

Ebury Bridge Community Futures Group – Meeting 43

2nd February 2021, 6.30pm – 8.30pm

via Microsoft Teams

Members Attendance:

- Tom McGregor [TMc] – Chairperson
- Charlotte Pragnell [CPr]
- George Panayioudou [GP]
- Joanna Winterbottom [JW]
- Mohammed Eisa [ME]
- Cristina Pasantes [CPa]

Apologies:

- None received

Absences:

- Tammy Dowdall
- Sheila Martin

WCC Officers and Consultants:

1. David Thompson [DT] – Ebury Bridge Programme Director
2. Gelina Menville [GM] – Ebury Bridge Regeneration Manager
3. Martin Crank [MC] – Communications & Engagement Manager
4. Millie Morrissey [MM] – Project Support Officer (Meeting notes)
5. Tom Elwood [TE] – Programme Manager – Existing Estate
6. Stephen Stretton [SS] – Programme Manager – Future Estate
7. Louis Blair [LB] – Communities First (ITLA)

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. Welcome

TMc welcomed all members and officers.

2. CFG Standing Items

- **Action List Review:** Key actions are included as agenda items.
- **Key Considerations Tracker:** GM introduced the tracker/planner and explained that it follows on from the list of CFG key considerations for the year ahead, shared last month. It will allow us all to track topics for future discussion, capture any requests to discuss a topic in more detail and plan for future meetings. The tracker will be shared with the CFG shared as part of the meeting pack ahead of each monthly meeting.
- **Matters Arising:**
No matters raised.

- **Rumour Buster:**
No rumours raised.

3. Project Update

Construction Phasing

DT covered JW's point from the previous meeting regarding Phase 2. Phase 1 construction can only commence once planning permission has been granted. We had understood that the planning application would be taken to committee in November of last year but have been asked to wait until March or April to go to committee. DT has asked Planning Services for a confirmed date, March or April, this has not been given. Covid has affected the service and caused some of the delay. We can still adhere to the August start date for Phase 1 if we get a March date for planning committee, but this is not confirmed.

LB asked if completion in December 23 would mean the process of letting wouldn't begin for some time after and would affect the start of Phase 2a. DT explained WCC aim to have a housing services provider in place a full 12 months before Phase 1 practical completion. DT added not all of the Phase 2b want to remain on Ebury, and therefore will move away rather than into Phase 1.

JW asked if this means people in Phase 2a don't have to vacate before 2022 and 2b before 2023. DT confirmed the VP date for Phase 2a remains unaffected. The Phase 2b VP date of August 2023 is expected to be revised to somewhere between 2b December 2023 through to February 24, depending on a planning determination. GP stated he had received a letter regarding vacating in August 2023, would this now be changed. DT confirmed that that as GP is in Phase 2b, the VP will change, as described above. However, the Council will continue to work with Phase 2a occupants, seeking sale by voluntary agreement up to the existing August 22 VP date.

Action: Confirmation of Planning Committee date to be provided to the CFG once received

Action: MC to produce communications to clarify phasing dates

4. Tenants Affordability: Rents, Service Charge, Universal Credit

SS presented information on how the social rents will be calculated in the new homes, and how the impact of the new estimated service charge for social tenants, and the access to housing support they might receive. This was in direct response to a CFG request for more detail.

SS explained that new social homes built on Ebury will be charged at a target rent which is calculated using a government formula. The government Target Rent formula is used by the Council to calculate the rent on all its social home within the borough and takes into account property value, number of bedrooms and the average earnings in the local area.

SS presented the expected new target rents and explained that as with the existing target rents, the figures are reviewed each in line with CPI +1 and gave a combined tenant charge for the new Ebury homes which combines the target rent and average estimated service charge.

SS explained that for social tenants who receive full housing benefit now, it is expected that this will continue for the new homes in the future, resulting in no additional cost in the new homes. Full housing benefit covers both rent and service charge.

SS continued to share a number of worked examples, of varying household size, working arrangements and levels of current housing benefit. With the exception of a family with two working adults on minimum wage, all other examples resulted in no change.

LB observed that as part of the housing need assessment to return, the relocations team should explain to returning tenants any impact due to their individual circumstances. SS confirmed the Housing Team do offer this support to ensure that tenant who are struggling with their finances are supported to ensure that they are claiming the correct benefits such as tax credits, working credits and housing support. GM added the team are in the process of looking at all 119 returning tenants, to get a better understanding of any potential impact when returning.

