

Nithsdale Crescent Proposals – Report on Community Engagement

Public Engagement Event

A public engagement event was held on 12 August 2019 at the Bearsden HUB. The purpose was to discuss East Dunbartonshire Council's proposals to demolish two existing blocks of flats at 8-28 and 30-50 Nithsdale Crescent Bearsden, and to build new affordable housing on the site. The proposed concept plan discussed at the event is shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1



The proposal was advertised in:

- The Scotsman, (<https://www.scotsman.com/news/environment/ambitious-housing-plan-by-council-to-regenerate-run-down-area-of-bearsden-1-4975393>)
- Glasgow Live (<https://www.scotsman.com/news/environment/ambitious-housing-plan-by-council-to-regenerate-run-down-area-of-bearsden-1-4975393>)
- Scottish Housing News (<https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/article/plans-proposed-for-new-affordable-homes-in-bearsden>)
- The Bearsden Herald,

As well as on social media. Invitations were extended to:

- The North Bearsden Community Council
- All residents and business operators within the site and the immediate surrounding area
- Elected members representing the local ward

Members of the Housing Service and the Council's Design Team were in attendance to answer questions about the proposals. The Project Architect and Housing's development team were there to focus on the proposals, while an Allocation Officer and Housing Options Team Leader were also available to discuss alternative accommodation for existing tenants in the block. A series of banners featuring site context and history, background to the proposals, design options considered, concepts and approach, parking, programme timescales were displayed and talked around. The banners can be seen on the Council Website at:

<https://www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/council/consultations/consultation-archive/nithsdale-crescent-affordable-housing-public-engagement>

Community Engagement Event

The engagement event was very well attended, and in total 53 people attended during a four hour timeframe. The majority of attendees were local residents living within proximity to the site. However one business owner, one Community Council representative and one local Councillor were present.

There was overwhelming support for the proposals by those who attended the event. Local residents were keen for works to be undertaken, and described the blocks situated at Nithsdale Crescent as an eyesore. Many residents were keen for the properties to be demolished as soon as possible.

Most attendees also advised that should the proposals progress that new build housing provision would help regenerate the wider locality, particularly given the shortage of affordable housing in the area coupled with high housing need. Given high house prices in Bearsden, it is difficult for people on modest incomes to access private housing, principally first time buyers and tenants who would like to buy a home from the market. The new build proposals also include the provision of some shared equity housing. This form of discounted home ownership will enable such households to become homeowners, helping meet need and demand for this tenure type in the pressured housing market area of Bearsden. A number of residents who attended the engagement event displayed an interest in accessing shared equity homes for themselves or a relative or friend.

In-line with the Council's Developer Contributions policy, three of the new homes have the potential to be accessible for people with particular needs, including wheelchair users. Within Bearsden there is a shortage of this housing type so additional provision will help reduce need. A resident who requires wheelchair accessible housing attended the event, and showed an interest in being allocated

a suitable property. There are also a number of applicants' on the Council's housing list who require specialist housing. Where an interest was shown, details were taken to check on allocation potential and to ensure that early engagement on design requirements was made possible.

The majority of attendees were also upset or had concerns about the aesthetics of the blocks and surrounding areas and some owner occupiers felt that this had a negative impact on house prices in the locality. One of the residents advised that their property was energy inefficient, and costly to heat.

A local business owner who was in the process of developing an after school care facility in an adjacent, former pub, attended the event. Discussions were positive as the owner believed that new build housing provision on the site would improve the appearance of the area, and help regenerate the neighbourhood. The owner did have some concerns about parking provision due to her business' needs. The owner was assured that this would not prove problematic as parking provision had been considered as part of the development proposals and the title conditions provided for a right to continue to use part of the site area.

Overall there were few concerns raised about the new build affordable housing proposals, but those raised at the event principally related to:

- The current condition of roads and traffic circulation. *The team advised that the proposals would be subject to a full planning application process during which traffic and circulation would be considered in detail.*
- Possible loss of parking if new build development progresses. *The team were able to point towards the inclusion of parking spaces within the development for existing residents, as well as for the new properties*
- Potential shortage of amenity space. *The use of the area above the Antonine Wall as highlighted and discussed as having the potential to contribute towards open space requirements as well as supporting the cultural identity of the local area.*

Nobody raised any concerns about the development being in close proximity to the Antonine Wall, however several did raise the prospect that the area of open space associated with it could do more to identify it in some way. Some positive points were made about the inclusion of open space at this area and residents expressed a need to consider introducing improved play facilities locally, though not necessarily within the site itself.

