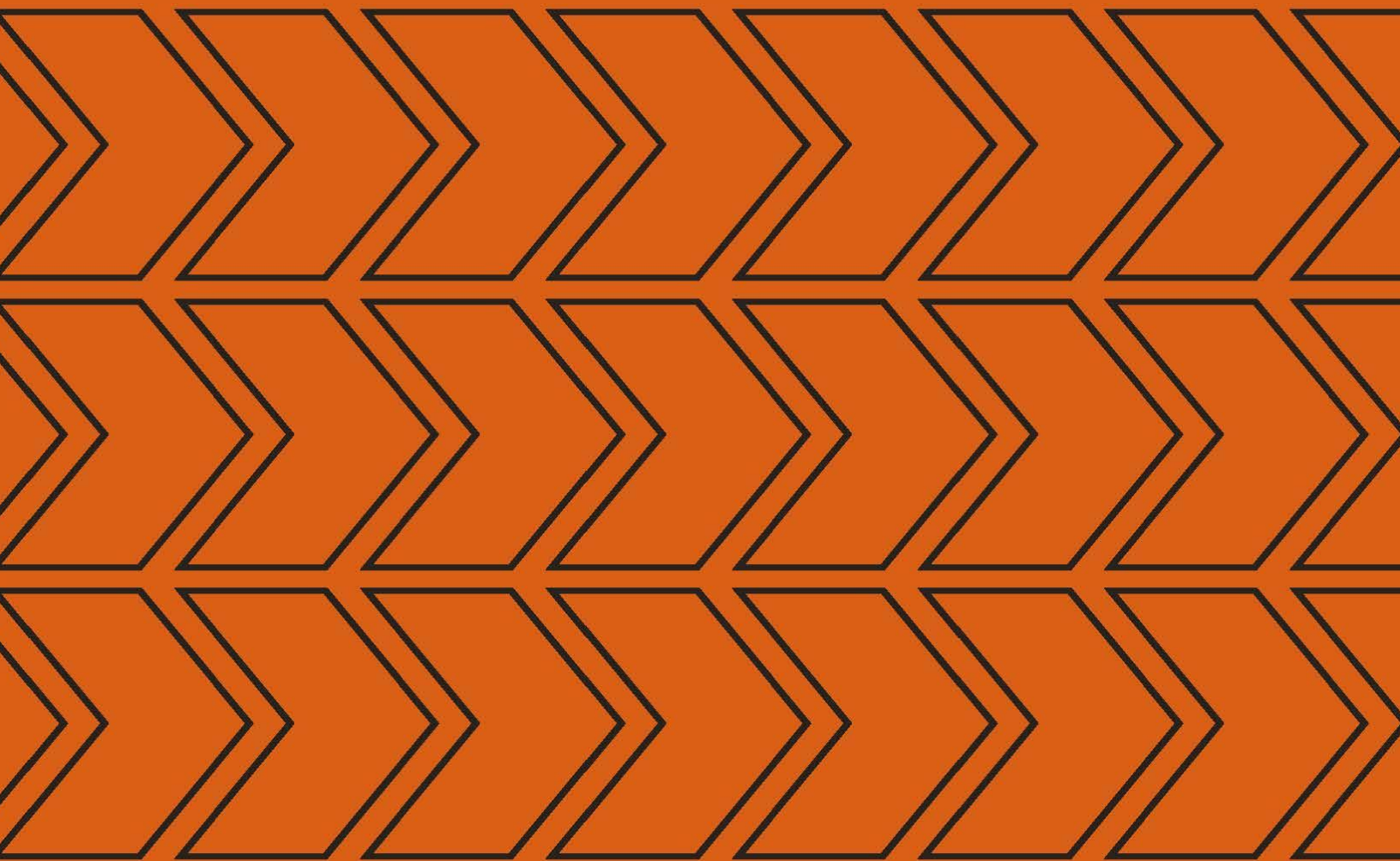


# Proposed Redevelopment of Sir Oswald Stoll Mansions



Consultation Report  
June 2022



## Summary

Stoll held a consultation on the potential redevelopment of Sir Oswald Stoll Mansions, Fulham between 19th April to 17<sup>th</sup> June 2022. Based upon a comprehensive case for change presented to the residents, the high-level proposal discussed was to build a new housing scheme for Stoll on part of the site and to release the rest of the site for sale and redevelopment. Stoll would offer 50-80 homes with a mix of 20 existing homes and 30-60 new homes. Residents' views were also sought on the listed frontage and on the head office function currently provided from the Fulham site. The consultation was aimed at early engagement with residents to gauge their views on the potential redevelopment. This report is written to summarise their feedback connected to any future development.

WWA was appointed by Stoll to facilitate the consultation process; advising on methodology, and inclusion, and collating and analysing the feedback.

The consultation was held over an eight-week period and there were a variety of ways for residents to engage in the process including; a permanent exhibition located in the Garden Room at Fulham, an Online Exhibition on Stoll's website, Group Consultation Sessions and offering 1:1 sessions. Feedback was either provided orally at a Consultation Session or to a member of staff or through feedback forms which were made available in digital and hardcopy. All conversations with staff both structured and unstructured were fed back through feedback forms or via email notes. Residents were encouraged to share their feedback through letters and emails if they were unable to complete a feedback form. Informal feedback was also provided directly to Stoll staff and is reflected in this report.

The Fulham site is currently at 88% occupancy, of which roughly one third are on the newer assured shorthold tenancies and the remainder on assured tenancies. Feedback was received from both groups, either via a group session, to staff members, or feedback forms. The feedback illustrated that:

- Communication moving forward is key.
- From longer term residents, there was some scepticism that the proposal would progress due to perceptions of the previous closed development proposal involving CFC.
- Once it was further explained to them, the majority of residents were in agreement that change is required and understood that there was a case for change.
- A key concern was how the new units would be allocated, open discussion around these key concerns at the next stage will be important.
- Reduction of units on site compared to the current provision was raised as a key issue, many stating that as many as possible if not all existing tenants should if possible be provided for in any redevelopment.
- The effect on the current community of considering the proposal was frequently raised and there was ample feedback that retaining a sense of community would be important.
