

Ham Close: Update for Homeowners on potential improvements

As you know, Ham Close has been selected as a potential regeneration project as part of Richmond Council's Uplift Programme. The Uplift Programme is designed to deliver physical, social and economic improvements to local areas.

Ham Close includes a number of RHP homes, so we're delighted to be working in partnership with the Council to explore what might be possible in Ham. We see this as a potentially exciting opportunity to invest in the local community and provide more affordable high quality homes for local people. As you know, earlier this year RHP and the Council engaged the Prince's Foundation as an independent body to work with you, other local residents and key stakeholders to consider the future of Ham Close. The purpose of this was to establish what people liked about their homes, their views on Ham Close and what change they would wish to see or find acceptable in the future. Following the information gathered during the consultation process (called an 'Enquiry by Design') the Prince's Foundation was able to compile a report which summarises the results of the process and the views of those who participated. To download a copy of the report, visit our website at <http://www.rhp.org.uk>.

As with any regeneration project there are a wide range of options to be explored and it is important that we do this with you. We're clear that any choice that is ultimately made must meet the following criteria:

- It must have the support of our customers;
- It must be financially viable;
- It must result in at least as many affordable homes as exist at the current time.

The Council are considering the report at their Cabinet meeting in January and will specifically be asked to support some key next steps including an 'option appraisal' to take place in conjunction with architects. We'll then be in a position to share detailed design options with you and understand the likely costs associated with the various possibilities. We appreciate this is both an uncertain and exciting time for many of you and are committed to keeping you informed as the process proceeds. As part of doing this we want to share some useful information with you, including:

1. A summary of the options that will be considered.
2. What happens next.
3. How you can get involved.
4. Answers to your questions.
5. How we'll keep you informed.

1. A summary of the options that will be considered

We know that the possible changes affect different people in a range of ways. The three possible scenarios that will be considered if an option appraisal goes ahead are described in the table on the next page, including what impact they could potentially have on you as a Homeowner. For answers to more specific questions please refer to section 4.

Option	What this means	What this means to me
Do nothing	<p>No development would take place.</p> <p>Repairs and improvements will continue to be made to homes and external areas when due/ needed.</p>	No impact.
Refurbishment of existing flats with infill (partial development)	<p>This would involve significant improvements to homes such as adding cladding to improve thermal efficiency and replacing some roofs. Where financially viable, new lifts could be added to improve access to upper floors.</p> <p>Making this option financially viable would require some infill development which means creating additional homes in some of the space between flats. This would be subject to normal planning policy, consultation and approval.</p>	<p>This would result in less disruption than full redevelopment. However there may still be a requirement for you to move out while refurbishment work is being carried out. If you had to move RHP would offer a £5,000 disturbance allowance to cover removal costs etc.</p> <p>The cost of repairs and improvements may need to be partially met by a combination of RHP/grants/Homeowner contributions in accordance with your lease.</p> <p>The improvements will lead to reduced energy bills for residents.</p>
Full redevelopment	<p>Under this proposal, all existing flats would be demolished and replaced by a new development. This would be done through a phased process of demolition and new build.</p> <p>The new homes would be high quality with standards fully compliant with the London Housing Design Guide.</p>	<p>Owners will be given a choice between the following options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RHP buys the existing property at a price set by an independent valuation. • The owner is offered one of the new properties on an equity share basis. <p>In addition RHP would offer £5,000 disturbance allowance and pay for reasonable legal fees.</p> <p>If you are a 'buy to let' landlord the following also applies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RHP will not be

		<p>responsible for any tax implications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RHP is not responsible for the tenants within these properties.
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2. What happens next

With any regeneration project, it takes time to both develop and decide on the best option for the local community, and, to plan and deliver the development programme. The decision making process is complex and relies on a number of factors. It's therefore important that we take the time we need to make the right decision for our customers and the local community.

If the Council's Cabinet approve the option appraisal at their meeting in January, the following sequence of events will take place throughout 2015.

