

Appendix B – Consultation events November 2021

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The units comprising each estate are currently home to established communities. The proportion of leaseholders is currently just under a quarter of the total of 130 homes at Kingsway and around a third of the total of 127 homes at Hanover and Princess Courts. A substantial proportion of the homes sold under the Right to Buy have now been let out.
- 1.2. Any comprehensive strategy for remodelling or redevelopment will impact all these interest groups acutely but in different ways. Proposals must be tested thoroughly through patient and detailed communications so that all those concerned have the opportunity to voice their opinions and influence the outcome. The Council is committed to extensive and meaningful consultation at an early stage. This means that there will be an element of uncertainty about viability, funding and timing.

2. Consultation events November 2021

- 2.1. Residents of both estates were informed by letter that the Housing Scrutiny Committee would consider a report at its meeting on 23rd September 2021 which describes how the Council will work through the options for investment.
- 2.2. In November 2021 a letter to all residents at Hanover Court, Princess Court and Kingsway invited residents to two outdoor consultation events:
 - Hanover and Princess Court – 13th November
 - Kingsway – 20th November
- 2.3. The letter provided a named contact for any enquiries or questions leading up to each event.
- 2.4. In addition, the events were promoted by a flyer sent to each household and posters displayed in communal areas within each estate. The flyers also listed the details (with QR code for easy access) of two websites where further information could be gained of the consultation process:
 - www.hanoverandprincess.co.uk
 - www.kingswayflats.co.uk

2.5. Invitations were also sent to Members with advanced copy of the content to be displayed at each event.

Attendance

2.6. Between 8-10 Council Officers were present at each outdoor event from Housing, Repairs and Maintenance, Leasehold Services and the Housing Development Agency, alongside Members from both Market and Arbury Wards.

2.7. Boards were displayed to provide detail in the following areas:

- Strategic overview of the Council's housing aspirations
- Redevelopment – opportunities and constraints
- Examples of recent Council developments
- Decant options and support available
- Survey and different ways to provide feedback

2.8. Officers were present from a range of services to discuss the condition of the estates and issues surrounding redevelopment or refurbishment.

2.9. Door to door calls were made to households at both estates to advise that we were on site and to leave a survey.

Online

2.10. Two webinars were held for those unable to attend the outdoor events;

- Kingsway – 23rd November
- Hanover and Princess Courts – 25th November

2.11. A letter was sent to all residents to notify of each webinar. The webinar events were also detailed within each consultation website.

2.12. Unfortunately, the first webinar (Kingsway) could not proceed due to technical difficulties. Three residents were registered to attend and these have been contacted separately by phone to arrange further discussion.

2.13. A recording of the webinar for Hanover and Princess Court has been made available on the consultation website for residents to access.

Feedback on the events

2.14. Feedback on the events was mostly positive – for example:

“Congratulations for your clarity in order to communicate your ideas making this event happen today.”

“Thank you for today, it’s been very positive and encouraging.”

“I think it’s great the level of interactivity you have shown in consultation with tenants, regarding future plans/ideas on their homes.”

2.15. One respondent thought the material on the day was biased because it was too focussed on redevelopment.

2.16. The responses to the consultation survey are considered below under each of the estates.

3. Consultation Survey Hanover and Princess Court

- 39 Survey responses received
- 13 Webinar attendees
- 78 Website views
- 53 Drop-in attendees

3.1. Residents were asked about what they liked about where they lived. Several responses focussed on the location:

- *The central location (multiple responses)*
- *Close to transport links and hubs e.g., a short walk to the train station and on main bus route to Addenbrooke’s hospital*
- *Easy access to city centre for work opportunities*
- *Close to shops and GP surgery*
- *Outstanding schools in catchment area*

3.2. Other positive comments focussed on management issues:

- *Pet-friendly place*
- *Low rent*

- *Secure tenancy*
- *Excellent caretaker*

3.3. Other comments focussed on the environment and the community:

- *The community room and gardens*
- *Pleasant space – I've invested a lot of money in my flat*
- *Strong community spirit*
- *Access to the garage*
- *The communal corridors in the flats are open air – of huge benefit during the Covid pandemic. There is a feeling of space which is absent from some newly built properties or those with indoor hallways.*

3.4. Residents were asked about what they disliked about where they lived. Many of the comments focussed on energy and sustainability issues:

