

Appendix B

Housing Select Committee - resident engagement in housing development review

Notes from meeting with group of residents local to Hillcrest and High-Level Drive

30th September 2019

One resident lived on the Hillcrest Estate, two lived on nearby roads, and two were members of the Sydenham Society. The discussion was centred on a set of six questions, which had been sent around in advance. Some of the key points of their feedback are noted below:

- 1.1 In relation to now-withdrawn development proposals on the estate, the group were unhappy with the location and timing of the consultation events.
- 1.2 The consultation events were held a long way from the estate itself and it was felt that the timing of the public consultation events, 4-8pm, excluded many people.
- 1.3 It was felt that everyone affected by a major development within a certain area, taking into account local geography, should be engaged.
- 1.4 The whole community should be involved in discussions about where to put local housing as local people have valuable local knowledge.
- 1.5 Engagement should also involve local services to address concerns about these.
- 1.6 It was felt that residents should be engaged earlier – residents should not be presented with a done deal involving one evening consultation well away from the site involved.
- 1.7 With a recent development proposal, it was felt that the process was well underway before local residents were involved.
- 1.8 Discussions with residents should start with a blank piece of paper. Discussions should be open and honest. Solutions should not be offered – problems should be posed and residents involved in co-design.
- 1.9 Developers should recognise the uniqueness of areas and listen to suggestions. Developers should also acknowledge when they have made mistakes.
- 1.10 Architects should walk around estates to understand the landscape. It was felt that desktop designs without understanding the ‘on the ground’ situation are a waste of time and money.
- 1.11 In terms of engagement methods, in-person and on-site engagement was preferred. On-site community centres should be used.
- 1.12 There should not be an overreliance on digital engagement tools such as Commonplace.
- 1.13 Local Tenant and Resident Association’s (TRAs) should be encouraged, formed and engaged.
- 1.14 Ward Councillors should be engaged.
- 1.15 A planning officer should attend consultation events.
- 1.16 It was queried whether it is appropriate for Lewisham Homes to carry out consultation as they are not independent.
- 1.17 With a recent development proposal, it was felt that the design pictures used in the consultation boards were misleading. It was felt that dull colours were used to depict

the estate, including play and games areas, as run down and unused, while wide-angle, full colour images were used to depict the proposals. Some of the design images produced did not include existing buildings.

- 1.18 It was noted that pictures could be very influential, particularly for those who may only pay a quick visit to a consultation event.
- 1.19 The headers of two consultation event letters for a recent development only referred to one site on the estate when the events were in relation to all sites on the estate. It was felt that this could have given the impression to some residents that the events were not be relevant to them and prevented them from being involved.
- 1.20 It was felt that the feedback presented on the consultation excluded some of the points made and didn't accurately reflect the concerns. Information presented only included the concerns that had already been addressed. The concerns petitioned by local tenants and residents were not acknowledged.
- 1.21 There needs to be more information to address concerns about congestion and overcrowding, emergency vehicle access, use of garages, lack of amenities, lack of public transport, and lack of a community centre.
- 1.22 There was criticism of a public meeting held in response to local opposition to a recent development on the Hillcrest Estate. It was felt that the meeting should have enabled residents to properly voice their concerns, however a high proportion of time was allowed for the consultants, including the appointed architects, to present their proposals again.
- 1.23 The meeting was held on a weekday in the Civic Suite. There was no agenda and it fell on the same night as an England World Cup Game.
- 1.24 One member of the group mentioned resident ballots and spoke about a loss of trust and felt that it was unclear what would happen if residents voted against a development.
- 1.25 Other Council departments might be able to help identify some hard-to-reach groups. Care workers might be able to help identify people who may have just been discharged from hospital and health visitors might be able to help identify new and isolated mothers.
- 1.26 Engaging people through local libraries was also suggested as a way of reaching some hard-to-reach groups.
- 1.27 A multi-use games area, with a sports programme, would help to engage young people.
- 1.28 It was felt that local engagement would be vastly improved if the community centre on the estate was re-opened for use by tenants and residents.
- 1.29 Facilities on the estate should be regularly improved for existing residents – upgrades should not be dependent on new housing being built.
- 1.30 Given the lack of transport, community facilities and the hilly topography on the estate, it was queried whether any new housing would provide 'lifetime homes'.