

West Kentish Town Estate Neighbours' Meeting 2 February 2021

Questions and Answers

Appendix A: Frank's timetable

Appendix B: John Diver's presentation

West Kentish Town Estate Redevelopment Programme

The timetable shows a long period of construction. Will there really be 12 years of demolition and building work? The area will be covered in hoarding for years.

This timeframe will include desktop work such as lining up funding and phasing so that residents won't have to move away. The team is looking at meanwhile uses, security, and carefully programmed demolition so as not to degrade the whole area or create an unpleasant atmosphere.

This is a tight timetable if it is to include consultation; people's views might change things.

We are committed to ongoing consultation with our residents and neighbours and so consultation is already programmed into the timetable. The masterplan is not created in isolation, but sits within the wider area.

I have had several residents asking me to ask you when does Camden think the WKTE work will start and/or be complete? There are some upset people saying that if they had known it would take 10 years plus then they would have voted differently in the ballot. As overcrowded families will not benefit from redevelopment as their children would be adults themselves in 10 plus years time. So they would rather a smaller but better home sooner instead. I am not completely sure what the situation is and what information they are referring to and again I am only hearing from the residents I know. They are under the impression that this information hasn't been clear, they were aware that demo/dev "takes time", but never had a timescale. There is the added fear coming out of seeing Bacton Low Rise still a pile of rubble years after the demo. If there are more definitive time scales for total demo versus home improvement then would it make sense that you organise a new ballot?

Thank you for passing on these concerns of residents. We have continued to hold resident meetings online; deliver newsletters and reach out via our Community Liaison Advisors who continue to have a physical presence on the estate and have been carrying out extensive phone consultation during these times of social distancing. If anyone is unclear about where we are in the programme, please give them our details and ask them to get in touch with the team.

The ballot was about the principle of getting new homes, and not about details. Timescales are frustrating for all involved, developments of this scale don't (and

shouldn't) happen quickly. The next stage of resident consultation on layout, design etc should be engaging and exciting for all involved.

There is an offer for adult children in overcrowded households and we will work with each household on a 1-2-1 basis to make sure the best housing arrangement is reached in every case, according to their situation at the point of rehousing. Housing Needs Surveys are being updated constantly and we are working closely with colleagues in allocations on the Local Lettings Plan.

The development model for BLR was not the same as the phasing model proposed for WKT, and adopted on other estates, such as Agar Grove. It's unique challenges are being worked through and we are expecting progress soon.

Can you ensure that the timetable is integrated with those of other schemes in the area so that there are not trucks all over.

The Multidisciplinary Team (the Team consisting of Masterplanner, Planning Consultant, various engineers and the Landscape Architect) will commission a traffic survey, including assessing the impact of the closure of Queen's Crescent, to make sure heavy trucks are not in small streets or near places where children play. Other CIP developments in the area can be viewed on the map on the Community Investment Programme webpages at: <https://cip.camden.gov.uk/>

Will phase 1 begin on the MUGA?

A decision has not been made on phasing; the Multidisciplinary Team will look at the opportunities and constraints across the entire estate, with a view to maximise the number of homes in phase 1.

How many flats in phase 1?

We don't know yet. GLA funding for replacement homes will end in 2023 and we aim to maximise our benefit from this grant scheme. Plans need to be sensible and affordable. We are working hard to ensure that all residents will remain in their current flat until phase 1 is complete.

Delivery

Could you give us some more detail on the business case and whether the scheme is financially viable.

The business case will include an assessment of the cost to redevelop, a phasing and decant strategy. Costs are being looked at in great detail, including for example, land assembly, buybacks, sub-stations. CIP projects are progressed and sustained on the basis that they are viable. Viability appraisals are an exercise the development team is used to carrying out in partnership with the Council's Finance team.

What is the status of the Design Guide? Can this be made available?

Camden Planning updated the Design Guide in January 2021, and can be found here: <https://www.camden.gov.uk/planning-policy-documents> In order to receive funding, the scheme must adhere to the GLA's design guidance, which can be found here:

https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/housing_standards_malp_for_publication_7_april_2016.pdf

On financial viability, have you explored options on funding mix and procurement decisions? Are there any bars on contractor procurement routes, or will it just be a big contractor? How can the council ensure responsible contractors whilst remaining “affordable”?

