

Ebury Bridge Community Futures Group – Meeting 39

13th October 2020, 6.30pm – 8.30pm

via Microsoft Teams

Members Attendance:

- Tom McGregor [TMc] – Chairperson
- Charlotte Pragnell [CPr]
- Tammy Dowdall [TD]
- Joanna Winterbottom [JW]
- Cristina Pasantes [CPa]

Apologies:

- Fiona Quick [FQ]
- Sheila Martin [SM]
- Mohammed Eisa [ME]
- George Panayioudou [GP]

WCC Officers and Consultants:

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

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 gave apologies for FQ, ME & GP. TMc introduced TE (Programme Manager Future Estate) to the group.

2. CFG Standing Items

Action List Review:

(Item 5) MC presented the key items of objection to the Planning Application. There are 4 key areas of objections with height and massing as the main one with 11 comments making reference to this. Townscape impact received 3 comments and daylight and sunlight received 4 comments. MC added the impact of Covid-19 on the consultation was also mentioned. One comment was received about resident ballots. As it stands 23 objections and 1 supportive comment have been received. TMc asked were the 11 comments from groups or individuals. MC explained the comments definitely followed a trend as the wording for all were almost identical.

(Item 3) GM updated that she had emailed Chelsea Barracks for an update on timescales. Chelsea Barracks have struggled to provide any new developments as nothing has changed significantly since last time. GM added Phase 6 will be completed once they've sold enough homes. LB asked is Phase 6 social rent/affordable homes. GM confirmed that's correct.

Matters Arising:

No matters arising.

Rumour Buster:

Nothing to raise.

3. Market Rent Market Briefing Feedback

DT summarised the Soft Market Testing was an exercise to explore what contribution a funder could make to the new Ebury. DT added 10 organisations identified as having an interest in being either investors, operators or developers. Some organisations did one, some or all 3 things. DT explained overall there was a desire for physical separation. The starting point was from 150 units however most organisations shared the preference of 200 flats. They were very specific about who a neighbour could be and were clear that a very long-term lease would be required, 150 years minimum so their business plan could be satisfied. DT explained no company could better WCC finances and it would cost more to use their cash as they have a high borrowing rate. WCC is an attractive place and will remain so. The key to their work is a focus on the customer for market renting and typically customers rent for 1, 2 or 3 years. These organisations have a particular customer base because of this. A lot of them have never worked Zone 1 most have worked in Zones 2-6 providing market rent housing. DT added WCC will still provide market rent but not necessarily with someone who funds/builds.

JW attended some of the Soft Market Testing sessions to represent the CFG. JW explained her overall impression was that all of the organisations were struggling to model zone 1 properties. They expect Zone 1 residents to have a greater desire and demand for amenities, the rents are so high they felt people would expect these things. JW learnt a lot about how market rent properties are managed. TMC asked if achieving desired rent levels is presenting an issue. DT explained that in Zone 1 the value of land is higher and therefore this is translated into higher rents. DT added if WCC had a partner they would have to pay The Council for the land but would take 150 years to pay it back. TMC added The Council are under legal obligation to get some value for their assets. LB added this sounds like we may not be able to take this option forward and might have to explore other options. DT explained between now and December the team plan to wrap up viability for Phase 2, although it may take us to January/February due to there being a lot to put to the Cabinet Member.

DT explained this is the one exploration WCC wanted to have to see if they could attract private finance. The Cabinet Member must consider other stresses on budgets. TMC added the balance of units and how you fund them is a key issue. DT added all organisations met at SMT were told the development would be 50% affordable and 50% market. In the market component, we reserve the discretion for ratio of market rent and market ownership. DT added if WCC wanted to attract market rent there would have to be a procurement process, whereas with self-funding you don't have those procurement requirements. DT added this could put a year or so on top of Phase 2.

4. The New Ebury Estate & Block Services

TE explained a lot of focus is on the management for the future estate. The Council have started to look into different functions and services that Ebury will need to manage and maintain the new estate. TE presented a pie chart which showed the estimated Ebury future service charge budget. The estimate included some new areas that did not exist in the former Ebury.

