

Meeting – Thursday 24th October

TRA Hall, Ledbury Estate

-Draft Minutes-

Attendees

13 Residents

Alice Blair – Arup [AB]

Jenny Pattison – Arup [JP]

Mike Tyrrell – LBS Director of Ledbury [MT]

Ferenc Morath – LBS Head of Investment [FM]

Charles Hingston – CalfordSeaden

Jonathan Hutton – Calford Seaden

Cllr Kieron Williams – LBS Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Modernisation [KW]

Cllr Richard Livingstone LBS – Old Kent Road Ward Councillor

Cllr Michael Situ LBS – Old Kent Road Ward Councillor

Cllr Evelyn Akoto – LBS – Old Kent Road Ward Councillor

Cllr Leo Pollak – LBS Cabinet Member for Social Regeneration, Great Estates and New Council Homes [LP]

Neal Purvis – Open Communities / Meeting chair [NP]

Stephen Moore – Open Communities / Minute-taking

Apologies

Glenn Holmes

1. INTRODUCTIONS

1.1 NP opened the meeting with introductions around the table.

2. BACKGROUND FROM MIKE TYRRELL, LBS

2.1 MT explained that the meeting was to hear from Arup and their investigation into the towers at Ledbury. Arup were engaged by LBS in summer 2017 to investigate the structure of the block following concerns raised by residents. Their investigation led to Arup recommending a further series of works to strengthen the blocks in November 2017.

2.2 The Ledbury Resident Project Group drew up several options which were subject to consultative ballots by residents on those options. Residents voted to refurbish the blocks to a safe standard, an option which included the building of 81 new homes around the towers to fund the

additional refurbishment works. That was approved by the LBS Cabinet in October 2018, subject to further investigations by Arup that required one of the blocks to be vacated. As Bromyard House was closest to being totally vacant it was chosen as the block to have the further investigatory works to be undertaken..

- 2.3 Arup have carried out investigations into Bromyard House and are now in a position to report what they are recommending to give Bromyard House a further 50 years of life.

3. PRESENTATION FROM ALICE BLAIR, ARUP

- 3.01 AB presented Arup's findings with illustrative slides on a projector.
- 3.02 AB said she would be covering four key things: background on why we are here and doing this assessment; explaining the recent intrusive investigations in Bromyard House; the structural assessment of what that means; and the scheme design to deal with the problems Arup has identified.
- 3.03 Arup's work is focused on the resistance of the buildings to disproportionate collapse. The Ronan Point disaster led to new legislation regarding building construction standards. The construction of the Ledbury towers is not identical to Ronan Point but it is similar.
- 3.04 Arup are looking at how well these buildings can resist disproportionate collapse. What we have found is that the buildings do not meet those standards.
- 3.05 Arup also looked at wind loading, as taller buildings should be looked at again now its effects are better understood.
- 3.06 Arup have been carrying out intrusive investigations of the superstructure of Bromyard House, the lift and stair core, and the foundations – the foundations were not possible to fully investigate while the flats were occupied.
- 3.07 The residential towers do not meet the Government recommendations for disproportionate collapse. We understand the response by the council has included fire wardens on 24hr waking watch in each tower block, and two mitigation measures: the removal of the gas supply to the towers, and oxygen cylinders are not allowed to be used at the moment.
- 3.08 There is enough resistance in the buildings to wind load. What Arup are less sure about is the extent to which the walls are connected to the foundations. The foundations are 2.5m below ground level.
- 3.09 Arup have also looked at how the buildings could be strengthened to resist the likelihood of disproportionate collapse.
- 3.10 Arup recommendation is that steel trusses are erected on the roof, connected to vertical steel hangers, or beams, fitted inside residents' properties from the top down to level 8. These would connect to the floor slabs.
- 3.11 There would be some measures in every flat, which would reduce the size of any room affected
- 3.12 New floor slabs would be cast in every room, on top of the existing floor slabs. That would mean that your flats would be smaller. Below level 7 we would be casting a new floor slab, reducing the height of rooms by up to 120mm – approximately 5in. Above level 7 is where we have the additional steel elements. There would be two horizontal steel beams and vertical steel columns in each flat.
- 3.13 The stair core also does not meet the Government regulations against disproportionate collapse. All of the solutions for strengthening the existing stair core we could think of would mean that the stair core and lift would become unusable, as it would mean reducing the size of the lift and stairs

- 3.14 We are therefore suggesting that the central stair and lift core, and the bridges, are carefully demolished and rebuilt with a new layout. This can be done because the three parts of the building are possible to detach from each other, but it is a lot of work.