We are keen to work with responsible contractors who are responsive to our needs, not just in it to make money. GLA grant for this and other projects that involve the replacement of council homes will be available up to the end of March 2023. Consequently, the Council is considering other sources of funding along with Council resources for its development projects. There is an ongoing discussion for all projects in the CIP programme. The procurement of one or more contractors to undertake re-development of the estate will be set out in the business case. We need to ensure quality and value for money through the procurement process.

Original planned layouts get changed because of buildability considerations. 100% private leasehold was built on Vicars Road. Does having ‘flexibility’ mean Camden may sell off chunks of land?

This team's job is to deliver a feasible and viable scheme for the estate and alot can change in 10 years. The Council's priority is to develop and deliver more affordable homes and it will directly deliver, or where relevant, work with other developers to find ways to provide more affordable homes in the borough.

What are, if any, the new ways of thinking in light of Camden post-Covid. The housing waiting list is no doubt expanding by the day, is it now time to re-think the CIP model to move away from high density+market sales to pay for upgrading existing stock and think about a borrowing model to ensure there are more council homes to meet this unprecedented demand? I recently heard about a family in another London borough living in a squat. The housing crisis is becoming a housing catastrophe.

The focus of our work is on providing decent homes for our tenants in a very challenging landscape for social landlords, which includes the continuation of restrictions on borrowing for local councils. All local councils are grappling with the massive financial demands created by the covid pandemic and its fall out on local economies and communities. The ways in which we live, work, shop, meet, relax etc have changed, and will not return to pre-covid conditions. Property markets are reacting in unpredictable ways and the Council is always undertaking internal reviews to identify creative solutions and how the 'CIP model' can best meet the demands of our ever-changing economic condition. Camden Council has taken steps to support our tenants and residents who are struggling to pay rents, Council Tax, accessing food, paying utility bills and providing essentials for themselves and

families. We have introduced a Private Landlord licencing scheme in order to protect private tenants against the worst practices, but the continued attack on social housing and the increased leeway given to sub-standard new private development is a major concern for decent universal housing.

Planning decisions must, by law, be based upon the development plan (system we work within). We don't yet have specific planning policies about C-19. However, our design policies are all about ensuring that dwellings are high quality and spaces that are functional, with good levels of natural light, outlook and access to outside amenity spaces. The Council has an obligation to meet housing targets; we need more homes; and whilst there are no Covid specific policies, planning requires "resilient" homes.

What is the purpose of growth in our area? In planning terms, I think it's densification; you will say homes. The council in the 1960s gave the same reasons to knock down 19th century housing. Learn from mistakes and think about alternatives.

Investment in West Kentish Town has not resulted in the long term solutions we require to ensure that the homes here meet the Decent / Better Homes requirement. We've gone through the process that has involved surveys and life cycle cost assessments of the existing materials and concluded that the buildings have a limited life and will continue to deteriorate beyond our ability to maintain them effectively and efficiently. It has not been an easy decision, but high level development of the estate was the option chosen by the Council and residents based on evidence collected and presented.

Planning

Why does the Updated Masterplan (May 2019) show most of the tallest buildings on the proposed redevelopment at the periphery of the site instead of in the middle? Surely this will reduce light as well as views for residents whose homes are in the middle, as well as for neighbours whose homes are opposite the site?

No layout or designs have been proposed yet. We are currently in the process of employing Architects and Multidisciplinary teams to begin designing the new estate. Any plans previously seen were feasibility studies and not indicative of final designs for the estate.

Can you reassure us that the proposed redevelopment will learn the lessons from the recently constructed new buildings in nearby Gospel Oak, which do not appear to have taken seriously the needs or desires of residents and neighbours for natural, green outdoor space, with a meaningful number of mature trees and communal gardens?

We are not sure which development is being referred to in this question. The "needs and desires of residents" vary greatly. We work very closely with residents, to discuss their preferences for open space / play provision and to respond to area wide aspirations for improving the quality of green space (including its biodiversity).

The provision of open and private amenity space is a planning requirement and therefore we expect to be held to a high standard to reflect the aspirations of residents and the wider community.

How does Camden planning assess the negative impacts of gentrification on a neighbourhood? With 1000s of new high spec flats potentially landing in the area (from all the CIP/commercial developments) this could well affect the culture of queens crescent market. At present, the market caters well for its community - the cafes and shops selling goods at affordable prices. If shop rents increase as landlords see new wealth arrive, then these businesses are at risk of being priced out and replaced by Pret, Costa and Tescos and the like (unaffordable to most people currently living here). This will mean many people in the area, my friends and neighbours, will suffer greatly and I am really worried about this - as this will affect how much food families/everyone can afford to eat - esp worse now post covid.

