

John Barker Place redevelopment – questions and answers

We have recently attended public meetings about our proposals to invest £20 million in redeveloping John Barker Place on the Westmill estate in Hitchin and provide a new children's play area on the edge of Swinburne playing fields.

In this document we've included answers covering the themes of the questions we have been asked and contact details for settle if you would like to find out more information. You can also visit www.settlegroup.org.uk/jbp for updates.

Q. Can the original park be kept where it is and upgraded to keep it at John Barker Place?

It is important for settle to provide new accommodation for the residents of Westmill Lawns retirement living scheme and Freemans Close, along with additional new affordable homes. The space required for these buildings does mean that we need to build on the site of the current play area. Our plans include a new play area in the new development, but we will only be able to provide this once the building work has been completed, and this feels too long to wait.

We have looked into different ways to provide a new play area and in 2017 consulted Westmill residents on proposals to provide two new smaller play areas, one on Hine Way and one on the Crescent. We received feedback against these proposals, and local families suggested locating the new park on the edge of Swinburne playing fields instead.

Our plans are for a large new park on Swinburne playing fields, with modern equipment including wheelchair accessible play facilities.

We are happy to provide lighting and CCTV on the site of the new play area as requested by the Police and have confirmed details of the equipment to be provided with the Police. The Police will then monitor the CCTV footage once cameras are in place.

Q. What guarantees are you going to give that you will maintain the cameras in Swinburne playing fields?

A. It is our absolute commitment to maintain them. We would be under contractual and legal obligations to the Council and Police to do that.

Q. Will the park have security around it with a gate, will it be locked up at night or left open all night?

A. Yes there is a fence shown on the drawing and it is proposed it be locked every evening.

Q. What height is the fence?

A. It is about 3 feet high.

Q. How long will it take to complete the construction?

A. If planning permission is granted, we estimate that work would start on the first new building around the middle of 2020 and be completed within approximately two years. We are committed to keeping the shops open, which may have an impact on how we can build and how quickly we can complete the next phase. We think the overall building of the first two phases will be completed within around 4 years.

Q. So, retirement living apartments are going to be put above the shops?

A. Yes, there are 2 blocks proposed with retirement living accommodation. Some are above where the shops will be, and some are in the building beside. We are looking to provide the buildings in this way so that residents in the current Westmill Lawns retirement living scheme can move together and so that we can support the shops to stay open during the building period.

These two buildings include 49 new homes, 37 in the block above the new shops and 12 in the adjacent building, to provide a new home for everyone currently living in the Westmill Lawns retirement living scheme. The retirement living residents would have their own private entrance, stairs and lift services for these new buildings.

Many residents living in the Westmill Lawns retirement living scheme already live above ground floor. We have included open space for everybody with a balcony for each apartment, an outdoor terrace and a roof garden. We are meeting residents of Westmill Lawns to take on board their feedback and work with everyone about their individual preferences.

Q. Will the buildings on John Barker Place be built with glass balconies?

A. Our plans are for large window sizes to allow as much daylight as possible into the homes. Our plans are for the balconies to be in a railings style, which we felt would be in keeping with the surroundings. Any planning application approval can include conditions about the type of balcony we use.

Q. Are all the new buildings just on the same side as the shops?

A. The first two buildings, or phases, that we are talking about are on the same side of the road as the shops. We have provided detailed planning applications for these buildings. These plans also include new homes for residents currently living in Freemans Close. In the fullness of time we will also look to replace the homes currently on Freemans Close and we have provided what's called an outline planning application for this third phase of development. We would provide a more detailed planning application for the third phase at a later stage.

Q. Please clarify - older residents and younger people in the new homes would be able to view each other's homes from their balconies?

A. Yes, some would be able to see each other from their balconies across a courtyard.

Q. The current Westmill Lawns has a kitchen, will the new building have this?

A. Yes, it has a communal lounge with a kitchenette. There is laundry in the new building, an increased size scooter room for buggies which residents have asked for. There is a hairdressing salon with windows so it vents to the outside that residents have also asked for.

Q. How many people were consulted about the Swinburne relocation proposal. How were meetings advertised?

A. We have held a range of events, including public meetings, coffee mornings and individual meetings. We have invited people through social media, posters, flyers and individual letters.

Residents can continue to get in touch with settle with any questions – please use the [contact us](#) information on the settle website and ask for Penny Metcalf or Shenaz Virji who are leading this project.

Q. What is the procedure for objecting?

A. You can find the details on the NHDC website. The planning applications are being heard in public; members of the public will be able to attend and provide feedback on them.

The NHDC website provides some further information about these meetings and how to have your say - [Information about NHDC council and committee meetings](#)