

MONTREAL SQUARE FAQs February 2019

The CHS Board has approved plans to redevelop the homes at Montreal Square. This document aims to answer the questions you may have, and updates the questions and answers previously issued in 2018.

Q: What are the key features of the redevelopment?

A: The indicative design

- creates a total of 45 dwellings (36 rented and 9 shared ownership)
- enables the number of rented homes on the site to be doubled (with current residents keeping their social rent)
- retains the same amount of open green space, in the same place
- provides replacement houses for existing residents – all of which are 15% larger than their current homes, have gardens and own in-curtilage parking.
- does not require us to have any homes for market sale or private rent.

Q: How was the design brief for the architect drawn up?

A: Residents were invited to shape the redevelopment by responding to a list, sent in May, of “Key points for residents for Montreal Square redevelopment design brief”

- A summary of residents’ responses was sent to the architect, together with some key principles set out by CHS:
 - Residents to have new houses no smaller than their current ones, at no higher rent than current rent (for same size of home)
 - Maximise new affordable housing on the site subject to this design brief
 - High built-in energy efficiency standards
 - Seek to address current residents’ concerns regarding potential loss of community
 - Residents’ participation in design process will not be taken to mean acceptance or support for redevelopment
 - Residents to see and comment on indicative scheme design before CHS Board makes a decision on redevelopment.

The design is also required to meet a range of technical specifications, including CHS’s floor area standards:

Table 1 - Minimum gross internal floor areas and storage (m²)

Number of bedrooms(b)	Number of bed spaces (persons)	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
1b	1p	39 (37) *			1.0
	2p	50	58		1.5
2b	3p	61	70		2.0
	4p	70	79		
3b	4p	74	84	90	2.5
	5p	86	93	99	
	6p	95	102	108	
4b	5p	90	97	103	3.0
	6p	99	106	112	
	7p	108	115	121	
	8p	117	124	130	

Q: What assumptions is the indicative design based on?

A: The design offers a mix of homes:

- 17 x 2 bedroom houses for up to 4 people, each with private garden
- 3 x 3 bedroom houses for up to 5 people, with garden
- 19 x 1 bedroom flats for 2 people
- 5 x 2 bedroom flats for up to 4 people
- 1 flat with 3 bedrooms for up to 5 people

Q: How does CHS know this scheme is possible?

A: We have met with the City Council Planning Department, including the 'Urban Design' team which influences planning decisions and this indicative plan takes into account their comments. However we have not had in-depth discussions about a detailed scheme and it is possible that some aspects of the scheme design will change as we go through the planning process.

We have also calculated the expected costs of building and maintaining these new homes, future rental income and income from shared ownership sales over a period of forty years to satisfy ourselves that the number of homes, their types and tenures, in this plan would work financially. We have made assumptions about how much government grant we could get and this determines the split between affordable rents and shared ownership and whether we need any market sale homes. We believe we can get enough grant to ensure that none of the homes need to be sold on the open market.

Q: How will the new development be funded?

A: The scheme will be funded by

- CHS borrowing money from banks or investors and repaying it over 40 years
- Grant from the government body Homes England
- Income from shared ownership sales

Q: Could the construction be done in phases?

A: We have considered this option. For all units to be affordable housing, costs of the proposed redevelopment need to be kept to a minimum and developing the site in one phase would cost less. Developing in two phases also severely restricts the

layout of the scheme as we would need to re-provide 2-bedroomed homes in the first phase for some of you to move in to. This indicative design assumes all units will be affordable (i.e. rent or shared ownership) and developed in a single phase and avoids the need for open market sales.

Q: What are the next steps in the process?

A: The next stage is to work in more detail with you on the proposed plans in advance of applying for planning permission. This would include the more detailed requirements you have told us about already, and perhaps some new details to agree with you. We will also need further discussions with the planners. Getting planning permission is likely to take at least 9 months and could be significantly longer if the planning department has a different view of what we propose.

