



Mr Chris Lee

Director of Environment and Regeneration

London Borough of Merton
Civic Centre
London Road
Morden
SM4 5DX

31st October 2013

Dear Chris

I am writing to advise you of the outcome of last night's special board meeting to discuss the informal consultation process which we undertook with our residents.

The Merton Priory Homes Board have considered a number of reports on the work undertaken within MPH and the wider Circle group looking at the need for and possibility of regeneration on the Eastfields, High Path and Ravensbury estates. One of the reasons for looking at the possibility of regeneration is to improve the long term sustainability of the MPH housing stock.

Our Consultation with residents

As you know, we undertook a consultation exercise with residents of the three estates for a twelve week period between July and September 2013. The consultation followed MPH's promise to all residents that we would carefully consider how to improve the estates. MPH has worked hard to carry out repairs and make improvements when needed, but we need to consider the long term future of some of the homes to ensure living conditions, communal areas, and the surrounding environment are the best they can be on our estates.

At the special Board meeting in June 2013 Merton Priory Homes Board members were briefed on the framework, timetable and plan for consulting residents about the future of their homes and estates including the possibility of regenerating Eastfields, High Path and Ravensbury. The consultation started on 4th July and ended on 30th September 2013 and has been successful in reaching out to all residents, with over 90% of residents of all tenures contacted in person over that period. I set out for you at appendix one the amount of people on each estate with whom we consulted.

The consultation started on 4th July with the hand delivery of newsletters and a letter from the Managing Director to older and vulnerable customers. Newsletters and the MD's letter were hand



delivered to all other residents once we had made two attempts to contact each of the older and vulnerable residents in person.

Regular monthly newsletters were sent to all residents (and local stakeholders) to update them on the consultation programme, a frequently asked questions paper was sent out at the start of the consultation and an updated version was issued in September along with a letter advising those residents and property owners who we had not yet spoken to that the consultation would close on 30th September.

All written information was distributed to every resident (and non-resident property owner) regardless of tenure to ensure that they had access to up to date information throughout the consultation period. The percentages set out in Appendix One represent those residents with whom we had direct personal contact.

Five consultation events were held during afternoons/ evening and weekends on each of the three estates over the summer where residents' views were sought on the future of their homes and neighbourhoods including the possibility of regeneration of each of the three estates and the replacement of the existing homes. Attendance at the consultation events was consistently high with many residents attending multiple events to share their views about the future of their homes and estates.

In addition to the consultation events the MPH's dedicated consultation team worked to contact residents personally through home visits, phone calls and email. At the close of the consultation on 30th September the majority of residents on all three estates had been contacted.

Our consultation team has focused on vulnerable residents and hard to reach groups to make sure that they have been fully involved in the consultation process from the outset. This has involved repeat visits to homes as the consultation events have progressed to ensure that the most vulnerable tenants can have their say. Special events, such as coffee mornings have been organised to make sure elderly residents, who may not be able to attend the events, can take a full part in the consultation process. MPH has worked closely with the Uptown youth group to engage young people living on the estates. This has involved young people taking photos of different parts of the estate that they would like to see improved. MPH has also organised activities for children at the majority of the consultation events and gathered their feedback too.

On each of the estates we have worked through a series of exhibitions that enabled us to ask residents what they liked and didn't like about their neighbourhoods and homes and to start to present some possible solutions. We were clear from the start of the consultation that regeneration and the replacement of some or all of the existing homes on Eastfields, High Path and Ravensbury was an option under consideration. Each of the exhibitions was an opportunity for residents to give us their feedback and ask questions.

As the programme of exhibitions progressed, residents' feedback was used to shape the materials presented and the questions asked. This enabled us to present exhibition materials showing different types of housing, landscaping, building finishes and estate layouts and to find out what residents felt about the different options. On each of the estates the fifth and final exhibition of the initial consultation programme presented options showing what could be achieved through regeneration whilst reflecting the preferences expressed by residents at the previous four events.

Findings and feedback from Consultation Process

Based on the top line analysis of feedback from all of those who participated, there is support for and understanding of the need for change by residents on the three estates.



Details of the five consultation events on each of the three estates, including the consultation materials used and the questions asked of residents developed over the course of the five events as well as the responses and feedback from residents were considered by the MPH sub-committee on 23rd October.2013. The Board is satisfied that there is ample support to proceed further and to explore in more detail the type of regeneration appropriate for these estates.

At this point we do not require a deferral of the obligation to meet the decent homes standard on these estates since we have time to be able to meet this obligation. However subject to a positive response to further consultation and engagement over the next 6-9 months, we would expect to seek such a deferral in the future .

Common issues raised by residents of all tenures are set out at Appendix Two which shows the feedback themes for each of the estates. We intend to use this feedback over the next few months to help us shape how we start the next stage of our consultation process. The consultation team are aware of the need to deal sensitively with issues around the future of our customers' homes and communities and have dispelled considerable anxiety for many individuals over the course of the consultation. This approach would continue be used through the masterplanning and our ongoing communications with residents of all tenures.

Equality & Diversity

We have carried out an equality impact assessment on the methods of consultation to ensure that those with protected characteristics can participate fully in the consultation. We are not yet at the stage when a final decision on the exact works to be undertaken is necessary, when we reach that stage a full equalities impact assessment will be available so that the decision makers can take into account equalities issues when making their final decision. An equalities impact screening has been considered by the MPH Board.

At its Special Meeting last night, the Board considered in detail the key themes raised by our residents, together with the feedback received from the consultation events and the feedback from our sub-committee. They agreed in principle to proceed with the appointment of masterplanners to take us through the next phase of consultation with our residents.

If you require any further information then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Deborah Upton'.

Deborah Upton
Executive Director of Governance
Circle Housing