

COUNCIL - 6 APRIL 2017

SECOND SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

ITEM 17; SHEERWATER REGENERATION SCHEME PROPOSALS

1.0 Background

- 1.1 At its meeting on 9 February 2017, Council agreed that Secure Tenants should be consulted on the Council's proposals to invite Thamesway Developments Limited to submit proposals for undertaking the Sheerwater regeneration, and for the affordable housing to be operated by Thamesway Housing Limited. This is in accordance with the Council's obligation under Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985.
- 1.2 It should be noted that the consultation was not an opportunity for Secure Tenants to comment on the merits of the proposed regeneration.

2.0 Consultation

- 2.1 Consultation letters were sent to 392 Secure Tenants. The letters gave details of the Council's proposals, and asked Secure Tenants to answer "Yes" or "No" to the following question:

"Do you consider the change from New Vision Homes to Thamesway Developments Limited and Thamesway Housing Limited (both wholly owned subsidiaries of the Council) acceptable?"

Secure Tenants were also given the opportunity, in the consultation response form, to provide any other comments they wished to make on Thamesway's proposed involvement in the Sheerwater regeneration.

The 28 days' consultation period ended on Monday 3 April 2017.

- 2.2 Forty-nine responses were received by 3 April 2017. One "late" response was received on 5 April 2017 and has been taken into account. Of these responses, forty-one answered "Yes" to the question, whilst nine answered "No", i.e. 82% of the respondents supported the proposal to use Thamesway companies in undertaking the Sheerwater regeneration and granting tenancies of the affordable housing.
- 2.3 Twenty-nine respondents made additional comments when returning their consultation responses. These are set out on the attached appendix. Personal information which could identify the respondent has been redacted. This includes references to personal circumstances and medical conditions which are of concern to the respondent. These matters will be taken into account, under the Community Charter, when the options available to secure tenants are discussed, on an individual basis, with each secure tenant (if Council decides to proceed with the regeneration).
- 2.4 A number of respondents commented on the nature of tenancies that would be granted by Thamesway. These cannot be "secure tenancies", as is the case with Council tenancies. Instead, Thamesway would grant "assured shorthold tenancies". The detailed terms of these tenancies need to be determined by Thamesway. As the Council is the company's ultimate shareholder, it can have input into what those terms are, particularly in respect of the following matters raised in the consultation:-

(a) Length of Tenancy/Security

An assured shorthold tenancy can be granted for a minimum period of six months. However, consideration could be given to granting the tenancies for an initial minimum period of, say, 3-5 years. At the end of this period, the tenancy would continue unless determined, e.g. for breach of the tenancy conditions. Consideration could also be given, at the end of the initial minimum period, to granting an extension to the guaranteed period of occupation (dependent on the individual's housing needs at that time).

(b) Rent Levels

A number of respondents have made comments in respect of the rents that would be charged by Thameswey. Paragraphs 5.6 and 5.7 of the main report to Council detail the provisions that will be applied to rent levels, i.e. rents will start at an acceptable "social" level, and be maintained at that level.

(c) Right to Buy

The statutory "right to buy" will not apply to properties occupied under Thameswey's assured shorthold tenancies; there is no intention that a voluntary right should be granted. However, consideration could be given, in the future, as to how tenants could be assisted in acquiring a property of their own.

- 2.5 There are thirteen "affordable" units included in Phase 1 of the proposed regeneration. The detailed terms of the proposed tenancies of these units can be the subject of further consultation, by the Council, prior to the tenancies being granted by Thameswey. The Council can ensure that its views on those terms are addressed by Thameswey when the tenancies are granted. This process can inform the tenancies which are granted of properties in subsequent phases.

3.0 Conclusion

- 3.1 Council should carefully consider the responses to the statutory consultation with Secure Tenants before it reaches a decision on the Sheerwater regeneration proposals.
- 3.2 In view of the clear majority of respondents supporting the change from New Vision Homes to Thameswey companies, Officers' view is that Council should proceed as recommended in the main report to Council.
- 3.3 A letter detailing the action taken by the Council following the consultation will be sent to each respondent.

Date Published:

6 April 2017

Background Papers:
Consultation Letters (personal details redacted)

REPORT ENDS

Sheerwater Regeneration
Section 105, Housing Act 1985 Consultation Responses

Additional Comments from Secure Tenants who answered “Yes” to the Consultation Question, i.e. “Do you consider the change from New Vision Homes to Thamesway Developments Limited and Thamesway Housing Limited (both wholly owned subsidiaries of the Council) acceptable?”