- Many residents raised concerns on the impact of the future development with regards to timescales and tenancy agreements. It was explained and understood that such issues would be addressed in a second, more detailed phase of consultation with residents should the proposal obtain Board approval to proceed.
- Several tenants put forward suggestions for the detailed design stage of a development, and we would recommend engaging further on this as part of any future discussions.
- The prospect of the redevelopment has engendered anxiety in certain residents.

In summary, the consultation had various responses, and it looks likely that more input will follow in any later stages when there would be definitive plans to discuss. Tenant feedback was that they largely understood the need for change but were hesitant about the effect on their community and lives.

## **Introduction**

Stoll launched the consultation process for the potential sale and redevelopment of the Sir Oswald Stoll Mansions site on the 19th of April 2022. The full details are set out in the Case for Change, rehearsed below. The consultation programme concluded on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2022. It was held to engage with residents to gauge their views on the principle of the proposed sale and redevelopment of the site, thereby to enable this report to be fed back to the Board.

## **The Case for Change**

Sir Oswald Stoll Mansions is in a very tired condition and requires significant investment<sup>1</sup> to address a wide range of maintenance issues affecting the individual flats and communal areas. Half of the flats were built over a century ago when expectations and standards were unrecognisably different. Approximately one third of our flats have at least one major component (such as kitchen, bathroom or windows) that has exceeded its expected life cycle and needs replacement. This is in part because of the age of the infrastructure but also because of sustained under investment due to the weak financial position of the Charity. Stoll simply cannot afford the multi-million pounds investment necessary to ensure that its Fulham site is maintained at the Government's decent homes standard. This standard is currently under review by the Government, and it seems likely that any changes made to it will raise the bar for future regulatory compliance. The overall thermal efficiency and insulation of properties in Fulham is often very poor and many tenants complain of their homes being cold and say they are unable to afford their heating bills. Some 60% of our Fulham flats currently have an EPC rating of D or E, yet we are required to attain a C rating by 2035. In addition, the Government's commitment to delivering a zero-carbon economy will have far-reaching implications for Stoll. Meeting these various expectations and requirements is unrealistic given the finances of the Charity.

