

## Appendix C

### **Housing Select Committee – resident engagement in housing development review**

#### **Notes from workshop with Tenant and Resident Associations on Pepys estate**

**3<sup>rd</sup> October 2019**

Cllr Aisling Gallagher (Housing Select Committee), Chantelle Barker (Head of New Initiatives, Lewisham Homes), and John Bardens (Scrutiny Manager) were present.

The workshop was based around table discussions on a set of questions that had been shared in advance. Participants separated into small table groups, chose the questions to discuss and then reported back to the wider group.

The questions that the groups focused on during the workshop related to: the best ways for residents to be informed and involved; how to reach as wide a range of people as possible; and what should be done differently in the future. The key points of the workshop are summarised below.

(Photographs of the groups' full written comments are also attached.)

#### **Engagement methods**

- 1.1 On the best ways for residents to be informed and involved, the group suggested a number of tools including, online engagement and newsletters, with regular updates up to construction, and community events held in different locations, with all residents in the area made aware.
- 1.2 It was also suggested that the contact details of key people involved in the development of proposals should be made available to residents and TRAs.
- 1.3 One table noted that events and meetings are not always accessible for everyone. Meetings held in the evening, for example, can make it more difficult for those with children to give their views.
- 1.4 A numbers of tables also warned of “token” and “tick box” consultation exercises, and the feeling of consultation “being done to” residents as opposed to being given the opportunity to influence the process.
- 1.5 One table suggested “panels” to provide residents with a meaningful role in decision-making and also advocated the involvement of residents in the detail of regeneration schemes through design reviews, for example.
- 1.6 Engagement with architects was cited by one group as an example of where engagement has gone well in the past.
- 1.7 There were calls from a number of tables for more co-design and co-production with residents.
- 1.8 Another table said that it was also important that engagement starts early, with residents informed and involved from the outset, so that plans can be tailored in response to feedback at the ideas stage.
- 1.9 There were calls for engagement to be more strategic and proactive through the development of local masterplans.
- 1.10 There was a strong feeling among the groups that engagement should be in plain English and jargon-free. One table said that engagement should aim to meet the visual

and verbal preferences of residents and that imagination was required to devise creative engagement exercises, such as on site exhibitions and community theatre.

### **Hard-to-reach groups**

- 2.1 On the topic of what the council can do to ensure that it hears from as wide a range of people as possible (particularly so-called hard-to-reach and under-represented groups), the group suggested several methods, including:
- 2.2 Family and community events; directly involving young people; notices and events through schools and other community hotspots; community theatre; door-to-door visits; and a permanent section in Lewisham Life on new developments.
- 2.3 The group stressed the importance of going out into the community and engaging people through, for example, places of worship, toddler groups, disability groups, and not relying on a few groups to speak for the whole community. One group also suggested keeping a register of people who aren't digitally connected
- 2.4 One table said that engagement with residents should start with what the community needs and the benefits that a development could bring. Another group felt that there needed to be a sense of urgency to get people involved.
- 2.5 There was also discussion about overcoming the history of poor relationships and mistrust built up over the years. There was a feeling that there's nothing to show for the years of consultation and engagement in the past and that residents are only engaged when things have already been decided.

### **What should be done differently**

- 3.1 In terms of what residents would like to see done differently, the groups said they wanted to see earlier engagement. They wanted to be able to have open and honest discussions with developers to find solutions to residents' requests, and for practical views to be listened to. They also wanted to see their promises kept and design details, such as play areas and communal spaces, not being lost post planning.
- 3.2 The group said that it was important for a wider range of people and groups to be engaged. They said that having good local intelligence is key to this, and that having local leaders on board, Block reps, for example, can make a significant difference. There was also a feeling that local Councillors should play a key role.
- 3.3 The groups called for a local masterplan to coordinate all of the regeneration in a ward, and across boroughs, and to help old and new communities and developments integrate. One group specifically called for a local "heritage plan" to preserve and promote local history. Another table suggested engaging with charities that successfully run community centres and other facilities in other areas.

There were also a number of other comments more related to the planning process, rather than pre-planning engagement. These included:

- 4.1 It was felt that residents and TRAs should be given advance notice of any plans in their areas due to go to planning committee, and that they should have the opportunity to engage with planning committees before planning permission is given. One table said that the major findings of planning committees should be displayed at local community hotspots.
- 4.2 It was also felt that a dedicated planning officer should be assigned to local communities to create local masterplans in order to join up various developments and

help residents get the best deal. A number of tables said that s106 and CIL money should be ringfenced and spent on local needs and infrastructure of the community.

1. Panels - meaningful role in decision making - 'inside' the chamber.
2. Regeneration - design reviews - involved in detail
3. Co-design & Co-production.
4. Events - consultation 'taken' - being done to - not feeling like influencing anything.
5. Meetings are not accessible to all - evenings where people with children find it hard to give their views.
6. Need to be involved from the outset.
7. Avoid consultation fatigue.
8. Difference between engagement & consultation.
9. Imagination needed to devise engagement exercises  
↳ 'taxi rank' consultation events around exhibition.
10. Should meet visual & verbal preferences of people not officers - Community theatre
11. Timescales - want to influence scoping, not just when wide
12. Jargon free needed - planning speak need to understand

① Community events (notified to all residents in the ward)  
outreach engagement  
newsletter

① several and spread across the ward

② frequent + regular updates <sup>until</sup> close to construction

③ contact details of Council Key people + developer's Key people given to residents / TRAs

④ maintenance of open communal spaces  
schedule in place after completion and given to residents / TRAs

⑤ opportunities for residents / TRAs to engage directly with planning <sup>Committee</sup> Commission before planning permission given

⑥ residents / TRAs  
Should be informed when plans for their area are going to planning <sup>Committee</sup> Commission, with good notice.