The focus of our work is on providing decent homes for our tenants in a very challenging financial landscape that has existed for social housing landlords for the past 20 years. The Covid pandemic has highlighted how the disease has disproportionately impacted Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, most of whom are concentrated on estates like West Kentish Town. In addition other groups of people badly affected by the disease are those who have underlying health conditions some of which have been caused by the poor state of the housing in which they live. Camden Council has a legal and social justice obligation to tackle poor housing where it exists, and especially where it is the owner of the asset.

Due to its funding obligations to other services, e.g. education, adult social services and children and families, the Council has to utilise other funding streams to build affordable homes. The sale of new homes and market rent income generated from these other tenures enable the Council to make a contribution to the provision of social rented homes in the borough. The Council is committed to providing as much social housing as it can and most of its developments contain 50% social rent homes. It is more likely that Right to Buy has contributed structurally to the loss of social rented homes in an area like West Kentish Town and that this more than any other physical change creates the sense of gentrification you refer to. It is also important to stress that whilst the Council does all that it can to support the maintenance of local economies, this alone cannot safeguard the continued survival of the diverse mix of commercial and community facilities in the area. That being said we will be looking into the possibility of commercial units made available at a lower price, and support for Queen's Crescent market.

Planning perspective: Policies seek to ensure that developments contribute towards a mixed and balanced community. Changing from a single (generally) tenure type to a mixed development will mean change, but it is about making sure that this change still reflects the diverse nature of the Camden community. For instance, we have planning policies in place which set minimum targets for different housing tenures (i.e. social rent, intermediate rent, private ownership etc), as well as policy targets for a range of unit sizes linked to market demands for each. As a general rule, our number one priority is for social rent. In the last 5 years the Council has shifted from a growth agenda to one based on enhancing and not displacing communities.

Camden has specific policies, eg. the need to make new developments contribute to mixed communities, delivering different dwelling types / sizes. We recognise the need to invest in genuine tangible benefits for local businesses and people. Part of the aim of the emerging community vision is to help ensure that these wider benefits are optimised and realised for the existing community.

Given the closure of Carlton School and reduction of places at Haverstock School, we have to retain and attract families to the area. This part of Camden is in crisis. Developments need to be sustainable and provide an adequate mix.

We are aware of the need to provide a wide variety of sizes of homes, in addition to providing a mix of tenures. To this end, we are pleased to advise that eight family homes have just been sold without trouble at Kiln Place, 6 of these are 3 bed units and the other 2 units were 2 beds. This demonstrated that there is still market appetite for well-designed homes in Camden.

Planning response: As per previous answer, there are planning policies that seek to secure a mix of unit sizes to meet shortfalls in current demand. The Planner will therefore expect a provision of family sized units as part of the scheme.

How many units are proposed on WKT?

The feasibility study stated 850-880 homes could be built on a clear site; we have never sought to go beyond this and planning will regulate the size of any development.

For clarity – the figure of 1,200 given in the presentation refers to all the schemes in the area, not just WKT.

Construction

Given the numbers of residents and neighbours who work from home, whose numbers are likely to increase as our working patterns evolve, how does the council aim to address their concerns about noise, air pollution, and crime during building works estimated to last for over a decade, until 2034?

It's far too early to say what working patterns will be like when we start construction in January 2023. However, we will do everything we can do to limit disruption for both residents and neighbours of the West Kentish Town Estate; this will include lessons learnt from the redevelopment of Maitland Park and work on HS2. Once the redevelopment is complete there will be significantly less air pollution in the local area as new homes will be fitted with sustainable heating which doesn't emit NOx gasses into the environment.

When determining planning applications, we have specific policies that seek to protect residents from an undue loss of amenity, both from completed schemes but also at construction stage. Some temporary disruption is inevitable with a construction project in an inner city location such as this; however, at Camden we have a very robust and well tested methodology for mitigating and alleviating this

impact. These include securing both demolition and construction management plans through a legal agreement rather than through a Planning condition, which is the standard in Camden, but a far more robust approach than most local planning authorities (LPA) take nationally. This means that we can secure much more - like the need to set up community working groups and agree channels for disseminating information about planned works, but critically it is also then a live document that can be updated rather than a one off approval. Unlike any other LPA I know of, we have a dedicated team of officers who work to approve, monitor and enforce these plans.

