

BENHILL RESIDENTS' STEERING GROUP (RSG) Meeting notes (No.15)

Venue: Zoom

Date: Monday 26th April 2021 **Time:** 7pm to 9pm

Attendees: Residents from Benhill Estate

Officers: Lauren Fabregas (LBS), Geeta Le Tissier (LBS), Ian Simpson (CF), Palma Black (CF), Rebecca Woodward (CF) Christine Wytiahlowsky (SHP)

Observers: Colin Hawkins (Sutton Federation of TRAs), Bev Brigden (Sutton Leaseholders Association) Cllr David Bartolucci, Cllr Ali Mirhashem

Apologies: Michael Hunte (LBS)

1.	Introductions & Chair	Action
	<p>Ian Simpson welcomed everyone to the meeting. Michele Katana has volunteered to stand as Chair and Ian asked for other nominations. None were received, and Michele was adopted unopposed as the RSG Chair. Other members of the Communities First team also introduced themselves, as well as Geeta and Lauren from the LBS Regeneration Team and Michele Katana and Phoebe Connell, the Vice Chair of the Steering Group.</p>	
2.	Questions and Answers	
	<p>Ian invited questions from residents:</p> <p><i>Q: is this meeting open to both tenants and leaseholders?</i></p> <p>A: Yes, everyone on the estate is welcome. The Chair explained she is a tenant and the Vice Chair is a leaseholder.</p> <p><i>Q: What is a Resident Charter?</i></p> <p>A: A Charter sets out the promises and guarantees that residents have negotiated. It's not compulsory, so if residents do not want a Charter they do not need to produce one.</p> <p><i>Q: How can leaseholders afford to remain on the estate after regeneration?</i></p> <p>A: If there is redevelopment of any homes, the council has a range of options to help homeowners bridge the affordability gap between existing and new homes. A residents charter could be an opportunity to explore other ways to ensure</p>	

	<p>everyone can stay on the estate if there is any redevelopment.</p> <p><i>Q: How do we motivate residents to be involved as a lot of residents are not yet informed, engaged or connected?</i></p> <p>A: Ian suggested a range of opportunities to allow residents to engage in different ways to suit their own interests, confidence and knowledge e.g. word of mouth, tabletop workshops, door knocking. Councillor Bartolucci praised the passion and engagement of residents present. He emphasised this is a positive opportunity for residents to come forward, engage and shape the future of their homes and community.</p> <p><i>Q: Does Sutton Council already have plans for the estate?</i></p> <p>A: Sutton staff and Cllr Bartolucci agreed that this is not the case. Ian explained that until an options appraisal is carried out, neither Sutton Council nor residents will be able to decide the best way forward for the estate.</p> <p><i>Q: Is GLA funding only available for additional homes and not replacement homes, and what is the impact of this on regeneration viability?</i></p> <p>A: Yes, the funding arrangements have changed for the GLA's next funding round. This will impact the financial viability of the redevelopment option, but until an options appraisal has been carried out we won't know the impact.</p> <p><i>Q: How does building on the green spaces impact future generations tackling climate change?</i></p> <p>A: The future options appraisals will need to balance competing considerations. For example, if new homes are built on the estate they will be more energy-efficient than the existing ones.</p> <p><i>Q: Has Communities First worked on any options appraisals where landlords had to back down from a preferred option?</i></p> <p>A: Yes, it has worked with residents on one estate where the ballot rejected redevelopment. In addition, councils often make adjustments to the preferred option to take account of residents' concerns before the ballot takes place.</p>	
3	Housing management	

	<p>The Chair introduced Christine Wytiahlowsky from Sutton Housing Partnership. Christine explained she is new to the role and described her team of housing managers.</p> <p>Residents discussed a range of housing management issues including repair, maintenance, refurbishment and management issues.</p> <p>Ian said that Sutton Council still has a legal obligation to ensure repairs and safety of tenants' homes and the estate both during and after the options appraisal.</p> <p>Councillor Bartolucci noted the RSG was not a suitable forum to table these issues. Until recently, there had been an outstanding TRA which had unfortunately been disbanded. He suggested the TRA should be reconstituted to deal with repairs and maintenance issues, which deal to be addressed regardless of the options appraisal. He would be happy to support residents in setting up and running the TRA but did not think it would be appropriate for him to chair. Ian suggested Sutton and SHP can offer support to help set up and run a TRA, and that Communities First has a lot of experience too.</p> <p>Residents expressed frustration with the length of time the discussions around regeneration have taken to date and the drawn out processes. Some people felt that the bulk of residents are not aware what was happening.</p> <p>The future approach to resident meetings and engagement activities was discussed. The majority of residents at the meeting were in favour of resuming in person activities as soon as possible. Options put forward included small group tabletop meetings, public outdoor meetings on the estate and door knocking.</p> <p>Ian said door-knocking can be carried out in early evenings and Saturdays as well as weekdays, to suit different lifestyles. He thought many people would still be reluctant to be visited at the moment, and Communities First will leave a contact card so residents can contact the independent adviser at a convenient time using their own preferred method.</p> <p>Residents suggested public outdoor meetings in one of the car parks or the shelter of an under-croft (subject to the agreement of nearby households). But acoustics are often a problem at outdoor meetings, especially if people have to be physically distanced and speakers are wearing masks.</p>	
4	Architect Procurement Meeting	

	<p>Phoebe gave feedback from the meeting of the Panel to select the architect for the options appraisal in the summer. She recapped aspects of the discussion about architect selection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interview questions should be well-designed to avoid unhelpful generic responses. ● Should the selection process match that used on other estates? ● Transparency from the Council on their brief, goals etc. <p>She thought using a 30 year lifespan for the options was unsatisfactory. She noted the Council's Local Plan, adopted in 2018, only describes Benhill as a potential regeneration site, and that improvements to transport infrastructure will be needed to support housing intensification in central Sutton.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Keith's request to join the Architect's Selection Panel was accepted.</p>	
5	Date of next meeting	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 24th May 2021 at 7pm online ● Agreed to pick up the agenda items that were not discussed at this meeting. 	

Links to helpful websites:

Mayor of London - Better Homes for Local People, Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration (February 2018)

<https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/better-homes-for-local-people-the-mayor-s-good-practice-guide-to-estate-regeneration.pdf>

GLA Capital Funding Guide, Section 8 - Mayor of London - Funding Conditions that require Resident Ballots for Estate Regeneration Projects (July 2018)

https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla_cfg_section_8_resident_ballots_-_18_july_2018.pdf

GLA Housing Standards - Minor Alterations to the London Plan (March 2016)

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

HEB Report - Estate Regeneration Rehousing and Compensation Scheme (15th October 2018)

<https://modern.gov.sutton.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?Ild=40537&PlanId=0&Opt=3#A139427>

Estate Regeneration Good Practice Guide (December 2016)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/estate-regeneration-good-practice-guide>

Benhill Estate Regeneration Webpage

https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200502/housing_advice_and_options/1781/benhill_estate_regeneration

Sutton Link

https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/trams/sutton-link/user_uploads/sutton-link-consultation-report.pdf

Report It (Sutton Council)

https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200447/report_it or telephone: 020 8770 5000

Report It (Sutton Housing Partnership)

<https://www.suttonhousingpartnership.org.uk/report-it> or telephone: 020 8915 2000 or contact Lara Amota (SHP Housing Manager) on 202 8915 2181

Housing Regeneration Team Email: estateregeneration@sutton.gov.uk

Communities First (CFF) Email: benhill@communitiesfirst.uk.com