Housing Options Discussions with Tenants Living within 30-50 Nithsdale Crescent

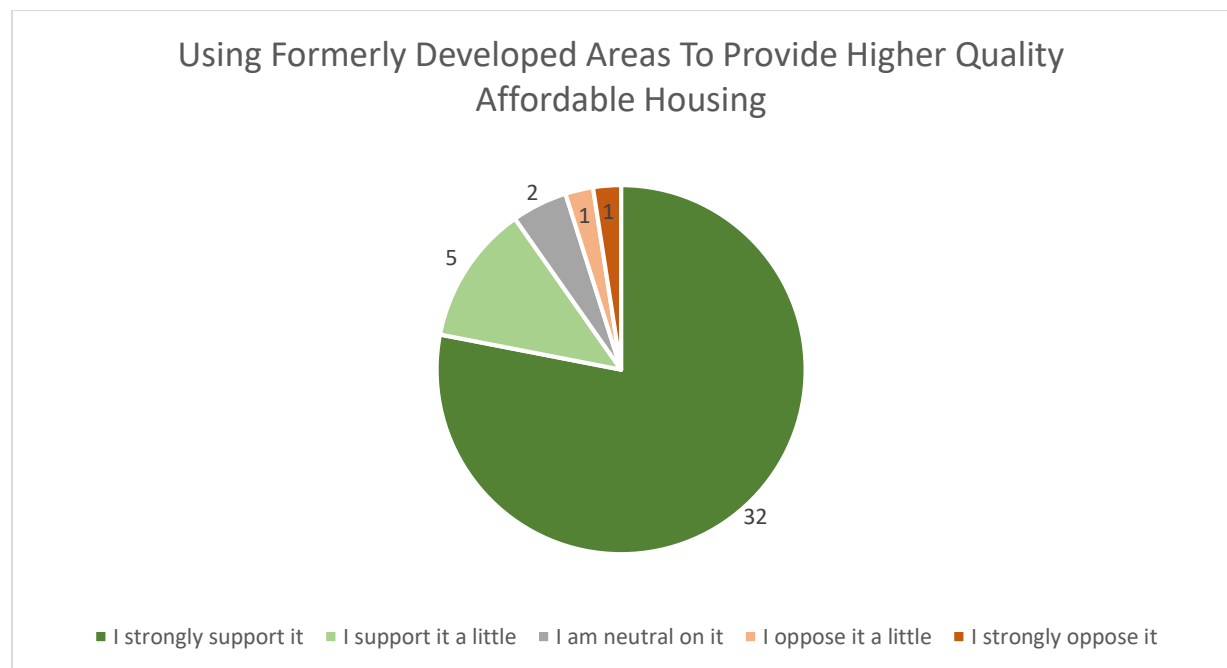
The Housing Service have also undertaken discussions with tenants living within the above block to discuss their future housing options. Currently 6 Council tenants reside within the block, and most are keen to receive a housing transfer from their current accommodation to a new home which suitably meets their housing need. If the proposal progresses and it is agreed that the block is to be demolished then tenants will receive an appropriate housing transfer. One tenant has recently received a housing transfer due to the household's housing requirements. Owner Occupiers and private rented tenants have also received and will continue to be given housing advice as required.

Questionnaire Responses

A questionnaire in relation to the consultation was provided online and in physical copy to stakeholders. A link was provided to the questionnaire as part of the publicity for the engagement event.

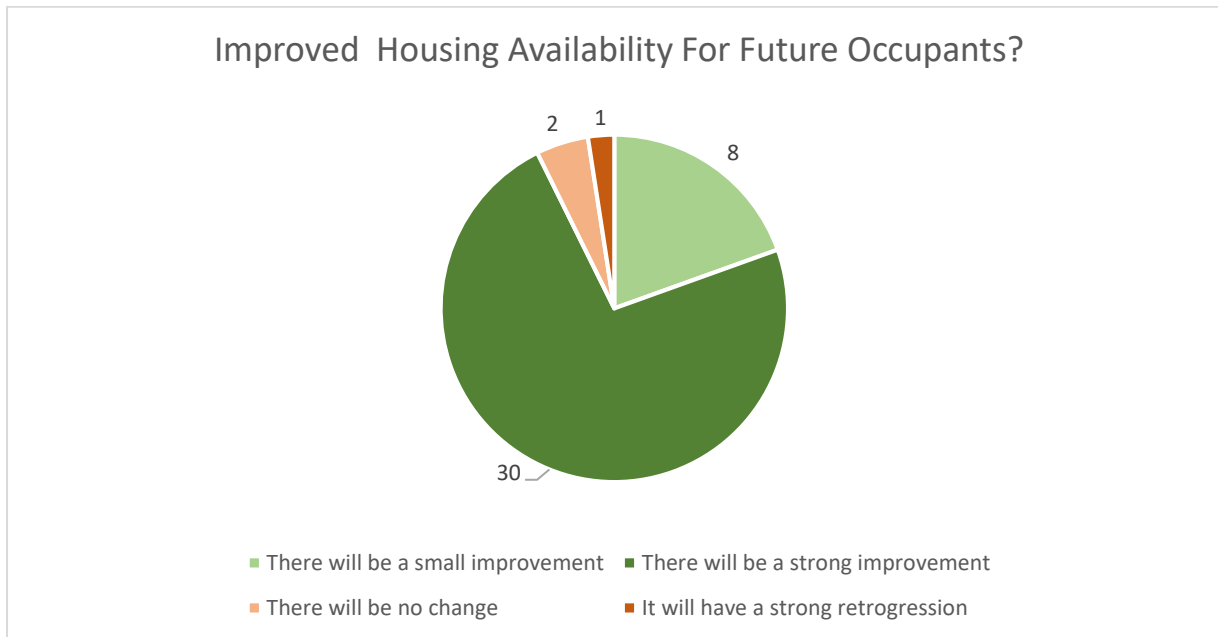
In total 41 questionnaire responses were received. The outcomes are summarised below.