Should planning permission be given, there would then be a period (likely to be at least a year) of detailed preparation. This would include extensive support to all residents to move to temporary accommodation, with compensation via a Statutory Home Loss Payment currently set at £6300 per tenancy by the government.

As well as providing practical help, CHS would also cover the cost of moving (to temporary accommodation and back again, or for a single permanent move) as well as any difference in rental costs during a temporary move. All residents choosing to return to Montreal Square will be able to get involved in the specification and design of their new home in whatever way possible.

Q: What if the City Council requires substantial changes to this plan in order to grant Planning Permission?

A: That will depend on the level of change. If the changes make the proposed scheme more expensive then we will either need to ask for more grant or increase the number of homes for shared ownership or potentially sell some homes on the open market. We have always been clear that we might need to do that.

If the changes affect something in the design which is important to residents then we'll need to discuss the implications with you.

Q: What is being proposed?

A: After consulting with with residents at Montreal Square CHS has decided that these homes are replaced alongside additional new homes, to make the best use of the land available on the site and to help the maximum number of households to have access to social housing in Cambridge. Our aim is to increase the number of truly affordable homes at Montreal Square, not to make a profit. The new homes will be likely to be a mix of two, three and four bedroom houses and one or two bedroom flats.

Q: How could more homes be accommodated on the site if we re-build 18 houses and retain a green space?

A: Our indicative design work shows that enough new homes could be built on the site to increase the overall number significantly. A factor that will make this possible is to reduce overall garden size, resulting in smaller gardens compared to what is currently there now.

Q: How would we address parking issues, which residents have already identified?

A: Our indicative design seeks to ensure that residents are allocated their own parking spaces where possible, and includes personal, in-curtilage parking spaces for all the houses for existing residents.

Q: What will redevelopment mean for current tenants?

A: Current residents will temporarily move out of their homes while the rebuilding work takes place. All residents will be offered the option to return to a new home in Montreal Square, which will be a two bedroomed house if you want it, or larger if your household needs it.

Q: Why is CHS planning this and why now?

A: As a charity, CHS has a duty and a desire to provide as much affordable housing in Cambridge as we can. Private rented property in Cambridge is unaffordable for people on low incomes. We want to build more homes to help more people. It's currently very difficult for CHS to find or build affordable housing in Cambridge, where need and lack of affordability is greatest; we haven't built a new affordable home in the city for nearly 5 years.

CHS entered into consultation with residents at Montreal Square six years ago and decided not to redevelop the site at that time. This is now something we need to review as the housing affordability crisis in the city has worsened significantly since then.

Q: Why has CHS chosen Montreal Square?

A: In order to build new affordable homes in Cambridge, CHS has very few options as other sites are too expensive. In addition to issues with the age and future maintenance of the houses, Montreal Square is the only CHS site in Cambridge suitable to build more new homes than exist there already, due to the size of the whole plot. This will allow us to help more households with affordable homes than would otherwise be possible.

The homes at Montreal Square are also becoming increasingly expensive for CHS to maintain, and to upgrade to modern day standards for existing and future residents. Substantial investment would be needed to make significant improvements in the energy efficiency of these homes in the short to medium term.

CHS also has a duty to make the best use of its resources and our Regulator requires us to achieve effective management, value for money and best use of our assets. CHS's Asset Management Strategy has identified Montreal Square as a high priority for appraisal. Over the next thirty years, we would need to spend around 45% more per property at Montreal Square, compared to what we will spend on the average CHS property. An additional £360k of investment will be needed within the next five years to bring the properties up to our energy performance standards.

Q: What do we mean by 'affordable housing'?

A: CHS has always provided social housing, and more recently shared ownership homes too. As current residents you will continue to pay rents equivalent to the rate you pay now. Rents will be higher for the additional homes, based on the Local Housing Allowance set by government, which is currently £144.96 per week. This would still be well below local market rents. If we were to charge rents equivalent to our existing homes at Montreal Square, we could only do so by building more homes for shared ownership or market sale. We think it will be better to build as many rented homes as we can, at a rent that lower income households can afford.

Q: How will CHS support its residents through the process?

