



# HOUSING NEWS

Lower Oldpark

October 2023. Lower Oldpark Community Association, 9-23 Avoca Street, Belfast BT14 6EN. Tel: 028 96928293. Email: [loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com](mailto:loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com)

## Future of Bonfire Site Remains Unclear

The Housing Executive (NIHE) will continue to hold back the release of the Lower Oldpark 'Bonfire Site' for private development unless LOCA abandons its request for restrictive covenants. The purpose of the restrictive covenants is to ensure that only three-bedroom family homes are built and that the new houses are sold only for owner-occupation and not to private landlords and investors.

The Bonfire Site was supposed to be released on the market for private housing development in 2021. This option was agreed with the NIHE because it said that a housing needs assessment didn't support social housing provision.

After LOCA requested the use of restrictive covenants in 2021, the NIHE put a hold on progress and stopped engaging with LOCA for a year.



During a meeting organised and attended by Brian Kingston MLA and Councillor Jordan Doran at LOCA on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2023, NIHE Director of Regional Services, Elma Newberry, said that legal advice the NIHE received prevented the use of restrictive covenants. However, she refused to make available the content of the legal advice even though the NIHE could choose to release it.

LOCA will not support the 'Bonfire

Site' being sold for the potential development of private apartments and houses that could be sold, in the first instance, to private landlords and investors. This is a view the NIHE Director said she couldn't understand. The future of the site remains unclear.

### Find Out More

LOCA has lots more information on its housing website and Facebook page.

#### Website

<https://loweroldparkhousing.co.uk>

Our website includes the latest news, back copies of this newsletter, a brief history of the area, details of regeneration plans and much more.

#### Facebook

@loweroldparkhousing Please follow and like.

## Lower Oldpark Alley Gates Update

During the early part of 2023, Belfast City Council consulted Lower Oldpark residents who would be affected by the installation of alley gates at a number of locations across the neighbourhood.

The purpose of the consultation was to ensure support for the scheme, identify possible problems and solutions, and to allow for objections to be raised.

Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) supported this consultation and encouraged residents to respond.

The consultation period finished on

Monday 7th August 2023.

An update on progress, including if or when the scheme in Lower Oldpark will start, is still awaited.

The proposed locations of the new alley gates in Lower Oldpark are summarised below. Plans showing the locations are available on the Lower Oldpark Housing website at <https://loweroldparkhousing.co.uk/useful-info>

#### Proposed Alley Gates Locations

- Entrance to walkway at rear of 12 Foyle Court and 2 Summer Street.
- Entrance to walkway at rear of 1

Foyle Court and 5 Shannon Court.

- Entrance to walkway at rear of 1 Shannon Court and 6 Foyle Court.
- Entrance to walkway at side of 6 Foyle Court and rear of 19 Shannon Street.
- Entrance to walkway at side of 32 Avoca Street and rear of 2 Alloa Street.
- Entrance to walkway between 10 and 12 Alloa Street.
- Walkway at rear of 12 Summerhill Court and side of 14 Bandon Court.

## Oldpark Road Public Realm Update

Planned improvements to the public realm on the front of the Oldpark Road, from near its junction with the Crumlin Road to Cliftonville Circus, have been revived by the Department for Communities (DfC).

When the plans were first put forward in 2017, Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) consulted all local residents. This was followed in 2018 by the submission of a planning application (Reference: LA04/2018/2378/F) by DfC. This received planning approval in 2019.

However, the scheme was then put on hold until earlier this year when it was revived. Things are now moving ahead and it is hoped that work will begin this financial year (before April 2024).

