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**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Communications, Engagement and Marketing Plan

GORSE RIDE SOUTH REGENERATION – PHASE 2 DELIVERY (PLANNING REF: 202133)

Background

In 2013 the Council decided to move forward with the regeneration of Gorse Ride, recognising that the existing housing stock has fallen into disrepair and, due to the nature of its original build, was unsuitable for refurbishment.

Conversations were had with the local community to establish a vision for a new Gorse Ride development which would:

- Have a distinct character within its context,
- Bring vitality to the area,
- Revitalise and enrich the community for the future, which builds upon the strong community spirit present on the estate,
- Provide high quality of new housing designed to support modern living and offer flexibility for the future,
- Minimise impact on existing residents where possible by carefully phasing works and offering support to residents through the transition
- Support the climate emergency agenda by delivering a low carbon development

Since 2013 the Council, and project team, have worked closely with the Gorse Ride community in the regeneration area and key stakeholders to develop a masterplan and detailed design for Gorse Ride. This work culminated in a detailed planning application being granted consent in December 2020

Following this the Council started the process of procuring contractors to demolish and construct the development in six key phases.

- Phase 2A – Demolition
- Phase 2A - Construction
- Phase 2B – Demolition
- Phase 2B - Construction
- Phase 2C – Demolition
- Phase 2C - Construction

For further information relating to the sequencing and construction programme, please refer to the Phasing Plan, submitted under Condition 3.

Key elements of the Gorse Ride Development include:

- **Retaining the Gorse Ride character**
 - Use of natural toned brick and tiles to reflect the wooded feel of the area
 - Materials chosen to ensure easy maintenance of site in future years
 - Feature brickwork and details to create interest
 - Primarily two and three storey homes with apartment block heights reduced by setting top floor back within roof level to keep three storey feel.
- **A range of high-quality new homes**
 - 249 new homes across the site with a good mix of property types including
 - One and two bedroom apartments
 - One and two bedroom bungalows
 - Three, four and five bedroom homes
 - A mix of social housing and private housing
 - Variety of housing styles, including terraces, bungalows, detached and semi detached properties to help create character and a sense of place
 - Well designed homes influenced by Homes for Life standards to ensure they have the flexibility to adapt to different resident needs over time

- **Improved access and parking**
 - Main pedestrian connections to the wider area maintained and routed through attractive community areas where possible
 - New road layout to spread access and reduce reliance on one route
 - Roads and pavements carefully laid out to improve pedestrian access, reduce car speeds and better integrate parking across the neighbourhood
 - 416 parking spaces in a mix of dedicated bays, off road parking courts, on street spaces and garages
 - Mix of allocated and unallocated spaces to recognise the needs of different residents.
- **Green and attractive spaces**
 - A New central landscaped area with planting to help create a community space where people can gather and relax away from roads
 - New apartments designed to have views out over the landscaped spaces with balconies and large windows
 - Design retains many existing mature trees with over 200 more new trees planted to enhance the green wooded feel of the existing area
 - New pond to address historic flooding issues by creating an attractive space for water to drain naturally.
- **Community and families**
 - Plentiful public seating and open areas designed to allow the local community to come together and enjoy the new space
 - New play equipment to be integrated into the development at key places to encourage safe play and leisure.
 - A commitment that existing residents who wish to stay in the community will be accommodated
 - Engagement of the local community throughout the process and at the heart of the regeneration
 - A phasing plan that aims for as little disruption as possible to peoples' lives
- **Safer communities**
 - Scheme will be built to Secured by Design standards to help create a safe feel to the neighbourhood.
 - Reduced use of alleyways and enclosed pathways
 - Community spaces are overlooked by multiple properties to reduce risk of anti-social behaviour
 - Private spaces are clearly defined from public and community spaces to increase sense of security.
- **Greener communities to help us all**
 - Scheme designed with a reduced carbon footprint helping to deal with climate change and the council's aim to become carbon neutral by 2030
 - New homes designed to be more eco friendly with a range of improvement including glazing, heating and insulation
 - Large windows in living areas to maximise natural sunlight and make the most of natural warmth
 - Houses provided with electric heating , hot water and cooking facilities in recognition of need to move away from using gas supplies in all future developments across the country
 - Improvements in design and approach to use of energy will help lower the utilities costs for running the new homes

- Infrastructure for 200 electric car charging points included with scope to add more in future built into the scheme
- Integrated secure bike storage in apartment blocks and storage space in houses to help encourage green travel and reduce reliance on cars
- Integrated waste storage areas to help keep spaces uncluttered and encourage better recycling
- More open space with improved planting to increase biodiversity and encourage wildlife.

