

DELIVERY PARTNER RESPONSE TO THE WDCO BOARD MOTION ON PHASE 4 DESIGNS

PLEASE NOTE: THIS RESPONSE IS CONFIDENTIAL TO WDCO BOARD MEMBERS

September 2022

This note sets out the response of the Woodberry Down delivery partners to the WDCO motion tabled and passed at WDCO Board on 21 July, 2022, on Phase 4 of the Woodberry Down regeneration (see Appendix 1). This motion has since been extensively discussed by the Design Committee where it was clarified that the motion did not call for a clean slate approach to the Phase 4 designs, but that there are areas where further clarification and exploration is needed.

Firstly, as a partnership we would like to reiterate our commitment to working collaboratively with WDCO and to thank you for your continued engagement in the plans to create new homes, public spaces and community and commercial facilities that are included in Phase 4 of the Woodberry Down regeneration.

To respond to the WDCO motion, two half day workshops were held with the Design Committee to discuss and explore the points raised. Workshops involved all the partners, and responses to the motion are summarised below.

The input received to the emerging designs through the Design Committee, alongside feedback from our extensive engagement with the wider community, has been invaluable. Any design process must recognise the constraints of the location, planning policies, building regulations as well as balancing the many benefits that new development can bring, and recognising the commitments to residents to be rehoused. We look forward to working together on the delivery of Phase 4 and future proposals for the Masterplan, and to ensuring the much-needed new homes and wider benefits can be delivered as soon as possible.

At the time of writing, Delivery Partners, WDCO and the ITLA are in the process of agreeing a date for a meeting and presentation of the Phase 4 scheme to the WDCO Board. It is crucial that this response is read in conjunction with the presentation to the Board, as the presentation will assist with fully understanding the rationale for design decisions and informing the discussion, as well as understanding discussing the constraints and parameters in more detail, and how lessons learned and feedback from the Design Committee have informed the design. **It would also be helpful to understand any questions the Board have in advance of the presentation.**

Further public engagement on the final designs will follow in October, where the final designs will be shared with residents.

We have addressed the specific issues raised in the motion below:

a) A vision for phase 4, and how this relates to past visions and principles

In preparing a new planning application for Phase 4, the intention was always to retain the Vision and Principles of the 2014 Masterplan. These principles underpin the Phase 4 designs, which have been further shaped by extensive feedback from the community, input from the design committee, pre-application discussions with the Council's Planning Service, and impartial oversight from the Council's independent Design Review Panel.

By adopting the same guiding principles and incorporating current planning policy and lessons learned we believe the current proposal still meets the original vision of creating an integrated, mixed and balanced community.

Just as the principles and vision are consistent with the 2014 Masterplan (refer to Appendix 2), the key design features and benefits incorporated into Phase 4 are also consistent. Namely:

- High-quality, mixed tenure homes, including new social rent homes for existing Woodberry Down residents
- A central square, intended to form a focal point for the estate
- Non-residential spaces facing onto the central square, designed flexibly to accommodate a range of commercial, civic or cultural opportunities
- Off street car parking spaces (although provided only for existing social tenants moving to phase 4 as per our commitments and blue badge holders)
- A podium garden for phase 4 residents
- A minimum of 41% affordable homes

Additionally, Phase 4 will bring forward a design which retains as many trees as possible, which is a shared priority of all parties.

While the design process will of course establish the physical development of Phase 4, our overall ambition for the phase also incorporates additional workstreams which are running in parallel, including: the Ground Floor Strategy, the Library Feasibility Study and the Cultural Strategy, which will be explained in more detail below.

b) A community infrastructure plan

Since beginning the Woodberry Down regeneration, there has been a commitment to delivering high-quality new community infrastructure alongside the many new homes being built here, and this remains a priority for Phase 4.

To date, the regeneration has delivered new facilities including the Redmond Community Centre, run by Manor House Development Trust, and provided over £5million towards libraries, adult learning, youth centers, education, the children's centre, leisure facilities and and the wetlands.

