

Frequently Asked Questions.

From The Local Centre and The Uplands Residents Meeting on 29th July 2023.



The questions found on this document came from meetings with residents in the Local Centre and The Uplands on 29th July 2023. There were also a number of feedback comments and individual questions received which the regeneration team are responding to individuals about. If you have a specific question for the regeneration team that is not contained in the below or on the frequently asked questions (FAQs) section of the website, please contact the regeneration team.

This document has been split into a number of sections.

Riverside Tenants

Will my tenancy type be protected when I move to my new property?

Yes, your tenancy type will be protected when you move from your current property to your new home though the regeneration.

Will my rent increase when I move from my current home to a new one through the regeneration?

Rent levels in Riverside homes are set using the Regulator of Social Housing's Rent Standard and accompanying guidance. Whether you move from your current home into another existing Riverside property or into a new build, your rent and service charge levels will continue to be reviewed on an annual basis following Riverside's policy and guidance as per previous years.

I live in a retained property, that is not identified for potential demolition. Will my rents increase?

Rent levels in Riverside homes are set using the Regulator of Social Housing's Rent Standard and accompanying guidance. Riverside tenants whose homes are not demolished will continue to have their rent and service charge levels reviewed on an annual basis following Riverside's policy and guidance as per previous years. If a Riverside tenant has a query regarding their current rent level please ask them to speak to their Housing Officer.

Will I get a choice of my kitchen and bathrooms in a new build?

At this stage in the regeneration this is not confirmed, however we have taken this on his feedback and we'll look to provide an answer at the appropriate time.

What's included in disturbance?

We received questions in relation to specific items being included in the disturbance costs. We are still continuing to collect feedback on what residents would like to see included in disturbance. A list of items eligible for disturbance will be included in the offer document once it is finalised in the coming months.

Owner Occupier

What happens to the plans if we don't want our home to be included for demolition?

If homeowners do not want their property to be included in the regeneration as the plans and delivery progresses, Riverside will assess the plans in relation to that specific property before next steps can be considered. Factors including where the property is located, the significance of the property in the proposed plans and the timescales for delivery will be taken into account, before next steps are determined. Riverside will work with homeowners throughout this process ensuring they are kept up to date as the design and delivery progresses.

How can financial advisors be independent, if Riverside are paying for them?

Financial advisors are governed by the Financial Conduct Authority and offer confidential advice to a person or household. To ensure households do not have to pay for the cost of a financial advisor Riverside will be procuring an independent panel of financial advisors. A robust procurement process will take place to procure the advisors and then households can access this service for free. All housing associations and house builders undertake procurement for independent financial advisors on any new build scheme to ensure this is not at a cost to the customer. Households do not have to access this support and can also seek their own financial advice at your own cost.

Is there an update on the equity package?

Riverside are working with legal and financial advisors in response to the community expressing concerns on being able to afford to move from their existing home to a new build for a variety of reasons. Riverside have termed this product offer as “equity loan” but it is not to be confused with the previous government scheme.

Riverside will be arranging to speak to homeowners in the coming months and year to discuss this potential product offer. Some of the topics we expect will be included in these discussions are how does it work, what homes does it apply to, how does succession work, questions around the percentage of the loan, etc.

The development of the equity loan for this regeneration is very much in the development stage and the criteria has yet to be signed off as input from the community is needed before this can happen.

How can market value plus 10% be justified in a declining market, when prices are predicted to drop an extra 8-15% in the next 12 months?

The draft offer that has been shared thus far with households is a draft. Feedback and consultation with homeowners has shown there are financial concerns with the proposed offer, mainly around being able to afford a new build with market value plus 10%. Riverside have responded to this concern by exploring the option of an equity loan. Riverside ask that each household has a discussion with the regeneration team to discuss their circumstances and any concerns surrounding the draft offer.

My home currently has adaptations. Will Riverside add adaptations to my new home?

If your home is currently adapted to fit your needs Riverside will work with you to ensure your new home provides you with the same level of adaption to support your needs.

How does market valuation work?

Market valuation is done by a RICS (*The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors*) survey. The valuation is usually valid for three months.

I don't want to buy again, can I become a Riverside tenant? Do I need to sign up to apply for properties?

