

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Classification:</b>  Open	<b>Date:</b> 27 September 2021	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission
<b>Report title:</b>		New council homes on existing estates – Case Study 1 – Brenchley Gardens	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		Peckham Rye	
<b>From:</b>		Stuart Davis, Director of New Homes, Housing and Modernisation and Owen Thompson, Development Manager, Housing and Modernisation	

1. The New Homes programme was originally established in January 2015 when the council agreed its new long-term housing strategy for the borough including specific commitments to increase housing supply, this included building 11,000 new council homes for social rent by 2043. Appendix 1 (link in Appendix Table below).
2. In September 2019 cabinet received a report, Appendix 2 (link in Appendix Table below), for considering rooftop developments on the Council’s existing housing blocks. This noted that RTDs should be:
  - Seeking to build rooftop homes with high levels of modern methods of manufacturing in order to minimise the on-site time and potential disruption to existing residents.
  - Offering first letting option on those new homes to existing residents living immediately underneath them, with the vacated homes being made available to the wider housing waiting list.
  - Accompanying the development with improvements to the existing block, with a new roof, lift and landscaping non-rechargeable to leaseholders.
  - Enhancing the existing block as well to maximise internal living and amenity space and provide solutions for connecting new homes to existing services.

### **Rooftop Housing (RTD)**

3. Rooftop housing is a way of adding to the housing stock and has the potential to extend upwards creating additional high quality new council homes. The Rooftop homes programme is mindful of the potential impact on local people and so the build methodology seeks to maximise the use of off-site, modular construction to minimise time on site and thus greatly reduce disruption to existing residents. As such every individual scheme will use the most appropriate, cost-efficient method of construction to provide the best quality homes in the fastest period possible.

4. The LB Southwark's rooftop homes "offer" to residents is that the council will deliver the major repair works and great estate improvements whilst also undertaking the RTD works. This is a cost-effective approach for all parties, and it offers the least disruption to residents.
5. In June 2020 cabinet members approved the review of the Charter of Principles of Consultation for Social Generation, Great Estates and New Homes. The RTH programme works to enhance level of these principles. Appendix 3 (link in Appendix Table below)
6. An initial assessment was undertaken of the council's flat roof estates to determine the suitability of these for inclusion in a possible programme. Factors assessed included:
  - Any known views of existing residents and the impact on leaseholders
  - The structural integrity of the blocks and their ability to accommodate additional stories
  - Fire safety
  - Development accessibility
  - Condition of the existing block and its investment needs
  - The capacity to deliver new homes
  - Ability to enhance the public realm and provide a strong local offer to existing residents
  - Density levels of the area, pre and post development
  - Ability to deliver high levels of modern methods of Construction (MMC)
  - The potential to deliver infill opportunities
7. Two key factors drives the delivery options on each estate; the employment of structural engineers and then fire consultants separately and before engaging each scheme architect, this will enable us to determine the structural capacity of each block, testing the assumptions made regarding their ability to contain the weight of proposed upward extensions, manage the risk of disproportionate collapse as well as the wind pressures on the proposed buildings.

#### **Consultation (Programme Consultation and Engagement)**

8. In all RTD initial consultation was undertaken with the lead member for Housing, this was further extended to internal stakeholders in validating a list of potential sites that could be taken forward for initial consultation with Ward Councillors and T&RA's and residents.
9. The RTD general resident consultation process was that a zoom meeting was held in with Tenants and Residents Associations (T&RA) in the absence of an opportunity to undertake an estate walkabout, because of Covid19 restrictions.
10. In all cases, letters and specifically a designed newsletter setting out the principles supporting the council's approach to roof top homes was also distributed to residents on the wider estates. The letters asked residents about the potential for improvements to

their estates and their thoughts about the roof top development scheme principles and if they were interested in working with the council in developing an estate project group.

