

Blandford Estate Resident Meeting (Major Works Y100)

Tuesday 15 August 2023 6:00pm-7:30pm @ Lisson Green Community Centre & via MS Teams

WCC Staff attendance:

Neil Wightman (NW) – Director of Housing

Gavin Ridgewell (GR) – Senior Asset Strategy Manager

Jim Patterson (JP) – Divisional Head of Major Works and Sustainability

Paul Halpin (PH) – Head of Leasehold Income and Engagement

Kamran Taylor-Hussain (KT) – Head of Property and Asset Manager

Ayesha Begum (AB) – Resident Advocacy Manager

Shah Alam (SA) – Resident Advocate

Apologies:

Marco Smart (MS) – Project Surveyor

Councillor Liza Begum (LB)

Blandford Estate Residents RA attendance: Michael Fuller (MF)

Apologies: Linda Childs (LC)

RA's nominated spokesperson: Martin Jones (MJ) and Jim Neill (JN)

No. of residents attended: 29 (12 participants joined online)

Item	Subject	Comment	WCC Response	Action & Lead	Due Date
1	Communication	<p>(a) Residents were not adequately informed well in advance about the major projects. The costs and scope of work were vaguely shared without sufficient evidence. Residents are feeling extremely overwhelmed with the high costs without any substantiated justifications.</p> <p>(b) Will NW be committed to being a part of this project and being contactable?</p>	<p>NW: As a way forward, we will commit to openness and transparency. We disclosed the costs in advance, to be transparent and moving away from our previous approach where estimates were withheld until costs were finalised.</p> <p>GR: Under the Freedom of Information (FOI), we've shared the detailed survey report and cost breakdown estimates for stage one with LC and MF. Further detailed surveys are planned for stage two, which will provide insights into required quantities, subsequently impacting costs. Our projected on-site presence is set for Autumn 2024.</p> <p>SA: Updates and additional documents are available on the major works webpage: https://www.westminster.gov.uk/blandford-estate-major-works-project-y100/documents</p> <p>NW: I cannot commit but will try and attend to future meetings to offer strategic support. However, I have a team that will carry-out the groundwork and be directly involved.</p> <p>NW: Having a Steering Group / Working Group will help residents become more involved throughout the entire duration of the project.</p>	<p>Scope and costs will be worked on with the residents steering group.</p> <p>GR to hand the project over to the programme board in October 2023, marking the commencement of stage two.</p> <p>SA to create a Steering Group and invite residents to join.</p>	<p>October 2023</p> <p>November 2023</p>

2	Trust	<p>(a) How can we trust WCC when the presentation in March indicated the project cost to be £1.8m, which has now changed to £2.5m due to WCC's error? That is a £700k increase.</p> <p>(b) The contractor and WCC will retain a percentage from the overall project cost. Neither organisations are motivated to reduce the costs.</p> <p>(c) Residents want to involve their own Quantity Surveyor to inspect WCC's surveys and other reports. Can that be possible?</p>	<p>NW: We apologise and acknowledge the mistake we have made, so going forward JP will sign-off the cost related documents to ensure it is accurate.</p> <p>NW: some of the costs come from tenants' rent and this is all in a ring fenced account - so value for money is essential for the council as it is for leaseholders.</p> <p>PH: We want as much value for money as you do. We receive the rental income from the tenants and that accumulates a large fund over the years to cover the costs for the major works. We look at various ways to save costs, such as economies of scale.</p> <p>NW: Clarified that if residents wish to do this that is their decision and we will support this process with information.</p> <p>JP: We have a process in place and a team of surveyors who scrutinise the contractor's reports and surveys. We seek detailed justifications on every item of work that has been added to the project, such as lighting, quantity of lights that is required, price of each light and why. Our surveyors will challenge the contractor. The contractor may have sub-contractors, we request for their details, prices, warranties and etc. and they too get scrutinised.</p>	<p>JP – All costs related information will be signed-off to prevent further errors.</p>	
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3	Residents take part in the decision making.	Is there an option available for residents to decide on certain aspect of the scope of works?	NW – Yes. There are some things that we have to do such as Health and Safety, but where there are items that are recommended or desirable, we can have a conversation regarding the scope. This is where the steering group can work with us to define the scope, but we will need to take it to the wider estate to get wider views.		
4	Design	<p>(a) Is that when your contractor is examining the scope of works and costs in greater detail?</p> <p>(b) When will more detailed surveys be completed by?</p>	<p>GR: Yes. For example, in the case of the lighting element, it will need to be designed. For other elements, surveys will have to be carried out, and information on the quantities of required brickwork will need to be provided.</p> <p>GR: More detailed surveys are undertaken as part of the design process and that will start in once the project has been handed over which is currently planned for in October 2023. It is expected to take four to five months to finalise. Subsequently, the Section 20 process will follow, allowing a 37-day observation period.</p> <p>NW: Residents will have the opportunity to scrutinise the full survey once it is completed. When we transition to the Section 20 phase, we will provide you with the necessary information and details, and keep you informed throughout the process.</p>	The team responsible for managing the design phase (the Commissioning team) will be able to share any reports during the design phase.	

