

Leegate latest

Lee Manor Society Comment.

News that Lewisham's mayor may insist on more affordable homes pushing the Leegate development even taller is worrying. Lewisham town centre is to sprout several 30-storey-plus towers creating windy canyons and an oppressive street level environment. Leegate is unlikely to go that high (we hope) but it already represents a tall and chunky addition to the Lee Green crossroads. Thought needs to be given not just to the number of new homes but of the overall environment they create. Many of the high-rise housing blocks built in the 1960s became the slums of the 1990s and have since been demolished. We do not want a see a repeat of that experience.

The Lee Manor Society's record of Leegate working group meeting with St Modwen in their Leegate office on July 12, 2018. Attended by Colin Darby (St Modwen), Katherine (Camargue Comms for St Modwen), Charles Batchelor, Peter and Pat Richardson, David French, Cheryl Armi

tage, Cllr Jim Mallory and Cllr Octavia Holland.

More homes could make a rebuilt Leegate even higher and delay the scheme

An extra two storeys could be added to the height of the Leegate redevelopment if Lewisham's new mayor insists on more affordable homes, St Modwen's Colin Darby told the meeting. At present 16 per cent of the 393 homes in the development will be affordable.

If new homes have to be added they could take the form of two additional storeys on the Leyland Road side of Leegate and an additional storey on the Lee Green crossroads corner. This could add 30 homes. The Leyland Road frontage would have the least impact because it faces the already tall flats of Leybridge Court which are surrounded by mature trees and other planting, St Modwen believes.

The London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, is also pressing for more affordable housing and has turned down two schemes elsewhere in London insisting they be made bigger by including more homes, Mr Darby said. If St Modwen is required to add more affordable housing, this would delay the project by about six months to allow for plans to be revised and a new environmental statement to be drawn up.

Mr Darby explained work had been done since the autumn to rejig the residential element of the scheme and carry out other 'technical work.' An additional 19 housing units (homes) have been squeezed into the scheme at the upper levels by filling gaps in the original design and moving walls. This has no impact at ground level where the public square and pedestrian ways remain as previously envisaged.

Costs have been saved by employing a simpler design for the windows. Brick will replace more expensive paneling under window openings but the size of the windows remains unchanged. St Modwen believes this does not compromise the quality of the scheme.

St Modwen continues to talk to 'three or four' retailers to take over the smaller food store space though they will not sign up definitely until St Modwen has obtained planning permission for its revised scheme. Marks & Spencer were interested but have since withdrawn. St Modwen appears confident it can find a single tenant for the food store space but this could be sub-divided into three or four smaller units if required. "The scheme is now driven by the residential element not by the food store anchor tenant," said Mr Darby

The scheme now includes 6,000 sq ft of office space not previously there. This has been achieved by reducing the size of the gym and the removal of a planned 'educational facility' (providing out-of-hours schooling).

The community centre is currently on the first floor of the development though there will be a ground floor reception area and there will be a lift, making access easier, Mr Darby said.

St Modwen expects its planning application for Leegate to go before a Lewisham planning committee in the autumn. However, it is still awaiting comments from the Greater London Assembly planners and the London Mayor who has the power to call the scheme in for his comments.

Chares Batchelor

12 July 2018