Question 1: To what extent do you support the principle of using formerly developed areas, such as this one, to provide higher quality affordable housing?



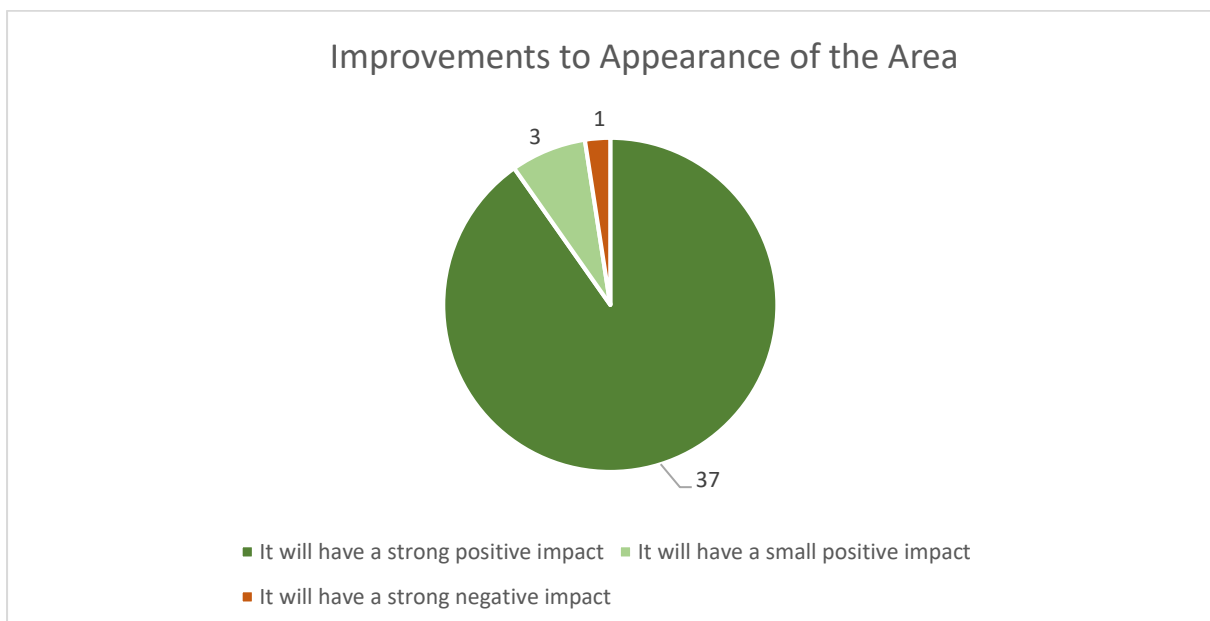
90% of respondents supported the above principle. A number of comments were made about the current condition of the blocks at Nithsdale Crescent, and the need to improve the condition of the general area.

Question 2: To what extent do you think the proposed demolition and construction of new affordable housing will improve the type of housing available for future occupants?



