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 @ta4bha

**March 2018 Update**

As you are all aware we have been challenging BHA’s plan to convert garages on Morland Mews, and storage sheds on Gissing Walk, into flats. Our efforts so far have resulted in the proposed plans being reduced from 14 flats to 11 and now to 7. BHA have produced their latest revised plans but insist that they are not final and will be subject to consultation, including a public meeting, probably in May. BHA’s current timetable is to prepare to apply for planning permission by the end of June.

**The new plans, and other items, were discussed at a meeting on Friday 23rd March at 60MM.**

**Present:**

**BHA: Martyn Waring (chair); Susan French (CEO); Dean McGlynn (PA Executive)**

**TA: Liam O’Dowd; Joe Spikesley; Ron Lord.**

MW opened the meeting at 10am by saying that he couldn’t stay for more than an hour. The agenda covered several items which were unrelated to the building proposals but which MW wanted to deal with first. MW left at 11am leaving SF to deal with the garage plans.

SF started by reporting that the two empty ground floor flats in Pugin Court are being renovated to improve ventilation and daylight. The interiors are being reconfigured, including moving the bedrooms. The TA committee was unconvinced that this will solve the problem of these flats being undesirable.

SF informed the meeting that she would like to involve TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) in mediating with the TA. She said that this was part of a wider plan to involve tenants more in the running of the association. TPAS are strictly advisory and impartial but can advise on best practice.

SF said that tenant input was important on the following matters:

* Construction planning
* Parking, garage and shed allocation policies
* Design of new Community Room
* Materials, landscaping and trees
* Location of refuse and cycle stores and new recycling facilities
* Other estate improvements e.g. lighting, storage

SF also discussed Community Development Events. This has been an ongoing discussion with LO as to how the TA will organise the annual events, such as theatre trips, days out, the Fun Day etc. LO felt that there needs to be a more detailed record of events, suppliers, costs, contact details, insurance cover and H&S details, so that these events have a shared ownership rather than relying on one or two individuals to remember and organise the bulk of the activities. SF said that there would be no further holiday trips organised by BHA. So far no budget or responsible overseer has been put in place.

There was also a discussion about an Older Peoples’ Strategy. SF feels that there could be closer community ties with Highbury View, the new addition to BHA’s portfolio. HV is a sheltered housing service with 50% of residents being retired civil servants. SF feels that more needs to be done for vulnerable elderly people in BHA properties by creating a pathway for them to access assisted living and social care as their needs change.

DMc reported that the new BHA website is being live tested by some residents. The new site will allow on-line processing and confirmation of repair requests, as well as on-line payments (rent, trip or event charges etc.)

**Garage conversions discussion**

The TA committee had been given copies of the new plans prior to the meeting and a discussion around some of the building aspects took place.

The plans show that BHA are proposing to renovate 37 garages to create 7 new flats, a new community room and a caretakers’ office and workshop.

There would be 6 flats in the MM/GW blocks – **1x 2 Bed, 3 Person wheelchair accessible flat** at the Top Site end of the block. This looks as if the threshold will be level so would not require an outside ramp.

**2x 1 Bed, 2 Person flats; 2x 2 Bed, 3 Person flats; 1x 3 Bed 4 Person flat.**

There would also be a **Studio Flat** in garages numbered 7 – 10 Pugin Court.

The proposed new **community room** would be in garages numbered 1 – 4 Pugin Court

The proposed **caretakers’ office and workshop** would be in garages numbered 12 – 14 to the rear of houses 1 & 2 MM.

The following garage numbers will be retained: 15 - 23; 36 – 39; houses 45 – 50 and 52 – 56; 57, 64, 65,

76 – 83 (81 is the bin shed); 93 – 96 (**total 39**). At least 3 garages will be needed for bin sheds and a cycle store. These are likely to include garages 5 & 6 in Pugin Court.

31 storage sheds on GW would be retained.

SF stated that the remaining garages could be sufficient if her proposal to bring in new allocation policies for sheds, garages and parking bays was introduced. This would mean that each household could only have one shed or one garage or one parking bay, but not one or more of each. She believes this to be a fairer policy. RL noted that some households had rented one or more of these amenities years ago, at a time when BHA struggled to rent them out. SF would not say how this might be implemented – does she intend to take amenities away from incumbent tenants?

It was noted that, should any of the proposed flats get planning permission, any new tenants would not be given a gate fob, so barring them from parking on the estate, but also, Islington council will refuse to issue them with parking permits for the surrounding streets. The council refusal of permits is also applicable to any current tenants displaced from the estate. SF has suggested in the past that parking on the estate will only be allowed either in a garage or designated parking bay.

SF was asked about the garages currently being used by BHA and its contractors (about 20 garages). SF felt that this could be reduced to 6 or 7.

JS asked if there would be any revival of the internal lettings policy, in particular where children of tenants could be given priority over new tenants. SF said the allocations were through the council but that she would be speaking to councillor Rowena Champion about the “Local Lettings Policy” to see what could be done.

SF said that she will be sending an information pack out to all tenants regarding the proposed building work,

Including a feedback form to express any concerns and ask any questions that tenants may have. SF’s proposed timetable is to send out the packs in April and deal with the feedback, then hold a public meeting in May with a view to making a planning application in June.

The meeting closed at 11.40.

The TA did not try to argue on technical points at the meeting as BHA’s architects were not present but we do have the voluntary assistance of two architects who have now reviewed the new plans. These plans have addressed many of the shortcomings of the previous plans but, according to our advisors, still have weaknesses.

**THE NEXT TA MEETING IS 7PM, THURSDAY 12TH APRIL AT 60MM**

**THIS MEETING WILL INCLUDE THE AGM AND ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS.**

**IF YOU WISH TO APPLY FOR CHAIR; VICE-CHAIR; SECRETARY OR TREASURER PLEASE LET ME KNOW IN ADANCE AT** [**WODOWD@SKY.COM**](mailto:WODOWD@SKY.COM)

**A COPYOF THE PLAN IS DISPLAYED ON THE NOTICEBOARD OUTSIDE 60MM**