

Ebury Bridge Community Futures Group – Meeting 31

14th January 2020, 6.30pm – 8.30pm

The Studio, 9 Ebury Bridge Road, Ebury Bridge Estate

Members Attendance:

- Tom McGregor [TMc] - Chairperson
- Charlotte Pragnell [CPr] (via Skype)
- Cristina Pasantes [CPa]
- Fiona Quick [FQ]
- Joanna Winterbottom [JW]
- Mohammed Eisa [ME]

Apologies:

- George Panayioudou [GP]
- Sheila Martin [SM]
- Tammy Dowdall [TD]
- David Thompson [DT] – Project Director

WCC Officers and Consultants:

1. Gelina Menville [GM] – Ebury Bridge Community Engagement Team
2. Martin Crank [MC] – Communications & Engagement Manager
3. Louis Blair [LB] – Communities First (ITLA)
4. Millie Morrissey [MM] – Project Support Officer (Meeting notes)
5. Richard Hyams [RH] – Astudio
6. Steve Westcott [SW] – Astudio
7. Emelia Ievolella [EI] – Community Engagement Coordinator

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.

2. Action List Review

Item 2+3: GM informed the group that a SharePoint site is being set-up which all CFG members can be added to in order to access slides and documents from the CFG meetings. The site will be fully functional by the next meeting.

3. Matters Arising

Review of Ebury Lights: GM explained that the event was a great success and thanked everyone for attending. Member feedback was positive, surrounding estates were in attendance and there was a great sense of community.

Concierge Update: GM informed the group that there have been minimal reports of ASB from the Concierge over the Christmas period and that they will be in place until the end of the month. GM asked the group if there were any issues or questions regarding the Concierge service. FQ asked why are they only in place until the end of the month? GM explained that demolition begins in

February, meaning the empty blocks will be secured with hoarding, eliminating the opportunities for ASB, etc to happen. JW raised the issue that the concierge said they felt frustrated that repairs such as communal balcony lights take too long. GM assured the group that all reports of repairs are brought to the attention of Natasha White to chase fulfil the repairs, within timescales.

4. Rumour Buster

Nothing to note.

5. Flat Size Comparison Update

SW explained to the group that since the last design consultation, comparisons have been made between the existing flat sizes and the proposed new flat sizes. SW presented a sample of measurements that have been taken from an array of different flats in different blocks, SW explained that this was done to ensure there was as much variety as possible when conducting the comparisons.

SW presented the headline observations to the group, which included two thirds did not comply with some of the statutory guidelines. CPa asked in what sense? SW explained mostly regarding the area of the flats and lack of private amenity. SW went on to explain that 16 homes were measured out of 336. GM added that many homes are layered, meaning that those which are layered were represented in the sampling.

RH explained that 95% of new homes will have dual aspect living space where as currently only 25% of flats have that. RH added that there is a balance to be had, to avoid homes being too cold in the winter or too hot in the summer. FQ asked what is the term for a flat with windows on both sides? RH explained that the term is dual aspect although this can also be called through aspect. RH added there can be variations of the term depending on the context in which it is used. FQ added it is important to introduce a new or defined term of dual aspect for the residents understanding and benefit.

SW presented a typical Phase One upper floor plan. FQ asked if any flats are directly facing head on to the railway? SW explained that none are due to the block being at an angle along the railway. JW raised the issues that 1 bed flats on higher floors may not be ideal for single or elderly people living alone. SW explained that those concerns have been taken into consideration, but to bear in mind that a proportion of the 1 bed flats will be for market rent/sales also.

JW questioned whether all new build 1 beds will be the size of those presented. SW assured the group that all new 1 bed flats will be bigger than the current average sized 1 bed. TMC asked will the flat size be the same whether a tenant or leaseholder? SW explained that yes, a 2 bed for example, being rented by a tenant will be the same size as a 2 bed of a leaseholder. RH added that all flats are designed to give the Council maximum flexibility on tenure. MC asked will all flats be built to the same specification? RH explained all flats are built to the same specification and added that there will be a variation of flats depending on where they sit on the estate. TMC asked does this way of designing leave residents and the Council a choice? RH explained that they are designed to enable the Council to have the maximum set of choices and not limit what can be done with the buildings. FQ questioned how will this be communicated to residents? GM explained that there will be more detail in the next exhibition and then subsequently summarised in the newsletter. GM added that the next exhibition will be in February and they are working towards the exact date. GM explained that all slides and designs will be formally collated in the Studio at the exhibition, but handouts and more information on the flat size comparisons will also be available the Regeneration Base. GM added that there will be another CFG meeting before the exhibition.

