

WEST RHYL HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
APPENDIX 1 – GENERAL PROGRESS
FEBRUARY 2014

Progress with the Whole Project

Progress with the project has been generally very good; with the acquisitions process moving forward effectively, resettlement work taken forward in an efficient and sensitive manner, and well progressed development planning. The successful award of the Compulsory Purchase Order in November has enabled many of the risk issues facing the project to be dealt with effectively.

The project is expected to deliver the expected benefits on time and within budget. Those benefits are:

- an image change for West Rhyl which will assist in drawing private sector investment into the area in the medium to long term;
- progression to a more balanced housing offer through changed house type and tenure;
- the removal of 40 properties (including 16 HMO properties with 72 accommodation units) to be replaced by the creation of 4,500m² of quality green space;
- the removal of 34 HMOs in total accommodating 182 accommodation units;
- the remodelling and reduction in size of 46 properties into appropriately sized, energy efficient, modern family homes **OR** demolition and rebuilding new properties surrounding the new green space;
- the progression of the 50-57 West Parade site, already assembled, cleared and in Welsh Government ownership, but suffering blight from poor quality housing nearby. This site (including 1-11 John Street and 18 Aquarium Street) could accommodate 60 modern apartments plus A3/retail ground floor uses;
- the provision of training placements and employment opportunities for local unemployed people

Acquisitions/ Demolitions

The project has so far expended a little under **£2.8M** on property acquisition during 2013/14, enabling the purchase of **17** properties required for project delivery. 15 Acquisitions are still required in order to complete the acquisition programme, and all are now being taken forward within the process for implementation of the Compulsory Purchase Order.

Progress within each of the development zones is illustrated in figure 2, and it can be seen that whilst in some development zones the acquisition process is complete, in other zones work is still required in order to ensure delivery. Zones 1 & 2 have been prioritised so as to facilitate the progression of the demolition programme and the delivery of the Green Space by March 2015 when funding for the project ends

The demolition programme has now re-commenced. The programme will see all required demolitions complete during February/March 2014.

Figure 2: WRHIP Acquisitions Progress

Zone	Total Required	Phase 1	2012/13	2013/14	Remaining
1	40	12	25	3	Complete
2	15	5	8	2	Complete
3	8	2	0	2	4
4	8	0	2	2	4
5	16	8	4	3	1
6	16	3	5	3	5
7	17	6	8	2	1
Total	120	36	52	17	15

Resettlement/ Supporting People

Progress on the resettlement work has been excellent, with more than 100 households now resettled successfully through the project. It is notable that the Council nor Welsh Government has received a single complaint about the process so far, and feedback from affected residents has been overwhelmingly positive.

Planning & Development

Within the WRHIP, a Planning and Development Team has been established in order to take forward the significant planning tasks required within the project.

Planning and Development work has progressed well, with a soft marketing of potential development sites in September 2013 which has established developer interest. Welsh Government officials across Homes and Places as well as the Department for Economy, Science and Transport, have appointed Legat Owen to move forward the marketing of the Aquarium Street/ West Parade site in preparation for sale and re-development. Buy back arrangements are being put in place so as to ensure timely development of the site.

Pennaf Housing Group has been working to establish development plans for Zone 2 (Gronant Street) and Zone 7 (Abbey Street). The redevelopment of the Abbey Vaults (3 - 9 Abbey Street) has already gained Planning Approval.

Additionally, West Rhyl Community Land Trust and North Wales Housing Association have formed a partnership so as to assess the viability of taking forward the development of eight properties on Abbey Street (11-33) within Zone 6 as a co-operative housing scheme. Demand levels have been established and a feasibility study is underway to determine the most cost effective way

Communications

The project is now moving towards a crucial phase that will cover demolition (and the potential for bad publicity), as well as the marketing of opportunities for housing redevelopment. Communication requirements have been reviewed by the Project Co-ordination Group and resulted in a far greater collaboration between communication specialists within each partner organisation.

