

## **Islington New Build**

### **Q&A**

**Q** What is happening?

**A** The council has seen an opportunity to start building new council homes in the Borough, and has asked Homes for Islington to pilot the first new development of council homes in the Borough in over 20 years.

**Q** What is being built?

**A** Council houses, maisonettes and flats for social rent are being built. Where possible these are being built as larger family sized units, as these are the sizes of homes that are hardest to find in the borough, and they will help to relieve the Borough's overcrowded families.

**Q** Where are the new homes being built?

**A** There are fifteen sites identified for development so far, spread over four phases. The first two sites are complete and they are:

- Boleyn Road
- Armour Close

The second phase consists of:

- The Neptune House garage site
- Clifton Court first floor mezzanine

The third phase consists of:

- Docura House undercroft

The fourth phase consists of:

- The former surgery at 143 Seven Sisters Road
- Otley House garages
- Elthorne Estate Site 6 - dog training unit, Holland Walk
- Elthorne Estate Site 7 - car park, Mulkern Road
- Belfont Walk Site 1, infill site next to 6 Belfont Walk
- Belfont Walk Site 2, infill site between 2 and 3 Belfont Walk
- Graham Street garages
- Bennett Court
- Holbrooke Court Site 8 - garages
- Holbrooke Court Site 9

**Q** How many homes are being built?

**A** The two developments already on site will be providing 14 new homes, phase two will consist of 8 new homes and phase three will provide 5 new homes. The remaining sites will provide a total of 58 new homes.

**Q** Who is building it?

**A** The council has appointed Homes for Islington to act as its development agent in arranging the identification of sites, the securing of planning permission, and the appointment of contractors to build the homes. After tendering the work to a number of contractors, Mansell have been appointed to carry out the construction works on phase one, phase two has been awarded to The Apollo Group, and Breyer have been appointed to complete the works on phase three Docura House. Phase four will be subject to a short, competitive procurement process and framework contract

**Q** Who will own it?

**A** Currently all the homes being built are being developed on council land, and will remain in council ownership.

**Q** Why is HFI/LBI building now, and not before?

**A** For over 20 years governments have discouraged councils from building new homes, by withholding all the funding options for this. However, this is beginning to change, and there is now a potential for councils and ALMOs (Arms' Length Management Organisations, like Homes for Islington) to apply for funding to develop. In preparation for this, and in response to the shortage of affordable housing in the borough compared to demand, the council is starting to develop now. This has helped to place Islington in a competitive position when bidding for funds from Government through the Social Housing Grant.

**Q** How is it being paid for?

**A** The pilot project is being paid for from money that the council is raising from disposing of other assets, mainly shops. Some of the new schemes will be funded partly by a grant made available via the Homes and Communities Agency and in part by prudential borrowing secured by Islington Council.

**Q** Who will live in the new homes?

**A** The new homes will be council properties, and will be let to council tenants on secure tenancies, just like any other council housing.

**Q** How will they be allocated?

**A** The new homes will largely be allocated through the Choice Based Lettings system, the same as all other council homes. However, because many of the new properties are being developed on land on, or next to existing council estates, it is planned to prioritise some of the new homes for tenants local to the new developments, who have registered for transfers.

**Q** What will they look like?

**A** Plans and elevations for the proposed schemes will be made available via the Homes for Islington website.

All neighbours to the development sites have been consulted on the proposed new homes as part of the statutory planning consultation.

**Q** Where can I see plans?

**A** A copy of the plans can be requested from the planning office in the Municipal Offices at 222 Upper Street.

**Q** Will the new homes be environmentally friendly?

**A** Yes. They will be built to high environmental standards and meet the requirements of the Government's Code for Sustainable Homes; level 3 for Armour Close and level 4 for Boleyn Rd. In all future phases, where feasible all new developments are to reach level 3.

**Q** Why is a Housing Association not developing the new housing?

**A** Islington Council works with a number of Housing Associations or Registered Social Landlords in the Borough. They are responsible for many new social housing homes developed in the Borough every year. However, only a proportion of their homes are available to the council for lettings from our waiting list or homeless households. With these new developments, all of the homes will be let to council transfers or applicants.

**Q** Will there be more?

**A** Yes, phase one of the new build scheme is intended to provide LBI and HFI with the experience to allow us to build more in the future, with central government funding via the Social Housing Grant.

**Q** Have the new homes got planning permission?

**A** Yes – for phases one, two and three. Planning was approved for Boleyn Rd in January 2008 and for Armour Close in March 2008. Clifton Court was approved in August 2008, and Neptune House was approved in October 2008. Docura House was approved in March 2009. Applications have been made for the schemes within phase four of the development programme, and it is expected that the applications will go to committee in December 2009

**Q** Does HFI/LBI have the expertise to build homes?

**A** HFI is responsible for procuring and monitoring contracts annually spending close to £100m for the duration of the Decent Homes programme. This expertise will stand them in good stead when putting in place contracts to build new homes. Any necessary specialist expertise will be brought in from outside wherever necessary.

**Q** How can I find out more?

**A** Look out for updated information on the new build projects on the council's website, and in the council's regular newsletters to its tenants and residents.