

The Earls Court Project Community
Engagement Programme

—
Masterplan Launch Drop-in Sessions Report
March 2011

MY EARLS COURT.COM

THE FUTURE OF EARLS COURT, WEST KENSINGTON & NORTH FULHAM





Community Engagement Programme

EC Properties Ltd is committed to an ongoing programme of community engagement, consulting with local communities so that they can have their say on the future of their neighbourhood.

In October 2009, EC Properties Ltd set out clear overarching aims for the community engagement process for the Earls Court Project, namely:

- Engage all in the community
- Listen to and understand the community
- Transparency
- Be innovative and set new standards
- Feedback will be integral to the development process
- Create and maintain momentum

The first stage of the community engagement programme took place from October to December 2009 and involved meeting community organisations and leaders, introducing the Earls Court Project team and explaining how local residents could be involved in the masterplanning process.

The second stage of the programme was a series of 7 drop-in sessions held in February and March 2010 which were designed to open up the dialogue to the wider community, explain the vision of the Earls Court Project and understand the concerns and aspirations of individuals.

The third stage of the programme took place in July 2010 and took the form of two public drop-in sessions that concentrated on the masterplan process, addressing the creation of a new urban neighbourhood or placemaking.

The fourth stage phase of the community engagement programme consisted of 2 drop-in sessions that took place on 10th and 16th November 2010 and concentrated on the masterplan concept.

Full reports on these stages can be downloaded from www.myearlscourt.com

The Masterplan Launch Exhibition and Drop-ins

The masterplan launch exhibition is the fifth stage in the community engagement programme. It was designed to unveil to stakeholder groups and the wider public the masterplan for the Earls Court and West Kensington Opportunity Area produced by Sir Terry Farrell & Partners.

The exhibition

The exhibition presented the Terry Farrell masterplan for the Earls Court Project for the first time and provided the opportunity to cover key elements that have informed the masterplan process, in particular:

- The history of the area
- The engagement process to date
- The High Street concept
- The Open Space Strategy
- The Transport Strategy
- The indicative phasing plan
- The emerging design for the Seagrave Road Scheme

By bringing all these elements together, the exhibition was able to provide a comprehensive view of the masterplan and its main components, building on the concepts outlined in the previous exhibition. A key part of the exhibition was a 3-dimensional model of the masterplan.

The exhibition demonstrated the approach that has been taken and, by focusing on particular topics, provided the opportunity to start the process of directly addressing the issues that have been raised in the community engagement programme to date.

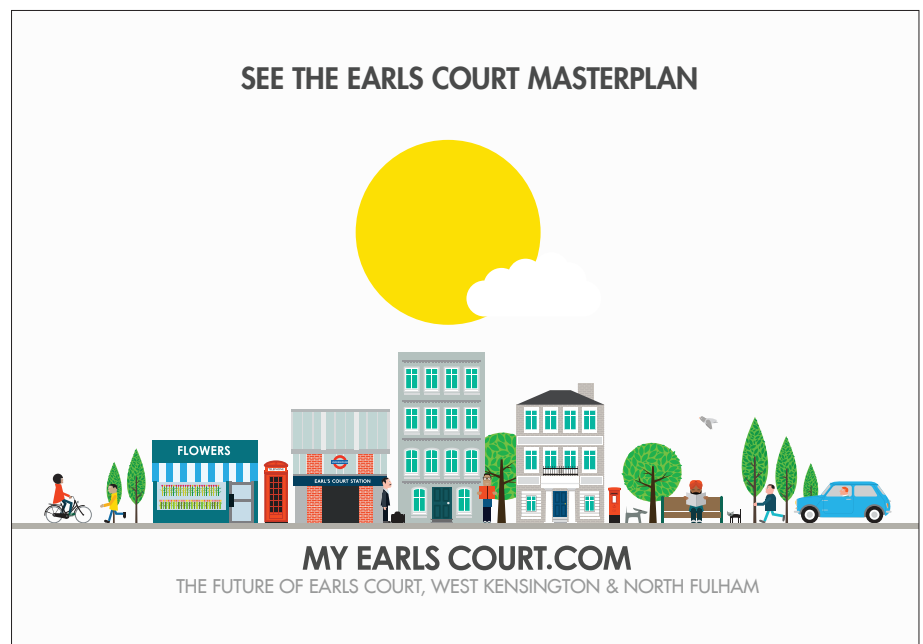
This will be developed further in the final phase of the engagement process when we present further detail on the masterplan and the strategies that have informed it.

