Druids Heath Together

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Resident & Community Engagement Summary Report

Delivery Phase 7a: January 2023 to April 2023

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Following Cabinet approval to bring the South of Druids Heath into the regeneration alongside the East of the estate, our teams have been active in the community engaging with residents on the doorstep to inform and gather views on the development of a masterplan for the whole estate.

In January 2023 Birmingham City Council were informed that the Levelling Up Fund Bid towards the regeneration of Druids Heath was unsuccessful, however remains committed to the regeneration and consultation with residents and other key stakeholders continues.

Key Highlights

- **Continuation of resident and stakeholder drop-in** sessions from Manningford Hall and Spearhead Trust.
- **Initiation of engagement activities with Druids Heath residents and key community stakeholders in the South of the estate** to identify views and attitudes towards the regeneration and design concepts, with a focus on gathering views about potential clearance (clearance required to meet housing environmental standards and holistic regeneration and the key aspects contained within the Levelling up bid).
- **Stakeholder engagement and attendance of Ward meetings** with Druids Heath Forum.
- **Continued use of social media,** the Regeneration newsletter and PropTech tools to communicate key updates and timely information to stakeholders.

Outcomes

- **Over 400 households visited through door-to-door consultation** in the South of the estate.
- Residents directly engaged through a combination of informal drop-in sessions and events.
- **24.2% increase in social media (Facebook) reach** compared to previous 90 days.
- Residents in the South of the estate **generally in favour** of design principles.
- **Some questions around immediate housing issues** and maintenance priorities.

Activity Summary

In December 2022 Birmingham City Council received approval from Cabinet to bring the South of the estate into the holistic regeneration of Druids Heath. This set out the pathway for the next phase of community engagement undertaken by The Pioneer Group, and the team began door-to-door visits in January 2023 to inform and consult with residents in the South on key regeneration principles and establish opinion on potential clearance.

The Pioneer Group Engagement Team alongside representatives from Birmingham City Council and the retained architects BM3 have also continued regular regeneration drop-in events for residents and key stakeholders to ask questions and raise concerns.

We have continued to build our digital presence through the Druids Heath Together website and social media, increasing reach and audience growth over this period.

Key activities and findings are outlined in the summary report below.

The Engagement Process

Key engagement methods over this period include:

a) Doorstep conversations
b) Community regeneration drop-ins and events
c) Stakeholder meetings
d) Social media and newsletters

Around 450 residents were engaged over the reporting period through a combination of consultation approaches in the community and stakeholder meetings.

In addition, nearly 10,000 social media users were 'reached' through a combination of Facebook and Twitter outreach.

The Winter regeneration newsletter published on the 19th of January was distributed to all residents on the estate and was made available on the Druids Heath Together website and through social media.

The focus of our community engagement was to identify the attitudes of residents and key stakeholders in the South of the estate towards the emerging vision for Druids Heath as

well as to update and inform residents on aspects of the regeneration, such as clearance, that potentially may affect them.

Using the good life approach initially employed in the East, the team began by establishing what residents like about living in Druids Heath, the community facilities ~~and~~ they use, and thoughts on what makes Druids Heath a good place to live.

These conversations paved the way for more specific consultation on aspects of the regeneration structured around the following talking points:

- Views on existing facilities (South and East) including services, transportation, connectivity, environment.
- The design concepts including sports pitch, village centre, Dell enhancements, health centre.
- Views on potential clearance.
- Improvements – what would you like to be improved, taken away, added or developed?

The following section provides an overview of the engagement methodologies.

a) Doorstep Conversations

Door knocking in the South began at the end of January 2023 and was completed towards the end of March 2033 focusing on two housing typologies: tower Blocks and FOGS (Flats over Garages):

- **Tower blocks:** Topfield, Pitmeadow, Bellfield, Drews House, Pleck House and Moor House

- **FOGS:** located in Bells Lane, Dial Close, Yarnbury Close, Lakedown Close, Meadow Walk, Pound Road, Orcheston, Stonehenge, Stapleford Croft, Durnford Croft, and Garretts Walk

- **Mono-pitch and two-storey houses** in Yarnbury Close, and Bell Meadow

Area consulted and housing typologies

422 properties were visited and 'knocked' in total. In instances where residents were not in or did not answer the door to our engagement team, a postcard was left detailing information and contact details.

