

Questions from the public about Mainway, Skerton to Councillor Caroline Jackson

1. Question from Mr Jim Michell:

Has the announced sale of Lune and Derby House gone ahead?

Councillor Caroline Jackson replied:

Yes, the sale has been agreed and is currently going through the official legal process.

Supplementary: *Sold for how much?*

Councillor Caroline Jackson replied:

Unfortunately, this is not something I am able to share, however I can confirm the Council received a couple of competitive offers for the sale and this was the highest priced.

2. Question from Yvonne Garrett:

What is the plan for the rest of the Mainway estate?

Councillor Caroline Jackson replied:

Council Officers have been working hard for a number of years to try and bring forward a plan for the Mainway estate and we have held various engagement events providing updates throughout. The Mainway estate requires significant investment and up until recently we were unable to secure funding from Homes England for this in its existing condition. The recent purchase of the neighbouring Skerton School site has meant that we can open up the opportunity for new energy efficient homes to be built for residents of Mainway to move into, whilst we look at the longer-term options available for the existing blocks, which are no longer fit-for-purpose and have poor energy performance. We have always been clear that this is realistically a seven-year plan for the whole estate.

Supplementary: *Can the council provide residents with a clear outline of the development plans for the estate?*

Councillor Caroline Jackson replied:

Officers have tried to keep residents updated on plans as they progress, through engagement events, meetings, the website and newsletters. The team also have the MyMainway shop available for residents to come and speak with staff as well. In summary the current focus is delivering new homes on the school site and the team expect to put the planning application in for the site later this year, this is likely to consist of a number of new blocks as well as some family housing, as has previously been reported, we are committed to keeping the tree lined cherry tree avenue and bringing the playing fields at the front of the site back up to a usable standard. This area will consist of other new amenity and community space as well for residents to enjoy. In terms of the current Mainway estate - it is a little harder to say at present, but it is expected that work will be done on a phased basis, although the Council cannot yet confirm whether that will involve refurbishment or redevelopment at present.

3. Mr Henry Holburn asked a question submitted by Mr Steve Sparrow, on his behalf.

Can the council guarantee that no one else will be forced to leave their homes?

Councillor Caroline Jackson replied:

As far as I am aware, no Mainway resident has been forced to leave their home. Individual discussions have taken place with some residents, and we have been requested to buy-back a number of properties that had previously been sold under the right to buy which the Council has considered on case-by-case basis.

Supplementary: *Can the council guarantee that there will be no more sell offs of council housing without equivalent or better council homes being made available to people first?*

Councillor Caroline Jackson replied:

Selling Lune and Derby Houses has not been an easy decision to make. The existing Mainway blocks require significant intervention as the buildings have to all intents and purposes become end of life, the properties have very poor energy performance, in some of the blocks water is ingressing through the external wall and for those of you who live in the blocks will know the windows don't provide the best positioning to allow views or light to come in. Through the various consultation with residents, it's clear that they would like their own outdoor space. The City Council is listening to these concerns and wants to provide better quality housing for residents. With regards to the two blocks which we have sold, there were unique reasons why a decision to sell them was brought forward, inflationary costs were having a significant impact, however these two blocks also sit within the flood zone meaning we wouldn't have been allowed to knock them down and re-build them and even if we had refurbished them we would still have been required to reconfigure the properties and would likely have lost a couple of properties in doing this, because we would not have been allowed from a flood risk perspective to have accommodation on the ground floor. The Mainway plan has always been to look at introducing different tenures into the scheme and therefore this has just been brought forwards to an earlier point. The City Council is seeking to develop new homes on both the Skerton School site as well as Canal Quarter for social rent, so that new housing can be provided to residents of Mainway as and when other decisions about other blocks are made.

4. Mr Pdraig Mailey asked a question submitted by Mr Joe Rigby, on his behalf.

We acknowledge that the council aspires to develop more social housing in the district, but in the meantime residents on Mainway are uncertain about the security of their homes. If future developments are intended to replace housing on Mainway, can the council guarantee that there will be as many or more council rented properties available in the future, with tenancy agreements and rents comparable to those on Mainway?

Councillor Caroline Jackson replied:

The City Council as a social housing landlord can only end a tenancy under certain circumstances such as in cases of serious rent arrears or anti-social behaviour, or other serious breaches of tenancy, residents of Mainway should not be concerned about the security of their tenure linked to these plans and where residents move into another Lancaster City Council home their security will continue. Where residents do move into another homes as part of the plans support will be provided dependent on the individual's needs, including financial support for any costs incurred. Similarly, as already mentioned the Council is seeking to provide new homes for social rent and therefore rents will be calculated on that basis. The Council's ambition is that we will provide at least the same if not more social homes as currently exists on Mainway across the site of what is expected to be over 400 homes in total. We are acutely aware of the housing shortage in all types of tenures though,

so introducing different forms of tenures within the other properties through partners can also help meet the District's wider housing needs.

I know that residents may feel that this is the 'thin end of the wedge' or the beginning of the end of Council housing, but that is not the case at all. We as a Council own our own Council housing and want to have more of it. We do understand and we want people to continue to have quality Council housing.