

6th December 2023

Update on the Barnsbury Transformation

Dear Resident,

We wrote to you back in September as we had to take the difficult decision to pause the demolition of Blackmore House and start of the new build construction. This was a result of a government announcement introducing changes to building safety regulations. We said we would write again in November to update you and we apologise that this update is a bit later than intended.

The proposed regulations introduce a major change to the design of new buildings over 18 metres or seven storeys – a requirement to include a second staircase in the design. This is a key issue for the Barnsbury redevelopment as most of the new buildings will be seven storeys or higher and the addition of a second stairway in each building means a reduced number of homes and/or bedrooms unless the scheme is amended, due to the space required for an additional staircase to be included.

We were expecting an update from the Government on this matter in the autumn, but so far we have only been advised that developments which already have planning permission can proceed without a second staircase as long as construction starts within 18 months of the new guidance being published (referred to as a transitional period). This does mean we can proceed with Phase 1a as currently designed. The new regulations will apply to the remainder of new Barnsbury and so we will need to include a second staircase in those buildings in the later phases that are over seven storeys.

At the moment, there is no information on the design and location of the second staircase or it's intended use. Until we have further details from the government, we are unable to start the review process and get on with the estate transformation. We are meeting with Islington planners to discuss how we could make changes to the scheme but at this stage we cannot firm up plans until there is clarity on the purpose and technical requirements of the staircase.

One of the considerations for Newlon as landlord is to improve the quality of homes on the estate, to ensure that our residents live in good quality accommodation. Delaying the start of works is of great concern to the Newlon Board, and for this reason we are liaising with LBI Planners and Officers, Councillors, the GLA and our Mt Anvil partners on the possibility of proceeding with Phase 1a while we review the design and seek a new planning approval for the remainder of the estate. Phase 1a meets all current safety standards and in some aspects exceeds Building Regulations, and has been approved by independent fire consultants.

To proceed with Phase 1a now, as designed, means the delay on the whole transformation programme will be limited and we should be able to give you an indication of timescale when we start the demolition of Blackmore House. If the decision is to seek revised planning on the whole

scheme the delay will be significant as this will be a major undertaking and will be a minimum of 12-18 months.

We will write again as soon as we have information to share. In the meantime you may be interested to read more about this issue by clicking on the links below:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-10-24/hcws1090>

<https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/second-stairwell-requirement-to-be-imposed-in-blocks-taller-than-18-metres-gove-says-82435>

If you have any questions please, as always, contact the New Barnsbury team on 020 8709 9172, alternatively you can email them at best@newlon.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Angela Nevin
Head of Barnsbury Estate Transformation

If you would like this letter translated, in large print, audio, Braille or any other format, please contact the BEST team by calling 020 8709 9172 or emailing best@newlon.org.uk.