Objectives

- To raise awareness of the Gorse Ride Regeneration and how it supports the council vision and priorities
- To communicate messages about key activities, events, milestones during the delivery of Phase 2A, 2B and 2C
- To ensure residents living in/around the existing Gorse Ride area remain informed and involved of progress in all remaining phases of works
- To ensure the communications activities support the delivery of the Gorse Ride Regeneration project

Contribution to Community Vision and priorities

This communications plan will contribute to the WBC priorities of:

- Enriching Lives
- Safe, Strong Communities
- A Clean and Green Borough
- Right Homes, Right Places

Audiences

External

- Council tenants living in properties impacted on and/ or moving into the new Gorse Ride development
- Private owners living in properties impacted on and/ or moving into the new Gorse Ride development
- Residents and businesses in properties surrounding the Gorse Ride development

- Gorse Ride Steering Group
- All general public within the borough
- Media local, trade and national
- Local schools
- University of Reading
- Local community groups
- Local MPs and Politicians
- Town and parish councils (primarily Finchampstead Parish Council)
- St Mary and St Johns Church
- Finchampstead Baptist Church
- Local businesses and social enterprises who may wish to tender for work
- Business / Industry community for sharing best practice
- Service providers working with the Gorse Ride community (public sector, TVP, Public Health, tenant services etc)

Internal

- General staff updates

Partnership messaging

The Gorse Ride Project is being delivered by Wokingham Borough Council in partnership with their wholly-owned registered provider of housing, Loddon Homes who will become long term landlords for the affordable elements of the scheme.

Where appropriate messaging may be shared through one, or both, of the partners to ensure it reaches the correct audience and can be best targeted to meet their needs.

Key Milestones

In order to minimise disruption on residents the Gorse Ride development has been split into three distinct phases of demolition and three phases of construction.

Each phase is split into similar key milestones which will need communicating as the project progresses –

Demolition

- Decant of residents from existing properties
- Demolition of vacant properties

Construction

- Pre-construction works and preparations
- Construction works start on site
- Ongoing construction works (milestones include elements such as apprenticeships, digging of foundations, topping out, open days, fitting out etc)
- Local resident involvement (street naming competition, visit to site by local school, artwork displays etc)
- Completion of construction works
- Handover of affordable housing elements to Loddon Homes
- Letting / Sales of completed properties
- Moving in of owners/tenants to completed properties

Key Messages

In general key messages will remain consistent across all three phases of the development although they will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they remain appropriate to the audiences.

- Regeneration is positive for Gorse Ride and its community

- We are creating high quality new energy efficient homes and public spaces for the community
- We are committed to tackling the Climate emergency and delivering low carbon projects
- These are ambitious plans yet deliverable
- You have helped shape the plans and will continue to help as we move forward
- We have worked closely with the Gorse Ride community to make sure they are right for the area and those who will live here
- Where possible we will support existing residents to remain in Gorse Ride should they wish to stay
- We will work closely with tenants to help them relocate as smoothly as possible
- Loddon Homes will be acting as landlord for the social housing and shared ownership elements of the completed scheme
- We aim to keep people informed and updated as work progresses
- We are committed to minimising disruption to residents living in and around the development but recognise that there may be times people will be inconvenienced
- Thank you for your understanding and patience whilst these essential works take place

Communications Channels

External

- Media relations
- Wokingham Borough Connect (e-newsletter) – general news / business matters .
- Gorse Ride website page (<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/major-developments/gorse-ride-estate-regeneration/>)
- Town and parish councils
- Social Media platforms
- Wokingham Borough News
- Marketing materials – posters / flyers / advertising /
- Hoardings banners and signage
- Direct letters & postcards
- Use of WBC engagement platform to ensure residents priorities and opinions are understood and reflected in service

- WBC Gorse Ride newsletter
- Housing Matters (WBC Tenants newsletter)
- Developer / Community newsletters
- Community forums, meetings and drop in sessions
- Text messages and emails to local community

Internal

- Intranet
- The Download – employee newsletter
- All staff email
- ECLT meetings
- Managers Network
- Loddon Homes

Budget

All communications activities will be reviewed on a case by case basis to determine the most appropriate method of sharing messages with the audience involved.

