



HOUSING NEWS

Lower Oldpark

October 2018 Lower Oldpark Community Association, 9-23 Avoca Street, Belfast BT14 6EN. Tel: 02890351334. Email: loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com

Future of Affordable Housing Scheme In Question

The future of a planned Lower Oldpark affordable housing scheme at the junctions of Cliftonpark Avenue, Oldpark Road and Crumlin Road is now in question.

It was hoped by the developer, Apex Housing, that work would commence on the first phase of the scheme, on the smaller site at the Oldpark Road/ Cliftonpark Avenue junction, during the second half of 2018. However, a tendering process by Apex did not result in any contractor being appointed to build the five terraced, family homes.

LOCA understands that a second tender process is underway. Apex advises that this should take six to eight weeks. It is hoped that a building contractor will be appointed and the planned scheme can go ahead. If this doesn't happen, the future of the development may be in question.

The five houses on the smaller site at the Oldpark Road/ Cliftonpark Avenue junction form part of a larger affordable owner-occupation scheme planned by Apex Housing. This involves the development of a further 10 houses (semi-detached) on the larger, vacant site at the junction of Cliftonpark Avenue and Crumlin Road, beside the existing petrol station. This part of the scheme obtained planning approval in August 2017.

On 25th November 2016, the owner of Landscape Filling Station submitted a planning application to build a Euro Spar/ filling station on part of the site at the Cliftonpark Avenue/ Crumlin Road junction. The application also included plans for the development of 10 houses. The plans were

an alternative to Apex Housing's proposal for 10 houses but with the added benefit of a new, large retail facility and petrol station which would bring new jobs. LOCA supported the Euro Spar/ petrol station/ housing proposal and it was agreed that it would become a Building Successful Communities (BSC) priority project for the area.

Since 2016, LOCA has attended many meetings and learnt about a series of delays to the scheme's progress and the reasons for these.

During the early part of 2018, the Housing Executive advised LOCA that if commercial development was to take place on the site, it would release the site on the open market.

In late September 2018, LOCA learnt that the proposed Euro Spar / petrol station site is designated in the Belfast Metropolitan Plan 2001 for housing use only. The planning application is still being considered by Belfast City Council Planning Department.

Container Removal Requested

Lower Oldpark Community Association has asked the Housing Executive to remove an abandoned storage container from its land behind 97 to 125 Manor Street and 2 to 12 Mountview Street.

The container is attracting children who are putting themselves at risk by climbing on it. The Fire Service had to be called recently when it was set on fire.

New Social Housing Scheme

Clanmil Housing is the nominated housing association for the development of a scheme of new social houses in the Lower Oldpark neighbourhood.

The scheme, which has now been included in the Social Housing Development Programme, will involve 12 new homes being built on land fronting onto Manor Street, Alloa Street and the former Annalee Court.

The scheme is programmed to begin during the financial year, April 2019 to March 2020 and, currently, provides for the development of four 3 bedroom houses and 8 two bedroom houses. LOCA supports a housing mix of nine 3 bedroom houses and three 2 bedroom houses. This mix will help to promote long-term community regeneration. LOCA has asked the Housing Executive to review its proposed housing mix.

New Lower Oldpark Housing Website

<https://loweroldparkhousing.co.uk/>

New Lower Oldpark Housing Facebook Page

@loweroldparkhousing

Community Meeting

Lower Oldpark residents are invited to a public meeting on local housing regeneration delays.

The meeting will give residents the chances to be fully updated and to share their opinions on how to go forward.

Meeting Date/ Time

Tuesday 2nd October 2018 at 7.00pm.

Where?

Lower Oldpark Community Centre, 9-23 Avoca Street, Belfast BT14 6EN.

More Information

Contact LOCA Housing Project Worker, Gary Hughes, on 02890 351334, or call into the Community Centre, or email loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com.

Action On Health Risk Site Awaited

Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) has asked the Housing Executive (NIHE) to clear an overgrown and rubbish covered strip of land it owns.

The site, which poses a health risk to local people, adjoins 16 Avoca Street, 4-6 Summerhill Court and 1 Summer Street. The NIHE has indicated that it will clear the site.

LOCA has also asked the NIHE to provide a gate at the site entrance to enable access for future cleaning and maintenance work. A decision by the NIHE on this is awaited.

LOCA learnt in late July 2018 that the site belonged to the NIHE and reported the problem then.

Courts' Improvements Delayed

Improvements to seven Lower Oldpark housing courts will be significantly delayed following an error by the scheme consultants, Aecom, and as a result of Housing Executive inaction.