1. Thank you for the services you are providing and for communicating to us about changes taking place.
2. As long as all promises are kept and I can be re-located to an equally sunny and light flat, as I am very happy where I am.
3. Hopefully they will provide the same supported flats that were first described to us.
4. In principle I agree. Would like clarification of the following:
Always remain a secure tenant of WBC services.
What part will NVH play. Will they oversee repairs and rent collection.
New company - how will tenants be able to access them with complaints etc.
What opportunities will there be for tenants involvement in shaping housing services. How will this change affect other tenants on Sheerwater.
Regeneration:
Will social tenants have an opportunity to source an independent advice?
Will tenants have a say as how contractors and designs of their homes as was spoken about at the first meeting for obvious reasons - was not noted or talked about again.
5. When I visited the Vision Homes sheltered accommodation in Reading a few years ago I was very impressed. My elderly friends and I were looking forward to moving into our new homes on Sheerwater estate. I will be [] this [] and would like to see the same ideas as Reading Vision Homes have done here on Sheerwater. The following would be great
 1. Eyelevel cooker so that I don't have to bend down.
 2. Balconies.
 3. Wet Rooms.
 4. Lounge areas on each floor with TV so if you want to be social and have a chat you can.
 5. Hairdressers.
 6. Laundry room.
 7. Wide doorways.
 8. Assist bars for either side of toilets.

I look forward to hearing more in the future.

[WBC Note: Some of this response has been redacted as it could identify the respondent]

6. On the face of it I have no objection to Thamesway Housing Ltd being the new landlord, however I have read with some concern that there have been some causes for concern and it was even described as a car crash company.
Below are the issue I spoke of with NVH and the WBC, which are important to me for a management company and especially for the regeneration:

1. It's important for me to feel safe with a working secure entry system.
2. It is important that Thameswey is able to provide the same services as does NVH and improve on those. E.G. timely repairs, flexibility built into the service for people that work Monday to Friday jobs that cannot time off to suit the contractor.
3. Thameswey shouldn't make unnecessary charges like NVH does: e.g. TV aerial system that few of us use but still get charged for and yet leave the roof cluttered with old aerial systems that we were told were going to be removed.
4. Thameswey should consider its green credentials. Given the fact that pollution is fast becoming a big issues in towns and cities Thameswey should do its bit to be greener in every way.
5. Thameswey should honour promises that NVH undertook in the Sheerwater Projects to install car charge points in the underground car parking.
6. Thameswey should NOT over populate one area with too many 'vulnerable' people like drugs users, alcoholics, and ex-offenders, which have caused issues for the decent people of Sheerwater – such as car vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

All of these are key points for a management company who is going to be responsible for the safety of its residents. Many of us in Sheerwater have felt for a long time that we are nothing more than a source tapping into cash in small ways.

If Thameswey does take over then issues like the ones I have addressed needs to be listen to.

So if Thameswey can improve all these issues and more you'll get my vote.

[WBC Note: Some of this response has been redacted as it could identify the respondent].

7. Dear Ray Morgan, I appreciate and support the Woking Borough Council plan of regeneration proposals for Sheerwater Because I think this plan is for the wellbeing for the people of Sheerwater. I read all the charter on the councils website and I also appreciate your all steps which you will take about rehousing options and compensation to compensate the people in removal. I hope when this plan of regeneration is finish in future and if I want to come back in Sheerwater again you will give us a home under the Woking Borough Council property not any other housing association. Thanks.
8. Dear Ray Morgan, We are appreciate and support the Woking Borough Council plan of regeneration proposals for Sheerwater. Because I think this Plan is for the wellbeing for the people of Sheerwater. I read all the charter on Councils website and I also appreciate all of your steps which you will take about rehousing and about compensation to compensated the people in removal. I hope when this Regeneration Plan is finish in future and if I want to come back in Sheerwater again you will give us a house under the Woking Borough Council property not any other housing association. Thanks.
9. Hope the services will be better and improve from NVH.
I hope to remain a social tenant of WBC and continue to pay social rent.
If I am allocated a new property under the regen I want to remain a social tenant and social rent.
Does the change in new tenancy, will effect our home disturbance loss payments.
10. Whilst I believe in the regeneration I do now wonder if this 'change' of developer had been planned from the outset.
New Vision have their faults but the current staff seem to be more competent than the original team.

As long as the new management team actually puts the residents first not profit. As long as the new estate is looked after and cared about. As long as there is space for new shops and amenities. As long as there is DECENT & EFFECTIVE sound proofing and insulation. then I will support whoever redevelops the area.

11. As long as terms and conditions remain the same.
12. I will be happy if Regeneration Project of Sheerwater will be accepted and proceed. I can't wait.
13. I wish to move as soon as possible.
I don't mind if I leave Sheerwater.

[WBC Note: Some of this response has been redacted as it could identify the respondent].

14. Whilst I think the regeneration is a good idea especially for younger families I do hope the older generation are not forgotten if the Council do go ahead. I am worried for myself and many others in my position.

I hope [family] history has a part to play in any relocation. I wish the council well with its proposals and wait to see what happens should the plan go ahead

[WBC Note: Some of this response has been redacted as it could identify the respondent].