The resident engagement team were able to directly engage on the doorstep with 103 households. A breakdown of housing type is provided in Appendix 1.

- There were several residents with English as a second language.

- Social housing tenancies made up the largest proportion of households consulted, with a small number of private and owner occupiers.

- It is of note that many residents of the tower blocks were new to the area and / or in temporary accommodation, demonstrating a more transient community.

- In addition to newer residents, several residents consulted had lived in the area all their life with strong family ties and social networks.

Findings of these conversations are detailed further in this report.

b) Events and Drop-ins

Monthly drop-in sessions at Manningford Hall and Spearhead Trust have provided a regular and consistent presence in the community.

In total four drop-in sessions were delivered, providing residents and stakeholders with direct communication with The Pioneer Group Engagement Team, key Birmingham City Council representatives and Architects.

Both morning and evening sessions were available to ensure wide accessibility.

Conversations and engagement at these meetings focussed on supporting residents with specific enquiries about the timeline of the regeneration and questions over clearance.

In addition, informal drop-in sessions at Kath's Café, Idmiston Croft took place on the second Friday of the month. These sessions help engage customers of the café in a more informal, conversational way and again establish presence. Masterplan boards are also on permanent display within the café.

c) Stakeholder Meetings

In this period there was one main engagement with stakeholders.

A meeting was held on the March 15th 2023 attended by The Leader of The Council, Councillor Ian Ward, Members of the public and The Druids Heath and Monyhull Forum. The purpose of the meeting was for The Leader to hear concerns from the residents and answer questions about the regeneration.

. There were strong views expressed on the strategies for delivering the regeneration particularly in relation to rehousing tenants impacted by the demolition of high-rise blocks and discussions took place regarding alternative approaches such as building first prior to moving tenants out.

There was also discussion on the mental health and wellbeing impacts on residents impacted by the regeneration, in particular those who had already moved or would be moving out of their homes in advance of demolition of tower blocks. Cllr Ward explained why building new homes before the tower blocks were demolished wasn't possible, he did however, commit to looking at ways to improve the experience of residents affected by demolition.

d) Social Media

Social media has been used actively in this period through the dedicated 'Druids Heath Together' Facebook page (Druids Heath Together | Facebook) and the Twitter account Druids Heath Together (@OurDruidsHeath).

In addition, the dedicated website (www.druidsheathtogether.co.uk) enables stakeholders to access key information, the regeneration journey and provide feedback on plans.

Over the last quarter social media has been used to improvement signposting to the website and direct traffic to specific features and key communications, for instance design principles and key documents and downloads such as the draft masterplan as well as to inform of scheduled drop-ins and ways in which stakeholders can engage with the team.

More frequent and meaningful news updates together with the newsletter download cross posted on Facebook and Twitter has served to push traffic to the website; posts on social media can be seen to correlate to real time spikes in website visits.

Posts across platforms consistently refer to the website feedback loop to encourage open dialogue and communication with stakeholders.

Social media across platforms demonstrates organic growth over this reporting period.

Reaching stakeholders and residents through third party local social media groups has also widened the marketing and communications reach particularly the promotion of key events and communications for instance cross posting the latest newsletter download from the Facebook page to local groups and advertising the family fun day (post reach 1982).

From January 2023 to the end of March 2023, analytics show that:

- Organic Facebook reach of 4,100 a 24.2% increase on the previous 3 months.
- There were 834 page visits, 46.1% higher than the previous 90 days.
- 75% increase in new Facebook page likes.

Twitter shows a similar growth, achieving 9,200 impressions over this 90-day period.

