

Subject: Clapham Park Estate Site Visit

Report to: Housing Committee

Report of: Executive Director of Secretariat

Date: 16 October 2014

This report will be considered in public

1. Summary

1.1 This paper sets out details of the Committee's site visit to the Clapham Park estate in Lambeth.

2. Recommendation

2.1 **That the Committee notes the record of the site visit to the Clapham Park estate on 2 July 2014.**

3. Background

3.1 As part of its investigation into the demolition and refurbishment of London's social housing estates, the Committee visited the Clapham Park estate on 2 July 2014.

3.2 Clapham Park is one of the biggest former council estates in Europe. It extends to some 150 acres in Lambeth, straddling Brixton, Streatham, Clapham and Balham and comprising around 50 multi-storey blocks. Many of these were built during the 1920s by the then London County Council, though other parts of the housing stock were built post-war and it is mainly these newer buildings which are being demolished. Over time much of the public housing fell into disrepair following decades of neglect. A major regeneration programme is currently ongoing with a view to refurbishing and/or demolishing the existing social housing and replacing it with new mixed tenure homes.

3.3 Overall some 7,000 people currently live in the area, and there are around 2,000 homes on the former council estates.

3.4 Clapham Park is currently owned and managed by Metropolitan Clapham Park, part of Metropolitan Housing Association.

4. Record of site visit

- 4.1 The site visit took place as part of an investigation which also included two public meetings in June and July 2014.
- 4.2 The purpose of the visit was to enable the Committee to see at first hand an example of the kind of refurbishment and rebuild work which is involved in a major regeneration programme. Members had the opportunity to discuss with senior representatives of the housing association and the borough their vision for the estate and how this has been shaped by funding opportunities and Government/Mayoral policy. They also saw for themselves how work is progressing and met a number of estate residents to discuss the programme from the tenant and leaseholder perspective.
- 4.3 The Committee held discussions with members of Metropolitan's staff, including Brian Johnson, Chief Executive; Carl Quilliam, Public Affairs Executive; Bernadette Marjoram, Regeneration Director; and Jon Maxwell, Regional Director for Housing; as well as Su Gomer, Lead Commissioner, London Borough of Lambeth.
- 4.4 The Committee heard that the estate comprises a wide range of building types, dating to different periods and in differing conditions. These require a range of different regeneration responses: the 1920s neo-Georgian former London County Council stock, for example, is well-built and is being refurbished. By contrast we were told that the 1950s and 1960s blocks are generally not in good condition and are being demolished. The option of building an additional storey had been explored for one building, but planning permission was refused and so the building has been emptied and is now awaiting demolition. The logistics of the decant process are complicated. For this reason work is undertaken in phases, with some new build being developed first in order to house existing residents who are decanted from buildings which are to be demolished. Metropolitan tries to limit the number of very disruptive double decants required (whereby residents need to move out and then later back in) by using Assured Shorthold Tenancies and then creating voids in buildings which are to be demolished.
- 4.5 Brian Johnson of Metropolitan explained that rebuild tends to provide greater opportunity to densify than refurbishment and is therefore advantageous in terms of realising land values and making efficient use of land. However opportunities are available to support densification alongside refurbishment, for example by using former garages and adding additional storeys to existing buildings, and refurbishment tends to be less disruptive for residents.
- 4.6 Su Gomer of Lambeth explained that the funding criteria applied to new build often do not allow for local housing need to be met in full locally, as new build grant is based around the Affordable Rent model, which sets rent typically at 65 per cent of market rate in London. Lambeth adopts a diverse approach to regeneration across the borough, seeking to meet the variety of housing need on a scheme by scheme basis by identifying a vehicle which can deliver for that scheme.
- 4.7 The Committee also heard that risk management plays a highly significant role in regeneration work, particularly with financial risks. The risks broadly fall into two categories:
- those relating to individual buildings, for example the chance of finding asbestos or further structural problems when refurbishing; and

- the wider risks of demolishing and building anew associated with estate regeneration, for example housing market cycles and volatility in land and property prices, which have more of an impact on the viability of different options in the new lower grant environment. Keeping promises made to residents is inevitably made much harder by this heavy reliance on the market.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 The Committee has the power to do what is recommended in this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

List of appendices to this report: There are none.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers:

[Demolition and Refurbishment of London's Social Housing Estates](#), Report to Housing Committee, 17 June 2014

[Resident Perspectives on the Regeneration of London's Social Housing Estates](#), Report to Housing Committee, 10 July 2014

[Housing Committee Work Programme 2013/14](#), Report to Housing Committee, 17 June 2014

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