Aims and Objectives

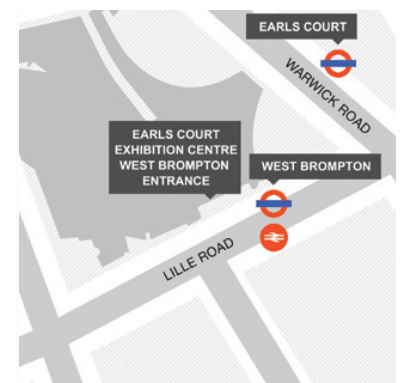
The main objective of the masterplan launch exhibition was to unveil to stakeholder groups and the wider public the masterplan for the Earls Court and West Kensington Opportunity Area.

1. To provide a greater level of detail than at previous drop-in sessions
2. To address some of the issues that have previously been raised and to answer questions and provide clarification
3. To obtain feedback from the local community and stakeholders through conversations and comprehensive comments cards
4. To generate input to the design process based on local views
5. To create a longer-term base for the exhibition at the Earls Court Exhibition Centre that provides a base and resource for stakeholders and local resident groups on an ongoing basis

Where and When



The exhibition was held in the Museum Hall of Earls Court 1, accessible via the West Brompton entrance opposite West Brompton station.



The exhibition was advertised through a number of means:

- Advertisements at West Kensington; West Brompton and Earls Court Underground Station for two weeks prior to the exhibition being open to the public
- 21,000 postcard invitations distributed door to door to properties in the surrounding area
- Advertisements placed in the local press the week before the opening:
 - Hammersmith and Fulham Chronicle
 - Westminster Chronicle
 - Kensington & Chelsea Chronicle
 - Ealing & Acton Gazette
 - Hammersmith & Shepherds Bush Gazette
 - Fulham Gazette
 - Hammersmith & Fulham News
- E-newsletter sent to 200 people who have registered with www.myearlscourt.com
- Invitation postcards sent to around 150 community organisations in both the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham and the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea

There were a series of previews before the exhibition was opened to the public:

- Capital and Counties Properties PLC stakeholder event
- Ward councillors from the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham and the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
- Local Resident and Amenity Groups including The Earls Court Society, The Fulham Society, The West Cromwell Focus Group and The Friends of Brompton Cemetery
- Gibbs Green and West Kensington estate Tenants and Residents Associations

Downloadable pdfs of all display boards from the exhibition were published on www.myearlscourt.com on the morning of Friday 18th March.

The exhibition was open to the public on the following dates:

Friday 18 th March 2011	10.00 – 17.00
Saturday 19 th March 2011	10.00 – 17.00
Monday 21 st March 2011	13.00 – 20.00
Tuesday 22 nd March 2011	13.00 – 20.00

Attendance

The exhibition was attended by 701 people, as follows:

Friday 18 th March 2011	153
Saturday 19 th March 2011	183
Monday 21 st March 2011	188
Tuesday 22 nd March 2011	177

About 300 additional people attended stakeholder and other events at the masterplan exhibition.

Summary of issues raised at the masterplan launch exhibition drop-in sessions

Overall feedback from residents about the masterplan was highly positive, and the majority supported the Earls Court development. A lot of people felt that redevelopment has been needed in the area for some time and there was positive feedback about the concept of four villages and the High Street. In particular it was felt that the High Street would attract a wider range of shops, facilities and activities than exist in the area at present.

There are still some residents of Gibbs Green and West Kensington estates who continue to oppose the inclusion of the estates in the Opportunity Area and therefore the masterplan. However, there appears to be an increasing number of residents from the two estates who welcome the proposals and recognise the benefits the masterplan would bring for them individually and the area.

A number of people expressed concern over how the loss of the exhibition centres would affect existing businesses in the area.

There was support for the mix of housing, but a feeling that greater detail needs to be provided about the types and locations of housing. There were also questions about their affordability and how affordable they would be for first time buyers.

There were a range of positive and negative views voiced about Earls Court becoming a destination and potential associated problems of overcrowding on public transport and increased congestion.

There was interest in the prospect of buying a property in both Seagrave Road development and in Earls Court masterplan area, including questions on prices.

