

Ebury Bridge Community Futures Group – Meeting 18
2nd October 2018, 6.30pm – 8.30pm
Regeneration Base, 15 – 19 Ebury Bridge Road, Ebury Bridge Estate

Members Attendance:

- Mohammed Eisa [ME]
- Stephen Rusbridge [SR]
- Fiona Quick [FQ]
- Tammy Dowdall [TD]
- Sheila Martin [SM]
- Yolanda Gaston [YG]
- Charlotte Pragnell [CP] – via telephone

Apologies:

- Mike Smith [MS]
- Rachel Riley [RR]
- Laura Buttigieg [LBu]

WCC Officers and Consultants:

- Tom McGregor [TM] - Independent Chairperson
- David Thompson [DT] – Senior Regeneration Project Manager
- Martin Crank [MC] – Communications and Engagement Manager
- Gelina Menville [GM] – Ebury Bridge Community Engagement Team
- Cecily Herdman [CH] – Principal Policy Officer (Westminster City Council)
- Louis Blair [LBI] – First Call Housing (Independent Resident Advisor)
- Abdel Belabbes [AB] – Ebury Bridge Community Engagement Team

Notes: *This document provides a summary of the discussions which took place during the meeting including questions and respective responses that were raised during the session, action points and key decisions.*

1. Welcomes and introductions from Chair

TM opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and giving apologies for those not in attendance.

MC informed attendees that CP is joining the meeting via telephone.

2. Notes of last meeting – 12th September 2018

The notes of the previous meeting were reviewed page by page with amendments and matters arising discussed by attendees:

Matter arising:

Pg 3 - FQ requested an update on the on-going needs assessment; whether November is still feasible as an ideal date for the assessments to finish since leaseholders have yet to be contacted.

GM clarified that needs assessments are for secure tenants only, with leaseholders having a separate discussion regarding their options.

Pg 4 - FQ requested an updated on the distribution of the development process and activity for Ebury Bridge to be produced by DT. DT confirmed the timeline will be produced and distributed by the next meeting.

P.g 5 – FQ requested an update on the recruitment for new members of the CFG. MC confirmed interviews were schedules, but due to illness did not take place. GM confirmed that one candidate does not currently have time to join the group and has asked to remain on the reserve list. A recommendation will be brought to the next meeting.

P.g 6 - FQ requested an update on the workshop to be run by GM with members of the engagement team to present a consistent message for the engagement. GM confirmed that the meeting was held ensuring that message is now consistent across the rehousing and Community Engagement teams. An FAQ is to be produced and distributed via the monthly newsletter and website.

P.g 7 – FQ requested an update on the development of the overall communications strategy. MC referred to this as an agenda item.

3. Action List Review

Each item was reviewed in turn and updated on the action point list.

Action Point 3 – MC put forward that following the BBC's *Inside Out* programme which featured a segment on Ebury Bridge's regeneration project as well the rumours being circulated on the estate, posters detailing the key pledges of the project have been produced and circulated on all blocks and empty retail units.

MC suggested producing a poster highlighting members of the CFG to accompany posters that will be produced highlighting members of the regeneration team to residents. TM stated that this was standard practice for resident groups of this nature.

Action point 4b - GM informed attendees that City West Homes (CWH) are obtaining a quote for the repairs on the meter boxes.

Action point 13 - DT informed attendees that this action has been completed.

4. Rumour Buster

TM invited attendees to share any rumours or concerns regarding the regeneration project to be discussed by the group.

LBI put forward rumours that are common on other regeneration projects; specifically, the size of the newly built flats post-regeneration.

DT assured that this will be covered in greater detail in future CFG meetings. The importance of refreshing the CFG on the aims of the project were stressed, reiterating that the specification that will be detailed in the brief sent to developers will safeguard the size & design of the flats. This will be achieved through on-going consultation with the CFG.

LBI suggested looking at the current size of residents' flats would be a good start in developing any specifications.

5. Project Update:

DT presented an update on the regeneration project.

i. Meanwhile Use

The meanwhile use following the demolition of Edgson house was discussed.

DT stated that by Christmas hoarding will be put up around the now emptied Edgson House building, following checks for asbestos which are currently taking place. After Christmas a contractor will begin work on the demolition which is likely to continue until July 2019.

