



The purpose of this Briefing Note is to update the Leader, and the Executive Member for Safer, Stronger Communities on progress relating to the proposals for the Granby Renewal Area.

1. "Four Streets Area" – Ducie / Jermyn / Cairns / Beaconsfield Sts

Overview

Since Executive Board approval of the Lovell proposals in April 2007, progress has been slow but steady. Lovell have, by their own admission, not been as energetic as either they or we might wish but they have remained committed to the project despite substantial difficulties and uncertainties in relation to the housing market and community lack of confidence. Engagement with the community thorough the Granby Community Partnership (which includes Granby Residents Association) has maintained constructive and open dialogue despite some fundamental disagreements.

Redevelopment proposals

Lovell have carried out exploratory investigations at one vacant property in Ducie Street (Phase1) which has confirmed their initial impressions regarding the prevailing structural condition – the conclusion is that they are no better or worse than expected. There are problems relating to the presence of knotweed in the area which required in depth investigation but fortunately the outbreak seems to be limited to the rear of Ducie Street and can be dealt with. This is relatively good news. Detailed design preparations have made good progress but have recently been suspended while consideration is given to the tenure mix and market situation in view of the credit crunch.

The proposals were originally intended to rebalance the Granby neighbourhood housing mix, producing some attractive housing for open-market owner occupation to complement the preponderance of social rented accommodation. The housing market collapse has undermined these aspirations – in the short to medium term at least – and Lovell is currently reappraising their assumptions with a view to producing an updated proposition. It is a priority aim to get the earliest start on site in Ducie Street which is fully vacant and almost completely in LCC ownership but clearly it is not feasible to build or improve housing for owner occupation (in an already marginal location) if there are limited prospects of buyers.

An updating report is expected to be submitted to Exec Board within the next 2-3 months, after which officers will be able to enter into negotiations to draw up a developer agreement for Phase 1.

Acquisitions / Rehousing

Voluntary acquisitions have reduced to a trickle. We have yet to acquire 57 properties in the 4 Streets –

22 owner occupied (1 in negotiation)
20 private vacants (1 in negotiations)
12 private tenanted (1 in negotiations)
3 RSL

Home Ownership Advisory Officers have been revisiting all remaining owners to make them aware of the latest availability of properties in the area at discounted prices. HMRI HIT team are pursuing owners of problem vacant properties under the Vacant Dwellings Initiative.

Management of the LCC vacant properties by 2020 / IPS is the subject of constant monitoring by Neighbourhood Management staff and there are currently very few complaints.

Community Engagement

Granby Community Partnership (GCP) was instituted in October 2007 to provide a forum for information exchange and consultation in relation to the 4 Streets regeneration. It comprises of representatives of

- Granby Residents Association
- Each of the 3 streets (Ducie is fully vacant)
- Ward Councillors (Alan Dean)
- LCC (Elaine Stewart, Jack Coutts)
- Lovell

and chaired by an independent chair, John Earnshaw, formerly of the Empty Homes Agency.

GCP meets every 6 weeks or so, receives reports on design matters from Lovell (there has been a detailed workshop session with their consultants), considers neighbourhood management issues including voids management (representatives from 2020 have attended to explain what they do) and discusses issues raised by residents.

The most recent open day was held at the Granby Centre in November 2007 and there are regular Granby Renewal Area Newsletters (latest Nov 08) which inform residents of progress in relation to all Granby matters.

In Oct 08 Granby Residents Association wrote a letter complaining that Granby was being treated unfairly in comparison to other Renewal Areas. The LCC response contained the following -

"While it is true that Granby has particular problems, the area and its residents have not been treated unfairly. Since the area was declared a Renewal Area in 1995, there have been successive phases of redevelopment which have produced attractive and popular new homes for local people as well as areas of remodelling and refurbishment by the Council and others.

The "4 Streets" is the last remaining substantial area of Granby to be regenerated. The time taken to start work on site here is a result of the Council's efforts to explore the options carefully to identify and deliver a solution which

- takes proper account of the physical condition of the houses and the cost of addressing the issues*
- provides good quality homes for owner occupation to balance the over-supply of social rented accommodation within Granby as a whole*
- achieves the maximum possible retention of the physical character of the streets within constraints of commercial viability and public subsidy*
- provides opportunities for existing residents to remain within the neighbourhood*

The achievement of this combination of objectives has been and continues to be immensely difficult and time-consuming.

The regeneration solution for each of the Renewal Areas has been arrived at in consideration of local circumstances. Some areas like the Welsh Streets require substantial demolition and redevelopment, some like Lodge Lane do not. In some areas like Garston there has been full agreement with residents (owners and tenants) enabling phased relocation and redevelopment to proceed. In others, like Picton, Compulsory Purchase has been necessary. The aim in Granby Four Streets has been to attempt to achieve agreement through positive engagement with residents."

GRA have not responded and have continued to contribute positively at subsequent Community Partnership meetings.