

Meeting Minutes

Earlsbrook Development Update – London & Quadrant (“L&Q”) and United Utilities (“UU”)

Venue: The Bowling Room, Delamere Community Centre, Station Road, Delamere, Cheshire, CW8 2HT
Date: 05 December 2023
Time: 1300hrs – 1500hrs

Attendees

John Edwards	Delamere & Oakmere Parish Council Chair
Cheryl Jones	Head of Development North West, L&Q
James Barrett	Construction Manager, L&Q
Nick Anderson	Project Manager, L&Q
Kat Noller	Development Manager, L&Q
Ian McCoy	Stakeholder Manager, United Utilities
Sophie Moore	Drainage Performance Manager, United Utilities

In the presence of:

Ted Lush	Tarvin and Kelsall, Ward Councillor
Tom Cooper	Tarvin and Kelsall, Ward Councillor

And Members of the Public

This record of minutes is supplementary to the Presentation provided by L&Q and UU, titled: *Presentation Delamere Parish Council Meeting 5December23.pdf*

- L&Q opened the meeting by stating that any specific queries relating to properties on the Earlsbrook Development ought to be directed to the Customer Care team.
 - A brief overview of the following topics was provided (consistent with the Presentation):
 - Commercial relationship between L&Q, Trafford Housing Trust and Laurus Homes.
 - History of the Earlsbrook Development.
 - Circumstances surrounding the administration of Lane End Developments Construction Ltd.
 - Role of United Utilities in relation to the Earlsbrook Development.
 - Timeline of drainage issues.
- A Member of the Public asked if UU remain confident in the capacity of the pump station sited on Station Road given that in periods of high rainfall sewage becomes present at the roundabout on approach to Earlsbrook.
 - UU reiterated that they have a high level of confidence in the capacity of the Station Road pump station. The exact cause of the sewage in periods of high rainfall is still under investigation but both L&Q and UU aware that there is significant water ingress into the Earlsbrook foul water system which is putting additional pressure on to the Station Road pump station.
 - There are two (2) pumps located on the Earlsbrook Development running in a duty/standby arrangement, each sized to pump approximately 7.39 litre of foul water per second. There is a

27 m³ underground storage tank which provides temporary storage of foul water before it is discharged by pump into the existing UU drainage system at the roundabout.

- UU explained that four (4) tankers were deployed by both L&Q and UU initially to support the removal of excess water from the Earlsbrook Development. Tankers remain on standby at all times to support as required and prevent any flooding. Tankers now discharging at Northwich to reduce disruption to the local community.
- UU explained that there is a comprehensive, robust process in place for sewerage adoption which forms part of a national standard. This is to ensure that the sewer system that is being taken on by UU from the developer is of the appropriate standard. UU want to reassure residents that they remain committed to working collaboratively with L&Q to ultimately adopt the sewerage system.
- A Member of the Public asked where the excess water is coming from:
 - UU responded by saying that there are multiple factors, although none at present can be confirmed as the exact reason. Possibilities include that:
 - The area has always had a high water table;
 - The Vrynwy aqueduct leak may have altered the water course on the site;
 - The brook on the perimeter of the site is now full of silt which may be impacted the water course.
 - L&Q responded by saying that they are aware of the silt situation within the brook and as such have submitted a permit request to Cheshire West & Cheshire Council to dredge the brook and return it to its previous level. L&Q have appointed a contractor for the completion of dredging works, albeit subject to receiving the permit to complete the works. Water levels continue to be monitored on site at the pump station. A meeting between L&Q, UU and Highways has been set up for the 12th January 2024 to discuss further actions.
- L&Q stated that there are 166 homes on the Earlsbrook Development, with 114 of those occupied. There are 48 homes still under construction, mainly internal works to be carried out. Construction work related to the site includes the drainage system, roads and the public open space. Public open space seen as a priority.
- L&Q stated that the Laurus Homes branding has been removed until a new contractor to complete the works has been appointed. Homes will be rebranded under the L&Q brand.
- L&Q stated that they are in dialogue with a contractor to complete the development and are working to determine an appropriate start date. Residents to be informed in writing once a contractor has been appointed. Aiming for Spring / Summer of 2024.
- L&Q stated that they have appointed a full time site manager for Earlsbrook, Wayne Prescott. Wayne's responsibilities include overseeing works on site, drainage monitoring and health & safety.
- L&Q stated that they have appointed BAAS Construction to deal with defects reported to the Customer Care team by residents.
- L&Q stated that they will review the landscaping at the roundabout on the approach to Earlsbrook prior to adoption by Cheshire West and Cheshire Council.
- L&Q stated that they are undertaking surveys with landscape architects in relation to understanding timescales associated with delivering on the Public open spaces. No managing agent in place at this time with few Public open spaces. L&Q remain responsible for maintenance of the Earlsbrook Development until a managing agent is appointed.