A few residents have also used social media to ask questions and obtain up-to-date information on the regeneration.

This has included questions on the clearance and refurbishment of specific properties including the tower blocks. We have responded to comments through direct messaging where needed.

Summary of Findings

Engagement over this period indicates that residents of all housing typographies consulted are generally in favour of the design principles within the masterplan and agree that the vision and changes proposed would bring improvements to life in Druids Heath.

'Good life' conversations tell us that people like living in the area as they have family ties, children at school locally and good neighbours. Given the choice, most residents engaged in the consultation expressed a desire to stay in the area due to the existing relationships they have in Druids Heath.

Residents consulted in the South of the estate expressed that they like the 'greenness' of the area, the view from their homes, access to fields for walking and the proximity to the countryside. Many residents felt that South Druids Heath was well connected by bus routes with easy access to shops, health services and the city centre. There was however frequent observation that the area was deteriorating, with many residents engaged in the South expressing a fear of crime and anti- social behaviour, with fly tipping widely reported.

Conversations with residents in the South highlight a need for immediate improvements to housing to create a better quality of life for people living in this part of Druids Heath. On clearance, generally, the majority (77%) of residents engaged in doorstep conversations across all housing typologies were strongly in favour. It is important to note that no residents stated that they 'disagreed' with clearance but several strongly disagreed, showing that residents feel passionately about this on both sides.

When analysing results based on housing typographies, 88% of tower block residents said they strongly agreed with the principle of clearance, compared with 43% of FOG residents. This is likely due to the immediate housing concerns residents in the tower blocks highlighted, with a consensus that current housing is unsuitable particularly for families and children. While these percentages are helpful, they need to be considered in relation to the sample size gathered.

It is also worth noting that the majority (67%) of FOG residents that expressed strong disagreement were older people aged 50 plus. In addition, when asked many respondents that strongly disagreed or were unsure on clearance were long-term residents of the

estate that have established social ties to the area, for instance having family and friends close by.

There was a preference for low-rise housing with an emphasis on the importance of gardens and outdoor spaces for residents, promoting a sense of ownership and connection to their homes and opportunities for greenery and recreation, enhancing the overall quality of life.

The engagement team noted that compared to the East, residents in the South demonstrated a lower level of engagement in the wider Druids Heath community with many residents unaware of existing amenities such as the library and the Dell. This may be because in the tower blocks particularly, several residents were being temporarily housed.

The project team noted a lower level of interest in the regeneration as a whole and how it could create holistic impact for the estate; there was at times indifference and apathy particularly in the tower blocks and with long-term residents of the FOGS, with residents feeling that Druids Heath had been 'forgotten' with uncertainty about whether the regeneration would take place.

There was a consensus that providing engaging and constructive activities for youth is crucial in preventing the boredom that can contribute to anti-social behaviour with specific suggestions for facilities such as youth centres, sports pitches, playgrounds, and recreational areas that cater to various age groups and interests, such as a BMX track, skate park, splash park, outdoor gym and sports equipment.

Respondents strongly agreed on the need for better and safer parks as a key element of the regeneration project with widespread calls for immediate enhancements to Walkers Heath Park and specific requests for playground upgrades, maintenance, and improved facilities to cater to diverse age groups and recreational activities.

There was a specific suggestion for educational signage to make green spaces more engaging and informative. As has been the case throughout, there were many concerns about safety in parks and on the estate, including the need for better-lit pathways, visible security measures, and improved policing to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

There were specific requests for community involvement in the development and maintenance of green spaces including communal gardens and community allotments, to cater to various preferences and needs and to foster a sense of ownership and pride in the project as well as provide educational opportunities.

There was some interest in attracting bigger retailers to the area to offer a wider range of shops and affordable options with some calls for better local shops to provide essential goods and services, particularly making better use of the Pound Lane site. A few specific comments expressed a desire for reinstating a community pub or social club to provide older people with opportunities to get out the home, reducing social isolation and contributing to overall wellbeing.

