

Resident Steering Group Meeting for Alice Shepherd House & Oak House

Monday 27th January 2025

St John's Community Centre and via Zoom

Attendance

Residents:

Cynthia Owusu (CO)
Sharon Holmes (SH) via zoom
Angela Greenaway (AG)

Riverside

Paula Huzjak (PH) via zoom
Isaak Amoah (IA)

HTA Architects

Eleni Stathi (ES)

Affinity Fire (Fire Consultant)

Jeremy Ockenden (JO)

Hill (Joint Venture Partner)

Dan Palman (DP)

ITLA:

Ray Coyle – Open Communities,
Chair (RC) via zoom
Murselin Islam (MI)

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies.

1.1. RC took the Chair and welcomed attendees. Apologies were received from Mike Tyrrell, Jane McGregor, Trish Nyarai Nyamunama, Alia Begum and Nadia Mahmood

2. Minutes of RSG meeting of 28th October 2024

2.1 These were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

3 Matters Arising

3.1 (3.2) Conditions in leases/tenancies to reflect current challenges (short term renting, AIRBNB etc). PH said this is something to discuss with Hill in the future. This matter will stay on the minutes as **ONGOING**.

3.2 (3.3) Riverside to prepare fact sheets on decanting/priority bidding and LBTH banding **COMPLETED**.

3.3 MT pointed out that on Poplar HARCA regen sites, returning tenants have been told they will get like for like even if adult children are rehoused via the councils adult/child rehousing policy - PH said MT will update on the detail of this as she has been told by LBTH that they are not aware of such an arrangement. SH said she thought this was in the Landlord Offer as she remembers it being mentioned by Riverside and that it should be in previous minutes. RC said he has checked for this and there is no reference to it in the Landlord Offer.

ACTION RC to check the minutes.

4. Update from fire consultant (Affinity Fire)

4.1 JO highlighted recent regulatory and non-regulatory changes. Building regulations have not changed much - the biggest changes are around combustibility of external walls. Current guidance is that all residential buildings over 18 metres should have two staircases. This is 'guidance' and not required by legislation.

4.2 This enhances fire service access to buildings. The two staircases mean that, if anything goes wrong with one staircase, the fire service can use the other. This also helps people with restricted mobility including wheelchair users. There is also a requirement for lifts to be usable even if there is a power failure.

4.3 AG asked how this will impact on build cost and service charges. DP said allowances have been made for the costs. Hill's originally looked at two stairways and four lifts but the guidance states two stairs and two lifts. New buildings are more efficient to maintain so overall service charges should reduce slightly. JO said they are now interpreting the guidance and incorporating that into the emerging scheme design.

4.4 SH asked if two staircases/lifts will be enough to deal with an emergency to evacuate. JO said homes are designed so that occupants are safe to remain within their unit except under exceptional circumstances. Also, they're designed so that everybody can escape at any time they choose. It is not a normal situation where everybody would rush to the stairs/lifts at once. Buildings are not designed for this. New systems are in place which allow the fire service to raise alarms either throughout the building or floor by floor depending on the situation.

4.5 JO said whilst buildings are designed to enable people to stay in place in the event of a fire, they are also designed so that people can leave at any time they choose. It is a requirement for all new buildings above 11 metres to be fitted with sprinklers. These are designed to limit fire spread and not specifically to put out fires. Sprinklers have pumps and power supplies which come on if there is a system break down.

4.6 AG asked whether windows have any impact of fire safety. DP said windows are not a part of fire safety, they provide light and ventilation. ES said only ground floor windows have a means of escape. DP said fire engineers are involved in the fire design process to ensure an effective fire system and strategy is in place to safeguard residents. RC said there is also the importance of having effective Housing Management systems in place for regular inspection/monitoring.

4.7 SH asked when was the last time Riverside carried out the fire door inspection at Oak House. She said her own front entrance door is very light, much lighter than her interior doors, front door is much heavier than the block street door.

ACTION - PH will find out and will inform SH.

4.8 RC suggested providing fire related information in the future newsletters. PH agreed adding that consultation events can also provide fire related information.

5 Update on Design Works by HTA

5.1 ES said HTA has been looking closely at the project brief provided by Riverside/Hill. The first planning 'pre-ap' meeting took place with officers from LBTH with some positive feedback. ES shared some historical maps of the estate. The pockets of greenery to the south of Oak House will be built on. ES also covered;

- the community centre
- the current walkways in Alice Shepherd House having a view of Canary Wharf
- river views on the other side
- maisonettes
- deck access and the benefit of resident interaction
- impact of building heights on neighbours
- Trees by the community centre having Tree Protection Orders while trees on Alice Shepherd car park do not.

5.2 SH mentioned bats in the area, and the possibility of surveys on this. DP said there will be preliminary ecological assessments that will pick up all these local habitat issues and that these will be carried out when the time is right to do so. SH also said sparrowsparrets live on the shrubs along Stewart Street and they might be becoming endangered.

5.3 ES said there are some sewers under Stewart Street and Alice Shepherd House as well as a culvert which they cannot build over. There are spaces between Stewart Street and the neighbouring 2/3 storey houses and Alice Shepherd House. Increasing the density of the development and public use of land, the better it is in terms of the planning application. ES mentioned play areas due to lot of family accommodation.