DT updated the group about the feedback for the interim use for the space gathered during the Summer Fun Day organised by the Community Engagement Team. The planning proposal will be submitted and includes specifications for one large community space, with other smaller spaces which could be added later.

DT & MC met with South West Area Network (SWAN) and the Chelsea Barracks Liaison group, regarding the interim use to gather further feedback.

DT stressed that one of the main goals of the interim uses is to encourage the growth of businesses within the local community.

TD enquired whether the planning permission could possibly extend to Wainwright House should the building be empty by the time of the demolition. DT explained that this would not be the case as a separate planning proposal would have to be put forward.

SM put forward concerns regarding the growing anti-social behaviour on the estate, with unsavoury individuals being attracted to the empty building and asked for clarification as to when the building is due to be demolished. DT said it is expected to begin in January and continue until July.

TD raised a concern about the need for increased pest control once the demolition starts.

LBI stated that accessibility arrangements for disabled parking bays should be considered during the demolition.

DT assured that these issues are all being considered. The concerns regarding accessibility will be discussed with the Council's development team and the demolition contractor once appointed.

MC reassured the group that disabled access to parking will remain available during the demolition of Edgson House.

FQ highlighted concern over the behaviour of labourers following the growing number of workers from Chelsea Barracks loitering outside of Edgson House.

TD reiterated concerns over parking access as well as children's access to the playground.

SM raised concerns over residents owning disabled badges under false pretences.

ii. Development delivery options update

DT presented an outline for the four options that the City of Westminster could choose for delivering the regeneration. Each option was outlined and discussed.

DT presented several points to consider when selecting a route to market, including falling housing prices, protecting the development against sales risk and HRA caps on borrowing which could impact the deliverability of the project.

The nature of a Wholly Owned Company (WOC) was discussed by TM and the level of control over a development it would give the Council. TD raised concerns over its legitimacy, with MC explaining that Ealing's Copley Close was an example of a successful use of WOC as a development route, stating that this gives the council more control than other options.

TM assured that the homes will remain council homes if a WOC is used.

LBI assured that WOC is a progressive approach and that both market and sub-market rent should be considered as it would be meeting a need of the community. He continued to state that the WOC is a financially sensible option.

FQ enquired whether the selection of a route to market will disqualify certain developers, raising concerns over whether there would be enough companies who would want to deliver the development under a WOC.

DT assured that there will be, and that development advice will be sought out. He continued to state that there will be an outcome for the evaluation in November.

6. Leaseholder policy details

CH presented a summary of the newly adopted Westminster Leaseholder Policy, stating that it has been uploaded onto the Westminster website and will be distributed to the leaseholders.

CH commented that there was disappointment in the quantity of responses, but that feedback received was of a high quality.

Regarding disturbance payments - CH stated that the presentation is only a summary, not presenting all the issues raised during consultation. Lack of detail was a recurring concern amongst leaseholders during the consultation. CH stated that the policy is purposely general for all regeneration projects, valuing principals over scheme specific details.

CH clarified by offering "main objectives" the policy would provide more flexibility in its application.

Regarding the equity loan option - CH acknowledged the difficulty in applying this level of flexibility to mortgage issues. DT suggested that less phases in the development could make the option more viable, stating that the housing needs assessments will give an indication of the feasibility of this.

FQ enquired whether there will be a cap on any service charges faced by Leaseholders in the new policy. CH stated that the policy did not place any caps on charges.

TM assured that part of the objectives of the design brief was to minimize service charge. DT elaborated that all evidence shows that high quality builds minimize service charges.

LBI suggested that designing the new builds would suggest design the nature of its servicing.

CH continued to discuss equity loan options, stating that there are now fewer restrictions on inheritance. Overall in summary Westminster has five key offers to leaseholders in renewal schemes.

Discussing the equity loan, LBI stated that more certainty might be needed as few leaseholders might want to take the third option presented, buying one of the new homes outright. He continued to suggest that flexibility to off-site movers on equity loans should be desired.

CH stated the next steps following the publishing of the policy, would be inviting leaseholders to meet with AR to discuss their individual circumstances.

AR informed attendees that the meeting will be confidential, that all cases will be considered on a case-to-case basis and that it is important to have these sessions as soon as possible before stating that all leaseholders are welcome to seek independent advice from LBI.

