

**Notes from the Brandwood Ward Forum Meeting on
Wednesday 15 March 2017 at 6.30pm at Manningford Hall.
Bells Lane, Druids Heath B14 5RY**

Attending:- Councillor Eva Phillips (Chair), Councillor Mike Leddy &
Councillor Barry Henley

Austin Rodriguez, Neighbourhood Development & Support Unit
Bali Paddock, Development Project Manager
Andrew Hood, Senior Service Manager
Kay Thomas, Community Governance Manager
PCSO's Mahmood & Jefferies

There were 70+ residents in attendance

1. **NOTICE OF RECORDING** – noted
2. **PETITIONS** – None submitted
3. **UPDATE ON LOCAL INNOVATION FUND**

Austin Rodriguez gave a brief overview of the Local Innovation Fund and process for spend. Details were on the council's website or Austin could be contacted direct.

A bid had been submitted on behalf of the Partnership of Moseley Rugby Community Foundation and Brandwood Centre to offer a certified work experience programme run by local people for local people, offering a service which was not currently available. In response to questions a representative from Brandwood Centre advised that they would be working in partnership with the Billesley ward to develop the programme further and extend the existing Train to Gain programme. An offer of work experience was made.

It was agreed that the bid go forward for approval.

Action: That the bid submitted by the Moseley Rugby Community Foundation & Brandwood Centre for Local Innovation Fund for the Skills for Work project be forwarded for approval.

4. **DRUIDS HEATH INFORMATION/CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED REGENERATION OF THE AREA**

The Chair sympathised with resident's concerns and realised that people were worried about the future of their homes but explained this was the start of a conversation about the regeneration of the area as a whole and stressed no decisions had been made.

Bali Paddock explained that;

- This was the start of the regeneration process and stressed that no decisions had yet been made except that Heath House was to be demolished. Rehousing from the block would start in April. 86% of residents had wanted the block demolished.
- She had been involved with the regeneration project in Kings Norton and would take any interested residents on a visit to Kings Norton to see the regeneration.
- The boundary of the proposed regeneration site was explained.
- 2,500 questionnaires had been sent out to households seeking views. 405 had so far been returned so residents were urged to complete if they hadn't already done so.
- Funding had been received from the Homes & Community Agency to enable work with master planners to undertake a whole place review
- There were 3 options – 1) Leave the estate as it was 2) a mid-range option with some changes 3) radical demolition and complete regeneration
- No decision had been made. When all options had been considered a plan would be discussed with residents. This was hoped to be ready by July.
- The Regeneration Team would continue to talk to residents and groups and an offer to attend any residents meetings etc was made. A group had visited Telford to look at the homes in the regeneration project there.
- This was a long term regeneration programme of 15 years or more.

Residents then made the following comments;

- Information on the website referred to the programmed being finished by 2020.
- If asked, residents in the other tower blocks would also vote to leave. Families were living in the flats and this was a totally unsuitable situation.
- Reference had been made to the Kings Norton regeneration and it was queried how long the regeneration in Kings Norton had taken to complete and how many City Council tenants (%) had been able to return back to the estate. Had all social housing tenants be offered another social housing tenancy?
- Would people from Druids Heath be able to move to the new properties in Kings Norton? This would free up the houses in Druids Heath ready for demolition.
- How would the other 6 blocks be identified for demolition?

- Properties that residents had bought on the estate were freehold, would the new properties also be freehold?
- Would people who had bought their houses be able to buy a new property? Would they be affordable?
- Concern expressed that the regeneration would be similar to the Monyhull site
- Concern that the tower blocks would not be maintained while waiting for demolition and that the poor conditions currently being experienced by residents eg difficult to heat, damp, mould would become worse.
- When Druids Heath regeneration was completed, who would own the properties?
- Would secure tenancies be retained?
- There were rumours of properties in Bulford Close being compulsory purchased however a number of the houses has been purchased and money spent on them by the current owners
- It was unanimously agreed that the green spaces around Druids Heath must be protected.
- Reference to the 'whole place review' and how this fitted with the closure of Baverstock School.
- Would tenants who were in the process of trying to purchase their properties under the Right to Buy scheme be able to continue?
- Many residents expressed a wish to return to the area. There was concern that as they had purchased their properties they would be unable to afford a new property as they would be unable to obtain a mortgage/re-mortgage to cover the cost as they were too old/did not have the finances to support a mortgage. They did not want to become council tenants as they did not want to pay rent as they were currently mortgage/rent free and if they did become a council tenant they would not be offered the same size property as the one they currently lived in. There was a great deal of concern about equity plans and the future as several residents said they had bought their homes as a way of leaving something to their families.
- If the equity in existing properties did not match the price of new properties for sale, how was the gap going to be bridged so that residents could stay living in the area.
- If the properties were owned by a housing association there would be no right to buy
- Residents would not now be able to sell their properties because of the uncertainty
- It was alleged that residents of Saxelby House had received letters regarding the demolition of the block
- Reference made to the number of anti-social tenants living in the various tower blocks and whether there would be a policy not to re-house them in Druids Heath once the area had been regenerated so that the community could be re-built.