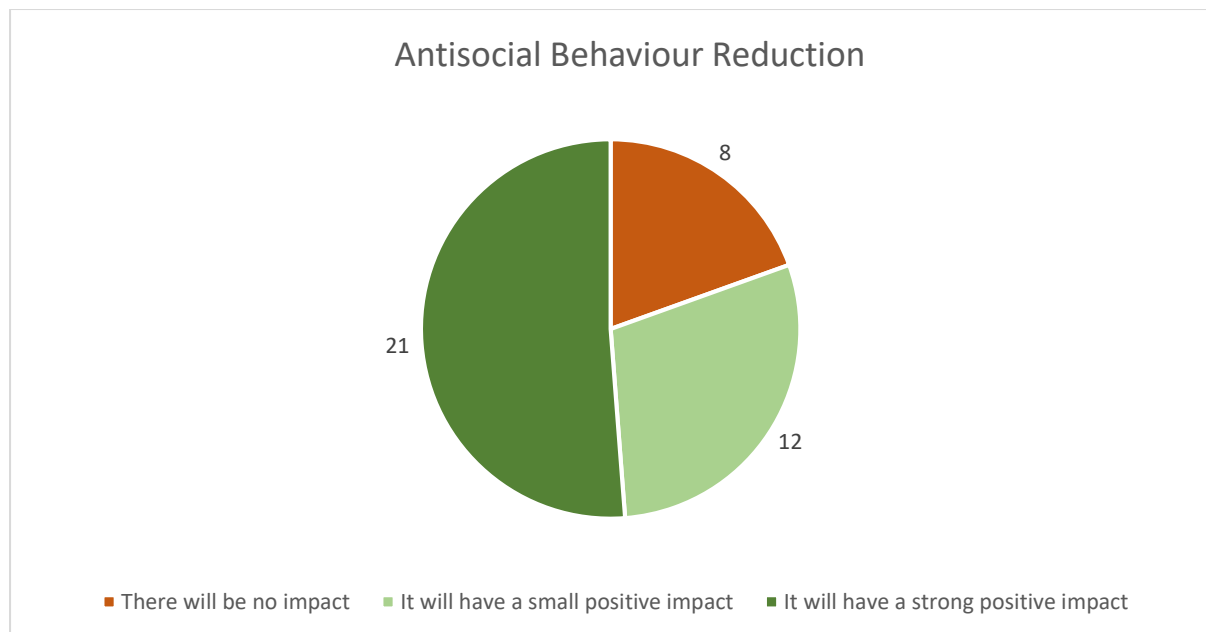
93% of respondents felt that construction of new affordable housing, following demolition of the two existing blocks would improve housing type availability. Comments included the provision of social housing in the area being beneficial, particularly brand new build. The poor condition, and unattractive aesthetics of the buildings were noted by several people.

Question 3: To what extent do you think the appearance of the area will be improved if the flatted blocks are demolished and new build affordable housing is built on the site?



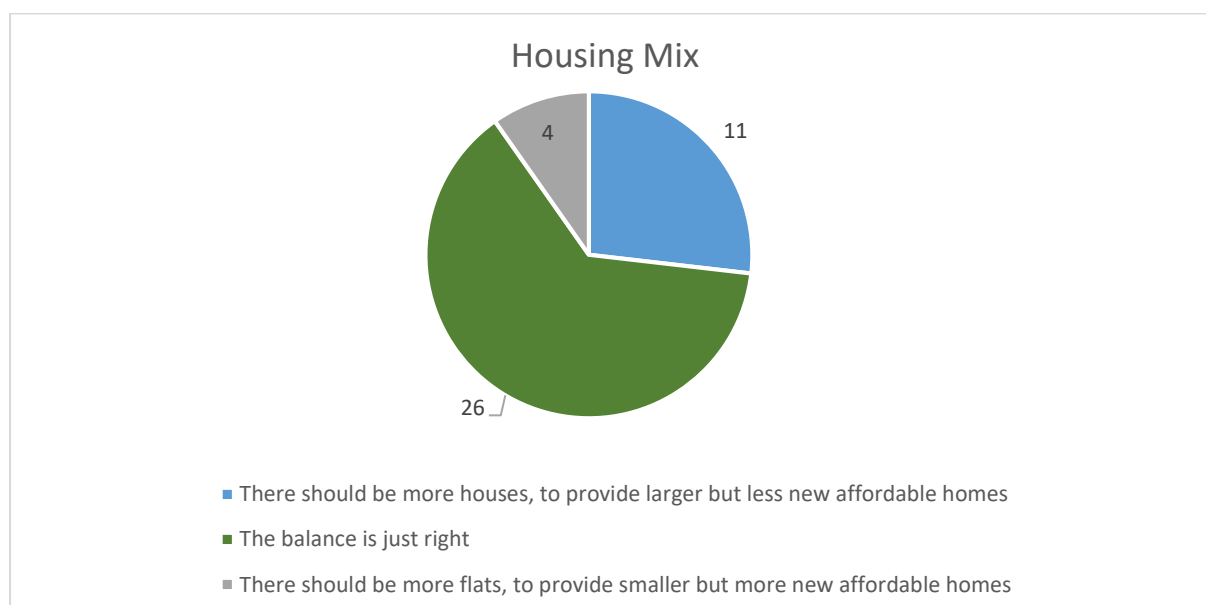
Of all respondents, 98% believed that the appearance of the area would be improved following demolition of the existing flats, and new build affordable housing provision. Respondents felt that the existing flatted blocks and adjacent areas were unsightly, and have a negative impact on surroundings.