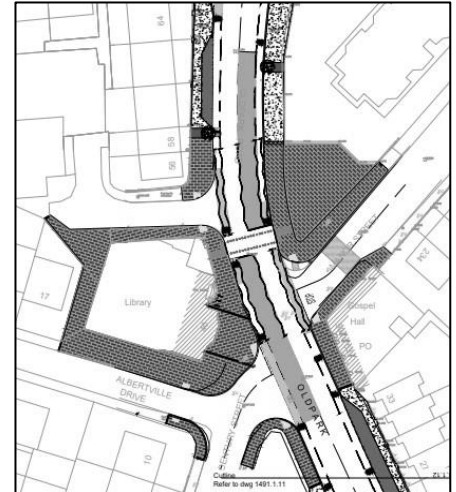
On the stretch of the Oldpark Road that passes through the Lower Oldpark neighbourhood, the planned work includes:

- Provision of natural stone paving at the front, sides and rear of the former Oldpark Library building and at the entrances to Century Street, Albertville Drive and Manor Street (including the triangle of land at the front of Filor Court) and on a stretch of the Oldpark Road, on both sides, below Shannon Street.
- Resurfacing of remaining pavements with asphalt along the main Oldpark Road.
- Resurfacing of on-street parking bays along the main Oldpark Road.
- Retention of existing trees, and planting of new trees, on footpaths along the main Oldpark Road.
- A reduction of the sharpness of the corner of the Oldpark Road/ Manor Street junction, making it easier for traffic coming down the Oldpark Road and entering Manor Street.

- Provision of new litter bins on the main Oldpark Road.
- Provision of a new pedestrian crossing at the same location in front of the old Oldpark Library building.
- Possible provision of new bicycle lanes on the main Oldpark Road.

Plans showing the planned improvements at Lower Oldpark are available on the Lower Oldpark Housing website at <https://loweroldparkhousing.co.uk/useful-info>.

The plans received planning approval in 2019, so there is very little scope for changes. However, if you would like to comment on the plans, contact the LOCA Housing Project Worker, Gary Hughes, at 9-23 Avoca Street, or call



028 96928293/ 0773990976, or email [loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com](mailto:loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com), or message on Facebook at @loweroldparkhousing before 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Gary will pass comments on to the Department for Communities.

## New Social Housing Scheme On Target



Twelve social houses under construction in Lower Oldpark are on target for completion in September 2024.

The ten houses and two bungalows are being developed by Clanmil Housing on the strip of land running from Manor Street, down Alloa Street and into the former Annalee Court.

Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) recently carried out an exercise to name the new street being created. All local residents were provided with a list of five options from which they could choose their

favourite. Four of the street names, (Annalee/ Avonbeg/ Dargle/ Roe) were selected as options as they were the names of pre-redevelopment terraced streets in the area.

John Hewitt was selected as an option because it is the name of the park facing the new street. John Hewitt was a Northern Ireland poet who lived in a house on the site of the park.

Twenty two households responded on time with Annalee receiving 11 votes, John Hewitt 5, Roe 3, Dargle 2 and Avonbeg 1. The residents' choice was therefore Annalee.

This list of options and preferences was sent by Clanmil Housing to Belfast City Council which will make the final decision on the street name to be used. The second part of the name e.g. street, court, place, will also be decided by the Council.

LOCA would thank all who responded to the consultation.

## Efforts To Improve Life For Oldpark Road and Manor Drive Residents

On Thursday 10th August, Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) hosted a meeting organised by local MLA Brian Kingston.

The meeting brought together representatives from a number of public bodies (see list below). Its purpose was to generate action to improve the environment for people living in 61 to 69 Oldpark Road and 1 to 7 Manor Drive.

This process was started in early 2022 by former Belfast City Councillor Dale Pankhurst and LOCA, and is now being led by Brian Kingston and Councillor Jordan Doran.

There is a recognition that the needs of the residents living at this interface have not been addressed. They have suffered significantly from asb and sectarian attacks over many years.

In December 2022, the PSNI prepared a Crime Prevention Assessment

Report which included some recommendations to improve the local environment. During the meeting on 10th August, these were considered along with other suggestions. The recommendations and suggestions are now being looked at by the public bodies.

Any actions taken will be subject to consultation with the residents.