Stoll is neither delivering the quality of housing nor the support that it wishes to deliver or that our residents expect, and the position is set to worsen. There is also clear evidence of low and declining demand for our Fulham flats, and of a higher number of Veterans in need elsewhere<sup>2</sup> nationally.

The Fulham site forms of course just one part of the overall Stoll estate, albeit the largest, oldest and most emblematic. Moreover, Stoll does not operate in a vacuum, working routinely with Armed Forces and other charities as well as the public sector. The strategic outlook for Veterans' housing, as foreseen for example by 'Lifting Our Sights'<sup>3</sup> and the 'Veterans' Strategy

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<sup>1</sup> In 2019 it was estimated that there was then a backlog of maintenance equating to approximately £2m and that there would be a need for an additional £0.5m annual investment in maintenance thereafter to maintain the current housing stock in a satisfactory condition. This level of funding has not been possible.

<sup>2</sup> [The Map of Need: Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust](#)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fim-trust.org/news-policy-item/lifting-our-sights-report-highlights-the-challenges-veterans-could-face-unless-action-is-taken/>

Action Plan<sup>4</sup>, points towards more transitional need and greater collaboration between organisations, as well as the enduring need for support. Thus, in redeveloping its Fulham site, Stoll is learning from its recent past as well as from evidence-based research, and remaining true to its founding principles, yet positioning itself to thrive sustainably in the years ahead whilst also delivering improved housing outcomes across the Veterans' community.

Stoll was therefore consulting residents on a proposal to provide at least fifty new and refurbished flats (better suited to needs and of improved quality) and support facilities for Veterans on the Fulham site, funded by disposal of the remainder of the site. It is anticipated that the head office function would move from Fulham but that the listed frontage would remain though not necessarily in Stoll's ownership.

To enable the Charity to continue to support its current and future residents, there is a strong financial imperative for the Charity to achieve the maximum value from disposal while providing high-quality housing for Veterans in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in the heart of London. Stoll also intends to increase its support for Veterans through its outreach services and is determined to explore and, wherever it can, to provide new housing opportunities where there is a greatest need. Stoll commits to further engagement with its residents and to continuing to support them through this envisaged transition.

### **Process, Timeframe, and Methodology**

From 19<sup>th</sup> April 2022 to 17<sup>th</sup> June 2022 residents were given the opportunity to comment. Residents were provided with different ways to find out more about the proposal and to ask questions, as follows:

- Consultation meetings: Were held in May and June and residents could choose to book to attend whichever time and day suit them best. These were provided at different times throughout the day, and days throughout the week – including weekend sessions. We scheduled twelve sessions, a few of which were combined to ensure good take-up, and completed six thus aiding discussion.
- Garden room exhibition: Boards were displayed in the Garden Room detailing the proposals.
- Stoll website: A full pack of information was supplied on the website, including an online feedback form for residents.
- Feedback forms: Feedback forms were widely available; in hard copy from the Reception and in the Garden Room, and online on the Stoll website.
- Informal feedback from residents was also received, including via the popular weekly 'afternoon tea' and in one to one conversations with staff during the period.

