

Foxhill development - DMC decision in line with Council Policy or not?

FoBRA argues that in terms of the Policy H9 criteria justifying redevelopment of social housing: (i) is met but for only some and certainly not for most of the properties earmarked for demolition; and (ii) is certainly not met, there being overall excellent cohesion and well-being within the Foxhill Estate, which has a stable and settled community.

Most importantly, though, Policy H9 presumes against **net loss of affordable housing**. Of the proposed 542 homes for demolition, 432 (c.80%) are owned by Curo, 399 of which are affordable homes, yet the Affordable Housing Statement submitted with the Outline Planning application states that:

*“.....In order for the regeneration scheme to remain viable and to address the social balance of the area, comprehensive regeneration is required. The planning statement submitted with this application provides a summary justification as to why comprehensive regeneration is necessary in order to deliver these benefits. In order to remain viable it is not possible for the scheme to provide the same level of affordable housing as is currently provided on the Foxhill Estate. The Regeneration scheme will therefore deliver a minimum of 30% affordable housing, which when complete will amount to 210 affordable homes [of which 158 (75%) are for social housing]. When combined with the 210 affordable homes [also 75:25] **that are to be provided at Mulberry Park**, the combined scheme will deliver 420 affordable homes, equating to a slight increase in the current level of provision.....”*

FoBRA considers that this statement challenges Policy H9.

It alarms us that the development is said to be “viable” only if no more than 210 affordable homes (whatever the mix) are built to replace the current 399 affordable homes (**a net drop of nearly half**). In our view it is not acceptable for Curo to **conflate the social housing provision of the two separate sites to camouflage the actual loss of social housing for planning gain**. Moreover, we question the financial basis of a proposed redevelopment of this size, where the affordable homes that are proposed to be built in Mulberry Park form part of the Foxhill affordable homes equation: the Council’s Development Management Committee should not have been persuaded otherwise. Surprisingly, Council Planners appear quite content to accept Curo’s claim that it has interpreted the Placemaking Plan requirements correctly, but we are most concerned that the financial viability caveat seems to have eclipsed the vital loss of social homes for rent. **This is not right! Curo should simply try harder – and their measure of viability should be rigorously and forensically examined by an independent body.**

Robin Kerr, Chairman, 5th Sept 17