Transport

Transport issues were one of the biggest topics raised by local residents. There was support for the promotion of cycling and the greater emphasis given to pedestrians, however concerns focused on:

- Parking – location in the development and impact on the surrounding area
- Traffic Congestion – there were concerns about the lack of detail about improvements we were proposing to the existing roads and junctions
- Impacts on the Underground services and stations, which are currently overcrowded at peak times, and how the network and stations will deal with the increased number of people living and working in the area
- There was a clear message that more information is requested on transport



Design

There were mixed feelings over the height and density of the proposal. Some people felt that the proposal was too dense and tall in places, in particular around the Empress State building. However, others felt that it was lower than they thought it could have been and felt that it seemed acceptable as proposed. A number of people appreciated that the masterplan had kept height clustered around Empress State building.

- There was discussion that the proposed buildings were not in keeping with the surrounding area
- Sunlight and daylight was raised as issues for the open spaces, streets and new and existing buildings
- Residents of Philbeach Gardens and Eardley Crescent raised concerns about being overlooked, the height of the new town houses at the back of their gardens, what affect it will have on the light in their gardens etc. There was a an issue of access from Philbeach Gardens that will be addressed at the next exhibition
- Issues were raised about the proximity of the new buildings to existing ones and problems with noise and vibration
- Residents from the areas west of North End Road were very excited about a new east-west route which will enable them to get to Earls Court Tube station more easily and quickly

Open Space

- Most people supported the approach taken and the diversity of open space proposed.
- There was excitement about the Lost River Park but many questioned the quantum of open space and specific play areas for children and for spaces for sports and ball games

Community Infrastructure

- There is a desire to know what social infrastructure will be provided to support the new population
- There was interest in how the new cultural and community spaces would be managed

The High Street

- more independent shops seemed appealing to quite a few people
- many questioned how they would be able to determine what types of shops would be in the High Street

Construction Impacts

- Many questioned the impact of demolition and construction and there was a request for more information
- The principle concerns that were raised were:
 - Dust, noise and pollution
 - Traffic impacts
 - Length of disruption due to the fact that the development will be phased over a number of years
 - Potential impact on the structures of neighbouring properties

Seagrave Road

- There was excitement about, and support for the proposed development on Seagrave Road car park, including from some residents of Gibbs Green and West Kensington estates
- A number of residents opposed the development and felt that the new housing did not offer an improvement on what they already occupy
- There were comments made about the style of architecture
- There was some concern expressed about the proposed density for the site
- There were questions raised about the traffic and parking proposals for the development
- The houses along Seagrave Road were well received by existing residents of Seagrave Road as it was felt they responded to the existing scale of the street
- There was concern about the impact of construction traffic along Seagrave Road
- Some expressed the view that the buildings looked too much like typical modern apartment blocks

The Exhibition

- There was some confusion about the extent of the scheme on certain drawings and on the model
- There was uncertainty about specific roads and differing advice given by local authorities about what would be included in the development, in particular Empress Place
- Many mentioned that there should be street names and locators on the masterplan maps and the plans for the villages. They also felt that locators such as Tube stations should be included on the model
- Most people were very impressed with the exhibition and said that it was very thorough and informative

Process

- There appears to be confusion about the masterplan process and there was a need to explain that there will be detailed plans for each part of the masterplan at a subsequent stage
- There was a need for more explanation of the development and the phasing process
- Some voiced frustration that people are unable to see what the development will look like. They appreciated that this is a masterplan and that the planning application will be an outline application. However, they requested more detail in order to gain a better understanding of the appearance of buildings.

Comments raised in the Comments Cards

194 Comments Cards were completed.

What is your overall response to the masterplan?

The majority of responses were positive and supportive of the Earls Court masterplan as proposed, with many using terms such as “excellent” and “terrific”, and that regeneration was “overdue”. Some saw it as a bold approach to the future of the area. As expected, there were also those that were negative about the plan and the implications for the area. The most cited reason for this was the scale of the development and the number of new residents proposed for the area. The negative responses were just under a third of the more positive responses

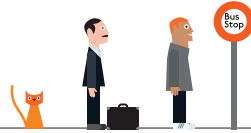
Reasons for supporting the masterplan:

- The concept of 4 villages and the High Street and the creation of greater permeability linking the Earls Court and West Kensington communities were the most common reason given for supporting the masterplan
- The benefits that will come from the regeneration of the area, in particular the run-down areas around West Brompton station. Some cited the regeneration of the estates and North End Road as a key element of potential improvements
- The approach taken to creating new open spaces were cited as a positive aspect of the masterplan, in particular the green aspect of West Brompton Village
- Transport – the improved bus facilities and cycle routes. The priority given to pedestrian routes was welcomed. There was support for the introduction of a new junction onto West Cromwell Road and the opportunity that the new development brings to improve junctions and reduce congestion
- Community Infrastructure - the inclusion of local amenities including new schools, a nursery with day care, GPs etc.
- The High Street was supported as it would bring new and unique, independent shops to the area. The community focus of the High Street was supported as it would bring more cultural and community facilities and a café culture
- There was initial uncertainty about the extent of the masterplan, and the fact that the existing Victorian buildings in Earls Court and Lillie Road were to be retained was supported

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- On the other hand, some felt the area needed to be modernised and that regeneration would bring improvements to the area
 - Many felt it was important to keep a mixed demographic in the Earls Court area and that families need to be attracted with larger houses and a multi-use environment with facilities and spaces for all
 - The retention of Empress State Building was universally supported and there was some support for clustering taller buildings near Empress State
 - People felt that the masterplan itself is well-balanced and provided exciting opportunities for the area
 - The masterplan provides the opportunity for a range of housing including affordable housing for first time buyers
 - Support for the approach taken by the Earls Court Project to engage with the community and the way that information has been provided and how staff listen to points raised

However, this support was tempered by a number of issues and concerns raised in response to the masterplan:

- Scale – there was unease about the extent of the proposed development and the impacts that the scale of development will have on the area and the lives of existing residents. Many talked about the quality of life that they currently experience and concern that this will be undermined.
- Density - there were comments that the masterplan proposed over-development in an already densely populated area
- Height – concerns were raised about the height of buildings in the masterplan, especially those in the east of the site adjacent to existing properties. Specific mention was made of the view across West Brompton Cemetery and the impact on this of the tall buildings proposed, in particular those in the Seagrave Road development
- Transport – key issues raised were the parking provision within the development and the impact on surrounding streets and the local area. Many commented that the development would make current congestion on both roads and the Tube worse at peak times
- Timing – many raised concern about the time it will take to complete a development on the scale proposed. There were concerns voiced about the impact on lives (and house prices) for the duration of the construction process. They said the phasing for the project will be important to reduce and manage potential construction impacts and transport congestion
- Concern that the unique character of Earls Court will be spoilt and the impact on house prices in the short to mid-term
- Destination – there was a mix of opinions about Earls Court as a destination. Some felt that the demolition of the Earls Court Exhibition Centre constituted the loss of an iconic London landmark, and that it would be replaced with modern architecture. There appeared to be a body of opinion that was critical of modern architecture with concerns voiced about “bland” and “featureless” buildings
- Construction and demolition – the impacts of construction and demolition were raised by many residents. These centred on the extent of disruption, noise, dust, potential structural damage, and negative impacts on transport and the quality of life



- Housing – many raised the issue of the existing residents on the West Kensington and Gibbs Green estates with detailed concerns about where they would be re-housed and the location of affordable homes. Questions were also raised about the affordability of new properties. Some were concerned that the housing will be zoned on the basis of cost, arguing that there is a need for a mix of housing (social rented with private housing). There was also mention of the impact of Buy to Let in new developments.
- Community Infrastructure – many stressed the importance of this for the community, in particular with regard to education and the need to include a new school. There is a view that existing services in the area are already under considerable pressure and that the new development should alleviate this. There was specific mention of the need for a public library. There was also specific mention of the importance of providing space and activity for children and young people, and there was concern expressed about the extent of the open space in this regard
- There was concern that the closure of the Exhibition Centre will adversely affect existing businesses

People were asked if there were **additional aspects of the masterplan or information** that they would like to see. The purpose of this is to assist in framing future engagement on the Earls Court Project. The key areas were:

- Construction / Demolition – how the impacts will be mitigated
- Population - what the final population will be in this area
- The heights of new buildings – in particular impact on Earls Court and taking into consideration the needs of existing buildings across the site
- The Open Space Strategy – where will the play and sports areas be?
- Estate management and maintenance arrangements
- Transport – an analysis of the impacts of the development and detail on the proposed improvements, in particular junction improvements on Lillie Rd, North End Rd, West Cromwell Road and the Lillie Road rail bridge. Increased capacity on the Underground network and at the stations
- Decision making timescale
- Community infrastructure including police and fire services and the impact of the development on local services
- Consultation process going forward
- Accommodation and improvement of North End Road market
- The High Street
- The cultural component – will there be a cinema?
- Employment and training opportunities
- Details on the impact on existing businesses
- More details about the proposal for existing residents of the Gibbs Green and West Kensington estates



Transport Strategy

What do you support in the transport strategy?