11. The letters also provided a link to a survey on the Commonplace where residents can record their responses. During Covid19 restrictions the consultation period was extended to ensure residents were given a full opportunity to respond.
12. Further, all residents in blocks where RTD are proposed and who were identified as vulnerable, received phone calls to ensure they had received and were able to understand the proposals. They were also offered assistance with the completion of the Commonplace surveys.
13. The initial feedback from residents on the Commonplace estates is usually fully captured along with the responses from residents on the planned improvements on each estate. The programme has the potential, through the inclusion of, and alignment with, the Major Work's, Quality Home Improvement Programme (QHIP) and the Great Estates programme, to co-ordinate and provide a comprehensive range of locally valued improvements.
14. The combined budgets and procurement of services also provide an opportunity to obtain better efficiencies and value for money in the delivery of block improvements. The Council will also be able to provide improvements to residents earlier than originally scheduled, thus improving satisfaction levels in updating the existing housing stock.
15. The rooftop homes "resident offer" will not only include QHIP works, but it will also provide improvements to communal areas, i.e. the addition of door entry systems, the inclusion of updated fire safety measures to the existing building, new block services and public realm improvements. The extent of these will be determined through the formation of Resident Project Groups to inform the schemes design/development processes.
16. In documenting the individual scheme responses, we can demonstrate that we are able to confidently mitigate resident concerns and utilise their observations to provide fully localised housing solutions. Further, the programme is committed to working with Resident Project Groups in the designing and delivery of new homes and the improvements in the public realm on the proposed estates.

### **Brenchley Gardens RTD and Consultation**

17. The Brenchley Gardens scheme can be described as set in open ground, with a good distance from any neighbours. Four (4) blocks of housing were deemed capable of taking a significant rooftop extension. In addition, there was a large area of unused green space at the north of the site facing onto Brockley Way which created the opportunity for a significant sized infill block addressing the street.

18. With the scheme's commitment to deliver significant improvements to the existing blocks and public realm, as well as the possibility of creating new social rented homes as noted below, there was a need to generate income to cross-subsidise these costs, with an infill sales block.

19. Proposed RTH blocks addresses:

17-47 Brenchley Gardens, SE23 3RD (ODDS ONLY)
65-95 Brenchley Gardens, SE23 3RE
113-143 Brenchley Gardens, SE23 3RF
161-191 Brenchley Gardens, SE23 3RF

20. Brenchley Gardens remained within the initial stage of the agreed consultation process where residents were introduced to the project proposal and feedback was sought via the Commonplace website.

21. The first presentation of the potential rooftop scheme on Brenchley Gardens was given to Ward Councillors on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020. Appendix 4 (link in Appendix Table below). A summary of that discussion was also provided to Ward Councillors confirming the discussion and points made soon after. Appendix 5 (link in Appendix Table below).

22. The development team engaged the Brenchley Gardens Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) based on the agreed consent of Ward Councillors.

23. The development team attended Zoom TMO meetings on the 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020 and on the 21<sup>st</sup> September to explain the principles of the project and how we intended to work with the TMO and eventually establishing a scheme Project Group. This included clarifying the RTD principles, the commitment to meeting housing needs locally and the critical block and environmental improvements that could be gained from a RTD project. The meeting with the TMO reflected the most up to date capacity study undertaken by the VOP Group obtained in August 2020. This also demonstrated the capacity of an infill site.

24. We understand that some local residents became nervous of the rooftop development proposals and invited Ward Councillors to a TMO meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November to discuss the RTH proposals. As the authority on the Brenchley Gardens proposals, the development team requested an invite to this meeting, but were discouraged from attending and in doing so were not able to attend.

25. At the meeting of the 23<sup>rd</sup> November the development team were subsequently informed that Ward Councillors claimed that they were not informed about an infill opportunity at Brenchley Gardens and some TMO members also claimed this had not been raised with them as part of the development team's previous discussions. This led to a loss of resident confidence in the process.

26. A review of the presentation and further discussion with the TMO's secretary confirmed that an infill site had indeed been discussed.

27. A copy of the Zoom recording was requested of the TMO with Ward Councillors meetings so officers could clarify and address any misunderstandings or mis representation of the issues and process, but the development teams request was denied. An abridged version of the recording was eventually received however this did not address issues of specific resident concerns.
28. A newsletter was issued by the development team to estate residents on the 18<sup>th</sup> December that highlighted the RTHs key principles. Appendix 6 (link in Appendix Table below). The schemes Commonplace was launched on the 20<sup>th</sup> December.
29. The newsletter did not highlight the more specific proposals for Brenchley Gardens including that of an infill site, that had been discussed with the TMO, and which had been shown in the Commonplace. This created concern from some TMO members who felt specific details were being withheld from the wider resident group.