If you are a homeowner and you would like to explore becoming a Riverside tenant, we will support you to do so. You wouldn't need to sign up to Property Pool Plus, we will support you in the process of exploring to be a Riverside tenant. Similar to the support we will be providing to Riverside tenants, we will be operating managed moves, which is where Riverside will work with you to find a property. You are welcome to utilise Property Pool Plus also, but this is not a requirement of the regeneration. As a homeowner you would have to ensure that you sold your property before you could become a Riverside tenant, as part of the eligibility criteria ensure requires you to only have the new home as your main and principal home.

Private rented tenants

How will you support me as a private rented tenant?

Riverside will support all private rented tenants who are relocated as part of the regeneration. There are a number of ways we can do this, which also require us to link in with your landlord. Your landlord may wish to purchase another property and work with you to relocate you to the new property. They may also ask Riverside to purchase their property and choose not to purchase another property. You may also wish to explore becoming a Riverside tenant, regardless of what your landlord chooses to do. If you are a private tenant and have not had a discussion with us yet please get in contact and we can discuss how we can support you.

Am I entitled to a new property as a private tenant?

All households who wish to remain in the area they currently live will have first refusal on any new build properties. If you would like to move away from the area, we would also support you to do this, whether you wished to become a Riverside tenant or not.

I'm interested in getting on the property ladder could I do this through the regeneration?

If you are wanting to get onto the property ladder, through the regeneration we will be offering intermediate home ownership options such as shared ownership and rent to buy, as well as open market properties (where you would get a mortgage for the majority of the cost). If any of these are of interest to you, please reach out to the regeneration team and we can discuss this with you. We will ensure we share more information on these as the regeneration progresses.

Private landlords

Will I receive compensation (for white goods removals, capital gains, etc?)

Since the last round of consultation, we have received requests for certain items to be included in compensation for landlords. We are still developing the financial offer for landlords and welcome any feedback on this from landlords who have not yet spoken to us. As you can see in the presentation video we are continuing to engage with the community over the coming months and year and this would include landlords as well.

Could more information on an offer to landlords be created and shared?

Following the draft offer documents that were shared in September, we have received feedback from landlords as discussed above. We will continue to develop the offer for landlords in the coming months as progress with the planning process. We will ensure that all landlords receive any updated information in due course.

Retained Household

Retained households is the terminology used for those households who have not been identified for potential demolition.

Will I receive disturbance?

In the session we were asked if retained properties will receive disturbance or compensation while the regeneration takes place. We will be exploring this question internally and will respond to this in due course.

I have health concerns regarding the impact of building work, what do I do?

If you have any health concerns regarding the impact of building work, please reach out to the regeneration team. We will work with you to look at the suitable options to support you during the regeneration.

Will my council tax increase?

If your home is not included for potential demolition, the surrounding regeneration will bear no impact on your council tax. Council Tax valuations are based on the value of properties that aren't used for business purposes. The value is based on the price the property would have sold for on the open market on 1 April 1991 in England. For more information on how council tax is determined you can visit – How domestic properties are assessed for Council Tax bands – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Can you engage more with properties that are not identified for potential demolition in plans?

During February 2023 consultation, we shared that we will be undertaking workshop sessions with households whose properties are to be retained. Whilst we have been focusing on the masterplans for the Local Centre and The Uplands and the planning processes that go with these we are still very much committed to working with retained households. We will share in the coming months a plan for engaging with you and holding these workshop sessions.

Will I have to pay a service charge once the new homes are built if I live in a retained home?

If you already pay a service charge you will continue to pay a service charge.

The Plans, Planning & New Builds

Where can I view the planning application in person?

You can view the planning application, accompanying plans and all supporting documents in person at Halton Direct Link. There are two locations; one in Widnes; and one in Runcorn which is located in shopping city next to Halton Lea library.

If the Local Centre planning application is not heard on the 7th August what happens?

If the planning committee meeting runs out of time on the 7th August and does not have time to hear the Local Centre planning application it will either be deferred to the next planning committee or a special committee date can be arranged.

How long after the Local Centre planning application has been heard will the Uplands planning application be submitted?

If the Local Centre planning application is approved on 7th August, we aim to submit The Uplands planning application within one month.