5	Electrical Lighting	<p>(a) During the first presentation the speaker appeared unaware that the lighting work had been carried out. JN has enquired about that part of the proposal and mentioned that we done a lot of lighting work, but instead of the price going down it went up.</p> <p>(b) JN: We have just spent thousands of pounds on lights and now the cables need to be changed after we have put the new lights in? This does not seem credible. Nor does it appear to be supported by the invoicing. What information do you have to support that we need new cables? Has the new lighting report been done?</p>	<p>GR: I understand the electrical team have shared details requested in relation to the lighting recently undertaken. Some lightings were replaced in the past, however, the cables will have to be changed for the new lighting system.</p> <p>GR: Yes, we can share the report with you.</p>	<p>SA: Please view the 'Feasibility Report Estate Security Improvements' via the Y100 Blanford Estate major works webpage:</p> <p>https://www.westminster.gov.uk/blanford-estate-major-works-project-y100/documents</p>	
6	Estimates	<p>(a) The estimates you have shared is the highest to what you think it could cost in the worst-case scenario.</p> <p>(b) What we want is a survey report to say what is exactly needed with the most accurate costs.</p>	<p>GR: We based the estimates by reviewing other projects and by speaking to other consultants. We also follow a benchmark on what the costs are likely to be.</p> <p>GR: At this stage of the project, we can only provide an estimate. Once we move closer to the final stage, we will have a detailed and completed plan, along with more accurate costs.</p>		

7	Major works in phases	Some of the scope of works could have been picked up few years ago instead of adding all of them in one large bill.	KT: Developing the scope is driven by multiple factors such as the condition of the asset being worked upon and capacity constraints within the wider programme for the Council. We try to be efficient in planning works and combining works often releases efficiencies and economies of scale.		
8	Surveys	Has there been any other surveys that you have not shared with us?	GR: No, no further surveys been done apart from the ones we have discussed.		
9	Gantt Chart & RIBA	We would like a Gantt Chart of the project, so that we are made aware of the critical dates, tasks, and what WCC are achieving. You said you can also provide information on RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects).	NW: We can produce that.	KT to provide a Gantt Chart with milestones and timeframes. JP to share information on RIBA.	Both will be made available during the Design Phase (Date: TBC).
10	Market Evaluation	Does the market evaluation exist?	GR: JN raised this question under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, and it was addressed on the 4th of August (market evaluation does not exist at this stage). We provide an estimation of how the contractor is expected to structure the costs for this project. We engage with the Commissioning Team, who collaborate closely with the contractors daily, to determine the projected expenses for the design phase. They have shared that the design expenses could range from 3% to 5%. Opting for the lower end, 3%, we have incorporated this into our project.		

11	Section 20	<p>(a) Residents are concerned to receive Section 20 notice with a £50,000 bill.</p> <p>(b) Would the estimated costs be the same or different on the Section 20 Notice of Estimate Letter?</p>	<p>NW: We are too early in the stage and the costs we shared are all an early estimate. Section 20 notice can be looked at a later stage.</p> <p>However, we, as a council, have recognised that the costs are escalating due to the current market rate and inflation. As a result, we are reviewing the payment options with the Cabinet Member.</p> <p>PH: It is likely to change, and it is based on the detailed design survey. The current estimates are not considered as a final estimate and therefore cannot be included on the Section 20.</p>		
12	United Living	(a) Are we giving the option to change our contractors?	<p>NW: United Living has a long-term partnering agreement with Westminster and is the main contractor for this project. However, they subcontract certain tasks, and residents can nominate and be part of the decision making for this tendering process.</p>		
13	Roof	<p>JN: The roof is under guarantee, so do not touch the roof work in case it voids the guarantee.</p>	<p>KT: The roofs at Blandford estate are under Guarantee at present. There are no major works to the roofs at part of the scope. We are currently in conversation with Langley (who the warranties are with), they are visiting site in August to check the condition of the roof and their warranties. Marco requested this to ensure WCC had no issues in this respect. Once we have an update from them, Marco will make sure the information is stored for reference.</p>		

14	Gates	Does this project address the gates?	GR: No, the Electrical Repairs Team that manages Oakray have said that only a few gates that need repairing, so capital investment is not required.	For discussion with residents – if residents want the gates included we can discuss as part of the scope.	
15	Health & Safety Standards	How do you define the hazards of H&S standards?	GR: It will be shown on the detailed design report.		
16	Quality of work	How do you plan check the contractor's quality of work, so that what we are paying for is justified?	GR: Each project has a Project Manager, Quantity Surveyor, Quality Manager and a Resident Advocate. The Quality Manager will be working with the contractor to inspect the quality is to the highest standard. SA/GR: Once the project is complete, it transitions to the 12 month Defect Period. Throughout this period, any faults that occur will be reported to the contractor for resolution. Additionally, following the 12-month defect period, any aspects of the work guaranteed by a warranty will be addressed by the manufacturer (rather than the contractor), at no additional cost.		
17	Quality Check	Can you let us know where United Living have carried out their works for the council, so we can check and judge if they are good enough for our project.	JP and NW have agreed to provide residents with some information.	JP/GR/KT to provide some samples of United Living's previous work in Westminster. Shah will provide an update during the Steering Group session and schedule a viewing to showcase some of UL's work.	Date: TBC