

Appendix 3

Appendix 3 – Community Engagement

A: Timeline on past consultation on DESIGN of CC

There has been significant amount of community engagement over the duration of the project.

In September 2016 we carried out a public consultation on three design principles. This allowed the public to vote on their preferred option with option 3.1, a mix of refurb and new build being the most voted for option. This was widely promoted through a mix of social media, through the reference group, press releases and websites.

In 2017 we encouraged local community groups to fundraise to deliver the community favoured option. To support this we gave a time frame of 6 months and funded a part-time fundraiser to help achieve this. Unfortunately the attempts to generate external funding were unsuccessful.

Enhanced proposals for the East Oxford Community Centre redevelopment were presented to the centre's Reference Group in October 2017. This £3.7m scheme would have delivered more community space than previous proposals, and an improved and better located outdoor amenity space.

In the meantime, there were some exploratory discussions with Oxfordshire County Council about their possible involvement in the redevelopment plans as it seemed they could co-locate some additional uses at a new EOCC facility and feasibility work was carried out to establish whether and how this might work, without compromising space provision already planned in the new facility.

By July 2018 Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council were entering the second phase of discussions about developing a joint community hub at East Oxford Community Centre.

The intention of the hub would have included some of the County Council's children's centre and adult learning activities at East Oxford Community Centre, alongside the City Council's community and arts provision. This approach would have offered the potential to enhance the range of services, the amenity provision (e.g. kitchen, café, etc), and the quality of a new community facility, increasing usage and creating opportunities to link activities and communities, and helping meet the needs of residents both now and well into the future.

Unfortunately the County Council were unable to contribute funding to the project at the time and this option was therefore discontinued.

From April 2019 Arcadis were appointed to manage the project from design and feasibility through to occupation. They have met with tenants and main hirers several times and again the optimal option to fulfil all requirements has been to refurbish the existing main building that is listed and a new purpose-built part to accommodate existing tenants and users.

In June 2019 a Consultation Framework meeting was held to make sure all the right parties were consulted. In addition to that, a task force was set up to involve hard reaching communities and charities operating in East Oxford.

Between June and July Arcadis met with key users and tenants to identify their design priorities, so they were able to draft a design proposal. That was first presented to the Reference Group (September 2019) and then to a wider audience in a community engagement meeting on the 20th of September. Around 150 people attended the event and gave feedback on the new plans. Tenants and hirers displayed their activities to the general public, showing the centre's good vibe, heritage and sense of community as well as a creative spirit. People not able to participate in the event could submit their feedback online. The feedback received was in-line with the previous consultation, but the new designs also spark comments on other important functional aspects.

The feedback collected in the engagement event was discussed with the stakeholders at the October Reference group and absorbed in the new designs. A new community engagement event was held on the 12th November to give visibility of new designs to the wider public.

At the same time, from October 2019, a special communication plan has been put in place for the EOGH customers: a letter has been sent out to inform them about the expected timeline of works and closure of the building they use and meetings have been held with 5 out of the 11 current hirers. The Scout group will be rehoused at the Centre.

B: Consultation on residential element of the scheme

Resident feedback and input on the draft plans for the housing element of the project are critical as these sites are surrounded by existing communities and active neighbours, but also because each site is very different to each other. This approach will be implemented on the three housing sites, Princess Street, Collin Street and Catherine Street, whether they come forward together or separately.

Since the outset of the project the community have been made aware that the funding of the development can only be achieved with the housing being part of the business plan. An opportunity was given for the community to raise external funding for over 6 months to try and give another alternative to this but unfortunately it was unsuccessful.

C: Engage on the vision for the centre to inform the governance

Without community activities, groups and services a Community Centre, is just another building. So the next stage of engagement journey will be around the vision of the centre, the needs of the wider community and how the centre and its activities will support addressing these.

We are aware that throughout the project process there have been a number of different community groups wanting to manage the centre going forward. To ensure that we are able to effectively engage around this, that it is adequately resourced and that it gives the 1st years operational costs and best chances of succeeding it is recommended that the Council continues to operate the site for the first year. That governance work starts after the community centre opens with a view to recommending a way forward after the first operational year as a minimum.