There were a number of positive comments made about the proposals included in the Transport Strategy. All of them related to improvements in public transport, including the additional entrance to Earls Court Tube station, the modernisation of the Underground stations and improved bus routes. There was a hope expressed that the new development would see less emphasis on the car and increased use of electric cars with the necessary infrastructure to support it.

There was also considerable support for encouraging cycling in a safer environment with safer routes and the priority being given to pedestrians.

Are there any aspects that you are concerned about?

There remains concern about the impact of the development on the existing transport infrastructure, in particular the fact that the area currently experiences considerable congestion both on the roads and at stations. The issue of current and future congestion is constantly repeated in the comments. It is clear that the proposals explained to date have not reassured the majority of those who have commented.

Other issues that were raised are:

- Impact of construction work on the road system
- Road safety – it was felt that this has so far been overlooked
- The experience of the impact of Westfield shopping centre was cited as an example of the lack of integration into the existing road network and increased congestion
- Parking provision and the impact on surrounding areas. There is scepticism about reduced car ownership in the new development. The issue of parking was a common concern
- Potential for the development becoming a rat run for cars
- The opportunity to redesign the Underground services at Earls Court in order to increase efficiency
- Pollution

People were asked if there were **additional aspects of the Transport Strategy or information** that they would like to see. The purpose of this is to assist in framing future engagement on the project. The key areas were:

- Parking – impact on the surrounding area
- The Earls Court one-way system
- How the development will discourage car ownership
- Junction improvements and the predicted impact on current traffic and estimated traffic flows
- Road safety
- Plans for extra traffic caused by construction and demolition
- Consideration of public transport alternatives like trams and electric buses
- More details on cycling
- Planned improvements to the Underground system
- Details on the station improvements planned

The Open Space Strategy

What do you support in the open space strategy?

There was considerable support for the approach taken in the open spaces strategy within the masterplan. There were many positive comments about the details, in particular the extent of trees and other greenery and planting, the hierarchy of spaces, the Lost River Park and the variety of spaces including squares and private gardens. Some felt that the proposed provision looked spacious and not overcrowded. There was an overwhelming view that the open space provision is crucial to the look and feel of a place that is densely populated, and that the range of uses and integration with residential areas will be key. There was considerable support for the greening of villages.

Are there any aspects that you are concerned about?

The open space strategy generated a wide range of views. Some supported it for the reasons given above, others agreed with the approach taken but felt that there was not enough open space being proposed for a development on this scale.

Some felt there needed to be a considerable reappraisal of open space in the development. The majority of those that raised concerns about the open space focused on the quantum proposed and the detail. Specific issues raised include:

- Lack of trees
- Views from the cemetery are not being protected
- Management and maintenance including safety and security
- Accessibility for those with disability or the elderly
- Outdoor play and sporting facilities for children and young people
- Lack of a central expansive park
- The proportion of private to public open space
- Impact of the higher buildings and the lack of daylight and sunlight in a number of the open spaces

People were asked if there were additional aspects of the **Open Space Strategy or information** that they would like to see. The purpose of this is to assist in framing future engagement on the project. The key areas were:

- Management and maintenance arrangements, including the approach to dogs in the open spaces
- Use of water to reflect the historical Counter's Creek and Kensington Canal
- Details regarding play and sports provision
- Images of the Lost River Park and any issues around putting the railway lines underground

Social Infrastructure / Land Use

What do you support in the way we have set out the land use of buildings?

There was a positive response to the range of land uses proposed in the masterplan. However, some felt that more and clearer detail should be provided in future exhibitions. There was support for specific aspects in particular the range of facilities that are proposed to support and develop the new community (schools, health, community resources etc.), and there was recognition that this will go some way to meet current deficiencies in the area. There was support for the inclusion of cultural facilities in the development.