In addition to the politicians and representatives from LOCA who attended the meeting, representatives from the following organisations were also there:

- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- PSNI
- Department for Communities
- Department for Infrastructure
- Department for Justice
- Belfast City Council



### Improved Radius Grounds' Maintenance

Lower Oldpark Community Association (LOCA) has welcomed a tidy-up by Radius Housing of three planted areas it owns at the rear of 52 to 62 Cliftonpark Avenue.

New flowers, bushes and bark ground cover provided on the three patches had been neglected. Weeds and litter had been allowed to build up and the appearance of the area just got worse.

Following lobbying from LOCA, Radius tidied up the three planted areas. Hopefully, with the appointment of a new grounds' maintenance contractor by Radius, these areas will be better cared for.

### NIHE North Belfast Maintenance Still Playing Catch-up

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) Maintenance Office for North Belfast is still playing catch-up with repairs not carried out during the maintenance workers strike that ran from 2022 to 2023.

During a NIHE North Belfast Housing Community Network (HCN) meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> September, the NIHE North Belfast Area Manager, Gerard Flynn, highlighted a backlog of almost 1,300 non-emergency/ urgent jobs to be done.

This explains why many Lower Oldpark NIHE tenants have been waiting much longer than the normal waiting times.

HCN members and NIHE officers expressed their frustration over the impact of the delays on tenants.

The NIHE continues to carry out, as normal, repair work classed as Emergency or Urgent.

Gerard Flynn also highlighted a backlog of repairs to NIHE properties that are vacant (and possibly boarded up) and awaiting allocation to people on the waiting list.

Before houses can be allocated, all required repair work has to be carried out. Problems linked to the strike and contractors have created delays to this work being done in many vacant houses. That's why some NIHE houses have lain vacant for many months.

The NIHE in North Belfast currently has 268 void properties and is working hard to get the necessary work done and the houses let to people on the waiting list.

### Housing Advice Service

Help with housing problems is available from the LOCA Housing Project Worker, Gary Hughes.

**Days:** Monday to Friday.

**Times:** 8.30am-11.30am & 1.00pm - 3.30pm.

**Phone:** 028 96928293 or 077 13990976.

**Email:**  
[loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com](mailto:loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com)

**Facebook:**  
[@loweroldparkhousing](https://www.facebook.com/loweroldparkhousing)

## Help When Things Get A Bit Difficult

Sometimes, things can get a bit tough and we worry about not being able to hold onto our home. This can happen whether we rent from the NIHE, a housing association or private landlord, or if we own or are buying a home.

The good news is that help is at hand through Short-term Floating Support Services. This is part of the Supporting People Programme and is funded by the Department for Communities and is administered by the NIHE.

A number of organisations provide support for tenants (new and existing), people in temporary accommodation and homeowners. The aim is to help people to live independently in their home.

The help is provided by a support worker who helps to find solutions to the specific problems faced by the person in need. Help can be provided for up to two years. Areas of support can include:

- Advice on housing rights and responsibilities.

- Claiming welfare benefits, paying bills and dealing with debts.
- Budgeting and financial management.
- Setting up home and resettlement support.
- Understanding tenancy agreements.
- Life skills and being independent at home.
- Staying safe at home.
- Accessing daytime activities, training, education and employment within the community.
- Finding a doctor and accessing other necessary services.
- Dealing with different agencies.
- Emotional health issues.

Organisations providing support include those providing help for people:

- Who are frail elderly.
- Have drug problems.
- Are in families experiencing homelessness.
- With learning disabilities.
- Have convictions or are at risk of

offending.

- Have mental health problems.
- Have a dementia diagnosis.

If you, or someone you know, may need support, you can:

- Ask the NIHE Lower Oldpark Patch Manager or local housing officer if you are a housing association tenant.
- Ask your social worker or health professional.
- Contact a housing support service provider directly. There is an online directory available at <http://www.nihe.gov.uk/find-support>.
- Contact LOCA Housing Project Worker, Gary Hughes, who can assist you to find help. Phone 028 96928293 or 0771 3990976 or email [loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com](mailto:loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com)

### Lower Oldpark To Get New NIHE Patch Manager

This month, Lower Oldpark will have a new Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) Patch Manager.

