

## **Columbia TRA**

### **Meeting to discuss 2<sup>nd</sup> Consultation for major works and rooftop extension at Tomlinson Close**

**Wednesday 6 January 2021, 5pm**

Present from the Committee:

- Kevin McKenna – Chair
- Penny Creed – Vice-Chair
- Jonathan Moberly – Secretary
- Pam Haluwa – Committee Member

Present from the Project Team:

- Kevin Connolly – Project manager, Tower Hamlets Homes
- Anwar Punekar – Regeneration Coordinator and Client Lead – Rooftop Homes, London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- Laura Day – Baily Garner
- Mariola Viegas – Baily Garner

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1. Kevin McKenna – introduces CTRA and committee members on the call. Committee members confirm that this is a fact-finding meeting and should not be seen as a consultation with the CTRA committee.
  2. Pam pointed out that other developments may happen on Tomlinson Close following the enfranchisement application at 33-63 Tomlinson Close. She asked how many responses came from consultation meetings, via email and web page. The project team were unable to confirm but promised to confirm after the meeting.
  3. Kevin Connolly introduced purpose of meeting - That Laura will run through proposal and drawings and after which committee members can ask questions.
    - a. It was explained that residents were invited to a 2<sup>nd</sup> consultation meeting two weeks ago. The first consultation was in September 2020.
    - b. There it was explained that the following works are proposed to take place:
      - i. 2-20 Tomlinson Close - extension (subject to planning approval) and major works
      - ii. 1-31 and 22-68 Tomlinson Close - Major works.
      - iii. 33-63 Tomlinson Close – No works as freehold being bought out.
    - c. This is part of a pilot project for LBTH and THH.
    - d. Plans are to repair/renew windows, staircase, roof replacement and fire safety works. All work is subject to surveys to ascertain what is needed.
    - e. In addition, a rooftop extension to 2-20 Tomlinson Close to create a four-storey extension on Brick Lane end. The redundant space to the west of the block will be used to create a family maisonette. To the east of the building the currently drying area will be removed to create space for an additional staircase to the new floors. The original staircase will be extended. Bedrooms will be placed to the south of the property to ensure quiet. The build will use as many factory-manufactured components as possible to reduce time, noise and dust.
    - f. Expecting to commence in the Autumn. The works will take at least 6 months.
    - g. Laura confirmed that they have assessed that this block is a good fit for development as it has a flat roof that needs replacing, has good access and is a central location.

- h. The design will be refined as the project progresses. They have decided to retain the white render and yellow brick on lower floors. Add in coloured perforated panels with grey metal sheeting on 4<sup>th</sup> floor. This is because it is flexible and can be patterned. Colours can be changed. The team has chosen cladding and render.
- i. The extension should add ten homes to the block.
- j. Nothing has been approved yet.

#### 4. Committee Questions and Comments:

##### a. Penny:

- i. **What is the voided area on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor, is that a roof terrace?** There are no plans for a roof deck, that is just the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor roof.
- ii. **Are you wedded to the coloured metal panel idea?** No. We are having early design discussions so that we can discuss them with residents. At the moment, it is a fluid design development. Penny went on to say that in her personal view that coloured panels do not age well, they fade at different rates and don't look good after a couple of years.

##### b. Pam:

- i. **Will the parking spaces in front of that block be taken away to make room for the build?** Laura confirmed they won't be taking any away but block that the new development is car free so no initial plans for additional spaces and residents of the new flats won't be able to apply for spaces in Tomlinson Close.
- ii. **Will the block have disability access?** The team confirmed that the new flats upstairs will not have a lift to them and therefore won't be suitable for disabled residents or those with young families using buggies. The team confirmed that they had been asked to find development opportunities where a lift wasn't required.
- iii. **Pam agreed that the idea for colour panels won't match the other blocks in the close.**
- iv. **Where would an external block lift go to allow roof development on 33-63 Tomlinson Close and how will the look and feel work given we don't know design plans for that block.** The team suggested that looking at that block, the only place a lift could go would be to the front of the block. The team confirmed that brick matching on projects in London has been very difficult. Which is why they have chosen render in order to integrate new floors into the older floors. Plus it is a lighter option when adding weight to the structure as they are limited as to weight.
- v. **Will the development include a plan for landscaping the wider close?** We are proposing landscaping to the rear of the block where the gardens are. Nothing significant, just to make it look a little more cared for with a higher quality planting scheme.

