

Agenda Item 8.2

Committee: Cabinet	Date: 1 August 2007	Classification: Unrestricted	Report No:	Agenda Item No:
Report of: Corporate Director of Development and Renewal		Title: Blackwall Reach Regeneration Project - Draft Development Framework		
Originating Officer(s): Owen Whalley - Development Manager, Major Project Development		Wards Affected: Blackwall and Cubitt Town		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report advises Members of a proposal for detailed consultation on a draft regeneration framework for the 'Blackwall Reach' area, including the Robin Hood Gardens Estate and neighbouring homes.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Cabinet is recommended to:
- 2.1 Agree that the draft framework (Appendix 1) for the regeneration of 'Blackwall Reach' can be used as a basis for a 12 week detailed consultation with residents including those in Robin Hood Gardens, Anderson House, Mackrow Walk and Woolmore Street, and other local stakeholders.
- 2.2 Authorise the Corporate Director Development and Renewal, after consultation with the Leader of the Council and Lead Member Development and Housing, to make any appropriate and necessary minor amendments to the Draft Development Framework prior to consultation commencing.

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (as amended)

List of "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report

Brief description of "Background paper"	Name and telephone number of holder and address where open
Blackwall Reach Regeneration Project Draft Development Framework	Robin Sager Tel: 020 7364 2439
Blackwall Reach - Regeneration Assessment (Draft report)	
Blackwall Reach - Draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report	
Cabinet Report CAB 124/067 (7 February 2007) - Housing Investment Strategy	

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 'Blackwall Reach' comprises eight hectares of homes, businesses and open space that lie between Cotton Street, Aspen Way, the Blackwall Tunnel Approach and East India Dock Road in E14 (See map Appendix 2).
- 3.2 Blackwall Reach is characterised by run-down homes and business premises in need of investment, a lack of decent shops and community facilities and poor quality, under-used open spaces. Years of under-investment, compounded by poor urban design, have led to a community in decline.
- 3.3 There are approximately 250 homes in the Blackwall Reach area most of which are in Robin Hood Gardens, but also including Anderson House and homes on Mackrow Walk and Woolmore Street. There are 206 Council rented, 34 leaseholders and 10 freeholder properties in the area. 214 of these homes are in Robin Hood Gardens which comprises of two blocks of flats built in 1972 and requiring substantial repairs. A building survey in 2006 discovered significant defects to the external envelope, roof coverings, bathrooms, kitchens, electrical wiring and other service infrastructures. It was estimated that at least £20 million will be required to remedy these defects and bring the dwellings up to a satisfactory standard.
- 3.4 Robin Hood Gardens was identified as having scope for a comprehensive regeneration masterplan approach. This was approved by the Council in March 2007 following consideration by the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the report 'Housing Investment Strategy'.
- 3.5 Access within and around the Blackwall Reach area is difficult, being cut off from the wider community by the busy roads which border it as listed in 3.1. This makes movement difficult for both pedestrians and vehicle users alike. There are no shops within the defined area, and the nearest shopping areas of Poplar High Street, and the Chrisp Street shopping centre require that residents cross busy roads with fast moving traffic.
- 3.6 Whilst there is an enclosed sports court, play equipment and green space between the two blocks of Robin Hood Gardens, use of the green is limited by the steep sided mound in the centre (which covers over the heap of demolition material from the former building on the site). Access to other areas of open space outside the site is difficult again due to the busy roads.
- 3.7 Woolmore Primary School is included in the Project area. Woolmore is a small school of single form entry. There is a need to plan for an expansion of the school (whether on its existing site or elsewhere within the Project area) to provide sufficient school places for the local community. This is within the context of Council planning to increase primary school places in the Borough overall to meet the needs of the rising population. The ability to provide a larger school within this area will contribute to meeting the needs of the community living in the additional homes to be provided.

Proposals for Woolmore School will take into account the need to plan for additional community services which may be provided from the school.

- 3.8 In order to revive this community, and create a new sustainable neighbourhood, the vision is to provide new homes, new shops, broader community uses, improved connectivity, new business premises and attractive new open spaces, all underpinned by high quality urban design and architecture.
- 3.9 The Council has been working provisionally with English Partnerships (The National Regeneration Agency) a key neighbouring land-owner to prepare this initial draft development framework for consultation with the local community. The aim would be to regenerate the area to create a new sustainable community including new affordable housing opportunities, and a co-ordinated management of potential development.
- 3.10 The appended draft development framework (Appendix 1) describes options for how this new sustainable community can be delivered.
- 3.11 Subject to approval of the draft document by Cabinet, the local community will be invited to get involved in the consideration of the options for the Development Framework during a 12 week public consultation. Following that consultation, and once approved in its final form by Cabinet, the Development Framework would form a material consideration in the determination of all planning applications in the area, and will therefore be a key tool in shaping the future of this key community in Tower Hamlets.