Andrea McAleenan, who had been in the job from May 2022, left the role at the end of September 2023. Details of the new Patch Manager are not currently available.

NIHE Patch Managers provide tenancy and estate management services to NIHE tenants and the communities in which they live.

Patch Managers are a single point of contact in a specific geographical patch e.g. Lower Oldpark. They deal with things like:

- New tenancy sign-ups.
- Transfer and mutual exchange applications.
- Rent account matters.
- Planned maintenance schemes.
- Payments from the NIHE.
- Tenancy succession and assignment, and joint tenancies.
- Anti-social behaviour and community safety issues.
- Managing empty NIHE homes.

Until a NIHE Lower Oldpark Patch Manager is in post, if you have issue, ring the NIHE on 03448 920900 and ask for Housing Management North Belfast.

### NIHE 'Make Your Money Work' Service

#### Who Can Use the Service?

NIHE tenants.

#### Type of Help Available

Free benefits' checks, help with making a budget and tips with making the most out of household income.

#### Contact Details

You can speak to a Financial Inclusion Officer by calling 03448 920 900 or make an appointment through the NIHE Lower Oldpark Patch Manager.

#### More Information

Search online - NIHE Making Your Money Work.

## Useful Contact Details

Issue/ Problem	Organisation To Contact	Phone/ Email
<b>Abandoned Vehicles</b> (On public road or land in open air) (Report)	Belfast City Council	0800 032 8100 waste@belfastcity.gov.uk
<b>Advice</b> (Request)	Vine Centre (Crumlin Roa)	028 90351020
	Age NI Advice Service	0808 8087575 info@ageni.org
	Disability Action Advice Service	028 90297880 hq@disabilityaction.org
	Department for Communities Make the Call Service	0800 2321271 <a href="mailto:makethecall@dfcnl.gov.uk">makethecall@dfcnl.gov.uk</a>
	Advice NI Debt and Money Advice	0800 9154604 <a href="mailto:advice@adviceni.net">advice@adviceni.net</a>
<b>Animal Welfare</b> Issues (Report)	Belfast City Council	028 9027 0431 animalwelfare@belfastcity.gov.uk
<b>Anti-social Behaviour</b> (Report)	PSNI	101
	Belfast City Council (ASB Officer North Belfast)	028 9032 0202 (ext 3394) or 078 2514 0523 or 028 9027 0469 (during normal office hours) or <a href="mailto:envhealth@belfastcity.gov.uk">envhealth@belfastcity.gov.uk</a> .
	Choice Housing (tenants)	0300 111 2211 <a href="mailto:enquiries@choice-housing.org">enquiries@choice-housing.org</a>
	Clanmil Housing (tenants)	028 90876000 <a href="mailto:housing@clanmil.org.uk">housing@clanmil.org.uk</a>
	NIHE (tenants)	03448 920900 Lower Oldpark NIHE Patch Manager
	Radius Housing (tenants)	0330 1230888
<b>Bins</b> (Request an assisted lift)	Belfast City Council	028 9027 0230 <a href="mailto:wastecollections@belfastcity.gov.uk">wastecollections@belfastcity.gov.uk</a>
<b>Bins</b> (Report a problem with your bin – missed collection, lost, stolen, burnt, damaged, spillage, not returned to its collection point)	Belfast City Council	028 9027 0230
<b>Bogus Callers</b> (Report)	Quick Check	101
<b>Bulky Waste Collection</b> (Request)	Belfast City Council	028 9027 0230
<b>Consumer Advice</b> (Request)	Consumerline (NI Trading Standards)	0300 123 6262 <a href="mailto:consumerline@economy-ni.gov.uk">consumerline@economy-ni.gov.uk</a>
<b>Crime</b> (Report)	PSNI (Emergency)	999
	PSNI (Non-emergency)	101
	Crimestoppers	0800 555111
<b>Dangerous Structures</b> (Report)	Belfast City Council	028 9027 0650 07850 499 622 (In an emergency outside office hours)
<b>Dead Animal</b> (On the road) (Report)	Belfast City Council	028 9027 0230 <a href="mailto:openspaces@belfastcity.gov.uk">openspaces@belfastcity.gov.uk</a>
<b>Dilapidated Buildings</b> (Report)	Belfast City Council	028 9027 0650 07850 499 622 (In an emergency outside office hours)
<b>Dogs</b> (Report, lost, stray, stolen)	Belfast City Council	028 9027 0431
<b>Dogs</b> (Report overheating in a car)	Belfast City Council	028 9027 0431
<b>Dogs</b> (Apply for a licence)	Belfast City Council	028 9027 0431 <a href="mailto:dogwardens@belfastcity.gov.uk">dogwardens@belfastcity.gov.uk</a>
<b>Dog Fouling</b> (Report)	Belfast City Council	028 9027 0431 <a href="mailto:dogwardens@belfastcity.gov.uk">dogwardens@belfastcity.gov.uk</a>