Moving forward, the Council is leading the process of creating a high-quality new mixed-use community space in a prominent location overlooking Spring Park in Phase 2, and Phase 3 will include a new 60sqm community space.

As part of the planning submission for Phase 4, a socio-economic report covering the impact that the proposal will have on local infrastructure will be submitted. This will include: health, education, employment, play space, leisure and other community facilities, alongside measures to mitigate this impact.

In addition, a Ground Floor strategy will be prepared setting out how flexibly designed ground floor spaces in the new buildings can provide commercial, cultural and civic spaces. It will also include a comprehensive review of the existing ground floor uses. Separately, the Council is undertaking a Library Feasibility study to test opportunities for a library within the new development. This will help shape the final designs for Phase 4 and the new masterplan, and feed into the Ground Floor Strategy. The Ground Floor strategy brief will be shared with, and input sought from, the Design Committee. It has also been agreed, through discussions with the Design Committee, that the Ground Floor Strategy will include identifying the potential for an alternative 'anchor' civic use(s) as part of the overall Phase 4 facilities if the library is not feasible.

c) A retail and arts strategy

Last year the Design Committee helped select Dallas-Pierce-Quintero (DPQ) to lead on the development of a Cultural Strategy for Woodberry Down, building on the existing Arts Strategy that was created with the Arts Strategy Group and an external consultant Jeni Walwin. This strategy will be broader, creating a cultural and creative vision that includes ways in which the cultural identity can be woven into the fabric of Woodberry Down, as well as identifying opportunities for community engagement and place shaping projects, and establishing commissioning principles for public art.

To date, DPQ has hosted a variety of engagement sessions with local groups and residents, including a lantern making workshop which formed part of the successful Winterfest celebration. Further engagement will follow in autumn 2022, which will help refine the designs for both Phase 4 and beyond as part of the masterplan engagement.

As outlined above, a Ground Floor Strategy covering both retail and community/civic uses is being progressed for Phase 4 and the masterplan. The Phase 4 non-residential floorspace around the edge of the central square has been designed as flexible space, meaning it can come forward as a variety of different uses in the future. Designing it flexibly ensures it has the best chance to meet the future needs of Woodberry Down.

Details about how the space will be used will continue to be brought back to the Design Committee.

d) Serious consideration to be given on scrapping the podium and replacing it with a ground level heavily wooded garden with the retention of all existing trees and with access for all

To understand the proposals for Phase 4 it is important to understand the parameters that underpin them, including the elements that have a 'land take'. These include 1,125sq.m of plant room space

for the operation of the buildings, and uses required by planning policy, such as 310sq.m of bin storage which also need to be located within 25m of people's homes, circa 830 cycle parking spaces, and 1,705 sq.m of play space.

To accommodate all of these uses the current proposal for Phase 4 includes car and cycle parking, plant and bin stores at ground floor level, with a residents garden with play space for all tenures to use at first floor. This is the same design solution as proposed in the 2014 Masterplan and is an approach that we have used successfully in the earlier phases of the Woodberry Down regeneration.

One of the Council's core commitments in the Woodberry Down regeneration is that existing social rented tenants should be no worse off as a result of the regeneration, therefore there is a need to provide parking for those with an existing parking permit, which is one of the key constraints of the Phase 4 designs. The Council has confirmed a requirement for 53 spaces on Phase 4 to meet this commitment. Phase 4 also requires 11 accessible spaces to meet the planning policy requirement. Meaning Phase 4 needs to accommodate a total of 64 car parking spaces.

There is also a desire to maximise green spaces and biodiversity at Woodberry Down, and the podium option allows for a much larger area of usable green space than would be possible at ground level. This larger green area also helps the scheme meet the urban greening factor policy and improves the net biodiversity. Alongside the design of the blocks on Seven Sisters Road, the proposals for the podium garden have been carefully thought through to ensure there is a buffer to Seven Sisters Road to the benefit of the podium users and to improve air quality and reduce noise in both the garden and central square.