The group sessions were designed to be as cooperative as possible. The sessions ran for one hour, with participants were shown a short presentation setting out the key principles with the majority of the time used for discussion. Contributions were encouraged from all and the sessions proved vocal and honest. There was a good engagement at all sessions with a mixture of emotions being shared. Although an emotive subject, the sessions were generally positive with an understanding the current situation could not continue. Trustees/SMT members were available to attend sessions. We were advised through feedback that some residents will seek to establish an association to improve engagement with the Charity, a welcome development.

### **Feedback Received**

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<sup>4</sup> [Veterans' Strategy Action Plan 2022-2024 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

In our judgement there was sufficient feedback to gauge and to summarise resident views. Face-to-face feedback proved popular, much of which occurred during the period directly with staff in informal conversations, and it is estimated by the executive that this accounted for roughly half of the residents. Additionally, thirty seven residents attended the group sessions and we received feedback forms from a further twenty seven individuals. This was facilitated via the website and hard copies. Online feedback was more limited than expected, perhaps due to the demographic of the residents. Using hard copy correspondence and in person would be recommended for future consultation and correspondence with tenants.

Summation of key points:

- Communication is key, with tenants wanting to be kept regularly updated with any future decisions and progress. The opportunity to provide views at this early stage was generally welcomed, although there was some frustration shown that further details were not available at this early point.
- Reduced number of apartments in the new proposal was questioned and clarification sought on what it would mean for individuals.
- There was a desire in the majority of the session for an explanation around which other options had been considered and why they weren't viable. This included general options and also options around additional financing for repairs to the current buildings or perhaps benevolence.
- Explanation of finances was a recurring theme, understanding how Stoll are in their current position and what steps are being taken to resolve any issues.
- It was not widely understood why Fulham numbers have reduced and the envisaged further reduced future need.
- The majority felt that the charity should keep the historic frontage in Stoll's ownership. There was passionate discussion at meetings about the legacy and meaning of the listed building.
- The request from many was that a future Stoll development should be kept together to the front of the site.
- The Fulham site has many benefits which tenants think are key to any future on the site: often cited were green spaces, community, 'open plan' flat design (such as it is).
- Rehousing was often mentioned as a priority, making sure any who move away are kept locally and housed appropriately.
- Some concern was raised for the head office staff and the effect of any move upon them.
- Mental health was consistently referred to regarding certainty, and focusing on continuity for those in need of support
- Consistently concerns were raised about individual tenure types and, peripheral to the consultation itself there were remarks about the affordability of rents and service charges
- There was a general understanding and acceptance that something needs to happen with some in support of the proposals and case for change.
- There was general support for the concept of new and improved flats, but little apparent understanding of the practical realities of financing these.

There were several issues raised that were outside of the consultation, for example regarding Stoll management and repairs, on visibility of trustees and staff and on charges, which have been passed on to Stoll separately.

A positive taken away from the sessions was there is a great amount of support for Stoll and what they do for the community, in housing and supporting veterans.

