relocation alongside practical help. Whilst the Council under certain circumstances has the right to compulsory purchase, we have not had to use that on similar sites as we are usually able purchase properties through mutual agreement and discussion with the homeowners concerned.

Question: Do Leaseholders have the option to sell now?

Response: If the leaseholder wants to sell, the council has 1st refusal under the terms of the Lease, which is standard across the Council. This is an option for the council but not an obligation. We encourage homeowners to speak with us directly.

It was noted that there is no waiver for the RTB discount if home bought within the last 5 years.

The Council has case studies of people that have moved and tenants that are willing to share their experiences, if anyone would like to talk to others.

Question: The timeline has changed since they were first consulted. Can we bring a decision forward?

Response: This is difficult to get right for everybody, we appreciate the longer timescale is bad news for some. This timeline is subject to change and if we can do it quicker, we will but there is a lot to get through.

Question: What does the refurb option mean to leaseholders?

Response: Refurbishment is complex, the council has the right to recover costs of repairs not improvement. There is the issue of access and this depends on the level of work that would be required as part of refurbishment.

Question: If there is a remaining house tenant that would like to leave, can a person being decanted move into their home?

Response: These arrangements cannot be confirmed until more detail is known about the preferred option. Any discussions for individual choices will be held on a specific circumstances basis, and in line with general Council policy. The Council officers are happy to discuss any individual circumstances at this stage, even if solutions may take longer.

Question: The Liaison Group meets every 3 months; how will residents be involved and submit questions?

Response: This space is for feedback, and Nacer, Alan and ward members etc. receive feedback through other communications which is all taken into account. Each Liaison Group meeting gives us the opportunity to offer more detail and feedback. This is a 2-way engagement. Any resident can feedback directly individually as well, and those views will be taken into account

Question: Can compensation be given to those staying, living next to a building site?

Response: There will be neighbourly discussions if there is specific impact, but not general compensation. Considerate constructor status for contractors will be part of the Council's brief and contracts may include specific conditions dependent on justified need.