

Wokingham Borough Council

Gorse Ride Project Residents Steering Group – Extra Special Homeowners Meeting

Wednesday 5th March – 7:30pm to 9:30pm
St Mary's and St John's Parish Centre
Meeting Notes

Residents / Stakeholder Attendees:

Steve Bowers	(SB)	Meeting Chair / Dart Close Resident / Tenant / Parish Councillor
Annette Lenton	(AL)	Billing Ave Resident / Tenant
Zaheer Sheik	(ZS)	Billing Avenue Resident / Homeowner
S Boutle	(SBo)	Billing Ave Resident / Homeowner
Julia Clark	(JC)	Dart Close Resident / Homeowner
Robert Baldwin	(RB)	Dart Close Resident / Homeowner
Christopher Rotherham	(CR)	Dart Close Resident / Homeowner
Doug Bates	(DB)	Dart Close Resident / Homeowner
B Dodgon	(BD)	Dart Close Resident / Homeowner
Nicola Bell	(NB)	Dart Close Resident / Homeowner
L Singh	(LSi)	Dart Close Resident / Homeowner
Gosia Bednarczyk	(GB)	Dart Close Resident / Homeowner
Romek Bednarczyk	(RBe)	Dart Close Resident / Homeowner
David Bolam	(DBo)	Firs Close Resident / Homeowner
Lorraine Bolam	(LB)	Firs Close Resident / Homeowner
M Czerniawski	(MC)	Firs Close Resident / Homeowner
Neena Corran	(NC)	Firs Close Resident / Homeowner
Hilda Hemmings	(HH)	Firs Close Resident / Homeowner
Steve Hemmings	(SH)	Firs Close Resident / Homeowner
Kairen Laing	(KL)	Firs Close Resident / Tenant
Peter Holt	(PH)	Firs Close Resident / Tenant
Angela Woods	(AW)	Gorse Ride South Resident / Tenant
Mike Eaton	(ME)	Gorse Ride South Resident / Homeowner
M Head	(MH)	Gorse Ride South Resident / Homeowner
Mike Jones	(MJ)	Orbit Close Resident / Homeowner
J Launchbury	(JL)	Orbit Close Resident / Homeowner
F Townsend	(FT)	Orbit Close Resident / Homeowner
Z Parafoot	(ZP)	Orbit Close Resident / Homeowner
L Campbell	(LC)	Orbit Close Resident / Homeowner
Daniel Atkins	(DA)	Orbit Close Resident / Homeowner
Natalie Atkins	(NA)	Orbit Close Resident / Homeowner
Matt Sales	(MS)	Whittle Close Resident / Homeowner
Chris Bulpitt	(CB)	Whittle Close Resident / Homeowner
Roland Cundy	(RC)	Finchampstead Parish Councillor
Barbara Wojna	(BW)	Nine Mile Ride School Governor
Andy Croy	(AC)	Ex-Gorse Ride estate resident

WBC / WBC representative Attendees / WHL

Richard Dolinski	(RD)	WBC Executive Member
Simon Weeks	(SW)	WBC Finchampstead South Ward Councillor
Louise Strongitharm	(LS)	Category Manager, Economic Prosperity and Place / Senior Manager for the Gorse Ride Project
Zareena Ahmed-Shere	(ZAS)	Gorse Ride Project Manager
Jennie Grieve	(JGr)	Community Development Worker
Charlotte Haitham Taylor	(CHT)	Leader of the Council