#### **Commonplace (estate websites)**

30. Information regarding the Brenchley Gardens project, including the details of an architectural capacity study undertaken by VOP Group were included in the Brenchley Gardens Commonplace with the website launching on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2020.
31. Also available was a questionnaire seeking feedback to the VOP Group proposals and inviting residents to share their views and concerns about how the council could make improvements to their homes and surrounding areas of the estate.
32. Residents were specifically asked to respond to the rooftop homes mini survey which stated:
  - Do you think it's important that we build new homes for people in need of housing?
  - Do you support the idea of new homes for residents on your estate?
  - Is your existing home suitable for your current needs?
  - Are there important works and improvements that are needed for your existing block?
  - How do you think your estate could be further improved? - Tell us how you think your estate could be further improved?
  - Would you like to be involved in how we develop the detail plans for your block and estate? - methods of meeting - which methods of contact do you have
  - Are the leaflets on roof top developments helpful in providing answers to some of your questions?
33. The resident feedback responses gathered from the Commonplace, would normally have helped the development of the architect's design brief. The design brief is a key document that provides design requirements and improvements to the existing blocks and new homes in the scheme. Resident issues highlighted from the Commonplace included the need to address: Damp; fire safety improvements; a request to consider building on adjacent land; maintaining local parking levels; clarify the heights of the proposed extended blocks and other local repairs including block windows.

34. On the 25<sup>th</sup> January the development team attended the TMO meeting during which it became clear that a misunderstanding had arisen regarding the consultation material and scheme proposals. This included concerns that:
- The newsletter that launched the Commonplace did not make significant mention of the infill project.
  - Some of the consultation questions were not “specific to Brenchley Gardens” and there was a sense they were not targeted at the homeowners/leaseholders who make up approx. 50% of the estate but were instead being directed toward tenants. Therefore, any results gathered would not be fully reflective of Brenchley Gardens.
  - The wider improvements and perceived benefits connected to the project would not be realised because the garden areas are well maintained, and residents were therefore not convinced of the need for estate improvements.
35. In response, it was agreed that:
- the development team agreed to work alongside two TMO representatives to ensure the website addressed resident concerns.
  - a revised Commonplace would be launched with a clear reference to the infill location and providing clarity and more details the proposed new homes.
36. The TMO representatives requested a more specific question as to whether residents were supportive of a RTD scheme or not. Apart from this no significant changes to the previously launched Commonplace were suggested.
37. However, in reviewing the feedback from local residents, stakeholders and Ward Councillors obtained after the closure of the Commonplace website, it was decided to pause the project to review the overall proposal.
38. This would allow the team to repeat the consultation and to ensure that residents had every opportunity to express their views, ask questions and make comments. It was acknowledged that this was vital to restore the Council’s reputation of effective engagement with residents and carrying out a collaborative design process.
39. This included the early establishment of a Resident Project Group, representative of both leaseholders and tenants from across the estate which would benefit the design development process.
40. The pause also allowed the development team to assess the critical repairs and improvements needed to the block in clarifying the local offer.
41. The pause further allowed the development team opportunities to review the deliverability of the infill site, and establish if this was possible, assess the financial viability of a RTD at Brenchley Gardens with and without it as an alternative tenure. As a Phase 2 project, the schemes successful delivery accompanied with the significant improvements to the existing blocks is unlikely to be viable or afforded without the ability to generate cross subsidy from a sales home as part of the development.

42. By exploring the opportunity to generate cross subsidy through the development of an infill site, the development team could ensure that the scheme was able contribute the council's ability to deliver a balanced and viable programme. It is recognised that the delivery of new social rented homes solely is unsustainable and unlikely to meet the councils' new homes targets.

### **Current Position**

43. In February 2021 the Lead Cabinet member for Housing agreed the project team should explore the adding of a single storey of housing to the four blocks at Brenchley Gardens thereby creating 16 rooftop homes only.
44. At Brenchley Gardens the project was and remains at feasibility stage whereby architects have not been appointed to design a scheme and the proposal is simply a "possibility".
45. Prior to seeking approval to take rooftop schemes forward to residents, given the cost and sensitivity of building homes on top of existing buildings, the stock condition information needs to be considered and the impact delivering these projects on the housing investment programme.