What's happening?	When
Richmond Council Cabinet meeting.	January 2015
A Community Forum will be established and briefed so that it can contribute to the Ham options appraisal and communications strategy.	See section 3
Consultants will be appointed to lead the option appraisal process. The consultants/architects will work with the Community Forum in developing the options for appraisal.	March 2015
The options appraisal will be completed.	July 2015
A presentation of the options will be given to RHP customers by an independent adviser. This will cover the full implications of each option.	August 2015
RHP customers (homeowners and tenants) will be given the opportunity to comment and state their preferred option.	September 2015
A report will be produced based on the outcomes from the options appraisal process, the financial viability of each option and the feedback from RHP customers and the local community.	September 2015
The Council and RHP will consider the report and make a final decision regarding the most appropriate option.	October 2015
RHP customers and the Community Forum will be notified of the decision made and how their feedback has been taken into account.	November 2015
Plans put in place to start delivering the preferred option.	December 2015

3. How you can get involved

Community Forum

We'll be setting up a Community Forum. The Forum will be made up of representatives from across the community including Ham Close residents and members of local groups. The intention is that the members of the Forum will share the views of those that they are representing so that they can be considered during the option appraisal process. Whilst the group will have no decision making authority their respective views and comments will be taken into consideration by a joint Council/RHP project team.

If you'd like to be part of the Forum please let us know by emailing customer.services@rhp.org.uk or give us a call on 0800 0322 433.

Workshops

During July 2015 we'll be holding workshops for customers which will explore in more detail what the different options mean for you.

Your say

There'll be an opportunity in the summer of 2015 to have your say on which option you prefer.

Visits to other developments

We'll give you the opportunity to go and visit other projects of a similar nature, including refurbishment, infill and full redevelopment. This is likely to happen in April 2015.

Resident Association meetings

We're happy to come to all of the Resident Association meetings you'd like us to so that we can keep you updated with what's happening. You have already asked us to attend your next meeting in February.

4. Answers to your questions

These are answers to the questions that have been asked already along with others we thought you may find useful. We'll keep this list up to date as part of our on-going communication with you.

1) *If full redevelopment goes ahead, will I get a choice of my new home?*

We will give as much choice as possible, subject to our rehousing and phasing plan. We will discuss this with you at the earliest stage possible.

2) *If full redevelopment goes ahead, will I be offered a 'like for like' home?*

We guarantee that you'll get a 'like for like' property. E.g. if you currently have a two bedroom home, you'll be offered a new two bedroom home. The value in your current home will be protected as part of the Scheme – see the answer to question 7.

3) Will I be able to stay in my home if full redevelopment goes ahead?

In the event of full redevelopment we'll work with you to try and achieve just one move. In a few cases two moves may be necessary. If the refurbishment option goes ahead some people may need to move out whilst the improvement works are undertaken.

Every customer that needs to move will be offered a payment of £5,000 to help cover the cost of removals and items such as carpets, curtains and legal fees.

4) Will I be forced to move away from Ham Close?

We're committed to doing all that we can to keep our existing customers on Ham Close. If an option goes ahead that means you'll need to move away temporarily and return later, we'll work to keep you as close to the area as we can.

5) I wish to sell my home before a decision is made on the redevelopment. Do I need to declare the plans for potential improvements to Ham Close to prospective buyers?

As there are currently no formal plans in place we believe that you have no legal obligation to declare this information at this stage. However, it is at your discretion whether you disclose this information to buyers and you may want to obtain your own legal advice.

6) How will negotiations take place with each Homeowner?

One to one discussions will commence in November 2015 (based on a final decision being made in October as to whether some form of redevelopment will go ahead). We'll speak to each of you on an individual basis to make sure you understand the impact the decision will have on you, offering as much support through any changes as we can.

7) What will happen if there is a difference between the price of my current home and the new one I am moving to?