Question 4: To what extent do you think that safety and antisocial behaviour will be improved if the flatted blocks are demolished and new build affordable housing is built on the site?



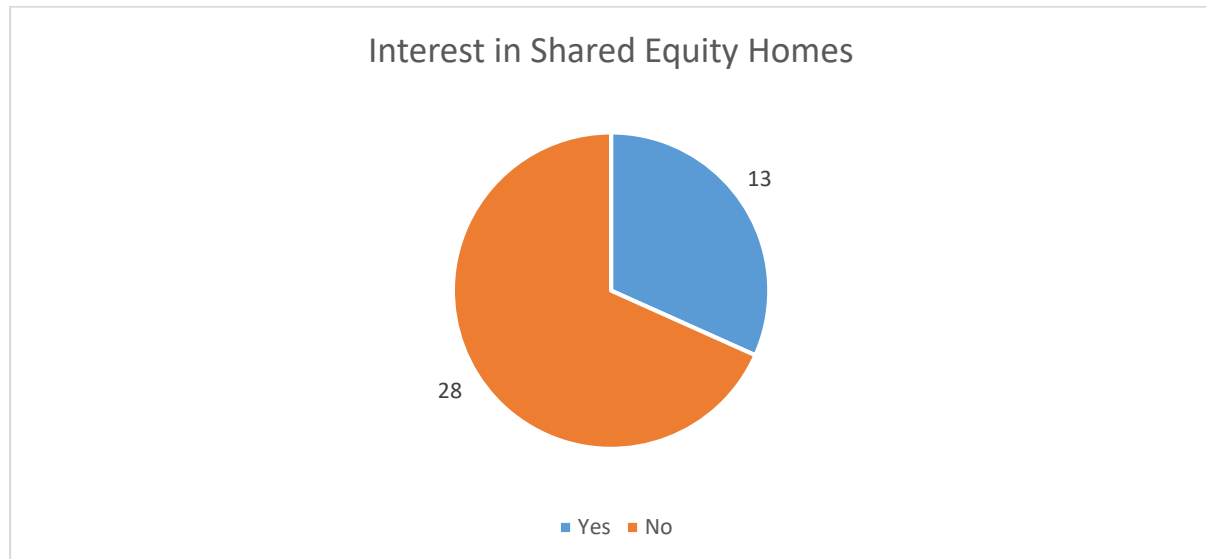
90% of respondents thought that levels of antisocial behaviour would reduce if the blocks were demolished with new build provision on site. The remaining 20% felt that there would be no impact. Some residents felt the derelict block at 8-28 Nithsdale Crescent, and run down surroundings encouraged loitering and antisocial behaviour in the area. Respondents believed that safety would be improved following new build housing provision.

Question 5: The proposed development is a mix of flats and houses with private and shared garden areas. To what extent do you feel this is a good housing mix for people who wish to live in the area or would you prefer to see another type of housing?



Of all respondents, 90% believed that the proposed properties were a good mix, with a limited number of people (10%) feeling that more flats with less houses would be most beneficial. Respondents felt that the provision of new build homes, some of which would be family housing would be beneficial in helping meet the housing requirements of those in need.

Question 7: Shared Equity homes will be provided as part of this neighbourhood. Would you or a member of your family consider buying a shared equity house at this location?



As part of the development it is anticipated that a number of homes will be sold as shared equity rather than social rent. There was significant support for this with 13 or 32% of respondents mentioning an interest. The lack of affordable housing in the highly pressured housing market in Bearsden was noted by several respondents. The provision of shared equity housing should help address housing need by households on limited incomes to become owner occupiers.

Conclusion

The level of response received from this consultation exercise is indicative of a significant degree of support amongst the local community for the physical renewal of the local environment at Nithsdale Crescent. The survey demonstrates a preference for the proposed principle of demolition and redevelopment as a means of improving the quality and type of housing being offered, as well as enhancing the appearance of the area.

East Dunbartonshire Council's housing service will use the findings from this consultation in order to inform the further development of proposals and intend to return to discuss these with stakeholders once more prior to the submission of a planning application.