6. Project Team Update

Key Considerations: *Soft Market Testing* – GM requested a member of the CFG to take part in soft market testing. This will help to decide whether to deliver Phase 2 with or without a partner. GM outlined that half a day is required in January, 1 day in February and a maximum of 5 days in March for individual interviews. TMc asked for soft market testing to be defined. MC explained that soft market testing looks at 3 things: funding market sale, market rent and management services. MC added that if the Design and Build contractors from Phase 1 are satisfactory or above, they may do the entire project. CPa asked what is the incentive for companies to be involved in market testing? MC explained that soft market testing explores the interest for companies to get involved, either pre-construction or post-construction. This could enable the company to put money in to the project, meaning they share the risk and the profit. MC added that there isn't a lot of mixed tenure managers, therefore the best of the best would be required to manage and maintain it to a very high standard. TMc explained big companies like Legal & General could be interested in providing investment as it provides 20-30 years of steady, reliable income, which benefits their pension funds etc. GM called for one CFG member to get in contact if interested.

Action: Circulate the timetable for soft market testing [GM]

Action: Email further information to the whole group including those not in attendance [GM]

Accelerated Delivery – Next Step: GM explained that the Phase 2 letters will be issued to all residents informing them that the vacant possession date is August 2022 brought forward from August 2023. MC added that revised rehousing options will be acknowledged in light of this change of date, and bespoke packages will be provided to those affected. GM added that a letter is to be issued to all in Phase 2 and 3 regarding serving initial demolition notice and what this means. Following this there will be one-to-one visits to all residents in Phase 2. CPa asked whether having large numbers of leaseholders will make it more difficult to accelerate. MC explained that if leaseholders wanted to, high source private sector rented accommodation will be source by the Council until new homes are built. A leaseholders current living costs would be maintained.

7. Understanding the Legal Process

LB presented slides to the group. LB explained to the group that all Councils take legal measures to ensure they can deliver a regeneration project. LB added Councils will always implement a tenant rehousing policy, a leaseholder relocation policy, a local lettings policy for new homes and a design consultation process. LB explained Councils will always want to reach individual agreements regarding relocation and generally take a flexible approach to meeting residents needs. These legal preparations are a backstop to ensure timely delivery of the project.

CPa asked whether a property is allocated to a resident early on? GM explained that the Council would be in a position to do so, off plan. MC added that if people had a preference of where they wanted to live, the Council would begin to reserve properties where possible for those people, including leaseholders. JW asked that because it is possible to allocated flats, is it also possible to know what the prices will be? MC explained that currently we are not sure on what the price will be. MC added that the Council can write a legally binding letter informing the resident that they will be able to return to a home of their choice that has been set aside. Residents will be able to lock in specifications after the flats are valued, off plan. FQ asked when will the value of flats be known? GM explained values will be know off plan, between 9-12 months before the build completes. MC added that properties on the front will take a little longer.

MC explained that to keep a leaseholder in home ownership whilst new homes are built and maintain a property value property that moves with the market, Westminster City Council would pay two stamp duties. Equity loans for the new homes would be higher to enable homeowners to return as homeowners.

CPa raised the issue that there is lots of jargon and legal speak, may come across quite threatening to those not as informed, the elderly and those whose first language isn't English. GM explained that after letters, face-to-face engagement is the next step. FQ asked if the Right to Buy relevant to the individual and not exclusive to the property on the estate being demolished. TMc confirmed that is correct.

LB explained the Compulsory Purchase Order and added that there will be a series of notices before the CPO is considered by the Secretary of State. The series will be; referencing, making the order, objection, decision, inquiry and finally negotiation. MC added that the one thing a leaseholder cannot object to throughout the CPO process is the valuation of the flat. This is done by an independent party. TMc added that the Council's intention is to give as much support and information as possible, objections are a last resort.

LB added that booklets and leaflets with CPO guidance for tenants and homeowners are available as Government publications and the ITLA can also provide further help or advice to CFG on a collective or individual basis.

ITLA are also now providing independent advice to support existing business on Ebury Bridge.

7. Any Other Business

FQ asked that less calls are made requesting energy consumption data. MC explained that the call for this data has come to an end, therefore no more calls will be received.

JW asked that the materials from this meeting are circulated or put on to the SharePoint. GM agreed to make sure that the SharePoint is fully functioning by the next meeting and slides to be uploaded.

Action: SharePoint site to be functioning by next meeting with materials uploaded [GM/MM]

TMc thanked everyone involved in Ebury Lights and thanked those who attending. Special thanks to Lukas Holden and Rachael Hookway for organising the event.

8. Date of next CFG meeting:
Tuesday 4th February 2020