If the Local Centre is refused at planning what happens to The Uplands submission?

If the Local Centre planning is refused on the 7th August, we would not submit a planning application for The Uplands yet. We would review the feedback on the Local Centre and resubmit planning for the Local Centre.

If either planning application is refused what will happen next?

When planning applications are refused by planning committee they provide feedback on why it was refused. Riverside would review this feedback and then look to amend the plans and resubmit to planning committee.

What about the impact of biodiversity and wildlife?

Riverside have appointed the landscape planning architects Planit-ie with extensive experience in working on regeneration schemes. A variety of surveys have been undertaken across the area as part of the early design stages to ensure the plans support bio-diversity. These surveys form part of the planning application which will be considered by Halton Planning Authority. The landscape architects will continue to be involved as the next stage of design progresses to ensure a positive impact on biodiversity and wildlife.

Why are Riverside not retrofitting all properties, rather than demolishing?

Regeneration is a holistic approach and looks at more than just the home, there are benefits to retro-fit/refurbishing and benefits to regeneration. Whilst investing in properties would increase the energy efficiency of these individual homes it would not deliver the following, which will be delivered through the regeneration:

- Creating a new safe and easily accessible level access local centre/ hub for the neighbourhood including commercial units, designed in a way to minimise crime and ASB in this area.
- Delivering new cycle ways, pathways and way-finding (signage and directions) ensuring these are in the heart of the neighbourhood and overlooked to provide safe and accessible opportunities for people to travel in a way that supports the aim of creating health communities.
- Diversifying the housing tenure of properties in Palace Fields to enable households to own their own home through home ownership options such as purchasing outright, shared ownership and rent to buy.
- Diversifying the housing type across the area, such as dedicate veterans accommodation, an extra care scheme, level access properties including bungalows, own front door apartments and increasing the number of 3 and 4 bedroom family homes to ensure residents do not need to relocate elsewhere their housing need changes. This supports the desire of the regeneration to create a sustainable community for generations to come.
- Deliver an extra care scheme with community facilities in a neighbourhood where there will be demand for this type of housing in the future. Therefore, ensuring residents requiring this type of housing are supported to continue to live in the Palace Fields for years to come, which supports the principle of creating a sustainable community.
- Bringing the historic Hallwood Manor ("Tricorn") Land back into use and refurbishing this into housing, to ensure the longevity of this building, decrease its misuse as a historic asset to the residents of Palace Fields, ensuring a design that minimises crime and ASB in this area.
- Delivery and making improvements to green open space - Removing unused pockets of hard and soft landscaping such as grassed mounds that do not have a presence and create crime and ASB hotspots and opportunities for continuous fly tipping.
- Making changes to existing infrastructure and where housing is located to design out many areas that are not overlooked and create crime and ASB hotspots and opportunities for continuous fly tipping.
- Supporting individuals and households to thrive, where support is needed through employment and training projects and inclusive opportunities. Riverside deliver this support

for Riverside tenants but the regeneration will enable anyone within the neighbourhood to access additional support.

Why are Riverside requesting to build on town park?

Through consultation and engagement with the community and key partners across Halton the proposal of housing fronting onto town park has been included in the draft plans. Utilising the National Designing Out Crime Principles ensuring an overlooked presence of housing to create light and a presence of people creates a variety of benefits including less crime and ASB, enhancing the place making of an area, creating safe, clear and accessible transport routes within and beyond the neighbourhoods to support sustainable communities.

Riverside are currently working with the Open Spaces Team at Halton Council on the soft and hard landscaping and boundary treatments of the new homes and town park to ensure Riverside's investment is complimentary to the Town Park masterplan and any proposed works by Halton Council in this section of the park. Working in partnership will also ensure that the design is complimentary to the recent improvements Halton Council have made to two existing entrances to Town Park; one to the North-East of The Uplands onto Palace Fields Avenue and one to the North-West onto Holt Lane.

How will the properties be built?

We do not have confirmation on how the properties are going to be built, this is the next step within the regeneration journey and we will confirm with the community on how we will build these properties at such a time.

Will there be 3 bed bungalows?