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
1	Welcome and Introductions	
1.1	SB welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
1.2	Apologies from Claire McEnoy (Vice Chair)	
1.3	Meeting attendees briefly introduced themselves as recorded above.	
1.4	It was pointed out that the Council has not made any financial decision yet on the future on the wider Gorse Ride Estate. The Council's Executive will do this on 16 th May 2018.	
2	Brief Regeneration Progress Update	
	ZAS provided a brief update since last meeting on 7 th February 2018	
2.1	<u>Phase 1 – Arnett Avenue Site</u> A pre-planning application draft drawing was presented to steering group in December 2017. However in light of recent pre application planning advice, the scheme has been re-designed. Revised drawings will be presented to the regular Steering Group on 28th March for consultation before being developed into a Planning Application and formally submitted.	
2.2	<u>Phase 2 + (wider estate) Masterplan Development:</u> The Masterplan was presented at last meeting on 7th February 2018. These proposals will be presented to the Executive for decision on 16th May	
3	Homeowner Proposed Options	
3.1	Suggested options were drawn up by the Council to reflect the fact that many people have lived on the estate for a long time. From the community feedback collected since 2015, the Council is aware that both homeowners and tenants would like to stay on the estate and hopes that one of the 3 options will suit most homeowners.	
3.2	LS advised that as a local authority, the Council has a duty to pay the market value for the existing homes and to sell assets (i.e. new homes on the re-built estate) at market value. The market value is determined by qualified surveyors / valuers. The Council will appoint its own surveyor to estimate the market value and homeowners are advised to obtain an independent valuation too.	
3.3	She cautioned that there will be a difference in market value of current homes and the market value of the new homes built on the re-developed estate. There is a difference in value as the existing homes are of pre-fabricated construction and in poor condition, whilst the new homes will be built to modern standards, they will have a larger internal floorspace as the national space standards have increased.	
3.4	MJ observed that the current valuations are low. RD encouraged people to obtain independent valuations – anyone can do this to get an estimation of what a prospective purchaser is prepared to pay. This figure will be a negotiation point for getting an agreed purchase price.	
3.5	LSi commented that if you have no option but to sell it back to the council, your options are limited and in theory, the Council could force down the value of the	

homes. SW stated that his understanding is the valuation will be based on the property as it currently stands and the future demolition will have no bearing on value so homeowners will not be disadvantaged.

- 3.6** MJ added that the Arnett Ave homes seems to be rising in value at a faster rate than Gorse Ride homes.
- 3.7** LS stated that statutory payments, such as 10% home-loss payment and disturbance payments (which cover legal fees, mortgage penalties, removal costs, redirection of mail), may also be claimed. Receipts must be provide to claim reasonable expenses.
- 3.8** Option 1 – shared equity and shared ownership
LS briefly explained that this is where the homeowner would be able to swap the value of their existing home and their statutory home loss payment into a newly built home with the same number of bedrooms or fewer on the estate. They would have an equivalent value share in the new home and be able to live in it without making any additional lump sum payment. The remaining share in the property would be retained by the Council. The homeowner would not have to pay any rent or interest on the part they did not own. Upon resale of the new property in the future, the resident would keep their share of the proceeds and the council would keep its share.
- 3.9** NB pointed out that while the tenants will be able to use their home loss payment for new furnishings, homeowners will be disadvantaged as they will need to put all of these funds towards the new home. SW suggested that homeowners could chose to keep a proportion of the home-loss payment, but this would mean that they would own a smaller proportion of the house. LS emphasised that these were suggested options that the Council is consulting on. The Council is keen to hear people's views on these proposals and any alternative approaches.
- 3.10** RD explained that homeowners will get the 10% statutory home loss and disturbance allowance whether they were moving to a new home within the rebuilt estate or moving elsewhere.
- 3.11** In response to a question about how this option would work if someone had just recently started a mortgage, LS answered that it was assumed that in most cases the existing mortgage would be transferred to the new home (where portable).
- 3.12** MS asked about the length of warranty on the new homes. LS replied that the builders warranty is usually 10 years.
- 3.13** Permission would need to be obtained to make structural changes (e.g. adding a conservatory). If this has been built by the homeowner, then this is the homeowner's improvement and the Council will not benefit from the extra value created.
- 3.14** LSi asked if WBC has rolled this out elsewhere. LS replied that in a previous regeneration scheme, there were only 5 homeowners and they all sold to the council and no-one moved back.
- 3.15** LSi commented on the vagueness of the options. LS, SW and CHT responded that these are not firm options and the Council will develop them taking on board resident comments. RD added that it would not be right for the Council to present an inflexible watertight option. LSi continued that homeowners have been living with uncertainty for a long time and asked for more detail on what will happen on 16th May. SW answered that until we know we have funds we cannot spend any money. LSi responded that the Council has spent time and money on surveys and

plans. SW answered that he hoped that at the end of the meeting, we will have more of an idea of how people would like things to develop. CHT stressed that this is a starting point and we have to take it through a council process. She acknowledged that this may seem long winded and bureaucratic, but the Council cannot confirm anything until after the 16th May Executive.

3.16 Option 2 – outright purchase

LS explained that this was where the homeowner would be able to swap the value of their existing home together with their home loss payment into a newly built home and then make an extra lump sum payment, so that they own the new home outright (100%). It may be an option for anyone wishing to downsize.

