

Borough Plan Advisory Committee

14 April 2016

Agenda item: 3

Wards: Abbey, Figges Marsh, Ravensbury

Circle Housing Regeneration: project update

Lead officer: Director of Environment and Regeneration, Chris Lee

Lead member: Cabinet Member for Environmental
Sustainability and Regeneration, Cllr Andrew Judge,

Contact officer: FutureMerton programme manager, Tara Butler

Recommendations:

1. That the Borough Plan Advisory Committee note the very initial summary of feedback from the draft Estates Local Plan consultation that took place in February – March 2016

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 At the January 2016 meeting, councillors on the Borough Plan Advisory Committee resolved to recommend to Cabinet that consultation be undertaken on the draft Estates Local Plan.
- 1.2 Public consultation took place between 01 February and 18 March 2016, targeted across the three estates of Eastfields, High Path and Ravensbury.
- 1.3 Around 400 responses were received, raising more than 1,000 different issues. Many of these responses raise issues that relate to Circle Housing Merton Priory or to matters not directly connected with the draft Estates Local Plan.
- 1.4 This report contains a very initial overview of the issues being raised.
- 1.5 Officers will report back to Councillors in a subsequent meeting with a more detailed analysis and recommendations for next steps

2. Estates Local Plan consultation update

- 2.1 Consultation on the council's draft Estates Local Plan commenced on 1st February 2016 and closed on 18th March 2016. The consultation included:
- Over 2,000 letters and emails sent to property addresses on and surrounding the estates
 - Notices in local newspapers, the council's website, presence on social media
 - Posters distributed across the estates
 - six drop-in events (two events per estate the three estates) attended by over 150 people. The events took place on weekday evenings and Saturday mornings.
 - Officer attendance at other community meetings
- 2.2 In addition, the residents associations / community associations and councillors also invited officers to attend meetings on their estates and helped encourage residents to respond to this important consultation.
- 2.3 Officers would like to thank local councillors, Eastfields Residents Association, High Path Community Association Ravensbury Residents Association for helping to publicise the consultation and encourage residents to respond.

Comments received

- 2.4 In total around 400 responses were received; approximately 25 of these were anonymous respondents. Responses from statutory consultees include the Greater London Authority, Historic England, Sport England; Circle Housing Merton Priory has also responded.
- 2.5 The majority of respondents were residents within the estate. For High Path, about 20 responses were received from residents living around the area but this was much more limited for Eastfields and Ravensbury (less than five)
- 2.6 Many respondents wrote extensive and detailed comments raising complex issues that either relate directly to the contents of the Estates Plan (e.g. on building heights, layout of streets) or to its delivery (e.g. on the residents offer)
- 2.7 Many comments relate to matters within Circle Housing Merton Priory (CHMP), whether comments on maintenance or the residents offer. At this early stage of analysis, CHMP have not been sent the issues relating to them nor had any opportunity to address any matters.

- 2.8 Once the analysis is complete officers will contact CHMP towards addressing any matters that relate specifically to CHMP (for example, the residents offer).

Eastfields Estate – summary of issues raised

- 2.9 Around 88 responses were received
- 2.10 In general, comments focussed on the logistics and financial implications of the estate regeneration for residents. There were also comments on the manner in which CHMP communicated their masterplan and offer information to residents. Homeowner respondents want to know much more detail about their financial and housing situation should regeneration go ahead..
- 2.11 Issues relating the proposals in the Estates Local Plan:
- Generally, respondents were positive about the draft Estates Local Plan
 - Mixed opinions were expressed about the proposed opening up of a through route, connecting Acacia Road to Mullholland. Residents referred to rat running and joyriding when the road was last open, although some thought the connection could be useful
 - Respondents were positive regarding the proposal of central open space.
 - In general respondents were in favour of the policy content of the plan however feel the logistic and personal circumstances of each resident should be given priority in the process of regeneration.
- 2.12 Issues related to delivery of the proposals:
- Many respondents are against the 11 year tie-in arrangement in CHMP's offer re: 100% new home ownership
 - Respondents want more detailed information from CHMP on their personal situation e.g. what date might my home be required? Where will I be moved to? Will I get like for like?

High Path Estate: consultation event summary

- 2.13 Around 99 responses were received, with about 15 of these responses being respondents who live near the High Path estate.

