

Appendix 1 – Consultation Report

The proposed demolition of the Resource Centre on the Oaktrees site

Consultation was undertaken with the tenants who reside in the bungalows on the Oaktrees site about ‘making good’ proposals should the demolition of the main building be approved. All 19 tenancies were invited to provide their views, of which 16 responded. The consultation was undertaken via visits in tenants’ own homes. Two options for the future use of the land were presented for consideration. These are set out below:

Option 1 - Working-garden area – to create a communal garden area to be used and maintained by tenants for recreational purposes to cultivate vegetables and plants as well as some seating. This would include fencing around the area to provide privacy for tenants and raised beds, given that the bungalows remain restricted to older age tenants.

Option 2 - Garden with seating and two additional car parking spaces – to create a communal garden to simply provide additional garden space for tenants, including a social outside space for tenants in the bungalows. This would include fencing around the area to provide a private communal garden. It would also include two additional car parking spaces for residents and or visitors, in addition to the existing turning space.

In summary, both options would be to ‘make good’ the land and create additional outside space, for the exclusive use by tenants of the bungalows, in addition to their personal garden space. Both proposals are relatively low cost in terms of maintenance, given the costs of ongoing upkeep and maintenance need to be considered and be realistic, both for self-funders and to the public purse for those who are reliant on welfare benefits for their housing costs (as communal area maintenance forms part of tenants’ service charge).

Outcome

15 tenancies preferred option 2. The first option was not favoured due to concerns that it would not get used as a ‘working garden’ and would then become unkempt as it would be dependent upon tenants being interested in and/or able to undertake gardening activities. Provision of seating was supported, with preference for bench-style, with finishing to coordinate with the proposed fencing (6ft) which would provide full fencing to the new garden area.

One tenancy favoured option 1, however did not voice strong views and following further discussion with family was accepting of option 2.

Three tenants did not respond to calls or visits in relation to the consultation, however all tenants and relatives continue to be engaged through regular updates.

Additional questions/requests were also made. Responses are provided below each point, and feedback will be provided to tenants as part of ongoing communication.

Q – Could additional fencing around the perimeter of the full scheme be provided, including replacement of damaged fencing on Stag Lane due to issues being experienced with antisocial behaviour (by youths from the local area)?

A - This is in addition to works outside of the proposed demolition and associated budget. However, we will consider this request although this may not be possible as it is subject to funding being available and we need to balance requests for funding for fencing with other priorities so we cannot guarantee this. We will update tenants on the outcome of the request for funding for the additional fencing as soon as we can.

Q – Could fob access be provided to the new gates (which will form part of the boundary for the new communal garden) to avoid vandalism?

A – We will fit locks with a key code to the new gates

Q – Could we have a barrier/gated access for the full scheme?

A - this is not considered to be financially viable and would also create access problems for other parties such as repair staff, emergency services etc. We also need to be mindful that this would also mean increases in service charges, for current and future tenants.

Q – Will the current CCTV be retained to continue to provide coverage for the bungalows when the main building is demolished?

A - This may not be feasible as there won't be a mains landlord supply for the CCTV when the building is demolished. However, we will look into this in detail and update tenants once we have looked at the feasibility. If it is possible, then we will consult tenants about any implications for the CCTV service charge.

Q – Could there be additional lighting provided throughout the grounds?

A – We will also look into the possibility of an additional street lighting column as we appreciate that the street lighting is limited (with one column at the top and one at the bottom). Also, each bungalow has an external front light which runs from the main supply as well as lights to the rear. The power for the external lighting (street and bungalows) is currently via the supply from the main building so we will need to change the supply arrangements and ensure that all current lighting is maintained and not reduced.

Q - Could a garden hose and water supply be provided so that tenants who are able could tend to the gardens when required as gardening contractors only cut the grass?

A - This is not something we are able to provide for communal gardens. However, we will review the maintenance arrangements for the new garden with our maintenance contractor, together with our estate services team.

Q - What will happen with the rainwater harvesting system which operates flushing of WCs in the bungalows as this operates from the resource centre? And will there be any additional costs to tenants when the setup is altered?

A – We will need to look into this and set up alternative arrangements as the system will be disconnected from the main building whilst ensuring that there isn't any disruption to the operation of WCs flushing. We will consult tenants if there are any changes to the service charge.

Q – What will happen about the TV aerial as its currently located on the resource centre?

A - We will provide a TV aerial to each bungalow as part of the programme of works.

Q – Can the fencing be replaced around the gas station?

A – This is not the responsibility of Together Housing. However, we will make enquires to find out if this could be done by the Gas company.

Q - Will there be a security presence on the site out of hours, for the duration of the demolition works? (given concerns that antisocial behaviour by local youths who are congregating on the pitches behind Stag Willow Close and are believed to be vandalising this empty site then running through the grounds of Stag Willow Close could escalate when it becomes evident that the main building is empty when demolition preparation commences).

A - Yes this will be put into place, and we will inform tenants of all the arrangements as part of the communications and updates about the demolition programme, if the Council approves for the building to be demolished.