

The London Borough of Merton (Eastfields No. 1) Compulsory Purchase Order 2022 (APP/PCU/CPOP/T5720/3303017)

The London Borough of Merton (High Path No. 1) Compulsory Purchase Order 2022 (APP/PCU/CPOP/T5720/3303018)

The London Borough of Merton (Ravensbury No. 1) Compulsory Purchase Order 2022 (APP/PCU/CPOP/T5720/3303020)

Summary Proof of Evidence of Michael Robbins Bsc(Hons), MRICS

dated 26 January 2024

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 I, Michael Robbins, am the Regional Partnership Manager at Clarion and I have been in this role since April 2021, although I have been in a similar role since 2017.

1.2 My role is to develop the long and short-term capital investment programmes to ensure that our stock is maintained to a high standard. To enable me to undertake this role I use the data gathered through stock condition surveys and reports from Clarion staff members to inform our capital investment across the South and South London regions including the three Estates.

1.3 My evidence provides:

1.3.1 An explanation of my involvement with the above-mentioned Estates;

1.3.2 An explanation of Clarion's duties in respect of the Estates;

1.3.3 A description of the existing condition of the estates;

1.3.4 An explanation of the options considered; and

1.3.5 Response to objections.

2 AN EXPLANATION OF CLARION'S DUTIES IN RESPECT OF EACH ESTATE

2.1 The properties on the three Estates are exempted from the Decent Homes programme, reflecting their impending demolition and regeneration. Clarion committed to continuing to ensure the buildings were kept safe and any failing components (windows, kitchens, bathrooms) were replaced. A full Response Repair service was maintained. When the regeneration work was delayed we included the three Estates in programmes of improvement. Those capital investment programmes are informed from stock condition surveys, information from the Housing, Estates Services and Response Repairs teams.

2.2 Clarion have continued to replace kitchens, bathrooms and boilers across all the Estates to ensure that residents homes remain fit for purpose whilst the Scheme is undertaken.

2.3 Clarion have adopted an enhanced standard for its residents homes (2050 Asset Strategy) and this long term strategy aims to ensure that all of our stock is of good quality, fit for purpose, sustainable and affordable to residents.

3 EXISTING CONDITION OF THE HOUSING STOCK

3.1 The Eastfields Estate

- 3.1.1 The properties on the Eastfields Estate were constructed in the 1960's and comprise three storey town houses and flats. Both types were constructed using the Wimpey No Fines method of construction and have since had metal panels inserted to the elevations. These panels are showing signs of corrosion and replacement is hampered by the presence of asbestos between the newer metal panels and original cladding.
- 3.1.2 The blocks have continuous flat roofs with internal drainage and the properties are suffering from numerous leaks and water ingress from both the roofs and drainage. The replacement of the roofs has been made very difficult due to the varying tenure types.
- 3.1.3 The properties are thermally inefficient suffering from condensation, damp and mould due to the low levels of insulation to both the roofs and elevations and life expired windows which makes them costly to heat and eliminate condensation.

3.2 The High Path Estate

- 3.2.1 There are over 600 properties on the High Path Estate of varying styles including terraced housing, maisonettes, medium and high-rise flats constructed between 1950 and 1980.
- 3.2.2 The three twelve storey blocks have poor thermal qualities and a number of life expired components including the flat roof and windows, which would require full scaffolding to enable replacement.
- 3.2.3 The 1950's four storey blocks are of solid brick construction and also have poor thermal qualities with extensive work required to reduce the resident's costs to heat their homes. The blocks are now 70 years old and, despite previous major component replacement programmes, now require substantial investment to bring them up to a modern standard.
- 3.2.4 The 1970's and 1980's properties are now between 40 and 50 years old and, whilst being of a more modern, construction are still thermally inefficient compared to a new build property.
- 3.2.5 Clarion have recently undertaken extensive cyclical repairs and redecoration to a number of the blocks on the Estate at a cost of over £500,000 in order to maintain the properties and reduce the cost of on-going maintenance.

3.3 The Ravensbury Estate

- 3.3.1 The Ravensbury Estate comprise a mix of two and four storey blocks of flats and Orlit prefabricated houses constructed in the late 1940's and early 1950's
- 3.3.2 The two storey blocks are now around 70 years old with life expired main components and require major refurbishment.
- 3.3.3 The 72 Orlit houses are of prefabricated reinforced concrete construction and considered to be defective because of the corrosion often found in the concrete frames and as such the majority of mortgage providers will not lend money against them.
- 3.3.4 These properties suffer from high levels of damp, condensation and mould due to the lack of insulation in the original construction of the buildings and are costly for residents to heat.

4 THE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 In addition to the full-scale regeneration of the Estates, two alternative options were considered:
 - 4.1.1 Refurbishment up to the Decent Homes standard which would have involved just the refurbishment of major components; and
 - 4.1.2 An enhanced refurbishment programme above the Decent Homes standard that would include all major components and also addressing some of the thermal issues experienced.
- 4.2 Whilst undertaking options 1 and 2 would improve the quality of the housing stock, it was estimated that the cost of such work, at 2016 prices, would be in the region of £209m. Both options would improve the quality of residents' lives but not to the extent that would be provided by the comprehensive regeneration of the Estates. It should also be noted that some of the properties are 75 years old and the refurbishment work would not extend the lives of these blocks by a significant amount.
- 4.3 Furthermore, although the work under options 1 and 2 would improve the thermal performance of the blocks and reduce the cost to residents to heat their homes and reduce the number and cost of repairs to Clarion, it would not achieve these aims to the extent that the Scheme would achieve.

5 RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS

- 5.1 As I set out above and in Section 3 of my Proof of Evidence, the buildings on the High Path Estate suffer from a range of issues, including poor thermal quality.

The refurbishment of the stock under options 1 and 2 will address the issues of damp, condensation and mould and improve the thermal efficiency of residents' homes and this is true even to the more modern blocks on the High Path Estate constructed in the 1970's and 1980's. Clarion have experience of undertaking work to improve the thermal efficiency of properties under the Government's Sustainable Homes Decarbonisation Fund programme. This work has improved the EPC ratings of the properties and reduced resident's heating bills, however the work did not extend the longevity of the stock in comparison to a new build property.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 I am strongly of the opinion that regeneration is the best option for our residents.