Sustainability

How do you propose during the redevelopment phase (estimated to last until 2034) to meet your legal obligations with regard to clean air, let alone stated targets to reduce air pollution? The redevelopment will involve the release of massive amounts of CO₂, as a result of the demolition of existing buildings and the construction of new ones. In explaining the measures you propose, please explain whether they will bring Camden back into compliance with the law, in view of the fact that Camden already repeatedly contravenes the law with regard to clean air. Please would the Council explain what measures it proposes to take to ensure that at all times during the period of the proposed redevelopment the Council, and contractors retained by the Council, meet their legal obligations in respect of clean air targets.

We take the question to be an opportunity for the Council to show meaningful leadership on a very grave problem that affects us all and which, in case there is any remaining doubt, voters take very seriously indeed.

Key to our approach at the West Kentish Town Estate are the principles of the Circular Economy. We will aim to Reuse, Renew, or Recycle all elements of the existing structures to minimise the need for new materials. We will share further details about this when we have appointed the Architects for the detailed designs. The issues of air pollution within Camden are largely caused by vehicle emissions and gas boilers; the new development will be car free (aside from disabled and a small number of existing resident spaces) and there will be no gas boilers.

From a planners' perspective: The Council will ensure that the impact of development on air quality is mitigated and ensure that exposure to poor air quality is reduced in the borough. These are tested in multiple ways: impact of works on existing levels; impact of future operation on existing levels; and conditions for future occupants. We require full, detailed AQA (Air Quality Assessment) as a basic validation requirement for any major application. This needs to include detailed modelling of a range of particulates and emission sources, including during the construction stage. We have specifically trained air quality officers who only deal with these assessments.

The redevelopment, all being well, will be with us for at least half a century (as the existing estate has been, give or take a few years). That is a date long after the UK has committed to being carbon neutral. So far, we have found on your website almost nothing specific about how you plan to ensure that the redevelopment contributes to this commitment. For example, how the estate

might harness renewable energy sources or provide charging points for sustainable personal transport.

The new development will be in line with all of Camden's sustainability commitments. The new development will be largely car free (aside from disabled and a small number of existing resident spaces) and there will be no gas boilers. We will share further details about this when we have appointed the Architects for the detailed designs.

The London Plan states that all major developments should be net zero carbon. In Camden we adopted the New London Plan standards some time ago and so ask for much more than what is required nationally to meet building control standards. The planners, when assessing a future scheme, will want to see how the development helps to deliver on these policy requirements and the ambitions of the Climate Action Plan.

I was always a strong supporter of redevelopment for WKTE but like many people, am shifting view due to the fact the climate crisis is real and now. What are the planning dept considering in regards to a move to retrofit, esp. in light of Camden's own climate action plan? See RetroFirst - the AJ campaign to prioritise retrofit over demolition and rebuild "The greenest building is the one that already exists"

We are sorry you feel this way and urge you to work with us in order to deliver a successful scheme for all involved. Please see the above response with regards to providing more efficient homes and reuse, recycle, renew. Realistic options to solve the serious deficiencies in the current buildings are being considered with external consultants, in line with Camden's Climate Action Plan.

There is carbon embedded in the buildings; residents are terrified of climate change and their views have changed since the ballot.

We received a very high mandate from the ballot. What residents want are new homes after being given the options. We will have to justify this in our business case, and reuse materials subject to planning policies.

Surely there will be more funding forthcoming from GLA for a retrofit rather than demo? Due to climate action/policies?

The GLA funding guide can be found here: www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/increasing-housing-supply/affordable-housing-capital-funding-guide

How do you offset the embodied carbon in the existing buildings?

From a planning perspective as part of a whole life carbon assessment, we would expect to see ways for existing embodied carbon to be reused onsite where practical for things like landscaping even where demolition is proposed. Where an offset is required to make the scheme net zero carbon, we would seek to negotiate a contribution towards local projects to boost energy efficiency and sustainability within

the wider neighbourhood through things like retrofitting of other estates to improve thermal efficiency and improvements to heating systems.

Any Other Business

Why start a new project at WKTE before getting Bacton started?

Bacton phase 1 is complete; phase 2 needed some planning alterations before getting on site. This doesn't stop the pressing demands to address housing needs elsewhere.

Do you intend to respond to, and publish on your website your responses to, those questions that have been raised during the course of the meetings themselves, which we have been unable to find on the website?

We shall collate these questions and answers from today and previous meetings with neighbours into a document to be circulated among the group and then posted on our webpages.

END