3.17 Option 3 - Sell to the Council

This would be an option if the homeowner does not wish to live in a home on the newly built estate. They can sell their home to the council for its market value (plus the statutory home loss payment) and make their own new housing arrangements. This is the only option for non-resident homeowners.

3.18 LS informed everyone that after 16th May, the Council will have individual discussions with homeowners. The Council knows there are individual cases where none of these options may fit, so we need to understand and try to provide a bespoke solution. SW added that CPO would be a final resort if we could not reach an agreement.

3.19 Several homeowners in the meeting asserted that they had been promised a like for like replacement home provided without any extra charges. LS answered that she is not aware of the Council making any such commitment given that no decisions had been made. She is aware of comments that it may be cheaper to build a replacement home. In response to comments voiced that the Council is making money from homeowners, LS answered that this was not correct. The value of the new homes will be more valuable and the proposed options reflect this.

3.20 Someone asked for clarity on the tenure for phase 1. LS informed the Group that this is still open. No decision has been made yet, as the Council does not know whether tenants or homeowners want to move there.

4 Homeowners' Questions and Answers

4.1 MJ was thanked for providing the 22 questions from homeowners to the Council ahead of the meeting.

4.2 ***Q1: What are the options if I cannot transfer my current mortgage and because of my circumstances I am unable to obtain a new mortgage?***

A1: Following the Executive decision, the Council will meet you individually to explore alternative options to make it possible for you to stay on the estate. Possible options could include traditional shared ownership, rented housing or even potentially the Council looking to offer mortgages (if there was a wider demand for this).

4.2.1 Audience questions / comments:

SW observed that the Council is aware that it is difficult to get a mortgage on some of the existing properties. The new homes will not have that problem.

4.3 ***Q2: Will you take into full account all monies spent on structural improvements and adjust your purchase price accordingly and also offer an equivalent alternative property?***

A2: *The Council is required to pay you the open market value of your current home (which will take into account the current condition of the property and improvements). The valuation of your current home will be comparable with the price of similar properties recently sold within the local area. The Council has included 3-bedroom houses within the indicative masterplan reflecting the majority of the owned-occupied homes on the estate. We cannot guarantee they will have exactly the same features as your current property. They are likely to be larger than your current 3-bedroom homes due to latest space standards for new homes.*

4.3.1 Audience questions / comments:

MJ asked if he should stop redecorating and if so, will this undervalue his home? RD said that the valuation will look beyond the cosmetic decoration and focus more on structure.

4.3.2 A resident commented that they had delayed improvements to their home for the last 3 years, because of the uncertainty. This may have added value to their existing home. SW responded that as no changes were made, the money has been saved. The house will be valued in its current condition without taking the potential regeneration into account. RD added that it was cost neutral if you did not spend the money and still have it in your pocket.

4.4 ***Q3: Why are you taking the full home loss payment from us and leave us liable for the costs of curtains, kitchen appliances, bathroom accessories and flooring or will there be compensation for non-transferable accessories?***

A3: It is too early to confirm at this point what the exact specification of the new homes will include. If this issue is of concern to homeowners, it is likely to be possible to specify certain fixtures and fittings (for example, flooring, built-in appliances, etc.). You will also be able to claim "reasonable costs" that have been incurred because you have had to move under the "disturbance allowance". This would include costs to refit existing curtains or provide replacement curtains / blinds, etc. in your new home.

4.4.1 Audience questions / comments:

Would additions increase the price? Yes.

4.4.2 RD commented that there will be some flexibility. With any new home, the developers do give the option to upgrade on standard specifications. DB commented that Crest Nicholson did not offer any flexibility on their standard specifications. CHT advised that the Council would be commissioning the build contract, so we can be more bespoke. If you feel strongly that you want an upgraded kitchen or bathroom, we can specify it when we ask contractors to put in their tenders. SB added that it is important to feed this back in your comments at individual meetings so it can happen.

4.4.3 Are we able to choose a house or flat, or will we be allocated one? Is there a certain area for private residents? SB commented that he had a lot of nice neighbours who are homeowners and the mix is good. LS advised that the individual meetings would happen after the Executive decision. There will be some choice of plot / home type generally, but we will need to work out how homes are prioritised where there are lots of people wanting the same property. The Council will therefore need to come up with a bespoke local lettings plan for this estate.

