

Housing Scrutiny Committee – Tuesday 23 January 2024 – List of public questions

Question 1 – Save Ekin Road Community Group

We are the Save Ekin Road community group, and we are writing to you regarding Cambridge City Council's proposals for redevelopment of Ekin Road. We are a group of 60 council tenants and leasehold and freehold residents, living in the flats, semi-detached houses, and bungalows on Ekin Road.

As done in the past, we wish to express our thoughts and concerns to you regarding the investigation work and potential development of our estate.

Since the commencement of the Council's consultation process in June 2022, Save Ekin Road has advocated for the preservation of all dwellings on the Ekin Road estate, and for the Council to pursue an "upgrade and repair" plan. This was done out of a concern that many residents may lose their homes unnecessarily and against their wishes.

In recent months, a significant amount of additional information has come to light about the conditions of some of the dwellings on the estate, and about the differing wishes, needs, and desires of the residents in different types of dwellings, in particular the differences between those in flats or in houses. This information comes to us from a variety of sources, including the recent Marengo survey of the estate, conversations with ward councillors who have deep knowledge of the entire estate, and our own interactions with other residents in-person and on various social media platforms.

We, as a resident group, have always, and will always, advocate for what is best for all residents of the estate. No part of our campaign ever has, or ever will, be about NIMBY-ism, and we advocate for the core needs and rights of everyone. Thus, in light of this new information, Save Ekin Road now wishes to revise its stated position, to better reflect the wishes, needs, and desires of all those on Ekin Road. The position

of our group is now as follows, broken up into three key requests to the Council:

1. The Cambridge City Council must, as a matter of urgency, **immediately rehouse those residents on Ekin Road who are council tenants and living in substandard, near-uninhabitable dwellings**. There are many severe cases of mould, damp and condensation on the estate, and those families need to be rehoused immediately, by direct-let. No family should be living in such conditions, and they cannot wait for the investigation works by the Council to conclude. They need to be rehoused now.
2. That the Cambridge City Council must, in whatever final plan it produces for the estate, **demolish all 72 flats on the estate and rebuild new dwellings in their place**. The conditions of many of those flats are dire. And it is clear that it is the wishes and desires of a vast majority of residents living in those flats that they want them taken down. The Council should not look to refurbish those flats, as they are beyond repair and those living in them want them demolished.
3. That the Cambridge City Council must, in whatever final plan it produces for the estate, **retain all 32 semi-detached houses on the estate**. Those houses are in good condition, and there is no need to demolish any of them. And it is clear that it is the wishes and desires of a vast majority of residents living in those houses that their houses are very dear to them, and they absolutely do not want to leave them. The Council should not look to demolish any of those houses, as to do so would be an unnecessary construction waste, and cause unnecessary social harm.

From the information we now have, the requests to demolish the flats, and retain the houses, match the needs and wishes of those in the flats and houses. And these requests are mutually compatible; we believe it to be possible to demolish all the flats while at the same time retain all the houses. We call on the Cambridge City Council to heed these requests and carry out the necessary pre-project urgent rehousing, as well as produce a project plan that respects the differing, but mutually compatible, desires of various residents on the street. It is perfectly clear *what* must be done, and it is now in the hands of the Council to see that it *is* done. We have listened, and we have changed our approach accordingly. We hope that the Council can do likewise.

As a concerned resident group, Save Ekin road remains committed to seeing that, whatever the outcome for the estate, it is one that serves the needs of all residents. And we remain committed to working with the Council, collaboratively, to provide whatever insight and understanding might be needed to assist in the efficient running of these important project investigations.

Question 2

Agenda item 8 - Addition of Davy Road estate to 10-Year Housing Programme'

Firstly, although the tenants all received letters from Samantha Shimmon, none of the leaseholders in Brackyn Road had received letters about this by Friday 19th January. This is unacceptable for several reasons. When talking to my leaseholder neighbours about it I found they hadn't heard about it and I was actually breaking this shocking news to them. The letter mentioned leaseholders and tenants so all the tenants I've spoken to assumed as I did that everyone living in the flats had received letters.

We would like an apology to the leaseholders and your assurance that everyone will be kept informed together about general information and no one will be left behind. It is not our job to communicate effectively with the leaseholders on your behalf so we'd like to know as soon as possible whom we can talk to about this if the recommendation is approved tonight? We'd like your assurance that if the member of staff changes, we'll be updated as soon as possible. Several of the residents have long-term health problems which are exacerbated by stress and at least 2 are seriously ill with life-threatening diseases. The stress of this news is hard enough for healthy people to deal with.

Moving on, we recognise that the council must maximise its land and resources so it can build more homes for those who need them and service the ones it already has. We know our flats are old and several have some maintenance issues. However, we also feel sad that our community in Brackyn Road which we've worked hard to grow will be broken up. We'd like to know how long it might be before any plans are

decided for the redevelopment and how much notice we'd get before having to move out? We understand you're probably not able to give us exact times however what's the ballpark timeline based on previous redevelopments in the city?

We're concerned about the trees and wildlife in the area. There are bats in the gardens and lots of trees which provide local wildlife with homes as well as being important to us. Will these be disturbed by the redevelopment? Will there be more cars and fewer parking spaces? We know these and other more detailed questions can probably only really be answered farther along the process however is there someone we can send them to now?

Question 3

1. Is the council aware of the recent statements by Professor Kamila Hawthorne, Chair of the Royal College of GP's <https://www.rcgp.org.uk/News/Damp-mould-exposure>
2. Does the city council agree with her assessment of the health risks of exposure to damp and mould.
3. How many flats does the city council own on the Ekin road estate
4. How many of these flats are occupied and how many are vacant?
5. Can the council provide a timeline with a fixed end date for the rehousing of all the remaining council tenants from the damp and mouldy flats on Ekin Road to alternate accommodation?

A public question was received after the deadline and a written response would be provided outside of the meeting.