The approach we'll take will ensure that you'll get a like for like home and there'll be no requirement for you to raise funds to make up for any difference in property value.

The scheme will work as follows. If the new property is worth more than your existing home you will be offered the new home on a shared equity basis. E.g. If your existing home is valued at £200,000 and the new one is valued at £250,000, you would be offered £200,000 of equity in the new home and RHP would own £50,000 i.e. 20%. No rent would be payable on the proportion owned by RHP. If you sell your home and RHP still owns 20% of the equity then RHP will receive 20% of the sale price. If you'd like to buy some or all of the remaining equity then we'd offer you this at the market value at the time of your request.

8) Could a compulsory purchase order (CPO) be used to force me to sell my home?

A CPO is a legal process in the United Kingdom and Ireland that allows certain bodies which need to purchase land or property to do so without the consent of the owner.

We want to work with every Homeowner to get the best possible outcome for them. Our aim is that every Homeowner will be given the opportunity to remain at Ham Close regardless of the option chosen.

CPO powers are very unlikely to be used and would only be considered if a refusal to sell was standing in the way of progress for the rest of the community. In that case CPO powers would be used by Richmond Council.

9) *Will RHP buy my flat from me now?*

We're interested in talking to any Homeowner who would like to sell their home to RHP. We'd always look at market price and affordability within our budgets. Please get in touch with us if you'd like a more detailed conversation.

10) *I was planning some redecorations/improvements to my home. Should I go ahead?*

As always people have choices about changes they want to make to their homes. If regeneration goes ahead it will take a number of years to deliver in practice and we wouldn't want people to put their lives on hold in the interim. Any improvements that have been made to people's homes would also be considered at the point of valuation. If you're looking for general advice on this topic we're happy to chat this through on an informal basis with you.

11) *How will any new homes differ from what is currently on Ham Close?*

If redevelopment goes ahead, the new flats would be built in line with the standards set out in the London Housing Design Guide, and will therefore be more spacious and energy efficient than existing units. Additionally, it's important to us that the homes are lifetime compliant meaning they are easily adapted for disabled people so that there's future flexibility for those of you who want to stay in your homes long term.

12) *If the option to provide more homes goes ahead, how will it impact on the current infrastructure? (E.g. Parking, schools, road congestion etc.)*

If full redevelopment goes ahead we'd allocate a minimum of one parking space per home. The normal planning approval process will take into account the capacity of the current infrastructure to deal with the extra homes.

13) *How will RHP continue to provide quality service before, during and after any redevelopment?*

We're committed to maintaining the same level of service throughout the development and in addition we'll make sure that we provide the right level of support, advice and information for those affected at every stage.

14) *What will the role of the Prince's Foundation be at the next stage of the process?*

The Prince's Foundation is an expert in their field and is likely to have a role in advising us and the Council in some way going forward.

15) How long will the refurbishment and development options take?

Until we know which option we're going to move forward with, we're unable to answer this question. What we do know is that partial development will take less time than full redevelopment.

5. How we'll keep you informed

We're committed to keeping you informed and providing you with regular updates on what's happening. If at any point you feel that we're not providing you with enough information, please let us know. Some of the ways we'll communicate with you are:

- Providing a monthly newsletter (via email or post depending on your preference). Our first newsletter will be sent out after the next Resident Association meeting in February.
- By letter, if we need to give you specific information about your home.
- A Facebook page dedicated to Ham Close where you can keep up to date, ask questions and give feedback.
- By attending Resident Association meetings when requested.
- By attending Community Forum meetings when requested.

We hope you've found this information useful. If there is anything else you would like to know before our next update in the New Year please email us at customer.services@rhp.org.uk.

Thank you to everyone who has shared their thoughts so far, your feedback is really important to us and will be instrumental in shaping any options that are considered further.

We're looking forward to working closely with you on this potentially exciting opportunity in the New Year.

Kind regards

Miriam Morris
Head of Customer Services