- L&Q stated that they will be starting a quarterly newsletter and that a residents noticeboard has been installed at the entrance to Earlsbrook to relay information.
- L&Q stated that they would be happy to attend future resident meetings prior to a contractor being appointed and also reaffirmed their commitment to attend resident meetings whilst contracting works are being carried out.
- A Member of the Public asked when are the results due from the survey work that is being undertaken in relation to the drainage issues on site:
 - L&Q responded by stating that a surveying company has been appointed to survey all of the drains on site. CCTV is complete albeit with results being analysed by structural engineers before taking further action. Results from survey expected in the next two weeks with the meeting on the 12th January 2024 to take place to discuss further actions.
- A Member of the Public asked if residents will be held financial liable for the inadequacy of the drainage system:
 - UU responded by stating that once the drainage system has been fully adopted, subject to the system being of the appropriate standard for legal adoption, then residents will not be held financially liable for the pumping station and sewer maintenance. For the avoidance of doubt, the adoption process includes the pumping station situated at the bottom of the Earlsbrook Development and all associated mains up to and including the connection point with the existing sewerage system situated on Station Road.
- A Member of the Public asked if L&Q are confident in the level of service offered by Customer Care:
 - L&Q responded by stating that they are in dialogue with the Customer Care team and believed that at the time when Lane End went into administration that they did not adequate resources to deal with the volume of queries raised by residents.
- A Member of the Public asked if L&Q / UU would consider another meeting in the future with residents to maintain frequent communications or if a community liaison would be considered:
 - UU responded by stating that they hold frequent engagement sessions at the community centre and are happy to meet in any forum in the future.
- The Chair asked if L&Q would consider doing the “right thing” by undertaking any structural surveys on inhabited properties to determine if there are any structural issues to be aware of:
 - L&Q responded by stating that they have structural engineers undertaking studies on stock (unsold) properties to determine if there are any fundamental structural issues to be aware of.
- A Member of the Public asked what actions L&Q would be taking for residents who have purchased and had to live with “sub-standard” works completed:
 - L&Q responded by stating that residents should check with the Customer Care team as to what defects have been reported in relation to their property. If defects have been reported within the two (2) year warranty period from the point of purchase, then Customer Care alongside BAAS Construction are committed to completing the remedial works.
 - A Member of the Public asked for L&Q to elaborate on what constituted a defect given that they had not been contacted by the Customer Care team despite raising multiple defects.

- L&Q responded by stating that they have a Customer Complaints Procedure although it was pointed out by a Member of the Public that this procedure is ineffective / inadequate with limited to no responses being received.
 - L&Q to feedback to directors that Customer Care and the Customer Complaints Procedure is inadequate in its current form to deal with the volume of complaints does not work.
 - A Member of the Public reaffirmed that the Customer Care process is not fit for purpose with multiple issues raised but no response received or resolution obtained.
- The Chair asked if L&Q would be committed to meeting residents again in relation to the Earlsbrook issues as a collective, not just drainage:
 - L&Q responded by saying that they would need to consider the request before confirming, although the idea of meeting again in March 2024 would be considered.
 - The Chair confirmed that another meeting with UU will be placed on the Agenda for the January Parish Council meeting.
- A Member of the Public urged L&Q to consider extending the two (2) year warranty period on inhabited homes given that there was a substantial period within the two (2) years where (a) no contractor was available to complete remedial works and (b) no response from Customer Care.
- A Member of the Public requested L&Q to consider holding a Customer Care surgery, where a member of the Customer Care team would be available in-person to discuss any ongoing matters in relation to inhabited properties.
 - L&Q to feedback to directors and determine if a Customer Care surgery would be appropriate to implement.