### **Lessons Learned**

46. With more people confined to their homes during lockdown and increasing numbers of people working from home during the pandemic, value of locally accessible outdoor spaces has risen. Therefore, any proposal seeking the withdrawal of a community asset such as outdoor amenity space is subject to additional scrutiny.
47. The development team should lead and be at the centre of the scheme engagement processes.
48. Residents from neighbouring areas (Athenlay Road) raised wider concerns about the area and impact new housing and residents would have on their properties including parking, increased traffic, and losses of nearby greenspaces.
49. Given the volume of development activity taking place across the borough, the development team recognises that there needs to be an improvement in the communication between officers, Ward Councillors. The New Homes Development Team are therefore seeking to introduce periodic Ward Councillors' briefings to keep Councillors informed and aware of the resident challenges and concerns of projects being developed in their wards.
50. Prior to seeking approval to take rooftop schemes forward to residents, given the sensitivity of building homes on top of existing buildings, stock condition and the structural capacity of the existing blocks needs to be presented to residents at the earliest opportunity.

## Appendix Table

Appendix No.	Title	Date
Appendix 1	Borough wide capacity study of Housing land Cabinet Report Item 22 (Strategy for the 11,000 homes) <a href="G:\Asset Management\New Homes Delivery Team\Programme\Phase 6\Rooftop Developments Pre IDM\Brenchley Gardens - Wrayburn Estate\1 Key Documents\Scrutiny Report\APPENDIX 1 - Report New Homes strategy.pdf">G:\Asset Management\New Homes Delivery Team\Programme\Phase 6\Rooftop Developments Pre IDM\Brenchley Gardens - Wrayburn Estate\1 Key Documents\Scrutiny Report\APPENDIX 1 - Report New Homes strategy.pdf</a>	24 <sup>th</sup> March 2020
Appendix 2	Addition of Rooftop Homes to new Homes Report Cabinet report Sept 19 Cabinet item 13: outlines rooftop principles and programme update. <a href="http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=302&amp;Mid=6415&amp;Ver=4">http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=302&amp;Mid=6415&amp;Ver=4</a>	17 <sup>th</sup> September 2019
Appendix 3	Report Review of Charter of Principles <a href="G:\Asset Management\New Homes Delivery Team\Programme\Phase 6\Rooftop Developments Pre IDM\Brenchley Gardens - Wrayburn Estate\1 Key Documents\Scrutiny Report\APPENDIX 3 - Report Review of Charter of Principles.pdf">G:\Asset Management\New Homes Delivery Team\Programme\Phase 6\Rooftop Developments Pre IDM\Brenchley Gardens - Wrayburn Estate\1 Key Documents\Scrutiny Report\APPENDIX 3 - Report Review of Charter of Principles.pdf</a>	June 2020
Appendix 4	Ward Councillor Zoom presentation 1 <a href="G:\Asset Management\New Homes Delivery Team\Programme\Phase 6\Rooftop Developments Pre IDM\Brenchley Gardens - Wrayburn Estate\1 Key Documents\Scrutiny Report\APPENDIX 4 - Brenchley Gardens RTD TMO Presentation.pdf">G:\Asset Management\New Homes Delivery Team\Programme\Phase 6\Rooftop Developments Pre IDM\Brenchley Gardens - Wrayburn Estate\1 Key Documents\Scrutiny Report\APPENDIX 4 - Brenchley Gardens RTD TMO Presentation.pdf</a>	18 <sup>th</sup> May 2020
Appendix 5	<a href="G:\Asset Management\New Homes Delivery Team\Programme\Phase 6\Rooftop Developments Pre IDM\Brenchley Gardens - Wrayburn Estate\1 Key Documents\Scrutiny Report\APPENDIX 5 - Brenchley Gardens Torridge Gardens Rooftop Development.msg">G:\Asset Management\New Homes Delivery Team\Programme\Phase 6\Rooftop Developments Pre IDM\Brenchley Gardens - Wrayburn Estate\1 Key Documents\Scrutiny Report\APPENDIX 5 - Brenchley Gardens Torridge Gardens Rooftop Development.msg</a>	18 <sup>th</sup> May 2020
Appendix 6	Resident Newsletter	18 <sup>th</sup> December 2020