4. QUESTIONS FROM RESIDENTS

- 4.01 Q: What is difference in room width as a result of the columns you are installing?
AB: Each room would reduce in width by approximately 4in on both sides– that is the maximum reduction, and it is for every single room, on the 7th floor and above.
NP: The current size of the largest room is 3.6m, and it would take away 20cm (2x4inches).
- 4.02 Q: When the RPG was looking at options for refurbishment, the option included increased insulation. Is that included in these measures?
CH: It is not clear yet, as the scheme has not been designed. To clarify, 2.1m is the floor to ceiling height at its lowest point.
AB: You would notice the reduction in height the most in the doorways.
- 4.03 Q: Is it physically possible to demolish the stair core?
AB: Yes, it is possible to think of the buildings as three or five separate parts, if you include the link bridges. The three parts do not need each other in order to stand up. It is still a big job, but it could be done.
- 4.04 Q: How much of the roof truss will be visible from outside the building?
AB: It will be visible, but it could be covered in cladding something similar.
[MT suggested people look online for images of Winterton House, E1, which has a roof truss fitted.]
- 4.05 Q: Has this been done before?
AB: We have not implemented this structural solution. It would make sense to do one block to test this and check that it all works.
- 4.06 Q: Are you aware of this solution being used elsewhere? Has Arup or anyone else removed a stair core before?
AB: We have heard of other engineers doing exoskeleton solutions which I think we looked at. Arup had not copied this from anywhere else; this is a bespoke solution.
- 4.07 Q: What are the cost implications, and could the costs increase during the build?
NP: Costing is for the council and Calford Seaden to consider.
MT: Calford Seaden has only just seen the report. Full costings will be prepared by the end of November. The report going to council is going to ask us to look again at the costings.
AB: We have made recommendations, we have done some investigations, but we can't ever get all of the answers out of the building beforehand.
MT: 5.3.4 on p34 of the report sets out the further work needed if the project goes ahead.
- 4.08 Q: Critics of LPS systems refer to them being like a 'house of cards'. The concern is that if a flank panel is removed, will these steel beams do the job supporting? Will the building remain safe and rigid?
AB: Yes. If that situation arises, it is ready for action, but [under normal circumstances] the flank panel is still doing its job supporting the building.
- 4.09 Q: Does this work take into account the gas supply and oxygen cylinders?
AB: One of our assumptions is that gas will not be reinstated, but yes, it would be safe for oxygen cylinders.
- 4.10 MT: You are recommending a new slab on top of the foundations – is that the equivalent of underpinning?

- AB: No – you would be going in on the ground floor, removing the ground floor slab and pouring concrete in between the ground floor and the foundations 2.5m below ground.
- 4.11 MT: One assumption was to remove the concrete wall between the kitchen and living room, which is a non-load-bearing wall. Does that also include other non-load-bearing walls such as between the bathroom and the hallway, etc?
AB: We will come back to you on that.
- 4.12 A resident expressed concern that the replacement wall would not be strong enough to hang shelves from, etc.
- 4.13 Q: Would there be soundproofing added between flats?
AB: No – the walls between flats are all load-bearing walls which would not be removed. We were suggesting the wall between the kitchen and living room, and the corridor and the bedrooms, for example.
- 4.14 KW: On p30 of your report it refers under work ‘starting from the top floor’, to ‘remove the outer leaves of the flank wall panels’. What would that mean in practice?
AB: See p27: Part of the outer wall would need to be removed to access the inner wall to fix the steel plate.
- 4.15 Q: What is the approximate timescale?
JH: We would need to formulate an approximate programme.
MT: I would guess 15 months.
- 4.16 MT: Why would the outer leaves of the wall be replaced with a lighter skin?
AB: It’s less to do with trying to reduce the weight of the façade, but once you remove those outer panels it is very difficult to put them back again. It is more thinking, would you put them back, and if not, what would you put in their place? It wouldn’t be concrete, so it would be lighter.
- 4.17 Q: It seems in some ways we are getting a new tower with some original features. How much extra work is this?
AB: It is quite a lot more, but I can’t give you a number.
- 4.18 Q: The original Arup report described a bowing effect caused by heat as responsible for the cracks opening. Would this solution make any difference to that?
AB: We haven’t looked at that here, but if a new skin is being put on, we could take the opportunity to put in more insulation. It would have to be designed and thought about carefully, but it would improve that situation.

