

Housing Needs & Strategy

Estate improvement and new build feasibility study

Update to Hathersage Tenants & Residents Association

1. Introduction

1.1 As part of its asset management strategy Islington Council asked the Housing Strategy & Development Team to undertake a feasibility study on the options available to improve the condition of the housing and communal areas provided at Besant & Hathersage Courts. The work needed would involve preparing initial design studies which test the level of risk of constructing (“buildability”), the cost of providing new housing for rent and making direct improvements to the individual blocks and external shared spaces.

1.2 In April 2015 a project team of officers and consultants was established to investigate:

- a) the risk involved to construct and financial feasibility of providing new housing and
- b) undertaking general improvements in and around the two blocks.

These two objectives are not mutually exclusive and in the event that new housing is considered feasible, this will support the capital cost of making improvements to communal areas within and around the two blocks. This will also be the result if new housing is not an option.

1.3 Once completed the feasibility will be used to inform the strategy for improvements in and around the two blocks.

2. Proposals

3.1 The design of any prospective housing at Besant & Hathersage Courts is in its infancy and a range of surveys have been commissioned by the council to determine the most suitable locations to build and the type of improvements which can be carried out to the individual blocks.

3.2 The design process is critical to the process as it draws out the risks and benefits associated with development and will identify the most economically and socially advantageous solutions for the estates. There will have to be a number of meetings with the Local Planning Authority to determine matters such as scale, height and environmental impact.

- 3.3 Once the outcome of the feasibility is clear, the most promising design will be shared with residents who will be invited to comment and provide feedback. The design will also seek to include estate wide improvements although these will be made in the context of their long term impact on service and other charges borne by residents.
- 3.4 If the feasibility shows that new housing cannot be developed within the two estates then the council will focus its efforts on the existing buildings and the open space around it to find financially viable and socially improving solutions.
- 3.5 As the freeholder and landlord of the two blocks, the council will develop a communications strategy which will aim to ensure that individual residents, their representative organisations and ward councillors are kept informed of the decisions the council takes to make any changes to the area around the blocks.
- 3.6 The Housing Strategy and Development Team works closely with its colleagues in Housing Operations/Estate Services to ensure that information and details of the progress being made is shared and discussed.
- 3.7 Meetings with residents at Besant & Hathersage Courts will be held at key milestones in the development of the feasibility to ensure that officers are able to share new and meaningful outcomes as the project group moves from feasibility and to planning and then finally delivery. None of these stages have been finalised and the work involved to achieve each element will take time.
- 3.8 Officers expect to hold the first meeting to update residents on the outcome of the feasibility towards the end of August 2015. This date may change if key information needed to finalise the options under consideration is not available.

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