



HOUSING NEWS

Lower Oldpark

July 2018

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New Social Housing Scheme for Lower Oldpark



Alloa Street site for planned new housing social

Clanmil Housing will be developing a scheme of new social houses in the Lower Oldpark Neighbourhood.

The housing association will be building 12 houses on land fronting onto Manor Street, Alloa Street and the former Annalee Court. The site is currently open space. The scheme got the go ahead from the Housing

Executive following a detailed Housing Needs Assessment for the area.

The new houses will be another element of the long-term regeneration of the Lower Oldpark neighbourhood, which has also seen the refurbishment of four vacant and decaying NIHE houses by the Housing Executive and

26 by Clanmil Housing, and the development of eight new social houses on the Oldpark Road by Choice Housing.

The Manor Street, Alloa Street and former Annalee Court scheme will be part of the wider regeneration of the open space beside the Cliftonpark Avenue peace wall. Draft plans for this have been drawn up by consultants, Paul Hogarth Ltd on behalf of Belfast City Council.

It is hoped that the housing scheme can go on site during the summer of 2019 and be completed in 2020.

NIHE Bathroom, Kitchen Scheme Complete

Work on replacing the bathroom and kitchen units in 74 Northern Ireland Housing Executive properties in the Lower Oldpark neighbourhood was completed in April 2018.

The scheme provides tenants with modern and attractive bathroom and kitchen facilities and will help to support wider efforts to regenerate the Lower Oldpark neighbourhood.

The Housing Executive has advised that it has planned a further North Belfast Bathroom, Kitchen Replacement Scheme over the next two years and that a number of Lower Oldpark properties will be included in it. Details of when the scheme will commence and the properties to be included will be made available at a later date.

NIHE Heating Replacement Scheme Planned

A number of Lower Oldpark properties are to benefit from a planned Housing Executive scheme to replace their existing heating systems.

The scheme, which is expected to start during the second half of 2019, will involve the replacement of existing heating systems with new natural gas systems.

Details of properties that will be included are expected to be available in April 2019.

Tenants affected by the scheme will be consulted and provided with all the necessary information about the planned work during the summer of 2019.

Cliftonpark Avenue Affordable Housing Scheme 2018 Start Hope

It is hoped that work on the first phase of a scheme of affordable owner-occupation houses in Cliftonpark Avenue will start during the second half of 2018.

Five, three-bedroom, terraced houses will be developed by Apex Housing on the open space at the junction of Cliftonpark Avenue and Oldpark Road.

Also, a number of development options are being considered for the site at the junction of Crumlin Road and Cliftonpark Avenue. These include a proposal for a new petrol station/ retail unit and 10 new affordable homes

This scheme of 15 affordable houses is one of the three 'Catalyst Projects' to be implemented in the Lower Oldpark as part of the Department for Communities (DfC), Building Successful Communities (BSC) initiative. These Catalyst Projects are priorities within the BSC's Lower



Site for five affordable houses development at Cliftonpark Avenue/ Oldpark Road junction

Oldpark Action Plan for the area.

In June 2018, Apex Housing applied for funding from DfC's newly created Housing Development Grant. If successful, this grant aid will support the development of the 5 affordable houses. Apex Housing advises that it looks forward to a positive decision.

Apex Housing has asked that anyone interested in purchasing one of the affordable owner-occupation properties for sale should, in the first instant, register their interest by contacting Gary Hughes at Lower Oldpark Community Association on 02890351334. Gary will pass on your details to Apex Housing.

Big Plans for Cliftonpark Avenue Peace Wall Land

Draft plans have been prepared for a new John Hewitt Play Park in Alloa Street and for the development of the open green space beside the Cliftonpark Avenue peace wall.

Since the autumn of 2017, Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) has been involved with Belfast City Council (BCC) and its appointed consultants, Paul Hogarth Ltd, in the preparation of a feasibility study and development plan.

The preferred plan includes a number of separate schemes that will be put into effect over the coming years. New social housing will be provided on the green space running from Manor Street, along Alloa Street and into the former Annalee Court. It is

intended that in the longer-term, new housing will be developed on the open green space at the rear of Southport Court and Manor Court.

The draft plans also provide for the creation of a new public square named after the Northern Ireland poet, John Hewitt, who lived at 96 Cliftonpark Avenue. They also include an open green area for recreation and a new Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) facility for sporting activities.

Two areas of pop-up containers will offer accommodation for activities including shops, cafes, social enterprises and meeting places.

There will also be efforts to reduce the negative appearance of the peace

wall with proposals for a community orchard and a screen fitted to the wall for possible use as an outdoor cinema and for displays of digital artwork.

LOCA made sure that Lower Oldpark residents had a say in the nature of the plans. It arranged a locally based consultation in February 2018 to give residents the chance to influence the content of the feasibility study. This study sets down and examines different options for the development.

The draft feasibility study and outline development plan, which were funded by the Building Successful Communities initiative, are complete. There will be further consultation with local residents and external organisations.

Lower Oldpark Let Down By Government Initiative

A Department for Communities initiative established in 2014 to promote Housing Led Regeneration has let the Lower Oldpark community down.

That is the view expressed by Officers of Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) in a letter delivered to the Building Successful Communities (BSC) initiative on 8th June 2018.