FQ requested clarification on dates for the next steps. CH responded by stating that a general letter will go out to leaseholders explaining the policy within days. Meetings regarding the policy will start in two weeks, this will be accompanied by letters advising leaseholders that redevelopment will go ahead and to start negotiations to sell their property by agreement. One-to-one sessions have already begun and will be ongoing continuously.

CH finished by informing the group that the decant policy tenants is being reviewed and will be brought to the CFG once completed.

LBI enquired whether the letter described in next steps is the same letter that has already gone out. AR confirmed that it is not.

7. Six-month engagement report

MC presented an outline for communication and engagement for the next six months for the CFG to review and discuss. This included an outline for Westminster's

MC informed attendees that 342 affordable homes have now been locked as a (minimum) figure based on the work done to produce the viability and July Cabinet report.

MC highlighted that ensuring Ebury Bridge will remain a council estate is a key message to be communicated within.

MC discussed some of the other messages that will need to be confirmed to the community to provide more certainty of the scheme in the coming months, including phasing and number of anticipated room.

MC stated that there will be an away day for members of the CFG to discuss sequencing. TM enquired as to when this will take place. MC informed that it will take place before Christmas.

FQ stressed the importance of informing residents about what phasing means to them in the Newsletter.

MC discussed informing residents about the design brief, stating that the CFG will play a key role in the design of the new builds; will be given the opportunity to meet with the architectural team. He continued by suggesting a survey could be used to consult with residents on options for materials.

FQ requested on clarification on this consultation; suggesting that this was the purpose of the Community Charter. SM echoed these sentiments by stressing the importance of the Community Charter.

GM clarified the purpose of the Community Charter; the sequence of this consultation will change depending on which route of delivery the council chooses. Should the development be solely council lead, it is less vital as the procurement of a delivery partner/contractor comes later in the process.

ACTION: Communicate the purpose of the community charter via the newsletter - MC.

TD stressed the importance of giving attention to retailers on the high street as several have vacated their shops, when providing space in a temporary facility on the Edgson House space, they should be considered.

MC discussed the procurement of a contractor, informing the group that a procurement task and finish group will be formed at the appropriate time. The members of this group will be given training to help secure a contractor to deliver the regeneration.

FQ enquired whether these interviews will be held by the CFG alone or if it will be open to the wider estate. MC suggested that other residents might want to be involved. An estate wide drop-in will also be held, to ensure all residents have the opportunity to feed into this process and meet any potential contractors.

MC presented the communication commitments moving forward; production of a new digital package (including social media, the production of a new website that will be updated regularly), circulation of meeting notes within 5 days and 24-hour response time to enquiry via email. The importance of CFG's consultation in the designing of the website was heavily stressed.

FQ questioned whether the 24-response time for emails was exclusive to regeneration related topic or if it would extend to repairs as well.

TM elaborated that repairs was not within the regeneration team's remit.

SR enquired who oversaw dealing with repairs. MC responded that it was Natasha White [NW], City West Homes.

SR put forward a concern about the gate behind Doneraile house which has been unable to lock. He had reported it three weeks ago and it has not been repaired.

GM responded confirming the delay in the gates repair was due to an internal dispute as to which contractor's remit the gate falls under.

SR stated he had not received any updates on this repair, and that it was important to be kept informed about the status of outstanding repairs. TD echoed these comments, stating that this should extend to all residents which the repairs would affect.

ACTION: Repair updates to be sent to residents regarding their status following their report – NW.

8. Any Other Business

SM raised the issue of members of the Garden Club not having access to toilet facilities following the closure of Edgson House, stating this affect any children she taken on trips to the gardens from the Pimlico Toy Library.

MC suggested a portable toilet facility could be a solution to this issue. DT assured that this is being dealt with.

ACTION: Toilet facilities to be established for Garden Club users – DT.

TM put on record the CFG's gratitude the work Teresa Wickham [TW] has done for the CFG, extending a warm thank you which was echoed by those in attendance.

9. Date of next meeting

6th November 2018, 630pm – 8.30pm, Regeneration Base *

[*PLEASE NOTE: Change of date to Tuesday 13th November 2018]