Outcomes

- Informed stakeholders who have an understanding of the Gorse Ride development, how it impacts on them, details of the programme and its key milestones
- Transparency in the process supported by open and timely communications
- Informed residents who understand why Gorse Ride is being regenerated, what is being delivered and when it is happening and the plan for their individual rehousing / the benefits of the development and their roles and responsibility how this is happening
- Increased community confidence and trust in WBC and our contractors
- Improved the reputation of the Council amongst its people and the wider community
- Improving resident sense of involvement in the project and community and their own future

- Residents know how they can have their say on what is happening and how it is happening and know that they are being listened and responded to with open and transparent communication

Monitoring and evaluation

It's necessary to monitor the success of this plan. This needs to be done in order for activities to be changed if it appears they are not being as effective as planned. The Communication Plan needs to be reviewed on a regular basis and updated accordingly.

Monitoring will also be undertaken on a weekly, and monthly basis, highlighting local, regional and national risks, issues and opportunities.

We can measure in a number of ways:

- Feedback opportunities in all campaigns, events and publications
- Exposure or opportunities to see marketing material
- Hits to intranet /website / e-communications
- Social media reach and sentiment
- Number of enquiries from residents / stakeholders
- Change readiness survey / straw polls – ascertain levels of understanding and awareness
- Number of residents engaged and contributing ideas and suggestions at briefings, workshops and discussion forum
- Informal feedback from steering group members and through one to one conversations

Communications Action Plan

The following sets out the main activities to take place at different milestones.

The Gorse Ride project team will also maintain a detailed Communications Action plan to ensure communications are carried out in a timely and effective manner.

| Key Milestone | Communications activity |
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| 1 st Block Demolition in Phase 2A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Social media • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication • Website • Articles in borough newsletter / Housing Matters etc. |
| All Demolished (Phase 2A) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Social media • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication • Website • Articles in borough newsletter / Housing Matters etc. |
| Spade in the ground (2A) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Social media • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication • Website • Articles in borough newsletter / Housing Matters etc. |
| Site progress updates (2A) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Social media • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication • Website |
| Topping out ceremony (2A) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Social media • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication • Website • Articles in borough newsletter / Housing Matters etc. |
| Climate Emergency works | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talks and events • Press release • Social media • Website |
| First move in (2A) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication • Website • Articles in borough newsletter / Housing Matters etc. |
| Opening of Play Area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Social media • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication |
| Opening of Swale / Public open space | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Social media • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication |
| 1st Block Demolition in Phase 2B | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Social media • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication • Website • Articles in borough newsletter / Housing Matters etc. |
| 1st Block Demolition in Phase 2B | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Social media • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication • Website • Articles in borough newsletter / Housing Matters etc. |
| Spade in the ground (2B) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Social media • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication • Website • Articles in borough newsletter / Housing Matters etc. |
| Site progress updates (2B) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Social media • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication • Website |
| Topping out ceremony (2B) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Social media |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication • Website • Articles in borough newsletter / Housing Matters etc. |
| First move in (2B) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Social media • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication • Website • Articles in borough newsletter / Housing Matters etc. |
| 1st Block Demolition in Phase 2C | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Social media • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication • Website • Articles in borough newsletter / Housing Matters etc. |
| 1st Block Demolition in Phase 2C | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Social media • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication • Website • Articles in borough newsletter / Housing Matters etc. |
| Spade in the ground (2C) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Social media • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication • Website • Articles in borough newsletter / Housing Matters etc. |
| Site progress updates (2C) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Social media • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication • Website |
| Topping out ceremony (2C) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Social media • Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication • Website |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Articles in borough newsletter / Housing Matters etc. |
| First move in (2C) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Press release• Social media• Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication• Website• Articles in borough newsletter / Housing Matters etc. |
| Review in 12 months after final handover | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social media• Communication to local residents (GR newsletter, direct communication• Website• Articles in borough newsletter / Housing Matters etc. |