15. I am anxious about having to move again and need as fluid a move as possible I need as much information and notice as your able to give me. As long as I get the help and compensation that you have promised it should be ok. I don't want to move before I need to because []. At least living here in Sheerwater I know people and have good connections.

[WBC Note: Some of this response has been redacted as it could identify the respondent].

16. As a vulnerable council tenant my main concern is about being re-housed in a supported environment and still as a secure council tenant NOT as a housing association tenant. I think there are potential risks in the future for changing from New Vision Homes to Thamesway, but it seems right somehow that Woking Council own the company re-building Sheerwater, though for myself I really wish they would leave it alone.
17. We think it's a good idea, as these flats have had their day. Damp, Wet, Cold, good for the area, and good for the people especially the kids, go ahead as soon as possible. Thanks.
18. I would like to comment that all the information provided in this package were very helpful and provided assurance that the Council's intentions if the project goes ahead all the tenants will be looked after.

19. As a Sheerwater person born on the Estate, I think the regeneration is very much needed. The estate has been run down and jaded for many years, more so the flats, ours has floors that are breaking up, damp areas etc. The only issue I have is the uncertainty of time scale. It makes it difficult to plan decorating etc as obviously don't want to fit new carpets if only needed for a short time. Think personally should the regeneration go ahead, a good idea would be to give a rough guide to the phases etc, just so people know how long they have till they are likely to move.

20. Yes I live on a ground floor in []. I don't see the point in demolishing [] because the properties are not very old. PS I did go to the Regen shop in Sheerwater.

[WBC Note: Some of this response has been redacted as it could identify the respondent].

21. I don't mind the improvements of houses but I need to make sure that there is a temporary place we can stay in until the next property is available to me.
22. We both work in the Area and will have to stay or we lose our jobs.

Additional Comments from Secure Tenants who answered “No” to the Consultation Question, i.e. “Do you consider the change from New Vision Homes to Thamesway Developments Limited and Thamesway Housing Limited (both wholly owned subsidiaries of the Council) acceptable?”

1. You intend to build on flood plains which you know doesn't work through your experience in Byfleet & Old Woking and you couldn't get that right.

You were meant to make new amenities in Sheerwater recreational grounds, but don't have the money.

You want to put another 800 people on to the estate, where are the school places going to come from an over bursting school system already. The school simply have got the places to cope.

Parking, where you going to get the parking spaces from, there's cars on grass verges, parked on curbs so you can't get through. So where you going to put all these extra cars.

Why demolish some of the best housing stock you have. I don't want to live somewhere that you and hear what someone saying 3 doors away like Bullbeggars. And lets face it, you will give the best of Sheerwater to the private sector because that's where the money is.

2. There is no definite date announce for the plan and we are not in a position to wait indefinitely for the plan to commence - to move to another property. There is no clarity in the Charter announced about right to buy for the new property.
3. There is a delay in the project already. There's no guarantee that the project will be finished on time. There's no clarity about new property allocation regarding right to buy.
4. Dear Mr Morgan, I am writing to you to give my comment. I said no because the changes will affect me. The rent become very higher also change my tenancy contract and could change from permanent to temporary.

The Council services and repair well concerted, cheaper and very quick.

Council help vulnerable people and support them and take whole responsibility for them, for all that I would like the Council my landlord and want them to remain in Sheerwater because I like my area and community. I understand for change and I like improvement but I need secure tenant of council my home.

5. It is not acceptable because I understand that I will not be given a secure tenancy by Thamesway.
6. I do not agree with regeneration because it destroys our homes and community for generations. Why do you only pick on a select few?
7. Firstly we would like to ask “What previous letter to all residents?”

When the regeneration was originally dropped on us with only dictation where consultation should be, it was stressed at great length that NVH had been contracted to deliver from start to finish at NO COST TO COUNCIL OR RESIDENTS.

The fact that the council has not admitted why nvh have pulled out, choosing instead to state the contract has been completed in full, straight away calls into question all of the communication – openness - honesty statements made in the Charter.

It is stressful enough facing having our homes taken from us in this way, with previous promises of like for like replacement not forthcoming. We have genuine concerns and specific needs [] and have communicated these at every opportunity, together with making proactive suggestions most of which have been until recently ignored.

To now face the prospect of being expected to pay for the regeneration as the Council recoups its costs through Council Tax & rent increases is unacceptable.

In conclusion, no decision can be taken until openness, honesty justification of costs and engagement issues are resolved, as recommended by ISSP.

It is not acceptable to state 'Everything is done by email' to justify lack of communication/engagement knowing not everyone has e-mail or even a telephone on this 'deprived' estate. We all have a postal address yet it seems the Council deem this method irrelevant to the point that some residents are still unaware of what is happening around them!

[WBC Note: Some of this response has been redacted as it could identify the respondent]