4.4.4 A resident stressed how the uncertainty was taking its toll on residents and that they need to know that they are all still going to have a home. RD agreed that this was a valid point and that is why the Council is eager for a decision to be made, so we can move ahead. LS said that through the Masterplan we have planned a home for every single homeowner although not all will want to stay.

- 4.4.5 RD encouraged people to visit the community house to view the draft plans.
- 4.4.6 NB commented that she falls into the first phase and occupies a 3 bedroom / 6 person home and the largest replacement home planned within that phase is a 3 bedroom / 5 person home. LS replied that the phasing was not confirmed yet. As far as possible, the Council only want to move people once. However, this will not always be possible and the Council may need to pay moving costs twice if people are waiting for a suitable home in a later phase.
- 4.4.7 Will the temporary accommodation be in this area or will we have to move out? LS said that the Council does not have that level of detail yet. SW stated that there are 1500 homes being built at Hogwood and it may be possible to use some of them in the short term. LS added that as people move off the estate, the Council will use the voids on the estate to try to meet everyone's needs.
- 4.4.8 LSi asked for confirmation on the procedure for claiming "reasonable costs" and if residents will have to wait 60 days before being reimbursed. RD responded that this is something the Council will need to think about as it is a valid point.
- 4.4.9 If homeowners need legal advice, will the Council be willing to fund it? LSi commented that the Council would not be paying before the 16th May. LS confirmed this. It would be useful to get some collective advice. It is good practice to work up that level of detail together.
- 4.4.11 LS stated that the Council will draft a legal agreement and direct you to places where you can obtain collective legal advice.
- 4.4.12 NB acknowledged that in theory, nothing can be done until 16th May, but after that point the homeowners will be frantically seeking advice. If we had a draft now, we could go to the solicitors with the information. RD assured everyone that the bulldozers would not appear on Gorse Ride on 17th May – it will take a long time. NB commented that if we had the correct advice then we would know whether we were staying or going. NB continued that if she decided to go then she did not want to wait until 2020. CHT advised that more information will be available to provide to solicitors after the 16th May.
- 4.4.13 Would you fund solicitors collectively or individually? LS replied that the Council would fund both a collective solicitor to draw up a draft agreement and then individual conveyancers acting on behalf of individual homeowners. If each of the homeowners went to different solicitors, they would probably all give different advice.
- 4.4.14 A resident asked about the impact on homeowners outside the redevelopment who were still impacted by the development. RD advised getting a valuation as it may increase your property price. CHT added that if you feel there is an impact on your home you may need to feed this into the planning application process.
- 4.5 Q4: ***Will the shared equity option be interest free until the property is sold?***
Q4: Yes
- 4.6 Q5: ***Will the shared equity option be interest free if the property is inherited by our families?***
A5: *You may be able to pass on your new property on the same equity terms to your spouse or children if they have lived at the property for more than 12 months prior to the death of the freeholder / leaseholder.*

- 4.6.1** Audience questions / comments:
If you die before you pass over inheritance or mid transfer, can we pass it on?
LS / CHT responded that if this is stated in the will, then most likely “yes,” but will need to check on the legal aspects.
- 4.7** ***Q6: Will the shared equity option continue to be free of interest if the property is subsequently let?***
A6: No, you are unlikely to be able to let the property if an equity is retained by the Council or housing provider.
- 4.7.1** Audience questions / comments:
So if in 5 or 10 years and we decide to relocate, the only way to do this is to sell our properties? LS confirmed this. This scheme will not apply to non-residential homeowners. RD clarified that if you owned 100% equity then you could let but not if the Council still had a proportion of the equity.
- 4.8** ***Q7: Why are you undervaluing our homes with your estimate of value?***
A7: The Council has not given any estimate of the value of the homes and this will vary depending on the condition of each home and any improvements made. The Council will not be undervaluing homes and is legally required to pay you the prevailing market value of your home.
- 4.8.1** Audience questions / comments:
RD asked if anyone had asked an estate agent for a value as this is a good starting point? One person replied that they have had 3 valuations.
- 4.8.2** CHT advised that the Council had experience of buying properties around the Borough. We have looked at independent valuations versus council valuations. Sometimes the valuations match and sometimes they do not and that is when negotiations are done to agree a price.
- 4.8.3** AC commented that national trends indicate that prices are likely to increase in future. As the last phase won't start for another 6 years, will there be any benchmarking now so people will know about increase in equity? LS responded that estimates will be provided but firm prices will have to be agreed (based on valuations) nearer the time.
- 4.8.4** MJ gave some price comparisons between Arnett Avenue and Firs Close since the 2015 demolition order, highlighting that while sold prices in Arnett Avenue have gone up they have plateaued on Gorse Ride.
- 4.8.5** RC commented that values are likely to increase over a 5-7 year period, but so will building costs. LS observed that no one knows what impact Brexit will have but all we can do is go with the market. RC noted that valuations will change as we cannot fix it at this point. AC expressed concern is that it will be unfair as it will not be done in a systematic way. LS stated that every effort will be made to ensure the process is fair and consistent for all. SW added that the valuation of a property will be on the basis that nothing will change in Gorse Ride and advised everyone to make estate agents aware of this. The Council's valuation is likely to be more robust than an estate agent.
- 4.9** ***Q8: If my property has a conservatory will the new house also have a conservatory?***
A8: This is unlikely
- 4.9.1** Audience questions / comments:
LSi commented that you would need a garden. LS replied that all houses will have

