

## Appendix E

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

#### **Written submission from Secretary of the Forest Hill Residents Association**

**Received 11<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

I am responding to your email to the Forest Estate Residents Association a couple of weeks ago.

I would personally prefer to submit my views by email rather than in a workshop, because we do not have the community resources to keep on providing our consultation time for free on these matters. Also the consultation questions do not provide space for residents to fully articulate their concerns on the process. Once again the questions are based on a predetermined set of outcomes which do not value the day-to-day lived experience of residents and their knowledge about where they live.

As the outgoing secretary of the Forest Hill Residents Association I have spent two years listening to residents views on this matter. Whilst the aims of the Scoping paper are to be commended, the Scrutiny panel needs to take the following concerns into consideration:

1. There is a lack of transparency in the planning process due to the close relationship between Lewisham Council and Lewisham Homes, which is dealt with differently in other London Boroughs.
2. Existing residents have long term housing problems (electrical faults, damp, blocked drains, estate neglect) which have been ignored for decades, and have little confidence in being heard by either LH or LC. Proposals to build new flats whilst unable to undertake repairs and maintenance on existing properties is a major concern.
3. Existing leaseholders feel tricked by excessive major works bills, and are fully aware that the consultation process around the Major Works is ineffectual, and still unresolved.
4. There is a general lack of confidence in new build consultation processes which present unrealistic proposals which are then marginally modified after speaking to residents to feign a response. The DAD model - Decide Announce Defend has long been discredited in public consultation, yet is still employed by LH/LC.
5. Current LH consultation with the FERA Forest Estate Residents Association completely ignores previously negotiated agreements on estate works (eg Security Doors), rendering the TRA process redundant.
6. Previous attempts to build on green spaces has caused a lot of stress to local residents fearful of losing their parks, woodlands and play spaces essential for fresh air, mental health and outdoor play and leisure. The situation at Tidemill Gardens is deplorable where LH and LC are behaving like ruthless property developers with no regard to community wellbeing.
7. If LC were to publish a clear policy of building on brownfield sites, and converting disused and derelict buildings into housing, they might be able to regain the trust of their constituencies.
8. LC should also pursue other avenues to increase the amount of properly affordable housing stock by carefully reviewing planning policy across the borough. Perhaps additional kinds of new building should be required to include properly affordable new housing within any commercial development for example.

Please note that comments above expand on the issues raised in the Minutes from the FERA AGM on 19 September, which you attended, as outlined below:

### **1. Housing Select Committee (one of the scrutiny review committees)**

Leo Gibbons, Ward Councillor and John Bardens, [Scrutiny Manager] Lewisham Housing Select Committee: The aim of the committee is to scrutinise the work of the council and LH.

They are carrying out a review of how residents are engaged in building new houses in their area, however the review does not focus on specific planned developments, or specific consultations. They can invite people submit evidence through an online survey, or run a workshop.

#### **ACTION: To add to the scrutiny review:**

A) Lack of transparency in the Planning Process due to the close relationship between LH and LC, and needs an impartial team to assess (eg. Southwark, Lambeth, Bromley could assess the Lewisham Homes Planning applications).

B) The review should undertake both online surveys, but also door knocking to interview residents face to face.

C) People feel alienated because they have been asking for help with their building for years (Knapdale Close Flats).

D) Residents do not feel properly consulted about the Knapdale Flats Development, whilst existing problems are unresolved and ignored.

Once these issues have been properly addressed and resolved, then it would be appropriate to start a genuine consultation process about how to increase affordable housing in the borough.