Yes, following the last round of consultation we have now updated the Local Centre plans to include three bed bungalows. We are currently reviewing The Uplands plans ahead of planning submission and the inclusion of three bed bungalows will be confirmed in the coming months.

What will the room sizes be and the property sizes?

This will depend on the type of property and where it is located in the plans. For example a 2bed property can come in a variety of layouts and therefore the room sizes and overall property size would depend on the layout. The proposed layouts in the Local Centre can be seen on Halton Borough Council's planning portal and once submitted The Uplands can also be seen this way. Room sizes and specific property sizes can be confirmed at a later stage once we enter into the construction stage.

The new road you are proposing next to town park will it be a noise nuisance so why is it included?

A new road is proposed along the edge of town park, which would service the proposed properties that will front onto town park. A proportion of this road would be a cul-de-sac with the remainder entering from Palace Fields Avenue and linking into the road adjacent to the proposed green avenue. Riverside's consultant team have worked extensively with Halton Borough Council's Highways Team to ensure the design of this road supports the proposed houses and the existing community therefore ensuring traffic calming measures.

What will council tax be in the new properties?

Council tax is based on the price the property would have sold for on the open market on 1 April 1991 in England. For more information on how council tax is determined you can visit – How domestic properties are assessed for Council Tax bands – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). If you were to relocate to a new home with a different valuation as at 1 April 1991 then there could be a change in your council tax. Riverside will ensure that once house prices on the new build properties are known information on council tax banding will also be provided.

Will there be 3 bed bungalows with flats on top?

Within the proposed plans there are self-contained ground floor apartments. This means they have private gardens which are only accessible to the residents of that property and the property will be level access. This means they offer the same function as a bungalow as they are level access and have private entrances and garden, however this is not the only house type provided within the plans meaning there are bungalows without any apartments above them also.

Will the extra care be like Joseph William Mews in Belle Vale, Liverpool?

Yes, the extra care scheme will be similar to Joseph William Mews. DK-Architects who are the principle architect for Palace Fields also designed Joseph William Mews. Extra care schemes designed like this one are proven to be a successful model both for the residents who reside in the apartments and also for the community. Extra care schemes provide self-contained one and two bed apartments, with access to a communal garden a communal activity space for residents and also include a community café. The community café can be accessed by anyone within the community not just residents of the extra care scheme. If you would like to learn more about the extra care scheme please get in contact with the regeneration team.

Would new builds have a service charge?

Currently in Palace Fields, some residents will pay a service charge. Service charges are collected for a variety of services depending on the area you live in. If you have any questions about services charges in the first instance please check your lease and statements from us to see the specific services you pay for. Generally, we manage things such as:

- communal area repairs and maintenance
- shared area cleaning, gardening and facilities such as car parks

Any new properties Riverside builds, across the UK, are liable to pay a service charge. We will share more information on how service charges work and what the service charges may look like in Palace Fields when we are further along in the regeneration process.

What is classed as a major change to a planning application once it has been approved?

This would depend on the impact of the change on the overall vision. If a change is classed as a material change Riverside would potentially need to re-submit a further planning application to seek approval for these changes.

Allocations & Moving

How will the new build homes be allocated?

Any new build properties will be allocated to those who are being asked to relocate due to the regeneration. These households will have first refusal on the new builds and any remaining homes that are available after this will be allocated through the standard business ways.

If I need temporary accommodation how will that work?

If you are relocated into a temporary property whilst waiting for your new build property to be available we will support you during both moves. You would be entitled to:

- one home loss payment, which will be paid at your first move; and
- two lots of disturbance payments to cover the cost of moving first to the temporary home and then to your new home.

Riverside will work with you to ensure your temporary accommodation meets your needs in the same way we will be working with you to make sure your new property also meets your needs.

Delivery

When will delivery start in the Local centre?

If the planning application for the Local Centre is approved on the 7th of August we believe work could start in the Local Centre in Winter 23/24. Subject to a successful planning application, we will invite members of the community to Local Centre events in October to hear about timescales, delivery, phasing and an opportunity to meet the builders.

Where will delivery start in The Uplands?

This is yet to be confirmed. The next stage for The Uplands is to submit a planning application and continue to look at timescales in more detail. We also need to continue to have conversations with residents in the area, too determined more refined delivery plans.