A: CHS will support you throughout the process, including finding alternative accommodation on a temporary basis (or a permanent move if you prefer it). CHS will pay the difference in rent for temporary accommodation if it exceeds your current rent. We will also cover any reasonable costs associated with the moving process. Further help will be provided if needed, for example, for making arrangements with suppliers or packing and unpacking belongings.

Q: Where will the temporary housing be?

A: CHS would find you somewhere as close as possible to where you need it although we cannot guarantee how close this might be. This may be a home that CHS already owns in Cambridge however we do not expect to have enough of these – so we will ask other landlords to help.

Q: What will happen about rent payments?

A: If you choose to return to live in a new home in Montreal Square, you will not pay a higher rent than your current rent for the same size of home would be. Energy running costs will be significantly lower in a newly built home.

You may need to pay a higher rent for a permanent move if you choose not to return to Montreal Square, depending on the size of the property, location and landlord (if you have a secure tenancy and move to another CHS address, you would keep the rights this includes).

Q: Will residents have a say in what new homes they can return to?

A: Yes – if you choose to return to a new home in Montreal Square, you will be able to get involved in the specification and design of your new home in whatever way possible.

Q: How much compensation will be paid?

A: Each CHS tenant will be entitled to a statutory Home Loss Payment, which is set by government. Currently this is **£6300** per tenancy (in addition to any expenses). This may have increased in line with inflation by the time any plans move forward. CHS has a policy on compensation for home improvements, and would need to discuss your circumstances with you individually.

Q: Could the compensation affect entitlement to benefits?

A: It depends what assets you already have. It is possible that the compensation might result in some reduction in benefits, and you would need to take advice on

this. You may want independent advice, or CHS's own Money Matters Team could help.

Q: What about removal costs?

A: As well as providing practical help, CHS will also cover the cost of moving (to temporary accommodation and back again, or for a single permanent move) as well as any difference in rental costs during a temporary move.

Q: What would happen if residents say no to moving temporarily?

A: We recognise that moving residents out of their homes is very disruptive, creating uncertainty and needing to adapt to major changes. It is CHS's hope that you will feel able to work with us and we will do our utmost to make the process as painless as possible by offering as much support as we can. In the event that anyone refuses to leave their properties, CHS would have to explore legal action which can lead to eviction, although this is a very last resort and something we hope not to have to do.

Q: When will residents be expected to move out?

A: There will be a period of detailed planning, which we expect to take at least one year. It could be significantly longer as much of this is beyond our control. Timescales are subject to the planning process with the City Council, so it is not possible as yet to be more precise. Now that a decision has been made to go ahead, we will begin work with residents to prepare for the planning process as soon as possible.

Q: Why has CHS decided to go ahead with the proposals even though not all residents are in favour?

A: CHS has a duty to take residents' views into account during the decision making process and has taken your views on board to inform the final decision. As we have said before this doesn't mean residents have the final say on whether the development goes ahead. The final decision rests with CHS's Board, who carefully considered both the views of residents, and a wide range of other factors.

Q: Who can residents contact at CHS for more information or support?

A: Your Housing Officer is Mehwash Hussain (01223 713531, mehwash.hussain@chsgroup.org.uk) who can answer your questions or find an answer for you. If she is not available, David Bailey, Housing Manager, can also be contacted (01223 713561, david.bailey@chsgroup.org.uk)

Q: Who can residents contact outside CHS for advice?

A: CHS will notify your City Council councillors of its decision (contact details at the end of this document) and your Member of Parliament Daniel Zeichner MP. You can also seek advice at the Citizens Advice Bureau (66 Devonshire Road, CB1 2BL, **0344 848 7979** www.cambridgecab.org.uk) at no cost, or from a solicitor.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR LOCAL CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCILLORS

ROMSEY WARD

Cllr Dave Baigent
Tel : 07802 495329
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Cllr Sophie Barnett
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CONTACT DETAILS FOR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

Daniel Zeichner MP
Write to: Daniel Zeichner MP, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA
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