The size of the podium garden reflects the number of homes included in this phase. To provide a comparison the Phase 2 Block E provides 1,500sq m of podium garden for residents use, equating to 8.3 sq.m per home. Phase 4 has a 3,923sq.m garden shared by 470 homes, equalling 8.2sq.m per home.

It is also worth noting, that following discussion within the Design Committee workshops, the potential to have public access to the podium through the library is also being explored further with planning, and through the library feasibility study.

e) A detailed plan for the central square, with its possible enlargement and proposing what should be in the square and how it will reflect and enhance local character and the area's relation to water and New River

The central square will form a focal point for Woodberry Down and has been reorientated since the 2014 masterplan to maximise the space and retain more of the existing trees. The space also relates to the existing ground floor uses along Woodberry Grove to give a more open aspect and shared space as well as providing a link with the green finger along Rivulet Gardens to the reservoir.

The proposed design reflects the feedback from the community to use this space for a variety of different activities. The space has been designed in a way which balances a mix of planted green areas, areas of hard standing and benches on the square itself, and flexible floorspace in the buildings around the square, to be able to accommodate different uses and best meet the future needs of the Woodberry Down community.

Our early consultation suggested residents wanted to see a library at Woodberry Down. The Council is therefore undertaking a feasibility study to explore opportunities for this and we have ensured there is enough flexibility in the developing Phase 4 proposals to accommodate a library.

It has been agreed with the Design Committee that should the library not be feasible, the Ground Floor Strategy will identify potential civic or community 'anchor' uses which could be feasible, as part of the overall Phase 4 facilities.

The central square represents a real opportunity for public engagement and partners are committed to maximising opportunities to reflect the history, heritage, culture, and community at Woodberry Down. Through engagement with local residents we will be developing a cultural strategy to guide aspects of the design.

f) No buildings above 16 stories, unless an increase is specifically agreed in consultation and negotiation similar to which produced the promise on this in the Second Masterplan consultation

The height and density of the buildings proposed for Phase 4 have been informed by the changing planning policy context, both in Hackney and London, with higher density designs now often encouraged and expected.

Designing higher density buildings can help accommodate the number of new homes needed, including maximising genuinely affordable housing, while providing more public and communal space.

The taller building also helps to improve the environmental conditions of the new homes, the communal areas and the central square by maximising daylight and sunlight whilst also shielding the central square from the wind impact. Initial technical studies have shown that the location of a taller building in Phase 4 will not affect any heritage asset or detract from the surrounding townscape or views. This is an improvement on the 2014 Masterplan proposal.

The massing of the proposal has been discussed by the Design Committee, with the Council's planning services, and also formed part of the public consultation. The Design Review Panel and the GLA have also considered the design in some detail and both have given positive feedback.

As a delivery partnership we have to take into account and assess feedback from the wider community, planning guidance and the other constraints and factors that influence the design approach. While input from the design committee has been invaluable in developing these proposals and we will always look to reflect these views in the designs, we will not be in a position

to specifically negotiate the proposed massing, and the design, density and height will ultimately be a decision for the local planning authority.

The Design Committee influence has, however, been significant in influencing further studies to explore how the space will 'feel' by looking at the impact of the buildings on the sunlight/daylight conditions and also importantly, on wind conditions. This influence and the positive impact it has had on the scheme was acknowledged at a recent meeting with the GLA.

g) Thorough discussion within WDCO to be held on proposing an increase in the percentage and total of affordable homes; fewer percentage of private homes. The consideration of a pilot scheme for key worker housing provision

As you will be aware, the overall Woodberry Down regeneration needs to incorporate a minimum of 41% affordable housing, a figure set within the Principal Development Agreement (PDA). Like WDCO, we are committed to maximising the amount of genuinely affordable housing at Woodberry Down and the plans for Phase 4 exceed this figure, including 43% affordable housing and a significant number of large four and five bed social rent homes.