- *Heating system which is not fit for purpose.*
- *I pay a lot of money for electricity and yet still feel cold in the winter.*
- *Expensive storage heaters which do not work properly, despite the council repeatedly trying to resolve the issue.*
- *Hot water tank that is far too large for one person and is expensive to run. Also takes up valuable storage space.*
- *Lack of ventilation as windows only open on one side of the flat, therefore there is no through breeze. There needs to be some form of air-cooling system.*
- *Noise disturbance from people walking along the communal walkways.*
- *Poorly insulated doors that make the flat colder and more expensive to heat.*
- *Flats are very cold and damp*

3.5. Other negative comments could be read as comments on management issues but also reflect the constraints and challenges of maintaining and managing the existing buildings

- *Obvious drug-use from the smells that come in from outside.*
- *Anti-social behaviour and crime, particularly feeling scared when it's dark and poor external lighting (mostly out of order)*

- *The ease with which non-residents can access the property*
- *Lack of communal cleaning*
- *No motor bike parking available*
- *Poor management of repairs.*
- *Excessive and unjustified council charges to carry out repairs*
- *Exterior design – brutalist architecture made worse by tired stairways and brickwork*

3.6. Within the survey, 36 of the 39 respondents answered the question ‘Do you agree that Hanover and Princess Court is in need of regeneration?’

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
16	8	3	1	2	6

3.7. Overall the breakdown of these responses is as follows:

- 67% either strongly agreed or agreed
- 8% were neutral or unsure
- 22% either strongly disagreed or disagreed
- 3% were unsure

3.8. The proportion of council tenants responding was slightly higher than the proportion in the block; the proportion of leaseholder slightly lower. Support for regeneration was about the same amongst residents whether leaseholders or tenants (at about two thirds). Non-resident landlords were more opposed.

3.9. It is clear from other comments that most respondents understood regeneration to mean redevelopment but four of the eight who responded agree indicate that they would prefer regeneration to mean refurbishment. There is support for refurbishment from those who responded that they disagreed with regeneration. Overall, this survey suggests greater support for redevelopment but a significant minority that would prefer refurbishment. Only limited information has been provided to date to residents about the issues surrounding refurbishment and redevelopment identified in this report.

3.10. Asked what people would like to see many comments reinforced the basic agree/disagree message. Other comments from those favouring redevelopment included

- *I would like to see regeneration of the area with modern design. As discussed in a recent meeting with residents.*
- *Affordable environmentally-conscious flats*
- *Regenerate but let me come back*
- *After a lot of consideration, I feel that relocating for the purpose of demolition and then returning to Hanover Court once re-built; in the long term this will save us all money.*
- *Properties that offer safe, affordable and economically and environmentally sound*
- *The proposed plan will be highly disruptive especially as there are so many elderly and disabled residents and residents with mental health issues..... I moved into this flat believing that I would be here until I died....The survey is highly biased.....the only option discussed is that of redevelopment.*

3.11. Other comments from those indicating opposition to redevelopment included

- *I would like the buildings to be sensitively restored in a way that respects the integrity of the building work which is architecturally thoughtful and better quality than a lot of new builds. I would be disappointed if more housing was crammed in, which would make it inhospitable for families. Trees need to be preserved, and parking, so that it is liveable for people.*
- *Knock the garages down but keep the flats and get the work done.*
- *I would like to remain here. I would like the council to make some improvements but keep the courts.*
- *For the council to consult tenants about changes and modifications to their flats and also to check and take responsibility over contractors to make sure that a) the changes are necessary b) what is being put in place is appropriate c) that new installations are made and work correctly.*
- *It seems crazy the council having recently invested and spent money..... We as residents have suffered enough disruption and inconvenience by the council constantly undertaking unnecessary works requiring access to our flats and now the possible disruption after all that of having to find alternative suitable accommodation!*

- *Insulating flats so they would be warmer during winter*
 - *It is extremely unsettling to not know where we will be moved if decision is taken to demolish the flats. We have already been homeless in the past and it had serious health consequences on us*
- 3.12. Other comments from those who were unsure or neutral included
- *I would like to see the continuing existence of quality council housing in the centre of the city, whether that's by extensive refurbishment that addresses existing building and safety issues of the Courts or redevelops the site for future sustainable homes. I want to see the rationale for both options.*
- 3.13. Residents indicated that they wish to remain involved in the process, with 80% requesting updates by email or newsletter and 20% indicating they would like to be part of a steering group.