11m long gardens. LSi responded that it was not much.

- 4.9.2** Why are you saying it is unlikely when we were told like for like years ago?
LS commented that “Like for Like” is open to interpretation. We have planned enough homes to meet everyone’s needs assuming they want to stay. Like for like will not be the same. We are unable to re-instate your exact house in a project of this size. Some things will be better and some things may not, but the Council is planning homes of an equivalent number of bedrooms.
- 4.9.3** SW added that the bottom line is that if you have a conservatory, your existing house will be valued as having a conservatory and therefore higher than an identical house without a conservatory. LS said that homeowners could be given some flexibility to use the home loss payment to improve their new homes.
- 4.10** ***Q9: As ‘paying’ customers will we have a choice of which house we can have on the estate (dependant on a like for like basis)?***
A9: You can apply to exchange your existing home with a new property on the estate with the same number of bedrooms as you currently have (or fewer if you prefer).
- 4.10.1** Audience questions / comments:
LS informed the Group that it was too early to say what level of choice there will be. A Local Lettings Plan may need to be developed setting out how the new build properties will be allocated to homeowners and tenants.
- 4.10.2** AC commented that if the detailed plans will not be developed until after 16th May, the planners will not know what they need to be considering. LS answered that the architects have had ongoing dialogue with the planners and have received positive feedback on the indicative masterplan. However, the Council or WHL will need to undertake another tender exercise after the May 16th Executive decision to bring architects on board to do the next stage of design.
- 4.10.3** AL asked if another survey will be done and if there will there be enough 2 beds properties if downsizers are offered an extra bedroom. LS answered that the homes types within the indicative masterplan were based on household needs, but the additional 65 homes were mostly 2 beds. AL continued that the Council does not know what is needed. LS responded that this is a long term project and over time people’s circumstances change and tenants will change.
- 4.11** ***Q10: Will we have control over fit out and internal decorations?***
A10: It is too early to say, but it is likely that homeowners will be given some choices around fixtures, fittings and decoration.
- 4.11.1** Audience questions / comments:
SW wanted to see this package developed in more detail and suggested a “self finish” option whereby homeowners could install their own fixtures and fittings.
- 4.11.2** LSi commented that he had seen the poor quality of Council new homes and the fixtures and fittings used. Many people have quality / high spec units and don’t want MFI.
- 4.11.3** SW asked the audience if anyone had been on the visit to Phoenix Avenue. MJ replied that he did go.
- 4.11.4** RD spoke about a self-build scheme he had visited in Bristol where residents bought a building shell and they had to self-finish the home, which reduced cost. This was referred to as “sweat equity”. The Council could be creative and look at

this as a possible option.

4.11.5 LSi commented that it sounds good but there will be physical work / time / money involved. Although it will reduce the price, people who work will not have time to do their own fitting out. RD said that it could be one more choice. If you have a property and want to improve it, you have a choice whether you do that yourself or get someone else to do it. LSi re-iterated that people will be under a great deal of stress and anxiety.

4.11.6 LS highlighted that there are some positive things coming out of this meeting and the Council is listening. We have not come to you with fixed options. JGr said that she did understand that people were upset and want clarity. However, the Council need details of what people are looking for as this is additional information that would be fed back to the Executive for an informed decision.