The letter was, in part, the product of frustration and anger at a catalogue of excessive delays linked to new housing schemes in the area. The schemes were being considered and planned under the BSC initiative which is tasked with promoting Housing Led Regeneration.

Frustration and anger also arose from what was viewed by LOCA as BSC

putting obstacles in the way of a LOCA housing proposal. The proposal was for new affordable housing on the Lower Oldpark site bounded by Mountview Street, the rears of 1-7 Manor Drive, the rears of 103-125 Manor Street and the Oldpark Road peace wall.

Lower Oldpark is one of six BSC Pilot Areas across Northern Ireland. In each of the six Pilot Areas, Forums were established to help lead the housing regeneration process. LOCA highlighted in its letter that, since the Lower Oldpark was identified as a BSC Pilot Area in 2014, and despite 23 BSC Forum meetings, not one brick of one new house has been laid. The period before BSC's involvement in the area (2011 to 2015) saw work begin, and be completed, on the refurbishment of 30 vacant and decaying Housing Executive properties. Also, during this

period, work started on the development of 8 new social houses. While this was not significant progress, it contrasts starkly with the BSC years of virtually no progress.

LOCA stated in its letter that it has learnt lessons from the process to date. It has told BSC that it will now drive forward, in partnership with the community, housing regeneration on remaining sites. It will do this outside the framework of the BSC process. LOCA will, however, continue to work with BSC in relation to sites it is currently involved with.

A reply received from BSC on 3rd July 2018 stated that BSC 'welcomed the fact that LOCA will continue to participate in, and facilitate, future BSC Forum and Sub-Group meetings and looks forward to seeing you at our next Forum meeting.'

Improvement Plans for Seven Lower Oldpark Courts



Planning applications for major improvements works to seven Lower Oldpark housing courts have been submitted to Belfast City Council.

The work will involve replacing the wide, shared surfaces in the courts with more traditional street layouts. The aim is for residents to enjoy private and

defensible space in front of their homes with re-organised car parking layout, making it easier for pedestrians to move about.

The courts to benefit from the work will be Southport, Manor, Bandon, Liffey, Bann, Foyle and Shannon courts.

Lower Oldpark Community Association worked hard to ensure that residents affected by the proposals had a chance to influence the final plans. A series of consultation sessions were held for residents.

Feedback from those who attended the sessions, and those who made their views known in other ways, resulted in significant changes to the plans.

It is hoped that work will begin early in 2019, following a six-month tender process. An open evening will be held for residents. The purpose will be to introduce the appointed contractor and to provide scheme information. Work in each court will last about three months. Completion of all seven courts will take approximately 12 months.

Funding for these improvements will be provided through the Department for Communities' Building Successful Communities initiative.

Dumping Undermining Regeneration Efforts

Efforts to make the Lower Oldpark neighbourhood a pleasant and safe area for residents are being undermined by the dumping of unwanted household items by a very small number of people.

During the twelve months up to 31st March 2018, the Lower Oldpark Housing Project Worker identified and reported 99 cases of dumping and litter build up in the Lower Oldpark neighbourhood. The majority of the dumping was on the open, green spaces beside the peace walls, but some of it was on the street and in walkways at the back of blocks of houses.



Impact of dumping in Summerhill Court.

The dumping of unwanted household items and rubbish creates an unpleasant environment that makes Lower Oldpark a less attractive place to live in, or to want to live in. This undermines the efforts by the local community to regenerate the Lower Oldpark neighbourhood.

Such dumping creates a health and safety threat to residents, in particular, small children. This behaviour is also illegal and can result in fines of up to £2,500 for those prosecuted and found guilty.

Belfast City Council operates a Bulky

Waste Collection Service. Requests can be made for the collection of household items on 028 9027 0230. Items that can be removed include furniture, mattresses, carpet, electrical appliances and white goods like fridges, washing machines cookers.

LOCA Housing Proposal Obstructed

Proposals from Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) for a new affordable housing development in Lower Oldpark are being obstructed by the Department for Communities (DfC).

This is the conclusion of LOCA Committee following nine months of objections and delaying tactics by the Building Successful Communities (BSC) section of the DfC.

The proposals from LOCA involve the phased development of between 30 and 40 affordable, owner-occupier family homes on the cleared site bounded by Mountview Street, the rear of 103-125 Manor Street, the rear of 1-7 Manor Drive and the Oldpark

Road peace wall. Work on the houses would commence after the affordable housing scheme planned for the Cliftonpark Avenue/ Crumlin Road/ Oldpark Road junction is finished.

LOCA proposed that this housing scheme is classified as a BSC 'Catalyst Project' but BSC obstructed this. It put in place conditions that it didn't put in place for the other three Lower Oldpark Catalyst Projects. LOCA has advised BSC that its approach is inconsistent and, to date, BSC has not provided a satisfactory response.

LOCA believes that the approach of BSC is unacceptable and has informed it that, in relation to the Mountview Street/ Manor Drive/ Manor Street

Oldpark Road site, BSC has no role to play in the future. LOCA will work with the community and other organisations to drive forward the development of the site.

Housing Advice

Help with housing problems is available from the Lower Oldpark Housing Project Worker:

Where: Lower Oldpark Community Centre, 9-23 Avoca Street.

Days: Monday to Friday.

Times: 8.30am – 11.30am and 1.00pm to 3.30pm.

Phone: 02890351334.