



Little London Tenants & Residents Association.

c/o Margaret Spink, Secretary, 20 Carlton View, Little London

LLTRA response to: Little London Draft Development Framework Consultation

After reviewing the material it was clear the framework plan was designed by people who have little or no firsthand knowledge neighbourhood or the people who live here. For example the proposed demolition of a row of garages included no mention of an electrical substation. The idea of colour coding areas of the estate shows ignorance of the fact that much of the estate already have there own identities, through the mix of designs and mixture of tenants who occupy these homes – this idea seems out of place in LL and smacks of some passing fad in the planning world.

The questionnaire used for the framework consultation was poorly designed. It asked leading questions, framed in a way to receive positive YES responses without fully explaining the implications of that response. Asking the entire estate about ‘ginnels’ when a large proportion of the population have none was obtuse. No definition was included as to what the council considered an ‘unnecessary ginnel.’

a. Positives

1. We are pleased that brand new council housing will be built.
2. We support the Council's view that any new council housing should be built at Carlton Gate and that it should include 35 family units and would be completely opposed to having the council housing dotted around the estate – it should be given pride of place in the new major development site.
3. We are pleased that a new community centre will be built along with improved shops.
4. We support the creation of more public spaces and squares.

b. Housing/Homes

1. We feel any in plan for Little London should not include the net loss of council of actual housing units. Those lost should all be replaced and that a net increase in genuinely affordable rented council housing should be hardwired into this development.
2. We oppose the loss of garages on the estate, but would encourage the refurbishment of all the existing garages and the increase of garage provision for the local community.
3. We believe that the new housing for market sale and rent will not be affordable due to Council's poor enforcement record. The Council should issues a transparent statement that sets out who will be able to afford to live in Little

London under the proposed regeneration, and puts in place a transparent strategy for delivering genuinely affordable housing in the area, including guarantees of prices and rents.

4. We believe that Carlton Towers should be retained, in recent years money was spent partly refurbishing the building. Common sense says this work should be completed, with accompanying environmental re-modelling outside to make it a safe, secure and pleasant place to live. The Council has made absolutely no stock condition grounds or justification for Carlton Towers to be demolished. Other blocks of the same design in the city have been refurbished, why not these? The towers are only 50 years old, they provide decent and spacious homes that many people in Leeds would jump at the chance to live in.

c. Green space and environment

1. We are deeply concerned that the Council's proposals will mean a large loss of Green Space and green field spaces to the community with implications for natural habitat, biodiversity, sustainability, health and wellbeing.
2. The Council has promised that there will be no net loss of green space. But from our understanding of the development framework, there will be a net loss of green and open space. Given the lack of green and public spaces in the City Centre – unlikely to improve, more likely to further decline given the way the city centre development is shaping – we feel that a net loss of open, public, green space in this inner-city area is retrograde and short-sighted step.
3. We also object to colour-coding the estate seems a poorly conceived idea.

d. Shops and community centre

1. We are extremely concerned that the re-development of the shopping area will lead to existing businesses suffering and being forced out of the area due to rising rental values. We strongly oppose any re-development that will lead local businesses being priced out of the area.
2. We are concerned that proposals to build a new Community Centre will be accompanied by a privatisation plan for the facilities. The community centre should remain council/community run and owned. The size of the community centre should be increased as the plans include a larger population, therefore the demand will rise.

e. Schools and Children's welfare

1. We are extremely concerned that the potential loss of many families to Little London between now and 2009 will have negative implications for the local schools, Little London Community Primary School and Blenheim Primary.

f. Health provision

1. We are concerned that the Draft Development Framework makes no mention of plans to provide improved and expanded GP services in Little London. We believe that the Council's priority should be the health of the community and space should be found in any re-development for a larger and improved GP surgery.

g. Surrounding regeneration and development

1. We cannot look at the re-development of Little London in isolation from the Council's longer term plans for the surrounding area. With the planned Cultural/Student Quarter at Brunswick Place, the student flats up and planned, the re-development of the barracks site and the possible closure and re-development of Blenheim Primary School.
2. In our view, all of this regeneration activity is going to dramatically change the face of the surrounding area at an alarming pace of change. We are concerned about the community, crime and disruptive implications of more bars and more students next door, the amount of possible through traffic they will generate and the implications for house prices and rents in Little London.
3. We believe that if the Council is genuinely committed to the 'holistic regeneration' of Little London, then it should be considering the impact of its regeneration projects on the design and re-development of Little London now. We are also of the view that the totality of these regeneration zones offers the opportunity to provide much of the market housing scheduled for Little London. Therefore, there is no need for so many new homes for owner occupation to be built in Little London itself.

Conclusion

Looking at the Draft Development Framework for Little London in terms of an overall regeneration encompassing major re-development and re-design, we do not believe there is any proven or justifiable need for such a dramatic, lengthy and expensive intervention.

We accept that the estate is in places poorly designed and does not make good use of the existing urban space, and we know to our own personal cost that many homes are in disrepair and in need of refurbishment to decency levels, and the estate as a whole needs a facelift and new facilities. We are realistic enough to realise that this requires capital investment and some disruption and change.

However, there is a world of difference between overdue investment in the physical environment of Little London, and, as the Council wants to do, create a development vision that aims to "maximise the market potential of the area" as set out in the planning framework (p.6). We are a community of people; we should not be reduced to a portfolio of real estate assets and commodities, we are not all 'needy people to be designed out of our neighbourhood.'

Many of the problems facing LL are in fact the result of, or compounded by, the lack of any substantial capital investment, denied by the fact that LCC has pursued a PFI funding stream.

It is a fact – according to official and unofficial statistics and perspectives – that in recent years, Little London has improved significantly on all indicators. The factors and deteriorating community of the late 1990s that influenced the original decision in 2000 to go for a PFI regeneration of Little London have all but disappeared – higher than average turnover rates and voids, crime, anti-social behaviour and so on have been much reduced and the estate is definitely on an upward trajectory. The positive impact of CALLS, Little London Arts and Space@ has been key to this, plus more investment and services under neighbourhood management.

Yet, despite major changes in life on the ground in Little London, the Council persists with trying to ‘comprehensively regenerate’ our community with virtually the same plan it came up with during the crisis years.

It is important to note that plans differ in detail from those in the consultation presented staged in August 2007 for example:

The demolition of garages.

No mention was made of the plans LCC has for the 297 Lovell flats.

The community/commercial hub plans.

Numbers of new build properties

Also, no overall preference slip was supplied to give the tenants/residents an overall YES or NO of the plan.

We strongly object to the Council’s efforts to paint the estate in the worst light possible to central government in order to justify the PFI scheme. The latest case of this was the recent housing market assessment of Little London by consultants Outside Research and Development who were clearly asked to find the evidence – any evidence - to justify the huge expense and investment of PFI regeneration. They relied on selective data from the 2001 census and other selective data sources to draw the highly unreliable and biased conclusion that Little London was a ‘community on the edge’, had an unsustainable housing market, was full of problems, was unpopular, a place of last resort and needed to have less council housing and more private housing in order to attract young professionals to live here.

Committee of LLTRA

21.06.2007