4.11.7 If you did opt for shared option that was not fitted out, would permission be needed to add different things in? Would the valuation increase? LS suggested that a bronze, silver, gold finish options could be offered if people were interested. RD added that this will be firmed up when it comes to individual discussions.

4.11.8 CHT advised that at this early stage the Council is listening to what you want, so do not want to fix anything so it cannot be changed. If people want to install their own bathrooms, then the Council will look at the suggestion. But if that's the last thing that people want to do, we'll listen to that too. We will miss things without these conversations. It is important to understand your perspective.

4.12 ***Q11: What is the build cost of the new houses?***

A11: It is very early days and the build cost will vary between each phase due to inflation. We estimate that the total build cost (including infrastructure works, planning fees, project management, etc.) will be around £3,000 - £3,200 per square metre (roughly £280,000 for a smaller 3 bedroom 5 person house).

4.12.1 Audience questions / comments:

In response to a question about how the costs were derived, LS answered that these were provided by AECOM, the specialist consultants that ACG commissioned to support the masterplanning work.

4.12.2 MJ commented that the figures are twice what was quoted last year. AL recalled that the previous figure related to 2015.

4.12.3 Did they cost up a shell or was it a range of different fit out styles? LS responded that these indicative costs took into account everything that goes with the house that need to be provided, which includes new estate roads, utilities, infrastructure and drainage. It's not just about providing the house but you need to be able to access it and have facilities within it.

4.12.4 Someone commented that if we did it on our own, there would already be infrastructure so we would not have to pay for the services. SW answered that the house value on its own is unlikely to be £280,000.

4.12.5 How much is the value of building the house without the infrastructure? LS responded that the Council cannot share this information as it could undermine a future procurement exercise.

4.12.6 What is the reason for the existing infrastructure is changing? Was a decision made a long time ago? LS answered that Option A did utilise the original infrastructure but very few people chose that option.

- 4.12.7 When does the plan become final? LS replied that the Masterplan will need to be taken to the next planning stages. The Council/WHL need to go out to tender to appoint an architect for this work, so potentially another 6 months.
- 4.12.8 RD recalled that at the last meeting here there was a call for more bungalows, and there was a discussion about having to give something up, ie losing garages to make way for this. At some point we will need to freeze the design and go into the detail of the homes and their appearance.
- 4.13 **Q12: Do we need to obtain permission to modify the building in any way?**
A12: Yes, you are likely to need to request permission before making any structural improvements to the home, along with any relevant planning/building control approvals.
- 4.14 **Q13: Does Option 1 only apply to property within the Gorse Ride Redevelopment?**
A13: Yes, at the moment. However, if there was interest in a wider shared equity scheme, the Council may consider this.
- 4.14.1 Audience questions / comments:
A number of homeowners agreed that it was a good idea to extend the scheme to the second hand market. SB asked LS to explore this further.
- 4.15 **Q14: Would WBC be prepared to supply affordable land for self-build options?**
A14: The Council does hold a Self-Build register and you can register your interest in building or commissioning your own home by completing a form on the Council's website. The Council is currently exploring a site in its ownership for an affordable self-build project. It is unlikely that the Council would offer self-build plots on the estate itself.
- 4.15.1 Audience questions / comments:
RD said that he has visited a self-build estate in Bristol where all but one house was finished. It blighted the street scene and the neighbours are unhappy.
- 4.15.2 MJ commented that he did not agree because it could be designed into the plan as an option. He had been on the self-build register for many years but had not heard anything.
- 4.16 **Q15: We do not under any circumstances want to go into shared ownership. We own our property "freehold" and do not want this to change and don't see why we should be worse off with only being offered shared ownership in order for us to remain in the area. We have no future plans to move and are being made to lose our home. Why oh why should we lose our beautiful home and then be made to go into shared ownership to be no better and perhaps worse off?**
A15: Under the "Shared Equity" Option 1, you would still remain a "freeholder" of your new home. You would be named as the title absolute in the land registry documents. The Council or housing provider would take a second legal charge following the mortgage lender (if applicable). You can express a preference for "shared equity" over "shared ownership" in your consultation response. You should not be any worse off as a result of the regeneration and will benefit from a brand new, modern, thermally efficient home.
- 4.16.1 Audience questions / comments:
Whose name will go on the deeds as the owner? SW replied that your name as owner will appear on the deeds under shared equity.