Seven planning applications that were supposed to have been submitted in late February/ early March 2018 were, mistakenly, not submitted. The error was not identified until August 2018 when the seven planning applications were finally sent to BCC Planning Department. Some Lower Oldpark residents will have recently received notices about the planning applications.

An Aecom representative apologised for the mistake and outlined efforts being made to move things along at a quicker pace.

Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) was informed about the delayed

planning applications during a meeting on 14th September 2018. At the same meeting, LOCA also learnt that NIHE officers who deal with land transfer issues were not brought into the process until July 2018. This delay will also significantly hold back the process.

It is not expected that any Courts' Project work will be able to begin during the current financial year, namely, before 31st March 2019. If this is the case, Building Successful Communities (BSC), which is funding the project, will have to bid to the Department of Finance (DoF) for the necessary funding for the financial year 2019/ 2020. While it would be hoped that such a bid would be successful, there is no guarantee.

The Courts' Project is a BSC Catalyst Project.

LOCA is extremely disappointed and frustrated by another delay to the Lower Oldpark housing regeneration process.

Developer Ignoring Community

A property development company hoping to build 18 apartments and two retail units on a site at 205-211 Crumlin Road is ignoring Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA). GAD Developments of Tandragee has failed to respond to two letters sent to it by LOCA during August and September 2018.

The letters requested a meeting with GAD to discuss community concerns about the proposed development.

A planning application, which was submitted by GAD in June 2018, provides for limited amendments to an application submitted by the company in April 2017.

LOCA and residents living close to the site submitted objections to the plans during May 2017. Local residents submitted further objections to the amended application during August 2018.

New Housing Sub-group Established

In a letter to Building Successful Communities (BSC) in June 2018, Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) said that it will drive forward, in partnership with the community, housing regeneration on the remaining sites in the Lower Oldpark neighbourhood. LOCA also said that it will do this outside the framework of the BSC process.

The letter was, in part, the product of a catalogue of excessive delays linked to new housing schemes in the area. Frustration and

anger also arose from what was viewed by LOCA as BSC putting obstacles in the way of a LOCA housing proposal.

A new Lower Oldpark Housing Group has been established and is expected to meet in October 2018. This Group includes representatives from LOCA and the NIHE, as well as local political party representatives. Its role will be to push forward the development of housing on other cleared sites in the Lower Oldpark neighbourhood.

Decision On Alley Gates Funding Awaited

In January 2018, Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) asked Choice Housing to fund the installation of alley gates at the entrances of a walkway running between the Oldpark Road and Century Street.

The request followed reports of anti-social behavior in the area as well as discussions involving LOCA, Belfast City Council (BCC), Choice Housing and the PSNI.

If Choice agreed to fund the gates installation, the work would be carried out as part of a Belfast City Council Alleygating Scheme.

Since January 2018, BCC and Choice Housing have been dealing with the issue of the funding of the work. LOCA continues to await a decision and remains unaware of why the process has taken so long.

LOCA Propose NIHE Office Change

Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) has requested the transfer of Housing Executive Area Office responsibility for the Lower Oldpark neighbourhood from its North Belfast Office to its Shankill Office.

In a letter to the NIHE Chief Executive, LOCA requested the transfer on the grounds that Lower Oldpark has always been, and remains, a natural and integral part of the Greater Shankill community. Also, because a transfer would strengthen interest in the Lower Oldpark neighbourhood as a place to live and, in doing so, support the process of regeneration.

LOCA discussed the issue of the transfer with NIHE senior officers as far back as 2011 and has discussed it on a number of occasions with local political representatives who have indicated their support for the proposal.

Mystery Shipping Container Causes Concern

A shipping container left in a street off the Crumlin Road is causing concern for residents in Yarrow Court.

The large blue container has been sitting in a cul-de-sac that adjoins the boundaries of Yarrow Court and 223-225 Crumlin Road.

A local resident told Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) that they were concerned about what could be in the locked container. They also fear for the safety of local children who are playing on the structure.

LOCA has informed the PSNI and the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) (Roads) about the container. A DfI (Roads) representative said that the cul-de-sac in which the container has been left is adopted. DfI (Roads) has the power to remove the container but it and the PSNI are seeking to establish ownership.

LOCA contacted Belfast City Council (BCC) regarding dumping and litter in the vicinity of the container. BCC arranged for the removal of this material.

Useful Numbers

In August 2018, LOCA distributed a 'Useful Numbers' leaflet to all Lower Oldpark homes. This leaflet is also available at <https://loweroldparkhousing.co.uk/useful-information>.