GM added services needed to manage the new Ebury are being reviewed and will give an indication of where the costs sit in relation to each other. Some services such as the Concierge will be a new addition to the estate. GM added there is a lot of focus on maintaining the quality of the new buildings and ensuring they function as they should do. GM added there is work being done in with regards to insurance to refine figures for the new blocks. GM added repairs and maintenance may

take place in different way with a different time scale. GM explained work is being done behind the scenes to populate the breakdown and it will be brought back to CFG with more detail in the near future. CPa asked why repairs and maintenance estimates are significantly higher considering the blocks will be new builds. TE explained there will be a great deal of maintenance as well as repairs. The new blocks will have advanced electrical and mechanical equipment in the new blocks. TMC asked if this will be an annual charge. TE confirmed it will be and the budget is determined prior to the start of each year.

CPa noted the concierge would be quite a luxury and would be an addition to anything had in the past. CPa asked if there would be flexibility with the concierge, or would they operate across all the blocks. GM explained currently it is expected that the concierge will be level across all blocks. DT added there will be more on this item to come at future meetings. DT explained we would have to look at who is best placed to manage a multi-tenure neighbourhood. LB raised there is potential affordability issues for tenants and leaseholders who will be returning. LB suggested there is an exercise done where current service charges are compared to predicted future service charges. DT explained due to some of these services not existing at the moment there will be a definite increase. LB added the new services charges might impact people's decision to return depending on the difference in charges. JW asked if this will be spoken about again before the end of the year. DT confirmed the topic of services charges will be revisited.

5. Interim Rehousing Options & Support

- Tenant & Leaseholder Policy

JW raised that she has started steps towards getting a valuation and look to find another accommodation and therefore noticed the need for more detail, transparency and clarity on rehousing options. JW explained residents need a simple guide of how acquire and pay for a surveyor. MC explained there are two documents designed specifically to give a framework to how tenants and leaseholders are treated on renewal estates. There is a policy for tenants and separately for leaseholders. MC added there is a supplementary document to the frameworks that gives granular detail.

Action: Circulate both full policies to all CFG members [MM]

MC explained the key areas are financial compensation, a right of return and priority bidding status. JW asked if she could agree a value with the Council and stay in the flat until she found alternative accommodation. MC confirmed that could be one option. MC added there needs to be a refresh on information from WCH as there are lots of things the policy allows the Council to do they're just not very clear. GM added the leasehold process is fundamentally based around a negotiations process, but another team member is being recruited as a supporting piece to provide additional resources to fill the gap we recognise is there. TMC added WCC has a lot of influence over WCH as it is a Council owned business.

MC explained 122 secure tenants have been rehoused already and since we Phase 2a letters were issued, 11 leaseholders have agreed terms and offers have gone out to 5 more. CPa asked how many leaseholders are left in Phase 2a. SS confirmed there are 23 leaseholders in 2a and 25 in 2b. LB asked if WCH are up to speed on all these options. MC confirmed they are, SS will be providing additional support. For example, if a leaseholder wanted to move interstate, SS has knowledge of empty flats and could help facilitate that move. MC added there is a far more holistic support package required which is less transactional and more supportive and informative.

JW added clarity is needed on the basic steps. TD asked if there is a pack or checklist for leaseholders. MC explained that doesn't exist currently as it is the first time the policy has been applied and it is our responsibility to help them execute the policy and explain granularity.

GM explained her and DT have been meeting regularly with WCH/Steve Moore over the last few weeks. Anton, the leasehold negotiator is now based at Ebury to allow the regeneration team to support him with communication and sharing knowledge. CPa highlighted some leaseholders are older and are foreign internationals and the Council should bare those things in mind. This might make them dubious or fearful of the unknown and might be a factor as to why they have not begun this process already. JW added a handbook would save a leaseholder going to WCH every other day with a new query or question.

Action: Carry out a customer journey map exercise in order to streamline the process [LB/MC/SS]

6. AOB

GM explained there will be the need for additional meetings and will send out some dates to understand people's availability.

MC distributed a letter for comment on behalf of the CFG regarding the planning application. MC had received no comments. MM to re-circulate letter for final chance to comment by Friday (16th).

Fly tipping raised as a recent issue on the estate. SS to pick this issue up with housing.

Action: To write a letter to inform residents of the Council collection service to try and deter fly tipping [SS]

7. Date of next CFG meeting

Tuesday 3rd November