

Andrew Dismore MP
Labour Member of Parliament for Hendon



www.AndrewDismoreMP.com
updates@hendonlabourparty.com

August 07

Our Ref: U/09/02/0005

Please quote reference on all correspondence

Spur Road/Stongrove report back

I promised to write to you after my planned official visit to the estate, with Barnet Homes, Council Officers and the Police.

In addition to my normal work calling on people on the estate, I have found that these formal inspections provide a real focus for taking up the issues which concern you – that's why I have done these every year – rain or shine – for the last 10 years, ever since I was first elected as your MP.

Can I first thank all those who took part in my pre-visit consultation. Letting me know of particular problems or questions in advance really helped me to put the Council 'on the spot', as we went round.

Residents who raised specific individual problems will get a specific reply on these points – this letter is designed to give everyone a report on the general issues I've taken up.

My estate survey

As well as asking for any specific points, I also raised more general questions. It didn't surprise me to hear that 94% of Spur Road estate's residents thought the Council had neglected the estate. And 90% believed the Council was taking far too long over regeneration. 86% of tenants and 92% of leaseholders thought the Council did not treat them fairly.

I believe the Council (not controlled by my party!) has been selling Spur Road/Stonegrove woefully short.

I'll now set out some of the things I have taken up, on your behalf.

Regeneration

I attended the recent exhibition at St. Peter's church hall, to see for myself the plans and to discuss with residents, your views.

I was told that the application for the masterplan was due to be submitted this month. The detailed plan for the first phase would be put in at the same time. If approved, building for the first phase would start in March 2008, and would take 15 months to complete. The whole scheme of 937 homes would be finished by March 2013. Existing tenants would be moved to new properties by the end of 2011.

The new plans are different, compared to those which were originally proposed, many years ago. I believe the Council should ask residents again, by a new ballot, whether they approve the new scheme, as it has changed so much. Do you agree – I'd like your opinion: both on the new plans, and whether there should be another residents' vote.

At the exhibition of the plans, some residents were concerned about access and traffic flows through the estate. Others were concerned about the design itself, and whether standards of construction would be kept high throughout the development, without corners being cut towards the end. Some residents thought the new estate would be very closely packed and looking 'inwards', creating social problems. Others were worried about parking. What do you think? Please let me know!

Decent Homes Initiative

In the meantime, the regeneration has been used as an excuse by the Council, not to do any serious maintenance work. If the scheme is built to the proposed timetable (which inevitably must be questionable), it would be at least 12 years, since discussions started.

I do not think it is right or fair, for the Council to leave things so long. I have asked what plans they have to bring homes up to a decent standard in the meantime, especially those scheduled for the end of the regeneration programme.

The Labour Government has given Barnet a substantial grant of £81million towards the Government's Decent Homes Initiative, to bring Council properties to a reasonable standard. I believe it is time action was taken on your estate to do so.

And, of course, a lot of the estate is to remain, so these properties must be attended to as well.

I have asked for budgets and schedules for this work.

Policing Issues

I was accompanied on my inspection by Safer Neighbourhood Team officers, to brief me on policing issues. This also gave me the chance to feed back your questions, too.

Dogs

One of the major police issues that has come up, are fears about dangerous dogs. The police tell me they have raided 3 flats this year, so far. They are investigating reports of dog fighting.

I have proposed to the Council that they should make the estate a Dog Control Area, which would give the police stronger powers to require owners to put dogs on leads, for example, and to look after dogs properly.

Grounds maintenance

There was a general problem about weeds on the estate which have clearly not been treated. This seems to be a problem every year. I have asked who is supervising the contract and why this is not being done effectively.

The grass cutting, with one or two exceptions, appears to have been done rather more effectively than in the past.

Disused bin bases throughout the estate need attending to and removing.

Graffiti

I was also concerned to see that graffiti has appeared inside a number of blocks, which is a growing problem and I have raised this with the police and with Barnet Homes, as to what is being done about this.

Fire Doors

As I mention below, many fire doors are not functioning properly. This is a serious safety issue. This is also a recurring problem. I have asked for all fire doors to be checked, and repairs attended to urgently.

I'll now turn to some of the specific issues I raised, about particular areas and blocks, and on which I have asked for action to be taken.

Powis

The cleaning inside Powis looked very poor and the entry phone did not work.

Goldsmith

The pigeon netting has an accumulation of rubbish inside it, which needs cleaning up. There is a dangerous hole in the ground outside.

The fire doors are not all closing properly.

There is also an accumulation of litter and the stairwell was not clean.

The back door was not secured.

Garrick

The entry phone was not working. There is graffiti inside, and some fire doors were not closing.

Martyn

There was a bad overflow leak from a ground floor flat, which is clearly quite an old one. There is a large bush/weed growing out of the building.

Raffles

The door entrance system was still not functioning. I was told this was about to be repaired.

Some fire doors were not working, and the stairwell needed cleaning.

The play area

I was told that this has now been shut for a month, because of one broken item of equipment, and the need to repair the gate. This is not very effective, as small children were climbing over the fence anyway, to use the play area.

I am amazed that the play area has been out of use during the summer months and I have asked for this to be dealt with as a matter of urgency. If the children are going to climb in anyway, there seems to be little point in locking the gate, as this makes it simply more dangerous!

Disused shop rear fence

This is a perennial problem and is again broken down. I cannot see that the fence serves any useful purpose, now, as the rear of the shop is secured. The sensible thing to do would be to remove the fence and clear the land immediately behind the shop, which would actually give greater security. Best of all, of course, would be to demolish the shop, as it has not been used for years, anyway.

Old school buildings

I have asked what is being done about the demolition of the old school buildings, as clearly this is a security risk and a temptation for vandals.

Old school play grounds

I have asked whether there is any prospect of some of the old school playground being brought into use over the summer.

Stratton

The door entry system was not working. There was a noise problem, which I understand may have now been dealt with.

The stairwell lights were not all working and there was a problem with the fire doors.

Lacey Drive

The street sign has been damaged and needs replacing.

Chichelle House

The entrance security needed attending to. The hall lights are not working and some of the fire doors were not working.

Ware Court

There were a lot of weeds and bushes at the rear of Ware Court, which needed pruning back.

Wakeman

The grass cutting here has not been done.

Havilland

There was a large accumulation of litter, which needed attention.

Wilberforce

The football cage fencing needs repair. It is clear that windows have been broken. I have also asked if the Council would heighten the fencing for its full width on the building side of the fencing.

I have asked if thought could be given to improving the surfacing, as if this was safer, children might not use the greens for football, in defiance of "the no ball games" rule.

Craven

There was graffiti here, and the entrance light was broken.

Salisbury

There is an overflow which has clearly been running for some time on the ground floor, which needed attending to.

Bredon

There were concerns about football nuisance.

I hope you find this report of interest. I will write again, when I have the Council's response to these various issues.

No doubt I have missed some points – that's inevitable no matter how detailed my inspection. So, if there is anything else you want to raise with me, either about the estate or more generally, please let me know – either complete the enclosed questionnaire, or email me at: updates@hendonlabourparty.com,

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Dismore
Member of Parliament for Hendon

PS. I also have to tell you the House of Commons authorities have dramatically cut the postage and stationary budget available to MPs to write to constituents and to keep you up to date with developments. In future, I may not be able to write to you by post.

If you have an email address, I would like to write to you in this way, as it will help keep costs down and will also be quicker. So if you do have email, could you please let me have your email address, by emailing me at updates@hendonlabourparty.com together with your name and postal address and the reference number at the top of this letter, so I can continue to correspond with you about your concerns.