4. Consultation Survey Kingsway

- 14 Survey responses received
 - 3 Webinar registrations
 - 103 Website views
 - 31 Drop-in attendees
- 4.1. Residents were asked about what they liked about where they lived. Some responses focussed on the location:
- *Good bus links and close to shops (Arbury Court is nearby).*
 - *Close to the local school.*
 - *Perfect location meaning that it is easy to walk everywhere.*
- 4.2. Some focussed on amenities
- *Balcony with good storage space outside.*
 - *Good TV aerial and broadband connection.*
 - *The property is warm, spacious and well looked-after (the caretaker is good).*
 - *The size of the flat is good, with generously sized rooms. There are open green spaces, the council maintenance is good and there is new insulation.*

- *Lockable sheds are great for secure bike storage.*
- *Individual stairwells work really well as it is nice to have a proper front door and your own entrance – it doesn't feel like living in a block of flats.*

4.3. A couple of comments focussed on cost related issues

- *Affordable.*
- *The council is a transparent and fair freeholder.*

4.4. Others focussed on community

- *Friendly and helpful neighbours.*
- *Close to family and friends.*
- *Strong sense of community – people know each other here. It is real life, not all middle-class people.*

4.5. Residents were asked about what they disliked about where they lived. Many of the comments focussed on anti-social behaviour issues:

- *The area around Kingsway is well-known for drug use. People deal drugs and take drugs in communal areas (stated in multiple responses).*
- *Security problems, particularly when the scaffolding went up. Grown men and teenagers climbing the scaffolding inches away from tenants' windows. Broken fencing and a lack of CCTV.*
- *Exterior lighting that doesn't work. Unsafe at night.*
- *Poor environment. People dump rubbish by the carload, creating a fire hazard (the caretaker is fantastic in clearing this really quickly) and there is a smell of urine in the lift and on the stairs.*
- *Very noisy with young people gathering in communal areas, smoking cannabis.*

4.6. Other comments focussed on building quality issues

- *The building offers very, very poor living quality and is outdated for Cambridge.*
- *The design of the building – paper thin walls. Noise outside at night is deafening because of people walking on all the hard surfaces.*
- *Lack of parking spaces.*

- *Old water and heating system. It is so cold. Huge loss of heat in 1st floor flats through the floors. I can't afford to heat my bedroom anymore.*
- *There is bad access to ground floor, especially for a fire exit. Not safe to live in.*
- *A lack of natural light in the property. Recessed balconies mean that we don't get any sun.*

4.7. Within the survey, 13 of the 14 respondents answered the question 'Do you agree that Kingsway is in need of regeneration'?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No response
9	2	1	1	0	0	1

4.8. Overall the breakdown of these responses is as follows:

- 85% either strongly agreed or agreed
- 8% were neutral
- 8% were unsure
- No respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed

4.9. The proportion of council tenants and leaseholders responding broadly matched the proportion in the estate of leaseholder slightly lower. However, it should be noted that the response rate was very low. A resident who did not respond to the survey has indicated that they are settled and do not wish to move.

4.10. Asked what people would like to see many comments reinforced the basic support for redevelopment and the concerns about anti-social behaviour noted above.

4.11. Those focussed on regeneration included:

- *We would like the existing flats to be knocked down and rebuilt. We would like to return to Kingsway and for the new development to have green spaces for children and for anti-social behaviour to be dealt with.*

- *I think that us as council tenants we should embrace the possibility of total redevelopment, while also giving thought to our surrounding leaseholders. Redevelopment could mean that anti-social behaviour would reduce, making Arbury in general on a par with some more affluent areas. It would be a place for growth in terms of quality of life.*
- *I would like Kingsway to still be a place where I could afford to live. If the demolition goes ahead, the new build should be built to last so that we're not in the same situation again in years to come.*
- *Redevelopment is the best option given the age of the building. The land isn't used very well and there are too many garages. I don't see why there is a long consultation time. The sooner it's redeveloped the better*

4.12. Concerns focussed on anti-social behaviour and community issues were reflected in these comments:

- *A security presence to stop homeless people sleeping in the stairwells.*
- *I would like it to be drugs-free and for lights to be outside*
- *There could be improvements to the sense of community, perhaps some communal activities would help. I don't even know my neighbours.*
- *There should be security improvements, such as metal fencing*
- *There should be more car parking available for residents. This would stop people parking on the grass or on nearby roads*
- *It would be great to see some benches, bicycle storage or even a community centre with a café here.*

4.13. Residents indicated that they wish to remain involved in the process, with 11 requesting updates by email or newsletter and 3 indicating they would like to be part of a steering group