## Useful Contact Details (continued)

Issue/ Problem	Organisation To Contact	Phone/ Email
<b>Drug Related Sharps Needles In Public Places</b> (Report)	Belfast City Council	028 9027 0469 Out of hours: 07850499622 <a href="mailto:sharps@belfastcity.gov.uk">sharps@belfastcity.gov.uk</a>
<b>Electricity Supply Interruption</b> (Report)	NIE Customer Helpline	03457 643 643
<b>Energy Advice</b> (Request)	NI Energy Advice	0800 1114455 <a href="mailto:NIenergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk">NIenergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk</a>
<b>Flooding</b> (Report)	Flooding Incident Line	0300 2000 100
<b>Gas Supply Interruption</b> (Report)	Phoenix Gas	0800 002 001
	Firmus Gas	0800 002 001
<b>Graffiti</b> (Report)	Responsibility of the property owner	
<b>Housing Advice</b> (Request)	Lower Oldpark Community Association	028 96928293 0771 3990976 <a href="mailto:loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com">loweroldparkhousing@gmail.com</a>
	Housing Rights Service	028 90245640
<b>Housing Providers (Social Renting)</b>	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	03448 920900
	Radius Housing	0330 1230888
	Clanmil Housing	028 90876000 (General) 028 90876019 (Repairs)
	Choice Housing	0300 1112211
<b>Human Trafficking</b> (Report)	Crimestoppers	0800 555 111
	PSNI	999
	Migrant Helpline	0808 8010503 (Free asylum helpline) 028 9244 8449 (Out of Hours for Urgent Trafficking Queries Only) <a href="mailto:northernireland@migranthehelpuk.org">northernireland@migranthehelpuk.org</a>
<b>Noise Problems</b> (Report)	Belfast City Council	028 9037 3006 <a href="mailto:envhealth@belfastcity.gov.uk">envhealth@belfastcity.gov.uk</a>
<b>Open and Vacant Properties</b> (Report)	Belfast City Council	028 9027 0650 07850 499 622 (In an emergency outside office hours)
<b>Pest Control</b> (Report)	Belfast City Council	028 9027 0431 <a href="mailto:pestcontrol@belfastcity.gov.uk">pestcontrol@belfastcity.gov.uk</a>
<b>Roads and Footpaths</b> (Report) Gully, Drain and Sewer Blockages.	Department for Infrastructure a(DfI Roads)	0300 2007893
Potholes (Report)	(DfI Roads)	0300 2007893
Manhole/ Gully Cover Problems (Report)	(DfI Roads)	0300 2007893
Street Light Problem (Report)	(DfI Roads)	0300 2007893
<b>Street Cleaning</b> (Report dumped waste (fly-tipping), overflowing litter bins and unsatisfactory street cleaning.)	Belfast City Council	028 9027 0230
<b>Telecommunications</b> Report problems with cables, poles, cabinets or manholes.	BT	0800 023 2023
<b>Water Supply Interruption</b> (Report)	NI Water	0345 7440 088