5. NEXT STEPS – CLLR KIERON WILLIAMS

- 5.1 KW said: This is a conversation with all the residents about what we do next. We need the costs to do that, and it will take a little while to get those from Calford Seaden.
- 5.2 As this is very different to last time, I would like to put this back to the residents alongside the council, and look at what this will cost and what that means for the homes.
- 5.3 This is new information, and much more detailed. We need to ask, what do people think is the best solution?
- 5.4 The Cabinet report will ask for the costings and once we have those we will go back again to the residents of the estate and take the time to look again at what might be the best option.
- 5.5 A resident asked: Whether KW would stick by the commitment made by his predecessor – that unless the residents vote for demolition of the tower blocks it will not happen?
KW said: I don’t know, and it depends what the costs come back as. If the new costs are astronomical it would not make sense to go ahead. I just want to work through with you what

as residents what is right to do. I only want to end up with an option that's right for the residents on the estate.

- 5.6 A resident asked: In order to help the funding of the works they will build more houses on the estate. Is 81 homes still going to be feasible to meet these costs, and if not, will there be thought given to what might be proposed?

KW said: I am suggesting that we look at all the options. The things that are given: I wouldn't want to see anything that results in fewer council homes than we have now.

- 5.7 A resident asked if KW is referring to the towers or the whole Ledbury estate, when he talks about 'the estate'.

KW said: It is only the area that has been previously looked at – bounded by a red outline in earlier plans.

- 5.8 MT suggested that he would include this commitment in next week's newsletter.

- 5.9 A resident asked: In effect, if the repairs go ahead, leaseholders will be getting a significantly less attractive flat, albeit a safer one. Would the council consider giving leaseholders an enhanced valuation of their property? The property's market value will fall if it is smaller and less attractive.

KW said: It is a good question, and I will take that away and think about it.

- 5.10 A resident asked: What about these poor tenants who have stuck with it throughout – what will happen to them?

KW said: We have always said that whatever homes are here, whether it is the current towers improved or something else, that residents will have the right to return to those homes and have first refusal on those homes. That doesn't change as a result of this. The only thing we have to work through is, in the light of this, is the option we have chosen still the right one? MT added that there were 46 or 47 properties still occupied at the moment, but it could be about 40 by the end of the year.

- 5.11 A resident asked: All the residents I have spoken to who have been moved out have been moved to properties that are much more expensive than the previous rent here. What are you going to do about the rents for new build homes here?

KW said: All the council flats will be rented at council rates, but I will take that back.

- 5.12 A resident asked: Have you got a cut-off figure for what would be too expensive [for the work]?

KW said: No. If it gets to a point where we could build equivalent tower blocks for less money then would we want to do that instead of refurbishing the existing blocks?

- 5.13 A resident asked: You could densify the estate, demolish those existing blocks and put up 25- to 40-storey blocks in their place?

KW said: I am open to considering anything that residents want me to consider.

MT added: We have previously considered that as part of the options appraisal following a suggestion from the RPG

KW said: The existing option includes building more homes around the estate.

- 5.14 A resident asked: Would a new appraisal take account of the wider development going on along the Old Kent Road?

KW said: My starting point would be: What is right for this estate?

- 5.15 NP thanked KW and summarised what has been discussed tonight and the timeline of the next steps, including the council's Cabinet meeting on Tuesday, 29th October.

- 5.16 A resident asked whether information on the Arup report would be given to residents on the wider estate.

MT said: A newsletter is being delivered to every resident in the towers at this very moment and then sent out to the rest of the estate over the next few days. Over the coming weeks the

newsletter will be an important source of information for residents on what happens next. .
The firm commitment is that residents will be consulted over the next steps. Hard copies of Arup's report will be made available for anyone who wants it.

5.17 NP asked if there were any further questions from the floor, and none were forthcoming.

5.18 KW said that anybody was welcome to attend the Cabinet meeting.

5.19 The meeting concluded.