Many recognised that the mix of uses within the development would bring change and improve the area. There was also recognition that the proposed land uses complement existing uses and, particularly in the case of West Kensington's commercial aspects, are suitably located.

The High Street was positively received with many supporting the proposals for independent shops and a strong community focus. There was also support for the traditional street pattern that is proposed in the masterplan, and the clustering of taller buildings in the centre of the development around the Empress State building.

Are there any aspects of the land use strategy that you are concerned about?

Many of the less positive comments concerned issues of detail covering specific land uses. As with the more general concerns about the masterplan, there were questions raised about the scale of development and the land uses proposed on the site. There were also a number of concerns raised about the residential make-up and some pointed out the fact that for a residentially-led scheme there was a lack of information on housing in the exhibition.

Specific concerns raised included:

- The mix of residential and commercial spaces in the same location
- Security and the potential for anti-social behaviour
- Location of the commercial uses and distance from public transport
- The extent of retail proposed and the impact on existing retail centres in surrounding areas
- Management and maintenance of the estate

Housing

- The lack of proposed housing for the elderly (there is a currently a lack of sheltered and supportive housing in the area), especially for those that wish to downsize
- The density of the residential areas
- Location of the affordable housing
- There needs to be more thought about meeting the needs of current tenants and residents who live on the estates and offering them more benefits

Community

- The location of the medical facility to the north appears contrary to the community focus on the High Street, which is supported
- Concern that there is a lack of adequate facilities (schools, health and places of worship) for the size of population proposed
- Concern that there is a predominance of expensive retail
- The availability and affordability of sports facilities
- The need to avoid building community facilities that are not properly managed and are under-used
- The need to consider facilities for children and young people which is currently lacking

People were asked if there were **additional aspects of the Land Use Strategy or information** that they would like to see. The purpose of this is to assist in framing future engagement on the project. The key areas were:

- Details of the leisure and cultural component of the masterplan
- The size of the housing
- The impact the development will have on Earls Court residents and the potential for negative impact on present quality of life
- The number of people in the development
- How the routes to and through the development will work
- Impact on the area from the loss of the Exhibition Centre
- Justification for the level of community infrastructure proposed
- How will you ensure the High Street is not another typical high street with chains etc?

Benefits

What benefits do you hope for from the proposed regeneration?

There was a wide range of benefits listed that people hope to see from the Earls Court Project. These included:

- A cleaner, improved environment in the Earls Court and West Kensington areas
- Improved community facilities including schools
- Improved leisure facilities
- Better community spirit, a better standard of living and greater social integration
- More jobs
- An increase in house prices in the surrounding area
- Better and more efficient use of land in the area
- An area that feels more integrated and less disjointed
- Alleviation of current traffic problems and improvements in public transport
- Increased prosperity in the area
- Greater diversity of retail and more independent shops
- New cultural spaces and activities

There were some who were sceptical that the development would offer the extent of benefits outlined in the exhibition.



Seagrave Road

What is your overall response to the proposals for Seagrave Road?

The response to the outline of the Seagrave Road proposals were mixed – there were slightly more positive comments than negative ones.

Those that supported the proposals were pleased that a positive, residential scheme was being proposed for the site that complimented the existing residential neighbourhood. There was also support for the provision of open space within the development and the connectivity with the Lost River Park which would give the development an open, green environment.

However, there were a number of concerns voiced which centred on the scale of the proposed development. These concerns included:

- More information and research needed on the impact of 800 flats (1,000 – 3,000 people) on the area, in particular the impact on traffic, facilities, access and services
- Density and height within the development
- The proposed scheme is out of character with the architecture of the surrounding residential area in terms of design and height
- There is inadequate open space being provided considering the number of new residents
- The development could have an adverse impact on West Brompton Cemetery
- Parking and traffic
- How will the development integrate with the rest of the Earls Court masterplan area
- The development could become a “gated community” separated from the surrounding community

And finally...

There were a large number of positive comments about the exhibition as a whole with the vast majority of residents expressing their support for the approach to community engagement that the developers had adopted. The exhibition was seen as “excellent” and “very informative”. Project staff were also complimented as being “very helpful” and “friendly”.

Next Steps

Taking on board the above feedback from local communities, we will hold one final round of drop-in sessions focusing on the Masterplan, supporting strategies and the detailed plan for Seagrave Road, before submitting a planning application.