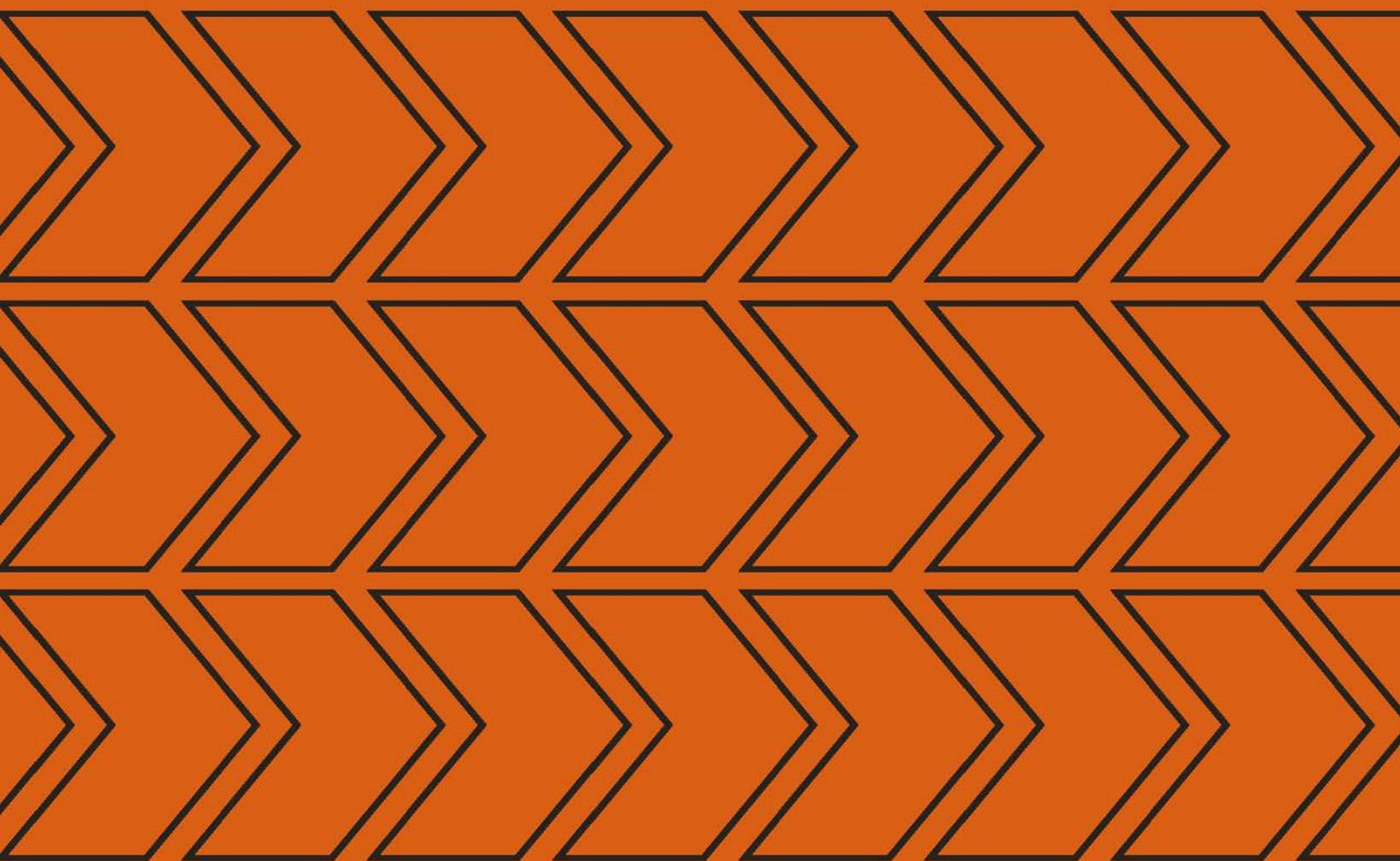
## **Conclusion**

There were many positive elements to the sessions with a general acceptance and in some cases support that something needed to be done to the Sir Oswald Stoll Mansions site. A theme throughout was that residents welcomed this opportunity for Stoll to provide more explanation of the options reviewed to get to this point. In general, although there was scepticism over the consultation due to historic issues, they offered an open platform to discuss key concerns. The openness and change in approach were widely praised by attendees.

On the proposal for 50-80 units, tenants would welcome further understanding why the number could not be as it is now. Some were keen to press their own case for being included in the 50-80 figure. There were concerns raised around Stoll's financial position and some sense that there might be other options to explore such as a single wealthy benefactor available to step in or raising the prospect of additional borrowing/fund-raising perhaps not yet explored by the Charity.

The main consistent theme was around the effect any proposal would have upon tenants and their community temporarily and into the future. There was a desire for as many as possible, ideally all, current residents to be re-housed in any future development, but no new suggestions for how this might be made viable financially. There was generally little interest in where or how the head office function is in future delivered.

Moving forward, further communication will be key and addressing areas raised particularly around options and effects on individuals.



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