##### c. Penny:

- i. **What is happening to the tenants and residents of 2-20 Tomlinson Close during the works, will they be moved out?** The current intention is to leave them in situ during the works
- ii. **Do you have a thought on who the contractor be for the major works? How will it be procured? When will Section 20s be sent out? How will these major works be a better experience than we've had on other projects?** The team couldn't speak to past experiences. The major works will be procured using the Better Neighbourhoods Framework. Tendered among contractors there. As soon as we have an estimate from the contractor that is when the Second Section 20 agreement

will go out. They don't have an option for selecting or proposing a contractor because of the framework i.e. the first Section 20 is not necessary. The section 20 with the estimate will go out as soon as we have an acceptable tender from one of the BNF contractors. Then it is 30 days for people to make comments on that. **What provision are you going to put in during lockdown given that there is usually an option for residents to view documents at the THH offices to ensure a proper consultation process?** Kevin Connolly admitted that he hasn't thought that far ahead and would have to speak to the Leaseholder Services department to find out how they would manage that. He confirmed that he can email documents to residents requesting them. He pointed out that they don't usually get many residents coming into the office but if people have a specific question we can give them excerpts of the documents. Penny stated that the CTRA will want to see all the surveys conducted in advance of the major works given the issues seen with poorly scoped works at other blocks that led to poor project planning, scope creep and the doubling of major works bills for leaseholders. Kevin confirmed that he doesn't see a problem with that. Given what needs to happen Penny stated that she was sceptical that the Summer start is realistic. Anwar responded to say that they are unsure what will happen given the pandemic. Penny stated that the CTRA expects a proper consultation with work-arounds for social distancing/pandemic lockdown rules. Penny confirmed that the CTRA website, social channels are all at the project team's disposal to use as part of their resident communication strategy. This was welcomed by the project team.

d. Kevin

- i. **Kevin pointed out that, in terms of a major works programme, that this project will have a much bigger impact than other projects and reiterated that our experiences on other projects have not been great. He pointed out that there are two strands to consider, one is around the experience that residents will go through and the other is the design and impact.**
- ii. **Kevin backed up what Penny and Pam had said in agreeing that the coloured panels are not very popular. Something that fits the colouring of the surrounding buildings would be better.**
- iii. **What impact will the extended rooftop on 2-20 Tomlinson Close have on the surrounding properties and gardens in Tomlinson Close area in terms of light and shadow?** The team confirmed have had an initial report and they are confident there will be minimal impact in terms of the adjacent properties in Tomlinson Close. Once we have more confidence in the design and agreed height, the next step will be to share the detailed shadowing impacts report with residents. A consultant for that has already been engaged. They are uncomfortable sharing the current report as the design is likely to change and the report will be inaccurate.
- iv. **Kevin pointed out that the leaseholder enfranchisement will have a bearing on this as there are many people in 33-63 Tomlinson Close who will be unhappy as they are on worse terms with the development company arranging that than others. Coupled with the plans to extend that building by two floors or more, having another roof extension on the next block is going to create a 'compare and contrast', not just between two potentially extended blocks but also with the two twin blocks where one has been extended and the other hasn't. The whole make-up of the estate is going to be different and that needs to be thought through with the design of this building and through the consultation. There is some concern**

**around this especially as there is unlikely to be much in the way consultation around the construction at 33-63 Tomlinson Close.** The team confirmed that they are working with planners and will look at the next-door development if/when it is presented to ensure their design is taken into consideration. Our design is up for change and adjustment, we are still very much in the design process. **Kevin reiterated that he hopes the other block will be taken into consideration when looking at light impact due to the cumulative impact of both block extensions.**

- v. **Will this have to go through a full planning process?** The team confirmed that the planning is the usual planning process for rooftop extensions. They are having pre-application meetings and once we put in planning, we will have statutory consultations.
- vi. **The redline around the 2-20 plot on your drawings, is that going to be the redline you will use on any planning documents or will be widened? This was an issue at Baroness Road infill project, the redline was placed too close to the building and when adjacent blocks were impacted these issues were hard to put right as they were too far outside the redline, therefore one of the learning points was to have a slightly larger redline for the sake of planning.** The team confirmed that the redline they are using and the people they have informed all comply with the statutory planning area as they want to ensure that everyone effected or indirectly effected are consulted. Mariola confirmed that the redline currently doesn't take into account any of the pavements but does take into account the paved area in front of the Tomlinson Close and the area to the side by Brick Lane, it wraps around to the rear gardens. They feel that is appropriate as they won't be doing any works to the pavements. However, any damage done as part of the construction process would be fixed.

