

Douglas Bader Park Colindale

Opportunities for estate renewal
August 2017

Home Group

Home Group is one of the UK's biggest housing associations and provides long term integrated housing, health and social care. As a social enterprise and charity all surplus made by our outright sales activity is reinvested in social homes and communities.

Home Group wholly owns Douglas Bader Park in Colindale, which has 271 affordable homes.

We are committed to providing homes our customers want to live in and wish to ensure that all customers have quality homes which promote social cohesion, wellbeing and self-dependence.

In April 2016 we carried out a full assessment of Douglas Bader Park which identified that homes within the estate are failing to meet those aspirations. After considering all other options we have concluded estate renewal is the best course of action to deliver long-term benefits to our current and future customers.

The majority of homes on the estate fail to meet London Plan space standards and due to their outdated construction method will continue to decline without significant investment. Many of the estate's properties are in a poor state of repair and provide sub-standard accommodation for our customers. The quality of existing properties is also having a direct, negative impact on lettings and the number of rental voids across the estate is increasing.

We would need to spend over £6.6 million on planned maintenance over next 30 years as well as around £2 million on structural/thermal repair costs. Rather than extending the life of these homes we believe the £8.6 million could be better used to provide high quality affordable homes for you.

Estate renewal will not only ensure customers who would like to stay on the estate can return to a new, high-quality home which meets the needs of their households and modern standards, but will also provide a mix of properties to reflect the broad range of housing need in Barnet and contribute to achieving a truly mixed and balanced community.

Why renewal?

Current problems on the estate:

- Properties are in a state of decline mainly as a result of how they were constructed (Wimpey No-fines construction).
- Evidence of decline in demand for homes on Douglas Bader Park, with an increase in letting time and rental voids as a result of poor quality homes.
- Almost all properties do not meet current London Plan space standards.
- Inefficient use of existing stock with many homes experiencing overcrowding.
- Poorly designed public and private space with no desirable through routes or pavements.
- Estate offers no sense of orientation, lacks natural surveillance.
- Rising reports of anti-social behaviour which is facilitated by the estate's convoluted layout which would not meet today's secure by design standards.

We believe regeneration should provide more than just improving the look of the estate. We want renewal to help:

- Create local jobs and improve the local economy
- Reduce fuel poverty by making the new homes much cheaper to heat and light
- Improve design to remove garages and dark corners to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour
- Introduce more natural daylight through use of larger windows to view the surrounding natural environment and improve wellbeing
- Larger and more spacious homes for our customers
- New green infrastructure and open space for the whole community to enjoy
- Offer customers the opportunity to own their home through shared ownership or potential right to buy.

Renewal - the options

To help us make our decision, we assessed the following options.

Option 1

Maintain the estate and repair damages as and when they occur

Advantages:

- No re-housing for our customers
- No disruption through potential building on site

Disadvantages:

- Financially unviable to repair all homes, the cost of which (£8.6 million) would need to be absorbed by Home Group
- The capital works programme, which covers the maintenance of homes, focuses solely on Decent Homes Standards and like-for-like replacement. This would not address the significant issues on the estate.
- 99.3% of properties on the estate fail to meet London Plan space standards
- No additional new affordable and private homes
- The estate will become out of character with the surrounding Grahame Park area which will be redeveloped and will likely exacerbate problems with lettings and increase the amount of rental voids
- Does not represent significant investment in homes or jobs at Douglas Bader Park
- If a Right to Buy scheme is implemented customers will struggle to obtain mortgages as many lenders will not cover properties which are Wimpey No-fines constructions
- Problems with overcrowding and inefficient use of space on the estate persist
- Customers continue to live in properties that are poorly insulated and costly to heat

Renewal - the options

Option 2

Redevelop only parts of the site

Advantages:

- Fewer customers would have to be relocated off the estate
- Some additional housing and jobs created (not as much as Option 3)

Disadvantages:

- Increase in repairs and maintenance costs for those customers without a new home
- Unconventional house layout restricts possibility of refurbishment and remodelling.
- Layout and constraints of the estate make this option almost impossible. Access for construction vehicles and equipment would be very limited and ultimately unachievable
- Significant funds would still be needed to maintain existing homes
- Parts of the site would continue to look out of place within the wider context of renewal and would likely struggle to be occupied in the long term
- The layout of the estate could not be comprehensively redeveloped and wayfinding meaningfully improved

Renewal - the options

Option 3

Comprehensive renewal of the entire estate

Advantages:

- Replacement of all existing homes, bringing every home up to a high, modern standard
- All properties will meet modern space standards with many customers being given a home bigger than their current property
- Homes which are more energy efficient and sustainable, reducing the cost of household bills
- Opportunities for further education, apprenticeships and training initiatives for customers on the estate and in the wider Barnet area.
- Possibility of owning a property under a Right to Buy scheme could be achieved in the new homes
- Choice offered to customers to return to the estate or assistance in relocating to another area
- Homes that are suitable for the needs of the households, ensuring no overcrowding/under-occupying
- Customer choice on interiors such as kitchens and flooring
- Improved layout, clearer wayfinding, landscaped amenity space which contribute to wellbeing
- Better integration of Douglas Bader Park to the surrounding area

Disadvantages:

- Customers lose their original homes
- Renewal over a number of years
- Customers likely to be temporarily relocated during the build programme

Conclusion

All approaches other than comprehensive renewal (Option 3) would still fail to address some of the inherent problems arising from the estate. It would be economically unviable to continue to maintain the estate in its current form.

Estate renewal offers a once in a generation opportunity to meet the needs of our current and future customers. The comprehensive renewal of the estate provides an ideal opportunity to build high quality sustainable homes which meet modern standards, thereby creating a vibrant place where customers would want to live.

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