Neighbourhood Management

A team of officers from partner organisations (DCC/ WG/ Pennaf/ North Wales Police/ Fire and Rescue) meet monthly and walk about the area in order to co-ordinate the management of the project area through what has the potential to be a very difficult and disruptive period. Issues are identified and dealt with promptly by the relevant organisation. Neighbourhood management issues of environmental crime in the area (fly tipping, refuse issues) have reduced and are continuing to reduce. The Authority has saved £3,741 when comparing 2012 statistics to 2013 through the dispersal of approximately 120 households to date and pro active management

In order to gauge the views of the community, two community consultation events have taken place to ascertain their desires. The result of the consultation has indicated that what people want to see is an open green space where people can spend some relaxation and leisure time with their families, enjoying simple pleasures such as picnicing and informal play.

Low level walls and fencing seem to be preferred so that the space does not have a "fortress like" atmosphere, but rather that it appears open and spacious

People felt very strongly about the need for security at the site with good lighting and CCTV monitoring seen as the most important factor and this is still under discussion with the various stakeholders.

Capita are now working up the detailed design which will include much more details such as the species of trees, flowers and shrubs, hard landscape materials, style and location of street furniture and bins and the measurements and materials of the boundary walls and fencing. This is aiming for a submission for Planning mid March and a start on site July 2014

At all stages of the design development, the need for low maintenance has been a consideration

Green Space Stakeholder Engagement

An established stakeholder group meets monthly to discuss the issues regarding the park. These include representation from Community Groups operating in West Rhyl, local Members including Town Councillors, North Wales Police, DCC Streetscene, DCC Highways, Welsh Government, Pennaf Housing

In addition to the established stakeholder group the following organisations have been consulted.

- Design Commission for Wales whose recommendations are below

Design Commission for Wales

- Quality critical to the success of surrounding properties
- Consider small community event space
- Consider developing social enterprises, a cafe, play/fitness facilities, toilets and baby changing, crèche, ice cream/food/drink vendor. This would assist family use of the park and allow good natural surveillance and activity, so that the space is well used and valued.
- Take into account existing and desired pedestrian links
- Promote links with the local schools

- Overall, the scheme should promote an attractive lifestyle choice. This will only be achieved by people working together towards a common goal.

- Sustrans
- Rhyl Member Area Group
- DCC Biodiversity Officer
- Rhyl Going Forward Programme Board

A concept design has now been developed in accordance with all the above comments which is provided at **Appendix 1**

Implications for Future Maintenance

The green space will have a revenue implication, currently estimated through in-depth meetings with Streetscene Officers to be no greater than £12,000. . Work is currently ongoing between the Design Team and Public Realm to look at how we can reduce that cost further through choices of species of plants, trees and materials;

The capital contract will have a 5 year maintenance programme built in so that this budget implication will not impact until 2020. This is standard practice for projects such as this. After 5 years, the proposal is that DCC Public Realm will adopt the space and maintain it. The backstop position will be for the Economic and Business Development Department to underwrite this cost annually from their budget on a permanent basis

In that 5 year period, we will be exploring (and potentially implementing) other ways to reduce the revenue costs, which could include a service charge on new homes, implementation of commuted sums associated with any new developments, develop a “ friends of the park” ” who will take on volunteer work and adopt some of the areas, amongst other ideas currently circulating

From a position where the DCC Officers had assumed responsibility for maintenance would fall on Environmental Services budget from Day 1, clarification has provided them with a degree of comfort, as the most intense period of maintenance with spaces such as this is in the first 5 years until plants, trees and shrubs have had time to establish. **However it is important to note that litter picking and refuse disposal will become DCC’s responsibility from Day One after construction. This will be no more onerous than the cleansing costs currently required for cleaning those streets**

Estimated costs

Estimated annual cost of cleansing regime is estimated as £2,129.40.