

<b>Committees:</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Community and Children's Services – For Information Housing Management and Alms-houses Sub-Committee – For Information	19/06/2020
<b>Subject:</b> Windsor House Consultation	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>
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## Summary

This report summarises the results of consultations with residents at Windsor House from May 2019 to February 2020, which was carried out to ascertain whether the residents were in favour of regeneration on their estate.

Residents were initially offered three options:

- Option 1: Estate stays as it is, with repairs and maintenance
- Option 2: Some additional housing introduced on the estate
- Option 3: Estate regeneration.

Results from the consultations indicate that the residents were not in favour of regeneration on the estate; they preferred the estate to remain as it is with the City of London Corporation (CoLC) continuing to carry out repairs and maintenance. The consultation exercise was useful as it also highlighted many estate-wide issues for the CoLC to address. Furthermore, the CoLC has now established a clear policy for leaseholders should demolition be carried out as a result of estate regeneration. It is proposed that the findings of the report are noted, but that a further report is presented to Committee in 18 months to ascertain whether attitudes on the estate have changed.

## Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note the report.

## Main Report

### Background

1. Windsor House was built in 1927 and consists of 104 flats, 32 of which are held on long leases. The 72 rented flats comprise 14 one-bed units, 30 two-bed, 27 three-bed and one four-bed. The building is a steel-framed construction of five storeys and has no lift access. Ground-floor flats are also accessed by a step and consequently do not have level access up to their entrance. The flats are 25% below the minimum current space standards recommended in the London Plan. Extensive repairs are required on the estate, including window replacement, which is scheduled to start in Quarter 2 of 2020/early 2021.
2. It was resolved in January 2018 to commission a feasibility study to examine the possibilities for development on the estate. Curl la Tourelle Head Architecture was appointed to carry out this study. The results of this study were reported to Members in January 2019. It was noted that a considerable increase

in the number of better-quality units could be provided. The complete regeneration of the whole estate would double the number of units with the provision of better-quality housing that met space standards and resolved mobility/access issues that currently exist, addressing our housing needs. From the Housing Needs March 2020 waiting list, a total of 19 applications were from Windsor House residents waiting to be rehoused due to: overcrowding; underoccupancy; adult children who occupied their parents' flat; and two households in need of a ground-floor property for mobility and medical reasons.

	Total waiting list	Windsor House
Studio	299	6 (adult children)
1-bed	113	3
2-bed	250	6
3-bed	100	4
4-bed	020	0
Total	782	19

*Figure A: Waiting list as at March 2020*

- It was resolved in January 2019 by this Committee, to appoint a communications consultant (Soundings Ltd) to engage with the residents of Windsor House to ascertain if the residents would be potentially in favour of redevelopment on the estate. The consultation also focused on other issues, such as residents' housing needs, any mobility issues, problems with the fabric of the building and their homes, and estate-wide issues such as security, access to garden and playground areas, and use of the community centre.

### **Estate Management Issues**

- The consultation indicated that there was a strong community on the estate, with several residents having lived there for a generation. There was also an active community group set up by residents that held regular coffee sessions. It was for this reason that any proposal for regeneration would be carried out in phases, with a commitment that no resident would have to move more than once during the development of the estate. A local lettings plan was also adopted giving priority to existing tenants on the estate. During the consultations, the following estate-wide issues were raised:
  - Garden/playground access
  - Use of the Community Centre
  - Security.
- The Housing Estate Management team has been proactive in taking action to address these issues, with health and safety works being completed in the garden and playground. Residents are proud of their estate and have a strong community who want to maintain and improve the estate's high living standards. Although the consultation was primarily focused on possible redevelopment, it has also encouraged the residents to voice what they would like to see happening on their estate on a day-to-day basis, resulting in a positive reaction to resident engagement.

## **Consultation**

6. Door-knocking exercises were carried out in May 2019 to introduce Soundings to the residents, explain their brief and to invite residents to attend the first formal consultation meeting in June 2019. The first Residents Consultation Workshop was extremely popular, with 30 residents attending. At the meeting, residents were split into groups and they articulated their concerns, and how the estate could be improved. In August the second consultation was held over three days, one of which was held on a Saturday to engage with as many residents as possible. Further consultations were held in September 2019, January 2020 and February 2020, there were six consultations with a total of 116 residents in attendance.
7. At the beginning of the consultations, three options were presented to the residents: Option 1. the estate stays as it is with repairs and maintenance; Option 2. some additional housing introduced on the estate; or Option 3. estate regeneration. By the third residential consultation, feedback received from residents indicated that they were least interested in the option for additional housing. Therefore, at the fourth residents' consultation event, two options were presented: to leave the estate as it is; or to demolish and rebuild. Throughout the consultations, Soundings were exemplary in connecting with residents and making sure their views and concerns would be duly noted by the CoLC.

## **Leaseholder Policy**

8. There are 32 privately owned properties on the Windsor House Estate, with 16 of these being absentee leaseholders. Leaseholders were concerned about their property, if the option for full redevelopment of the estate was chosen. A policy for leaseholders was adopted by this Committee last year and has been relayed to residents as part of the previous residential consultation.
9. The policy recently agreed that leaseholders who occupy their flat as their only home could obtain a shared equity stake in a new-build flat by exchanging their existing flat at its full market value. Thus, if a leaseholder exchanged their flat which had a market value of £300,000 for a new flat worth £600,000. They would hold an equity stake of 50% but they would not pay rental on the 50% equity share held by CoLC. Upon resale, the purchase price would be split on the equity basis between the owner and the CoLC, with safeguards in place to ensure that it was at market value. This offer was not available to absentee leaseholders in accordance with our local plan; as they are not resident on the estate, the option open to a non-resident leaseholder would be compulsive purchasing only.
10. All leaseholders would be given the opportunity to sell back their flat to the City at full market value, with compensation to cover legal fees and stamp duty to enable them to purchase another property. Compensation would be calculated as a percentage of the sale price, with absentee leaseholders receiving slightly less than leaseholders whose flat was their main home.

## **Conclusion**

11. A total of 80 feedback forms from the final consultation event were received from residents, of which 48 chose Option 1: for the estate to remain the same; and 31 chose Option 2: to demolish and rebuild. (One resident's feedback form did not state which option they preferred.)
12. It is proposed to continue consulting with the residents (without external consultants), while the scheduled programmed works are carried out, including window replacement on the estate.
13. I shall report back to Committee in 18 months' time when a decision will be made whether this project should be closed or revisited.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Soundings final survey results newsletter
- Appendix 2 – Windsor House Summary

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