LS/ZAS

4.17 Q16: When you've previously confirmed that all current tenancy agreements, including right to buy, would carry over so therefore why should we owners, who are being forced to sell, have to pay through the nose for the new houses when a tenant will get the same house for the same rent?

A16: The Council is legally required to pay you market value for your home and likewise to dispose of assets at full market value. The suggested options will allow you to move into an equivalent sized home, that will be built to modern standards and cost less to run. You will not have any additional monthly outgoings while you live there. It is only at the point of sale that you would be expected to pay the difference in value (under Option 1). Any tenant exercising the Right to Buy on a new home will also have to pay the new market value (less the Government-set discount).

4.18 Q17: We need option 1 (shared equity) to be complete with appropriate fine print before we can seriously consider it, when will that be available?

A17: Following the Executive decision, we will engage legal services to work up the options and to start drafting the legal agreements. You will have the opportunity to consider these draft documents and to seek independent legal representation.

4.18.1 Audience questions / comments:

LSi asked when will draft agreements be available? LS responded that the Council would aim to have the first draft available 3 months after the Executive decision.

4.18.2 RD reminded everyone that in the meantime we will have meetings and surgeries to receive questions and provide more information.

4.19 Q18: Exactly what costs will the council cover additionally? We need complete list with any conditions you intend to apply.

A18: You will also be able to claim "reasonable costs" that have been incurred because you have had to move under the "disturbance allowance". This would include costs to refit existing curtains, fixtures and fitting, appliances, etc. in your new home. Other costs that may be claimed include:

- Your surveyor costs for making a valuation of your existing property*
- Your surveyor negotiation costs reasonably and properly incurred*
- The legal costs on the sale of your property to the Council and the legal costs on the purchase of a new property, including items such as:*
- Solicitor's costs*
- Local authority, Land Registry and other search fees*
- Bank transfer fees*
- Stamp duty on the purchase of a new property (not exceeding the amount of stamp duty payable by the Council in connection with the purchase of your existing property)*
- Administration fees or mortgage redemption charges*
- Removal costs*
- Redirection of mail.*
- Having a telephone and washing machine disconnected and reconnected in your new home*

The exact details will be firmed up as the project moves to the delivery stages.

4.19.1 Audience questions / comments:

RD confirmed we can add in storage costs if required.

4.19.2 SW said that removal / redirection costs will be covered if people move more than once.

4.19.3 AL asked whether this would apply to tenants too. Yes - if they need to move twice. The decant policy would need to be updated for this project.

4.19.4 It was pointed out that the wording in brackets above relating to stamp duty limits may not be correct. LS will check.

LS / ZAS

4.20 **Q19: Exactly when did you decide to use market values rather than build costs? Since the redevelopment has been muted by WBC this has never been previously mentioned.**

A19: The Council has always advised that the options for homeowners would be subject to individual discussions. There has not been any decision previously to base the transfer price on build cost or market value. At the Steering Group meetings, homeowners have requested further clarity. Therefore, some high level options have been developed over the last 6-8 weeks for consultation.

4.20.1 Audience questions / comments:

MJ stated that he has been under the impression that homeowners would get “like for like” replacement homes at no added cost and the shared equity option had come up at short notice. LS said that this was because the Council had intended to discuss at individual meetings, but on the request of homeowners on the Steering Group, had developed the options for consultation. SB agreed that he understood these concerns but we do need to move on. NB added that it was a shock to hear that the market value would be close to £400,000.

4.20.2 NB inquired if there was an indication on parking standards. RD informed her that the rebuilt homes will have more parking per dwelling than the policy standard. LS advised that every flat will have its own parking space and each house will have 2 spaces. Some homes will have garages in addition.

4.20.3 SW stated that the Government has just made announcements concerning this and advised that we as a Borough can review our parking standards to reflect that we have the 2nd highest level of car ownership and limited public transport. NB commented that she had passed through Arborfield, where it says there will be more public transport. SW summed up that the Government announcement means that parking standards are likely to increase following the review.

4.20.4 It was highlighted that while some houses will have garages to suit preferences, none will have conservatories. What will be the criteria for those getting a garage? Lots of people have conservatories across the estate, so it seems unfair.

4.20.5 AC recalled that we were informed that garages do not count towards car parking allocation. Is this a change for the estate? SW advised that this is the current position. LS clarified that if you get a house with a garage, you still get 2 parking spaces. RD reminded everyone that there is also room for on street parking too.