4. OPTIONS FOR REGENERATION

Building Blocks for a Sustainable Community

- 4.1 The vision for Blackwall Reach is to deliver a new sustainable residential and business community. Investment brought into the project specifically from the sale of new homes and commercial development would cross subsidise improvements and new provisions for the community with extra homes for sale and rent, new shops, businesses premises, community and youth facilities, education facilities and attractive open spaces
- 4.2 The vision and proposed uses are consistent with the site's designation in the Council's Leaside Area Action Plan. Detailed development proposals for the site will need to be consistent with the full range of planning policies contained in the Council's Local Development Framework, together with those in the Mayor's London Plan. Expert advice on the historical interest and significance of buildings within the area would be sought and considered when developing regeneration proposals.

4.3 Options for regeneration are detailed below. However any redevelopment proposals for Blackwall reach must be based on the following key principles:

- Freehold ownership of the land on which the Council's homes are refurbished or replaced will remain with the Council.
- The Woolmore Street properties of 1-22 Anderson House, 1-11 Mackrow Walk and 2-10 (Evens) Woolmore Street would be proposed for demolition, to enhance the available public space.
- Additional residential development will need to provide a minimum of 35% affordable housing, together with the required levels of family housing across all tenures, in accordance with the Council's policies.
- This is likely to result in the provision of up to 800 new affordable homes depending on whether Robin Hood Gardens is retained or redeveloped.
- The financial framework for the building of Council homes is not yet known. The Council will need to consider emerging Government thinking on housing over the next few months. There may even be scope under emerging new Government thinking, to build a new generation of Council homes, subject to detailed information of the financing of this.
- That there is no net loss of public open space and that there is the opportunity to increase the amount of open space provision in the area and improve its quality.
- If the existing education, health, youth and community facilities are to be redeveloped, they will need to be fully replaced with modern and improved facilities of at least the same size to ensure they have the capacity to serve an increased residential population.
- That pedestrian and cycle linkages to and from the area are improved.

4.4 **Options for Regeneration**

The Development Framework has the potential to adapt to changes in either planning policy or financial viability without compromising the basic design concepts outlined in the framework (Appendix 1) chapters titled '**The Vision**' (Page 13) and '**Building Blocks for a Sustainable Community**' (Page 14).

4.5 The main changes are likely to relate to the retention or demolition of Robin Hood Gardens and the extent of decking over the Blackwall Tunnel Approach. Retaining Robin Hood Gardens would reduce the total number of potential dwellings on the development site and thus reduce the amount of funds available for community facilities such as school, health-care and recreation buildings and significantly reduce the amount of extra open green space potentially available under a wider redevelopment.

4.6 If Robin Hood Gardens is retained it will still need to be renovated to the Government's Decent Homes Standard. Due to their poor condition this will require substantial works to the interior of each Council rented home. Extensive works will also be required to the exterior of the buildings, increasing the projected costs to more than £20 million.

- 4.7 It is very unlikely that this standard of work could be carried out with tenants remaining in situ. Under the council's housing policy, where a permanent decant is required, secure council tenants are appropriately rehoused. Rehousing options will be developed during the consultation process, but at this stage it is too early to state whether a permanent or temporary decant would be required.
- 4.8 If the existing Council homes are retained there would be an implication for leaseholders as some of the works would require a recharge contribution.
- 4.9 As things currently stand, Robin Hood Gardens and the surrounding blocks will form part of the stock that will be managed by Tower Hamlets Homes (Arms Length Management Organisation) on behalf of the Council. Providing Tower Hamlets Homes achieves a minimum of a two-star status at an Audit Commission inspection this will release capital investment to bring the homes managed by the Council to Decent Homes Standard included Robin Hood Gardens. However, this investment will not achieve the wider regeneration objectives which could be brought forward by the scheme.
- 4.10 Decking over the Blackwall Tunnel Approach is desirable because it reduces noise and air pollution on the whole development site and improves connectivity, but is dependent upon the solution of technical, operational and constructional problems.
- 4.11 The construction of the deck would incur significant costs, which would be offset in the illustrative proposal by building apartments on the deck. Should this combination not prove financially viable, alternative solutions to the control of noise and air pollution would need to be found, which would themselves incur costs.
- 4.12 Reducing the extent of the decking over the Blackwall Tunnel Approach would reduce the total number of potential dwellings on the development site and thus reduce the amount of funds available for community facilities.
- 4.13 The options set out for consultation are:-

4.13.1 Option 1 : Redevelopment Keeping Robin Hood Gardens

(See Appendix 1, Page 24) This option assumes Robin Hood Gardens is retained.