5.4 ES presented an initial layout of the site/buildings. The southern block will have re-provision for all current residents (except those who want to move back to the new block on the current Alice Shepherd House site). The southern block will have low-rise and high-rise with a mix of maisonettes and apartments. Landings will have the park/trees/court yard view. The core landings and the location of maisonettes are shown on the initial plan. There will be a mix of smaller and bigger homes and residents will not be disadvantaged in terms of views based on the size of their homes and all homes will enjoy dual aspect. Residents talked about the importance of how the homes and communal areas are managed and the need to keeping them obstacle free.

5.5 DP talked about the provision of a community centre/space with initial thoughts to place it at the base of the southern block so that it gets delivered in the first phase. SH said residents may not want it within a block due to possible noise nuisance, unsocial operating hours etc. CO said she thinks residents would prefer a community centre rather than shops at the base of the block. DP said the community space would have sound proofing measures. If the community space is part of the 2nd phase, It will take a very long time to provide it. Future consultation events will include the community centre issue. Residents said any consultation events should include food, children's entertainment and other activities to attract more residents. SH raised concerns about the possible impact of Airbnb. DP said this will be managed through leases.

5.6 Residents asked about parking spaces. DP said they are looking into a few strategies around car parking as well as cycle parking, refuse collection, bin location and utility plant to support energy strategies. These all create challenges re car parking. AG mentioned car theft in the area, and would prefer underground secure parking. DP said all options will be looked at and they are carrying out a parking survey to look at the usage of parking spaces over a period of time in and around the site.

5.7 ES showed options of building lay outs. The building replacing the current Alice Shepherd House site will have some dual aspect homes on both wings and some single aspect in the middle which is liked by the planners. AG and CO said they intend to return to this building. PH said residents are allowed to have 2 moves if they want. MI said the allocation process of the landlord is important to ensure residents get their preferred location and the dual aspect if that is what they wish.

5.8 ES shared a table of 51 colour coded commitments from the Landlord Offer. The white columns are the ones that have not been looked at yet and the ones in yellow are the ones that will be done anyway. The ones in green are the ones that can be ticked off and the ones in orange are the ones that will be reached eventually. This table is updated regularly as progress is made. AG asked for clarity on the options re landings. DP said there will be options for residents.

6 Update from Riverside

6.1 PH said she sent the RSG an update on the detail of the last event held in December 2024. Some of the feedback included residents not wanting any shop in the development but wanted spaces designated for children of various age groups as well as parking for those who currently have parking. A general discussion took place about moving into the new homes and decant status in Alice Shepherd House. An update newsletter will be produced with the relevant information on the various questions by the RSG.

6.2 PH said the regeneration team is working hard to complete the Housing Needs Assessments and IA has met with all but 11 residents. This information informs the design process, ensuring every household is catered for.

6.3 SH asked how many residents have been moved out of Oak House. PH said there are 7 residents remaining. There are two guardians and 3 leaseholders in the block. CO asked if the commitments in the Landlord Offer still stood. PH confirmed this.

6.4 AG asked if there are 'non-adult- children who may be 'adult-children' at the time of decant, would they qualify for the 'adult children' initiative. PH said any qualifying 'adult-children' at the time of decant can register for the 'adult children' initiative – but only once the block has decant status (once planning permission has been secured – which should be around the end of this year. Their aim is to submit the planning application this summer however LBTH might ask for more information which could push the timeframe back a bit.

6.5 AG asked could the current project timeline be on show at the drop-in flat and also suggested that the table of 51 commitments from the Landlord Offer as well as some outline design of the project. This might encourage more residents to get involved. DP said they will be able to produce something when they have more information and have worked through the design. It may be more realistic once the next consultation event is completed.

ACTION - PH will look into how to provide and display this information.

Hill is working on a project website which will give updates on a regular basis. PH said they are cautious not to put out incomplete designs as this could confuse residents. They are keen to provide this once a clearer picture of the design emerges.

6.6 CO, AG and SH asked for clarity on what a tenant is entitled to if the family takes advantage of London Borough of Tower Hamlets' 'adult-child' initiative. SH said residents were told that if a resident lives in a 3-bedroom with two adult children and if the adult children move out, the remaining resident would be entitled to a 2 bed rather than a 1 bed and that this must have been minuted in the past. PH said that Riverside, and all other housing provider's in the borough, have no choice on this as they have to follow the Tower Hamlets' policy.

ACTION - PH said she will put something in writing re what the Council's policy is if a family wants to benefit from their 'adult-child' initiative.

7 AOB with Riverside

7.1 SH asked for help with bidding as she is not having much luck. She is concerned that she will find herself in the position of having to accept a 'direct offer' of a property that might not be suitable. She has spent money buying a new ~~dishwasher~~ washing machine, but is not sure if it will fit in the new property. She is open to moving out of London but she feels there is not enough support from Riverside. PH said Riverside sign residents up to the council's 'Home Seekers' website for bidding for properties. Riverside will have a clearance date after securing planning permission. As this date gets nearer, residents will have increased priority on the bidding system. PH said they look at their internal property list every week - inside and outside London - as well as contacting Seaside and Country Homes and that Oak House residents are contacted on a weekly basis. SH said she has not heard from IA for months. PH said she SH and PH were dealing with her case and that they prefer consistency in terms of communication.

8 AOB without Riverside

None

9 Date of next meeting – 24th February 2025