- 2.14 In general respondents had positive feedback on the policy content. However they are concerned about deliverability. There is a desire to see more information with regards to offer and logistics from CHMP.
- 2.15 Some comments related to CHMP's pre-application consultation with residents (January 2016) for residential development on garages to the south east corner of the estate.
- 2.16 Issues relating the proposals in the Estates Local Plan
- There were mixed views on the street layout and movement and access policies. Many respondents liked the idea of traditional street layout, taking the cues from the Battles streets to the north. However respondents are concerned about traffic congestion, particularly movement of traffic through the estate and on Abbey Road and congestion in the wider area (e.g. Merton High Street, South Wimbledon Junction)
 - Respondents stressed the importance of properly maintained roads and surfaces and the need for traditional streets with pavements so it is clear to pedestrians where they can walk
 - Residents liked the idea of creating clear links to the Wandle Trail via Mill Road.
 - Respondents generally like the idea of open spaces; in general the preference is for smaller open spaces, designed for different uses (e.g. playspace, caged Multi Use Games Areas, quiet smaller parks) that are overlooked by homes to keep children safe and discourage antisocial behaviour. Several respondents raised the need for landscapes to be properly maintained and funded
 - Mixed views were held about Merton High Street. Several respondents were cautious about providing too many new shops that might not be occupied or might be occupied by more fast food outlets. However respondents also welcomed the proposals for having active frontages along the high street.
- 2.17 Issues relating to delivery of the proposals:
- Freeholders and leaseholders were concerned regarding fair value for existing properties
 - Respondents feel the estate has not been maintained to an adequate standard.
 - Respondents want more information from CHMP on the personal circumstance if regeneration were to proceed; for example what part of the estate will my new home be in compared to my existing home?

Ravensbury Estate: consultation summary

- 2.18 Around 112 responses were received (including the Ravensbury Residents Association response, counted as one response, which was signed by 54 residents)
- 2.19 As with High Path, CHMP had undertaken some consultation in January 2016 with residents on their (CHMP's) pre-application proposals for building homes on Ravensbury garages. Several respondents referred to the Ravensbury Garages consultation in their responses on the draft Estates Local Plan.
- 2.20 Issues relating to the draft Estates Local Plan for Ravensbury
- Many respondents agreed with the residential land use, the preservation of the landscape and views to landscape features. Respondents supported the retention of existing green spaces and established trees around the estate.
 - Many respondents felt that the isolation of the estate is a positive characteristic. Proposals that might increase permeability, such as a bridge across the river Wandle, increased access to the park, additional roads or walking routes through the estate were not supported as they were seen as creating more through traffic and potentially increasing crime.
 - There was strong opposition to the proposed building height range of 2-4 storeys; respondents suggested three storeys as a maximum. There was also strong opposition to the draft Plan's suggestion of any reconfiguration of the ground floor of Ravensbury Court
- 2.21 Issues relating to delivery of the proposals:
- Residents want a more resident-led approach to design: more opportunity and time to access the design professionals employed by CHMP to shape any future plans for the estates
 - Concerns about the density and building heights on CHMP masterplans and opposition to proposals for the Ravensbury Garages site.
 - Respondents also stated that the Decent Homes programme has not been met; cited a decline in repairs and maintenance across the estate and said that the case for regeneration based on the structural condition of the Orlit homes has been overstated.

General comments

- 2.22 **Too much / too little information** Responses, particularly from residents on the estates, often expressed that they felt there has been too much consultation and at the same time don't feel fully informed about what is going on that specifically relates to their household (e.g. when might my home be demolished / reprovided?
- 2.23 **Too slow / too fast** Respondents are concerned about the length of time regeneration will take and are concerned at how long it has already taken. They have consultation fatigue and feel the important questions have been left unanswered regarding the specific impact on individual households.
- 2.24 However there are equally strong views at the long time decisions about whether or not to proceed with regeneration is taking. Many respondents do not want to see more general whole-estate consultation from either the council or Circle and just want a final decision to be made: to go ahead or stop (this is regardless of whether or not the respondent supports regeneration)

Next steps

- 2.25 As already stated, this is a very early summary of issues being raised by the c400 responses received to the February-March draft Estates Local Plan consultation.
- 2.26 The next steps are for officers to:
- Continue the analysis and present councillors and consultees with a much more detailed report on the consultation responses and recommendations relating to the draft Estates Local Plan. The next series of councillor meetings will take place from June 2016
 - Liaise with respondents and CHMP on relevant issues
 - Upload all of the consultation responses – with personal detailed removed – onto the council's website:
www.merton.gov.uk/estatesplan

3. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The council's draft Estates Local Plan is being prepared in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and associated Regulations. It is also being prepared having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance.

- 3.2 Review of legal ramifications related to the Stock Transfer Agreement jointly commissioned by LBM/CHMP and prepared by Trowers. Regular meeting with council regeneration, housing and legal teams to identify questions and areas for negotiation.

4 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 A Sustainability Appraisal and an Equalities Impact Assessment has been prepared alongside the drafting of the Estates Plan.

5. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None for the purposes of this report.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A risk register is being produced and kept updated for this project.

7. APPENDICES – the following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report

- 7.1 None for this report.