⑦ major findings of planning committee on developments to go on display to local community centre / library (report of major findings in simple language, not jargon).

- \* Be Strategic; Be Proactive NOT Reactive
- \* Start Early, residents must be informed from the outset so plans can be tailored in response to feedback. eg Masterplan. (outset of 'idea stage')
- \* Co-production of ideas should be the main aim.
- \* ~~Be~~ NO more tick box exercise.
- \* A planning officer should be assigned and local councillors <sup>involved</sup> to empower local residents in order to get the best deal.
  - S106 CIL against real need not made up shopping list from non resident planning officer with no idea of local intelligence:-

Evelyn has asked for a dedicated planner to retrospectively "join up" various developments agreed and "in progress" —

(Q5)

SEARCH FOR  
THE GROUPS  
(Groups, groups  
etc...)  
AND DISCUSS  
THEM

- 1) Community theatre.
- 2) Door knocking → little response, stranger danger.
- 3) Block reps - become familiar with who is a 'friendly face'
- 4) Homes - blocks of flats designed with out front doors opposite each other to interact
- 5) Sense of urgency to get involved.
- 6) Register of people not digitally connected.
- 7) Youths - directly involved - use social media
  - designed with audience in mind - youth committee. Be aware of postcode wars. - map solutions around this - accessible activities.
  - Short films, youtube → they teach us - intergenerational.
- 8) Coffee morning - Positive Aging Council - bring up these things there.
- 9) Engage @ markets - stalls - Deptford High St. Sat - familiar, tesco's, GP's, Schools, Family Groups
- 10) Newsletters.
- 11) Specialist user groups (cyclists, volunteers, retail)
- 12) Go to mosques, churches, where people already go to them. Albany

⑤ \* For young people, send notices through schools + have a noticeboard there + have events free for pupils + parents

\* Do engagement events through community centres / GP surgeries / leisure centres / libraries / Albany / TRAs / corner shops / bus stops / community noticeboards / mosques / churches

\* Hold Family / Community events that offer fun / entertainment + information about development (cluster developments together if small)  
(face painting / climbing wall)

\* Door-to-door visits in proximity of development

\* In Lewisham magazine there should be a section (permanent) on new developments (with notices / planning permission grants to ~~one~~ 'big' development with more than 30 flats)

\* Distribute "the Shopper" throughout the borough with Developments information

\* All above notices in plain English please!

- RS
- \* Learning of time from 'consultation' to action - you engage people but they stop trusting their things don't happen
  - \* Overcoming the history of poor relationships & mistrust built up over five years
  - \* The first priority to show for the years of consultation & engagement in the past
  - \* Council only come when things are decided
  - \* Different private development surrounding social housing - things don't link
  - \* Porter / when there's no master plan this happens
  - \* Officers from different departments need to work TOGETHER - planners & Levensham Homes need to work together
  - \* Young people are the ones who will live with the legacy of regeneration
  - \* We can't rely on one or a few groups to speak for a whole community
  - \* Notices & events through schools - engaging kids & families
  - \* Notices in community hot spots, e.g. corner shops. Community centre
  - \* PLANNING JARLON - THINK NEED TO BE IN PLAIN ENGLISH
  - \* Permanent feature in Levensham Life about housing & planning
  - \* Working to where people are e.g. mosque, local disability groups, toddlers groups
  - \* Start with the benefits - what do you as a community need from this development?

- Q16
- \* City House - all the plans were approved before they came to the community
  - \* Planning should bring things to the community before they go through the planning system
  - \* Loads of work put in to create temp space for enjoyment - nothing came out of it & then the trust is gone - interim spaces used but then once it was done there was nothing & the developers don't even engage any more
  - \* Developers sell their community engagement but sell out these people once they've got the stats. they don't
  - \* Councilors should have a big role in this & need to be reliable committed councillors
  - \* Legislation cannot rely on some orgs. who claim to speak for the community but don't necessarily - it's important to go to several groups not just one
  - \* Community having to fight for small things that shouldn't require this much fighting & effort for \$106 million
  - \* Local intelligence is key - simple solutions to complex problems & having local leaders on board makes such a difference
  - \* Community Asset Transfer / community ownership

To improve:

- 1) there should be a Masterplan coordinating all the regeneration, in the word
- 2) there should be a heritage plan aimed at preserving local heritage and how old and new community integrate.
- 3) ensuring that S106 and CIL contributions made by local developments are ringfenced and spent locally for the infrastructure of the community (eg. community centre, open communal spaces).
- 4) Dedicated planning officers to engage with local community and Masterplan
- 5) Engage charities that run well community centres.

Done well: (6) concentrate on community infrastructure (ie. centres) as well as housing.

\* LBL responded somewhat truly to request of information by community

(Q6)

Went well

- ~~Design~~ Design engagement with architects

Do different

- early engagement
  - See promises kept - design detail not been last post planning - value engineering.
  - Listen to practical views.
  - Be honest & open.
  - 'Shopping list' of requests so be discussed & reasoned with developers & residents to find solutions if not all possible.
  - Something good back for local community - stop for road thinking partner
- Walk across boroughs  
Play spaces  
interior and outdoor spaces, design  
Promoting local space  
Create common space