We also need to take into account the overall viability of the plans, with the scheme being funded through the income generated by sales, and the need for the proposals to go beyond just housing.

Any planning application will need to include a financial viability assessment (FVA) setting out the level of affordable homes provided, which will be scrutinised by independent experts at both the Local Planning Authority and the GLA to determine the level of affordable housing possible.

Any surplus profit that is subsequently generated by the regeneration, known as overage, will be split equally with the Council and ringfenced for Woodberry Down. This is enshrined in the contract between the delivery partners, so residents can be reassured that the maximum amount of affordable housing will be delivered at Woodberry Down.

With regard to different forms of affordable housing, the Council will be setting up a Hackney Affordable Housing Commission working with the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission to explicitly look at the role and scope of intermediate housing. This will explore different non-social housing tenure options including for people such as key workers, acknowledging the huge housing need in Hackney and the affordability challenges posed by shared ownership. Any outcomes from this will feed through to future discussions and negotiations regarding the Woodberry Down regeneration and will never dilute the existing commitments to social housing nor the aim to increase provision.

h) Different options for parking provision for social tenants

As mentioned above, the Council made a clear commitment that existing social rent residents and returning leaseholders will be no worse off as a result of the regeneration, and the re-provision of parking to honour this is one of the key parameters in developing the Phase 4 designs. Planning policy supports this re-provision, but the expectation is the new spaces will be off-street.

However, once all existing social rented tenants have been rehoused there will no longer be a requirement to provide parking aside from the accessible spaces and spaces for returning leaseholders.

As above, the delivery partners explored this in detail with the Design Committee, including the impacts of removing the car parking and lowering the podium. The presentation to the WDCO Board will explain this visually in terms of the 'land take' of the parking (as well as for the necessary plant and statutory requirements for refuse and bicycle parking, as discussed above).

Through the Design Committee workshops, Delivery Partners agreed with the Design Committee that options to reduce Parking requirements in future phases of the development is something that we will explore as part of the development of the masterplan.

i) A full and independent consultation on the final proposals, including public meetings, focus groups and questionnaires. WDCO to be given unrestricted access and inspection rights to the process of this consultation

Extensive engagement on the Phase 4 proposals has been undertaken. The Phase 4 engagement is being led by Comm Comm UK, an external specialist whose selection was informed by the Design Committee.

The Consultation Group, a sub-group of the Design Committee, was formed to consider in detail and discuss the plans for public consultation for both the Masterplan and Phase 4. The Design Committee then agreed on a series of objectives to ensure effective communication based on the objectives set out by the Tree Task and Finish Group.

The consultation approach and materials have been (and will be, ahead of the next round of public engagement) fully considered by the Consultation Group, and be presented to the Design Committee before any public consultation. Delivery Partners will continue to work with the Consultation Group to ensure that we are meeting these objectives and will continue to share the consultation plan and materials with the Design Committee before any public consultation.

During the Second phase of public consultation from 13 June to 1 August 2022, 16,000 newsletters were issued locally as part of wider promotion to encourage people to have their say. Four consultation events were held during this period across the estate and at different times, which were attended by over 200 people

This was supported by online consultation on the Commonplace website, with 129 people having their say online.

Focus groups have been held with a number of organisations to explain how to get involved with the consultation, and ongoing engagement continues with local schools and community groups.

The content, format and groups consulted were discussed and agreed with representatives from all partner organisations at the Consultation Group to ensure that the information prepared and shared was clear and informative.

As part of the planning application, we will submit a Statement of Community Involvement which will set out in detail the consultation process, responses, and how consultation has influenced the Phase 4 designs. This will be available for scrutiny as part of the planning application.

Further design development will be carried out with the wider community around both the detailed design and uses around the central square in Phase 4, and the development of the longer term masterplan.

Conclusion

Overall the Delivery partners have entered into the design process for Phase 4 in good faith and in the spirit of partnership working holding 34 meetings to date. The Partners are confident that the current design proposals are well thought out, supported by good design, and meet the brief. In doing so, the proposals retain and improve on? the Vision adopted under the 2014 masterplan.