**Kevin reiterated that the redline does matter and that the public realm on the estate needs attention such as road and pavement heights that make accessibility difficult. Access could be better and as a CTRA we're keen for more planning opportunities if any can be brought in. Penny expanded on the site access situation at Baroness Road to emphasise this point and to ask that, although the development wouldn't qualify for Section 106 or CIL money that residents and homeowners on the estate would be highly affected by the development and could lose light and privacy that could affect their home values and so should benefit from some public realm improvements in the least.**

Anwar added that as part of the project they are looking at how they can improve the space around the development rather than taking something away such as ways to design out crime or improve cycling or bin storage in the area.

- vii. **Kevin asked about the timeframe and whether the team should relook at moving residents out of 2-20 Tomlinson Close. Given they are yet to carry out surveys and could have project creep and slipped timescales.** The team stated that the reason they are integrating the major works and consultation into one project is to minimise disruption to residents. This not a usual infill project. We have identified three blocks as a pilot project, and we are working to reduce disruption as much as possible. Much is still to be consulted on and agreed. Mariola agreed to review this. She stated that they are doing this in other blocks and will look at how they progress. She also confirmed that they have conducted as many surveys as they can to try and de-risk the project and prevent project creep but pointed out that some things you just can't see until you are onsite.

- viii. **Kevin urged the team to review the parking policy for the new properties as it will likely cause issues for the CTRA and breed contempt among residents if some are allowed parking and others aren't.** The team pointed out that the car-free development is planning policy and so outside of their control. It would be difficult to add parking into the development as that would remove space for building. It would need to be discussed with the planning department. **Kevin pointed out that there is parking locally and that maybe the CTRA will need to take that up with THH.**
  - e. Penny
    - i. **Penny emphasised the importance of good communications throughout the project. Something that has been lacking on other projects. She reiterated the offer for the team to use CTRA channels and an offer to help with advice. She pointed out that many of the issues seen on other projects have come down to poor communications with residents – leaseholders and tenants who need to be kept up to date with what's happening. She also stressed the importance of giving residents enough notice of consultation events.**
  - f. Jonathan
    - i. **Jonathan agreed with others by stating his concern for residents in the block during works. Particularly during the Covid lockdown. Is there an advocate for the tenants and residents, he suggested that this should be someone's paid job and shouldn't just fall to the TRA?**
    - ii. **Are the residents going to be compensated in anyway, it may have an impact on the value of their properties?** The team confirmed that they are exploring ways to make things easier for the tenants and residents in the 2-20 Tomlinson Close such as allowing them to move up into the new flats if they have the housing requirement to move up. We should have a better idea at our next consultation in February. We understand that it isn't easy to build on someone's roof. It was added that leaseholders will be getting a new roof at no charge. They are also looking at (it has not been decided yet) to reduce the major works charge to leaseholders. It was confirmed that they have usually found that the value of adjacent properties have benefitted after works have finished.
    - iii. **Looking at the estate holistically, as this is a pilot scheme, is it being considered that other blocks on that estate should or not also have additional blocks put on them, should this be considered now?** This block was chosen because it fits into certain criteria following an extensive review of blocks because it needs a new roof and is only 1-2 stories and needed major works in the next 5 years. It was confirmed that as a Council is looking to set a good precedent on 2-20 Tomlinson that any block including 33-63 would have to follow.
    - iv. **Are there any completed schemes in other Boroughs that have been done where we could be connected with a similar TRA so we can understand issues?** Yes, there is a project in Southwark started on site recently, they are around six months a head of us. We can look into it. Also, East End Homes have planning consent in Mile End?
- 5. **Communications going forward** – Penny pointed out that communications with residents are of utmost importance and that other projects have run in to problems because of a lack of or poor communications. She offered the CTRA's support and advice with this. She also requested that residents are given more notice than they have been for any further consultation events.

- 6. Timing** – A discussion of timing then followed. The team confirmed that they anticipate that the planning application will be submitted in May (after the mayoral elections). It will then take approximately three months to be considered. Then a consultation and tender process will be required. At this point Penny interjected to point out that the anticipated time scale given at the start of the meeting was looking unlikely. She explained to the team that it is really important that they manage expectations of when projects are likely to happen as it will have huge ramifications for residents’ financial and other life planning. She suggested that it would be better if they didn’t give an anticipated start date if they are unsure and that they take care to manage expectations as part of their communications strategy. The took the point on board and agreed that they will scope out the project and come back with a more realistic timeline if possible.
- 7. Next Steps** – The team asked how the committee would like to be consulted going forward. The Committee suggested that they be invited to the resident consultation (with good notice) but that it would also make sense to meet the team separately before their next residents’ consultation to hear updated plans so that they can pre-empt questions to help the team prepare. The Committee also reiterated that this meeting had been a fact-finding mission rather than a consultation and reserved the right to submit further questions and comments over the subsequent two weeks.