The project team noted that the priority should be immediate repairs and maintenance to improve housing, making play spaces and facilities in Walkers Heath Park better and safer, increasing activities and opportunities for children and young people to improve opportunity and address anti-social behaviour, and improvements to overall estate safety and security. Key themes of this reporting period can be summarized as follows:

- Strong community support for the inclusion of facilities and amenities for children and young people to keep young people occupied.
- Strong support for the creation of new, usable public spaces and parks with better and varied equipment, improved safety and accessibility that considers the needs of people of all ages and abilities
- Strong support for the provision of a Village Centre with a good mixed retail and food service offer with health and community facilities to foster community cohesion.
- Strong support for sports facilities and sports pitch on the Baverstock site, with a clear desire for sports facilities for young people.
- Interest in partnerships with community organisations and youth-focused groups to provide additional support and resources for children and young people.
- Overall support for clearance with some concerned residents against, and some older people expressing a preference for retrofit.
- A strong preference for not building on the Dell although an understanding that additional housing is needed.
- Suggestions around using the Pound Lane shops to increase the local retail offer.
- Improved safety is a key issue for many residents**;** suggestions for improved street lighting, removal of alleyways, prevention of fly tipping, better estate layout and CCTV.
- Some questions regarding local parking provision.

See also Appendix 1 for in-depth resident feedback.

Key Actions for Next Period of Resident and Community Engagement

- Continuation of door-to-door visits in the South, focusing on sharing information and consulting with older people and bungalows.
- Continue presence in the community, providing residents in the South (and wider estate) open access.
- Continue with drop-in sessions as way for residents to keep up to date with plans and have direct questions answered as proving useful to residents who have specific questions about how the regeneration affects them.
- Develop Whitsun event programme to engage with more residents and other key stakeholders on next stages, timeline and vision and design principles.

Appendix 1: In-depth resident feedback

Design Features – Scorings

During engagement residents were prompted to comment specifically on these key design features and were asked to rate their opinion on these proposals based on whether they 'strongly agree' or 'strongly disagree' on a scale of to produce a score.

It is important to note that it has not always been possible to apply this scoring criteria consistently especially at the doorstep where time may have been limited or residents have preferred to have broader and more generalised conversations.

It is also important to review this scoring in line with attitudes drawn out in conversations, which are summarised below.

Table to show scoring attributed to key design features

	Score (1 strongly disagree, 5 strongly agree)				
Design feature	**1**	**2**	**2**	**4**	**5**
Sports Pitch	0%	0%	0%	1%	99%
Village Centre	0%	0%	0%	1%	99%
Enhancements on the Dell	0%	0%	0%	1%	99%
Views on clearance	8%	0%	9%	6%	77%

Views on Clearance – Number Consulted and Response Tower Blocks

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Additional Feedback

Feedback on the wider regeneration is summarised below.

Good life comments – existing features	• Good bus connections to city centre and connectivity to other areas. • Several residents, predominantly residing in FOGS commented that they like their neighbours and find the area friendly. • In Yarnbury Close – residents expressed a strong sense of neighbourliness and commented on the peaceful and quiet street. • Prevailing positivity towards the green spaces, fields for dog walking and access to nature, gateway to countryside for walks and bike rides. • Generally, shops in the area are considered good with a wide variety, convenient and close by. • Shops are the main local facility used by residents consulted in the South. • Several residents expressed they liked the convenience of everything being close by and local. • Use of parks particularly Walkers Heath although there were comments that it feels unsafe. • A few residents commented that they use the library, but some did not know it existed. • Daisy Farm Park was mentioned as a good amenity for local families. • Several residents commented on the nice view from their flat.
Good life comments – improvements	• Strong consensus for more activities and facilities for children and young people, including activities for teenagers. • Better parks and play spaces with more equipment and improved accessibility for all. • Suggestions included a splash park, BMX track, skate park, safe, legal space to ride quad bikes. • More local parks and a greener neighbourhood, using green spaces for growing e.g. community allotments.