Robin Hood Gardens would be refurbished to a basic Decent Homes standard but the smaller buildings just south of Woolmore Street would be removed to enhance the available public space.

The proposed new buildings over the Blackwall Tunnel Approach would be smaller than in Option 2, to match the present scale of Robin Hood Gardens. The potential number of new homes would therefore be lower reducing, in turn, potential funding for the wider community benefits which could be achieved in Option 2.

Ideally the Blackwall Tunnel Approach would be extensively covered, thus minimizing the noise and pollution from the tunnel to the surrounding homes. This would improve the visual environment and create a new modern approach to a key road tunnel under the Thames.

4.13.2 Option 2 : Redevelopment Replacing Robin Hood Gardens

(See Appendix 1, Page 25) This option assumes Robin Hood Gardens is redeveloped.

Robin Hood Gardens would be replaced by new high quality housing, allowing the central green space to be maximized, and as in Option 1 the smaller buildings just south of Woolmore Street would be removed to enhance the available public open space.

Also as in Option 1 a section of the Blackwall Tunnel Approach would ideally be completely covered, thus minimizing the noise and pollution from the tunnel to the surrounding homes.

This would improve the visual environment and create a new and unified modern approach to, and exit from, a key road tunnel under the Thames. The large number of homes on top of the deck would offset its cost and contribute the maximum towards community and other facilities elsewhere on the site.

As in Option 1 the extent of decking over the tunnel approach would need to be determined, but the greater extent of development would ease funding and therefore improve the viability of this important environmental initiative.

5. PROGRAMME

- 5.1 If a scheme is developed and agreed, the Council and English Partnerships (The National Regeneration Agency) would work together closely as delivery agents for the regeneration.
- 5.2 It is envisaged that Option 2 would require the full decant of the homes in the area with major rehousing implications which would have to be considered and planned. Residents will have a number of concerns including for tenants their options for rehousing and leaseholders and freeholders the options concerning the buy out of their homes. These issues will need to be explored in full through the consultation process set out in Section 6, and a strategy created to achieve this.
- 5.3 It is envisaged that a regeneration scheme, if agreed, should provide opportunities for new homes in the area for existing residents, within a vibrant and sustainable new residential and business community.

- 5.4 Phasing of an agreed scheme will depend on selected options such as described in Section 4.13.1 and 4.13.2.
- 5.5 The timetable set out below illustrates both the initial programme of consultation which is proposed for Autumn 2007 and, if agreed, subsequently the broad redevelopment programme as it is currently projected.

<u>Key Milestones</u>	<u>Target Date</u>
<u>Cabinet consideration of draft framework for consultation</u>	<u>August 2007</u>
<u>Helpline and project website</u>	<u>start August 2007</u>
<u>Sustainability Appraisal - Stages A&B (Scope and Options Assessment)</u>	<u>August – September 2007</u>
<u>Home visits, briefing meetings and workshops – Options</u>	<u>August – September 2007</u>
<u>Consultation Event "Have your say day" – Options</u>	<u>early September 2007</u>
<u>Stakeholder meetings and workshops – Option(s)</u>	<u>September - October 2007</u>
<u>Consultation event "Exhibition" – Option(s)</u>	<u>late October 2007</u>
<u>LBTH approve Development Framework – Option(s)</u>	<u>spring 2008</u>
<u>Submit Outline Planning and Detailed Phase 1</u>	<u>late spring 2008</u>

- 5.6 Phasing of an agreed scheme will depend on selected options such as described in Section 4.13.1 and 4.13.2.

6. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

6.1 Introduction

A Community Consultation Strategy for Blackwall Reach has been developed to ensure that the proposals to develop the area take account of the needs and preferences of residents and the wider community. The strategy reflects the commitment by Tower Hamlets Council to encourage and support residents, service users and communities in taking an active role in decision making. It sets out clear objectives, principles and includes an action plan for consultation and engagement. The strategy has been put together by a Community Consultation delivery team, selected through a tendering process and managed jointly with English Partnerships. The team will have an excellent knowledge of community and stakeholder engagement, particularly in relation to development and regeneration.

6.2 Need for Consultation

- 6.2.1 It is important that stakeholder and community engagement is carried out in an effective, inclusive and transparent way in order to meet national and local policy and to maximise the opportunities that the site has to offer. This will channel effort and resources into developing a more integrated, higher quality, deliverable scheme at Blackwall Reach.

- 6.2.2 Wider communications and PR activities will offer opportunities to promote the scheme more broadly as an example of good practice, mobilise support from a range of local and regional bodies, and ensure that local communities are aware of, and actively involved in, the engagement process.
- 6.2.3 There will be a number of implications for local residents for any scheme proposals including housing options. The consultation process will seek views on all such issues.
- 6.2.4 There will be further consultation including statutory when detailed proposals are developed and when planning applications are submitted.