- The City Council was blamed for the disintegration of the community on Druids Heath by closing schools, community centres, lack of investment in properties etc
- Castle Vale had been regenerated without whole scale demolition of properties so it was queried why properties couldn't be re-modelled rather than demolished

In response to some of the points raised Councillor Leddy urged people not to be alarmed as similar regeneration was going on across the City eg Newtown and Kings Norton. Birmingham needed 50,000 new homes and there was a shortage of 1/2 bed houses and homes with gardens. A large number of houses in Druids Heath were not of standard structure and therefore action needed to be taken and some properties were not fit for purpose. There had been no decision made regarding what properties would be demolished or the extent of the regeneration of existing properties. Resident's views and comments/suggestions were needed to help shape the plan and create an estate for the next generation.

Councillor Henley acknowledged resident's concerns and their wish to remain on the estate but said that it would take time to demolish to enable space to be made to re-build and this would start with Heath House. In response to a question he added that he did not believe all of the tower blocks would be demolished as some offered sheltered accommodation but asked that those with specific issues speak to him at the conclusion of the meeting. New properties would be built to BMHT standard and it was suggested that residents visit some that were being built elsewhere. There would be a mix of tenures and an attempt to match mix to need. Councillor Henley refuted that residents in Saxelby House had received letters regarding demolition of the block as no decision had been made about demolition other than Heath House.

Bali Paddock made the following points in response to the comments made;

- With regard to questions about the Kings Norton regeneration, consultation had begun in 2004 and it had taken 5 years to rehouse half of the residents. As an example the Redditch Road properties had been 50% council properties and 50% for sale. Those for sale were freehold. A great number of residents from Kings Norton had preferred to remain in the areas where they had been rehoused rather than return to Kings Norton but all council tenants were offered an alternative social housing property.
- Where a resident moved out of a property they would have a 1 to 1 meeting with a housing officer to discuss options and help given to find the right property. Shared ownership and equity share were options available and in the majority of cases people got what they wanted.
- The Right to Buy scheme was currently still applicable to properties on Druids Heath as no decision had yet been made on the master plan.

- All areas in the plan area would be reviewed and some properties would have more done to them than others. Properties in good repair would not be demolished.
- As soon as the plans were available letters would be sent to residents and another meeting arranged to discuss further.

The Chair concluded by saying that she and her colleagues believed that existing residents should have the opportunity to return to Druids Heath if they wished. Demolition should be carried out in phases so that the community was not lost. She reiterated that no decision on which properties, except Heath House, would be demolished/retained had yet been made but sympathised with resident's concerns amid the rumours that were circulating.

The Chair stated that the future of Baverstock School was not yet known but stressed that the decision was not one that would be made by the City Council as the school was an academy and out of the control of the Council. The Council would wish to keep the school open.

In line with the whole place review, the green spaces on Druids Heath were an asset but needed to be incorporated into the plan as more useable spaces. With regard anti-social tenants, the tower blocks were used for temporary accommodation as there were vacant flats available but the regeneration scheme afforded the opportunity to build the community by keeping emergency accommodation to a minimum.

The Chair advised the meeting that by July a more detailed idea of the options would be available for discussion with residents but urged, in the meantime that any comments/views be forwarded to bali.paddock@birmingham.gov.uk or via the Councillors. Letters could also be left at Manningford Hall. B14 News was also a good way to follow progress.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending.

Meeting ended at 7.40pm