	• Improvements to Walkers Health Park including facilities and general safety and tennis court. • More for older people, e.g. outdoor gym. • A fitness centre / gym / swimming pool / leisure centre. • Safety a key issue for many residents. Better lighting needed, removal of alleyways, prevention of fly tipping, better estate layout, CCTV. • Better use of Pound Lane area for shops and food retail establishments. • A wider variety of shops and budget supermarkets (Pound Road highlighted), food choices, and larger retail offer (e.g. a retail park). • More local jobs and employment support services for residents, neighbourhood office.
Design concepts - Sports pitch	General agreement that a 3G pitch would be very positive for the area. “Football pitch would be very beneficial for the area”, “kids need new facilities in the area.” One comment that “if there is a shortage of houses, why are they building a football pitch in Baverstock?”
Design concepts - public square ‘village centre’	• General support for new central community centre and facilities with a variety of shops. • “Convenient to have all the facilities in the same place”. • Several residents don’t travel to that side of the estate or use any of the facilities in that area.
Design concepts - Dell enhancements	• Great ideas, especially for children and young people as there isn't much for them to do. • Improvements will be good for the kids. • More places for children to play. • Several respondents consulted have not heard of or do not use the Dell as it is seen as too far away.

Clearance of homes and retrofitting	• Many tower block residents expressed a strong desire to move out into better housing, stating issues with damp and mould. • Several residents said that the blocks are currently not fit for children and families and they would welcome clearance. • Most residents expressed a desire to stay in the area where they had connections with schools, doctors, work and family. • Manty residents expressed preferences around the type of housing they would like, e.g. number of bedrooms. • Several tower block residents commented that they would prefer to move into a house with a garden which would be beneficial for mental health and wellbeing, particularly those with children or dependents with additional needs. • Several residents stated that the flats need to be demolished and 'do not need small improvements'. • A few residents felt sad at the prospect of demolition but were able to understand the need to develop the area to create wider improvement. • A small number of residents asked if refurbishment was an option, expressing concern over moving out and effect of change on mental health. • Several residents are in the process of bidding for a new home out of the area.
Health centre location	• A proportion of residents, particularly those that have recently moved into the area are not registered with a local GP and use healthcare services outside of Druids Heath. • Generally, those registered with a GP locally are happy with the current service and location. • Despite this, most people were not concerned if the services were to move although there is no strong need expressed by residents for a new location. • One comment that a new location (Manningford) would be more difficult for older people to access.

- "Better access to health centre would be great".
- "There is only one surgery. It would be good to have a better location".
- "It would be good if doctors are also in the same community building".
- "A new pharmacy is more important the new surgery".

Other comments

- There are several residents in the blocks with mobility problems that do not use local facilities and several respondents that know little about the local area.
- A lack of community cohesion in the blocks noted.
- Reports of feeling unsafe and impact on mental health, not using community facilities, parks (particulary Walkers Heath Park reports of anti-social behaviour), alleyways and a fear of being out alone or at night, particularly for women and girls.
- In Drews House, Pitmeadow, Pleck House, Moor House and Bellfield House several residents reported feelings of being 'forgotten' and living in poor quality housing (mould, damp, leaks, broken windows, faulty heating issues).
- In Drews House and Pitmeadow, Pleck House, Moor House Several residents stated they are waiting on repairs and that maintenance is slow.
- In Drews House and Pitmeadow, Plack House there were reports of drug use, noise and anti-social behaviour, rubbish and flytipping.
- Several comments on poor street lighting and safety in parks and alleyways.
- Parking issues reported by some residents.
- Several residents like living in the area and feel it provides them with everything they need.
- Several residents don't want to stay in the area due to deterioration and crime.
- Several residents did not know there was a library or thought it had been closed down.
- Questions about Baverstock school and if another secondary school will be built in the locality.