ACTION: Update on proportion of tenants wishing to return to Ebury are currently receiving any housing support [SS]

INFORMATION: Housing benefit and other benefit entitlements, can be check using: <https://www.entitledto.co.uk/>

5. Estimated Service Charges: By Tenure & Number of Bedrooms

TE presented information on the estimated service charges shown by tenure and number of bedrooms. For each an average and range from lowest to highest estimated charge, which is ultimately based on the square footage of the new home.

TE explained the CFG programme of discussions to take place at future CFG meetings, with the March meeting being where will drill down into the estimated service charge budget by line item and explore the levels of services assumed within each cost, and hopefully agree the principles of a settled agreement by June.

TE pointed out that the service charge for tenants is calculated in line with housing service policy, as only certain services are recharged to tenant, whilst others are paid through the rents. Leaseholders contribute an amount towards all services within the service charge. CPr asked will people on intermediate home ownership pay the same as people that buy on the open market. TE confirmed that is correct. GP asked how much will the new Ebury generate from service charge. TE explained the whole service charge budget is estimated at £2.6m, but is aligned with actual costs, and therefore not income generating. GM add the managing agent will charge a fixed fee for the management services and all other costs will be based on what services the estate needs. GP asked how much service charge generates on the existing estate. TE/ GM will get those figures and bring them back at the next meeting.

Action: Collate the total service charge budget for the existing Ebury estate [TE/GM]

GP asked if insurance is part of the tenant charge. GM explained tenants do not incur the charge for buildings insurance. GM added this topic will be discussed in more detail in March where we will explore each service area currently estimated in the service charge budget.

Action: TE to bring back to the group the breakdown of items that lie behind the service charge (such as management costs)

6. Initial Indicative Price Ranges

GM explained some indicative price ranges are able to be presented based on number of bedrooms only. There are key areas of information that are yet to be confirmed or obtained which would enable for precise prices for the new homes for sale. More work and further updates are needed before this can happen, include a planning determination, a cost of construction, a local lettings plan and a Red Book Valuation. GM explained the value of the new homes is also influenced by the size, outlook and floor level of the property.

A Local Lettings Plan will be discussed with the CFG at the appropriate time and explains how secure tenants and returning leaseholders homes will be allocated. Following an agreement in principle the

local lettings plan will be consulted on with the wider residents before it is taken to a Cabinet Member for approval. GP asked if there are any mixed floors. GM explained that the tenure distribution is horizontally spilt, however there will be some floors mixed between social and intermediate, and private and intermediate.

LB observed that take-up for leaseholders is unknown at the moment, therefore what would happen to intermediate homes not taken up. GM explained any individual intermediate homes not required for retuning leaseholder will be used for intermediate rent. JW asked for clarity on intermediate rent. GM explained intermediate rent is 80% of market rent, often accessed by people not eligible for social housing but who also cannot afford privately rented homes.

DT explained the rationale behind splitting Phase 2 in to 2a and 2b was a response to residents who were offsite, likes the homes being designed but wanted the opportunity to return quicker than original programmed. GM added next steps will be to engage with the leaseholders, to look at preference and what options are available to them. GM added temporary rehousing options away from the estate will be explored for residents living in Rye and Bucknill Houses (facing Ebury Bridge Road) if they have a desire to move back to a new home facing the road. If tenants want to come back to the front and they are in 2b, they could also move temporarily offsite until the new homes are built. GM added the policy does state that the new home may not be in the same location as previously lived in, but the team will attempt to provide some flexibility here, subject to availability.

7. AOB

DT informed the group that the demolition of Pimlico House is now underway, with ground preparation for Phase 1 continuing with JF Hunt therefore we are maintaining our preparations for the Phase 1 start date as best we can.

CPr raised the issue of recruiting more residents to the CFG. DT explained officers and the ITLA are constantly working on this. DT added the team are always reflecting on how we can engage and enlist anybody who comes in and shows an interest. GM suggested that if anyone has contact with anyone who may be interested, to speak to them about what the CFG does, as this may encourage more interest.

MC confirmed that as well as the CFG we are directly consulting with retailers, the Food Bank, childcare providers and through specific surveys. The office has also remained open and we get feedback from owners and tenants moving temporarily about what they expect to see and how they expect to be supported in the new Ebury.

Action: Make all presentations available on the CFG SharePoint site [MM]

8. Date of next CFG meeting Tuesday 2nd March 2021