6.3 The levels of consultation

The strategy will cover three levels of consultation:

- giving people information
- consulting over options
- enabling the stakeholders to influence priorities and actions

6.4 Who is being consulted?

Stakeholders involved in consultation will include:-

- the affected residents of Robin Hood Gardens, Anderson House, Mackrow Walk and Woolmore Street, including tenants, leaseholders and freeholders;
- residents and citizens of Tower Hamlets;
- Governing Body and Headteacher of Woolmore Primary School;
- the Poplar Mosque & Community Centre, Woolmore Street;
- local councillors and council officers;
- potential users of local services;
- local shops and businesses;
- community, tenant and residents' groups;
- local interest and pressure groups;
- voluntary groups;
- groups of people defined by a common factor such as age, disability, gender, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation;
- harder to reach groups such as mobile populations and people for whom English is not their first language;
- public and private sector stakeholders, including other landowners in the area;

6.5 Methodology

A range of consultation methods will be employed with the intention of reaching as wide a group of stakeholders as possible.

Consultation will be undertaken in 3 phases:

Phase 1: development of a communications and engagement strategy

- identify stakeholders
- categorise stakeholders
- make links with existing groups and networks

Phase 2: delivery of the communications and engagement strategy

- develop a project website
- delivery of regular newsletters or leaflets
- liaison with local press to publicise project
- initial round of stakeholder meetings
- stakeholder workshops 'Have your Say'
- feedback channels

Phase 3: production of a Statement of Participation documenting this process

- document the consultation exercise
- record comments
- developer response
- submit with Planning Application

6.6 Indicative Consultation Programme

phase	activity	completion date
<u>phase 1</u>	<u>prepare strategy</u>	<u>mid July 2007</u>
<u>phase 2</u>	<u>letter to residents</u>	<u>late July 2007</u>
	<u>project website and helpline</u>	<u>late July 2007</u>
	<u>home visits starts</u>	<u>early August 2007</u>
	<u>pre-event workshop</u>	<u>end August 2007</u>
	<u>issue Newsletter 1</u>	<u>end August 2007</u>
	<u>"Have your Say Day" event</u>	<u>early September 2007</u>
	<u>post-event workshop & site visits</u>	<u>mid September 2007</u>
	<u>issue Newsletter 2</u>	<u>mid October 2007</u>
	<u>final exhibition & feedback event</u>	<u>end October 2007</u>
	<u>post-event workshop</u>	<u>early November 2007</u>
	<u>issue Newsletter 3</u>	<u>early November 2007</u>
<u>phase 3</u>	<u>complete Statement of Participation</u>	<u>December 2007</u>

7. CONCURRENT REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEGAL)

7.1 There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

8. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

- 8.1 This report advises Members of the draft framework for the regeneration of the Blackwall Reach Area.
- 8.2 At this stage Member approval is being sought to commence an extensive consultation process. This will incur expenditure on items such as advertising, printing, hiring venues and facilitating public meetings. It is the intention that all costs will be absorbed by English Partnerships although this is subject to final agreement and will be determined prior to consultation beginning.
- 8.3 On completion of the consultation process, a development framework will be prepared that will form the basis of the Authority's long term plans for development of the area. The proposals and issues it contains will therefore have a financial impact on the Authority through the new development opportunities being offered and the potential investment that this will attract to the Borough. This will give rise to various initiatives and funding requirements that must be considered by members as they are developed.
- 8.4 The Council will need to assess the financial implications of new Government housing policy as more details emerge.

9. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The proposed regeneration programme is specifically aimed at addressing the causes and consequences of social exclusion.

10. ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The statistical 'Output Area' the Blackwall Reach Regeneration Project falls in was identified in the 2001 census as one of the most deprived in England (ranked 1,189 out of 32,482 most deprived being 1). This project aims to revive the community and create a new sustainable community to fully meet the needs of local people now and in the future.

11. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 11.1 The development framework recognises that proposals should address all aspects of environmental sustainability, and will aim to meet and exceed the sustainability targets set out in the London Plan.

12. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 This report recommends public consultation on a development framework on options to redevelop or refurbish Robin Hood Gardens and other land in the Blackwall Reach area. This consultation may prompt anxiety within the community. The report sets out a series of principles which seek to reassure residents and other land users about future land ownership, the replacement and enhancement of affordable housing provisions and the replacement of any displaced community facilities.

APPENDICES

This report has the following appendices:

Appendix 1 Blackwall Reach Regeneration Project Development Framework

Appendix 2 Map of the Blackwall Reach Area

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