	<a href="#">APPENDIX 6 - 2020 12 15 Brenchley Gdns letter for commonplace v1.pdf</a>	
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## Timeline

Item	Activity	Date
	Brenchley Gardens –Tenant Management Organisation (BGMA) Presentation 1	20 <sup>th</sup> August 2020
	VOP GROUP Group Capacity Study – rooftop homes and infill <a href="#">G:\Asset Management\New Homes Delivery Team\Programme\Phase 6\Rooftop Developments Pre IDM\1 Key Documents\VOP Feasibility Reports\2020-08-28 - VOP - LB Southwark Complete Study.pdf</a>	August 2020
	Brenchley Gardens –Tenant Management Organisation (BGMA) AGM – Project Team attendance <a href="#">G:\Asset Management\New Homes Delivery Team\Programme\Phase 6\Rooftop Developments Pre IDM\Brenchley Gardens -Wrayburn Estate\10 Residents and Stakeholders\TMO\1. BGMA Agenda Committee Meeting 10 August 2020.pdf</a>	21 <sup>st</sup> September 2020
	Ward Councillor and BGMA meeting (ONLY)	23 <sup>rd</sup> November 2020
	Commonplace website letter sent to Ward Councillors <a href="#">G:\Asset Management\New Homes Delivery Team\Programme\Phase 6\Rooftop Developments Pre IDM\Brenchley Gardens -Wrayburn Estate\10 Residents and Stakeholders\Cllr\Cllr Notification Commonplace launch Brenchley Gardens.msg</a>	15 <sup>th</sup> December 2020
	Commonplace website letter sent to residents	18 <sup>th</sup> December 2020
	Commonplace website launched <a href="https://brenchleygardens.commonplace.is/">https://brenchleygardens.commonplace.is/</a>	20 <sup>th</sup> December 2020
	Brenchley Gardens –Tenant Management Organisation (BGMA) AGM – Project Team attendance	25 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
	Ward Councillor’s (and former Lead Member for Housing) and Project Team meeting	4 <sup>th</sup> February 2021
	Commonplace website – Temporary closure letter	8 <sup>th</sup> February 2021

Item	Activity	Date
	<a href="#">G:\Asset Management\New Homes Delivery Team\Programme\Phase 6\Rooftop Developments Pre IDM\Brenchley Gardens -Wrayburn Estate\10 Residents and Stakeholders\Common Place\2021-02-08 Brenchley Gdns letter for Commonplace shutdown v2.pdf</a>	
	Project Manager and BGMA representative meeting – review Commonplace <a href="#">G:\Asset Management\New Homes Delivery Team\Programme\Phase 6\Rooftop Developments Pre IDM\Brenchley Gardens -Wrayburn Estate\10 Residents and Stakeholders\TMO\RE Brenchley Garden's TMO - Resident reps 23rd Feb 2021.msg</a>	25 <sup>th</sup> February 2021
	Commonplace website –updated news item	17 <sup>th</sup> March 2021
	Ward Councillor’s and current Lead Member for Housing and Project Team meeting – review proposal options <a href="#">G:\Asset Management\New Homes Delivery Team\Programme\Phase 6\Rooftop Developments Pre IDM\1 Key Documents\VOP Feasibility Reports\2021-03-21 20031_A32_Brenchley Gardens Estate_210319_email.pdf</a>	24 <sup>th</sup> March 2021
	Brenchley Garden’s Zoom meeting	13 <sup>th</sup> May 2021
	Commonplace website –update notifying the project has been paused and will be revisited.	17 <sup>th</sup> June 2021

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Stuart Davis, Director of New Homes, Housing and Modernisation		
<b>Report Authors</b>	Development Team Officers, Housing & Modernisation		
<b>Version</b>	Final		
<b>• Dated</b>	21/09/2021		
<b>• Key Decision?</b>	NA		
<b>• CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>			
<b>• Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>• Comments Included</b>	
Director of Law and Governance	NA	NA	
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	NA	NA	

Development Manager Housing & Modernisation	Yes	NA
• <b>Cabinet Member</b>	NA	NA
• <b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team / Scrutiny Team</b>		21/09/2021