We hope this response to the issues raised in the motion and the future presentation to WDCO Board will help in understanding the design decisions and how these have been influenced. We'd like to thank WDCO and the Design Committee for their feedback throughout the design process. To get the most from this response, it should be 'read' alongside a presentation from the design team and Delivery Partners, and we look forward to meeting with you in October.

In the meantime, if you have any questions ahead of the Board presentation please do contact the Independent Tenant and Leaseholder Adviser, Public Voice, who will collate comments and questions.

- Simon Slater: 07985 251834 or 020 8809 7203 or email Simon.Slater@publicvoice.london
- Roda Hassan: 07715 318125 or email Roda.Hassan@publicvoice.london.

Appendix 1 - WDCO motion

Discussed at WDCO Board meeting July 21, 2022.

Motion

This Motion calls for a root and branch re-think of the current proposals for phase 4. At the very least we call for:

- A vision for phase 4, and how this relates to past visions and principles.
- A community infrastructure plan.
- A retail and arts strategy.
- Serious consideration to be given on scrapping the podium and replacing it with a ground level heavily wooded garden with the retention of all existing trees and with access for all.
- A detailed plan for the Central Square, with its possible enlargement and proposing what should be in the square and how it will reflect and enhance local character and the area's relation to water and New River.
- No buildings above 16 stories, unless an increase is specifically agreed in consultation and negotiation similar to which produced the promise on this in the Second Masterplan consultation.
- Thorough discussion within WDCO to be held on proposing an increase in the percentage and total of affordable homes; fewer percentage of private homes. The consideration of a pilot scheme for key worker housing provision.
- Different options for parking provision for social tenants.
- A full and independent consultation on the final proposals, including public meetings, focus groups and questionnaires. WDCO to be given unrestricted access and inspection rights to the process of this consultation

Appendix 2 - Overall Strategy and vision for Woodberry Down

1. Provide a robust urban Framework

Creating a fully integrated community means getting the ground floor design right and paying particular attention to the network of public spaces.

2. Transform Community facilities

The Masterplan includes space for new retail and community uses. The plan includes flexible space to allow for facilities to come forward to meet the needs of residents including a Business Training and Development centre, three satellite community centres and a children's centre.

3. Efficient Public Transport

Improve the footpath network and bus facilities to integrate with Manor House underground Station.

4. Streets that put people first

Introduce attractive landscaping, safe pedestrian crossings and cycle routes. Put new parking underground or in podiums. Turn Seven Sisters road into a landscaped street.

5. Homes for a diverse and balanced population

New social rented homes to be mixed with private and intermediate homes creating a 'tenure blind' development. Provide a range of homes from 1 to 5 bedrooms with generous proportions.

6. A low carbon community

Meet a minimum of Code for Sustainable Homes level 4.

7. Making the most of water

Ensure that buildings open out to the New River and reservoirs, and waterside parkland is introduced for recreational enjoyment. Rainwater to be captured and recycled for landscape irrigation.

8. A range of open space and play facilities

New parks and a square are to be distributed throughout the area with a variety of play and sports facilities to suit children of different ages.

9. An ecological network

Preserve as many trees as possible and plant many more so that Woodberry keeps a green feel and thrives as a place for wildlife as well as people. Enhance the nature conservation value of the New River, especially next to the Reservoirs.

10. A framework for inspirational design

The Masterplan provides clear connections between the north and south of the site. These links will break down the barrier of Seven Sisters Road and define a clear network of open spaces. High design standards are to be applied throughout, with well proportioned, attractive buildings that incorporate high quality materials.

11. Securing delivery

Mechanisms are proposed to ensure that the execution of high design standards is achieved in practice and are economically viable. Implement a Phasing strategy to minimise disruption to residents and businesses. Delivery of community facilities and open spaces to be delivered early.