4.20.6 MJ commented that he used his garage for storage and would be relatively happy to have a large shed instead but he did require external storage. LS said that this had been noted.

4.20.7 Will a house with a garage cost more than a house without the garage? Yes.

4.21 **Q20: Will you confirm WBC's previous verbal commitment for like-for-like house swap?**

A20: The suggested options make it possible for you to move into an equivalent sized property (meeting current higher space standards), which will be newly built. It is likely to be of traditional construction and more energy efficient. Therefore, in many ways, the new homes are likely to be better than “like for like”. However, we

cannot guarantee the new homes will have exactly the same features as your current property.

4.22 Q21: Will you use equivalent market value of our homes, not current, at move date?

A21: If your property is included in the next phase of development, then the council will arrange for your property to be inspected and valued. The council's offer will be based on a 'no scheme world' and at market value. 'No scheme world' means that the value will be based on the assumption that the regeneration is not going ahead. This means the value the council pays for the property will not go up or down as a result of the regeneration proposals. Market value reflects the condition of the property at the date of valuation and, for example, will reflect:

- *The internal condition and size*
- *External condition*
- *Internal improvements to the property, such as, new bathrooms and kitchens*
- *The location of the property and amenities within the area, such as, transport links, shops and services*
- *The housing market in the immediate area, including recent sale prices for similar properties.*

4.23 Q22: When will Option 3 become an option to homeowners?

A22: It is proposed that all of these options will be made available to homeowners as each phase comes forward and is given decant status. The Council has already purchased some properties ahead of any regeneration and will continue to do so where a homeowner wants to move sooner. However, it is unlikely that the home loss payment would be made in these circumstances.

4.23.1 Audience questions / comments:

MS said he assumed the Council would want the properties as soon as possible so that people can be moved around, so after 16th May you could start immediately.

4.23.2 What happens if the planners turn it down, is there a plan B? SW answered that the project team will continue an early dialogue with planners to address their concerns prior to submitting a planning application as on the Phase 1 Cockayne Court site. LS added that the Masterplan was formed with ongoing dialogue with Planning, Highway, Tree, Flood and Infrastructure Delivery Officers. It meets the Boroughs design requirements eg the Masterplan contains shallow basins within the open spaces to hold rainwater and improve drainage.

4.23.3 MJ queried that in the tenants survey, the tenants were asked an extra question on whether they wanted the potential redevelopment 'not to go ahead' but the homeowners were not asked that question. LS pointed out in the Homeowners survey, that the question is there but worded slightly differently so that it didn't confuse people.

5 Next Steps

5.1 Covered above

6 Any other business

6.1 PH observed that there has been extensive discussions about driveways and garages but we have not talked about the lack of bungalows which has dropped from 40 to 13. SB advised that he should give his comments to JG. RD noted we have already received feedback on this matter.

- 6.2 If the Executive decision goes against the redevelopment, will the homeowners get any compensation for being in limbo for the last 3.5yrs? SW asserted that we need to make a good case for the decision to go through.
- 6.3 CHT advised that if homeowners want to move now, please let the Council know so we can fast track this after the 16th May. It should be a fairly quick process as we have previously bought properties in order to build roads so it's a question of taking valuations and agreeing the purchase price.
- 6.4 AL asked how long will it take to decant on phase 1? LSi asked if someone decides to move before the decant, what happens? LS advised that prior to the decant status, residents would not be eligible for the home loss payment.
- 6.5 CHT stated that assuming the decision is to progress in May, then we will need to discuss individual's timescales. If you choose not to leave the estate, and then move later, you can still do that.
- 6.6 RD said that it would be useful to know how many people would like to sell up and move off the estate. CHT advised that if half of you wanted to move then we would need to talk before May around what we can offer you. NB commented that she had been advised that you would get the value of your house only and no compensation, so residents should remain until the Executive decision. LS confirmed this position.
- 6.7 AC asked when will purdah start as there is a restriction on Council activities. CHT informed the Group that Purdah starts on 26th March. Officers will do their day to day business as usual but politician communication is restricted.
- 6.8 MJ expressed thanks for the meeting on behalf of everyone.
- 6.9 LS reminded everyone that the closing date for consultation is tomorrow but we'll accept responses up until next Monday 12th March for homeowners.

Next Meeting of the regular Steering Group will be on Wednesday 28th March 2018 at the same venue.