

The Matson Estate

Matson forms part of the ward of Matson, Robinswood and White City. It is largely a post war former council housing estate. There are high levels of deprivation, low educational attainment and poor physical and mental health. The area benefits from being on the side of Robinswood Hill and a spacious and green feel created by large amounts of passive and active green space.

Regeneration

The case for regeneration is a strong one. The quality of build and the poor design of many of the properties are detrimental to residents' health and wellbeing. In particular, the flats and maisonettes are in a poor state, damp and difficult to heat, with mould and condensation a constant problem.

Furthermore, as the largest social housing estate in the City the problems of undersupply of social housing are particularly prevalent. Overcrowding is common; residents wait years for suitable properties. People with disabilities and the elderly become isolated in flats with steep staircases and nowhere suitable to move to. The social costs of poor housing are well documented, and Matson pays the price.

For residents, access to social housing is important. Most work, but low pay means that buying a property or private rents are beyond their means. Right to buy has taken many of the better quality properties out of the social rented sector, only to reappear as more expensive private rentals in due course. An increased supply of social rent must form part of the regeneration of Matson and will benefit the City as a whole.

Community

In many places that regeneration has taken place there has also been a social regeneration. Matson is different; there are many community groups that have been active in the area for decades. There is a Community Economic Development Plan "The Power of Three" and the Community Partnership is considering applying to become a community council.

The danger that physical regeneration presents is that this strong sense of community will be lost.

GCH has yet to make public its rehousing strategy but this is key to retaining community resilience and build on it.

Aspirations

There are a number of key aspirations to consider.

Retain the green look and feel of the estate. This is a strong contributor to residents' wellbeing but also to their sense of Matson as a place. New builds to be tenure blind.

The right to return – some residents may be happy to leave but many have strong ties to the area, to family and to neighbours.

In order to achieve an increase in the number of social and affordable homes in Matson there must be an increase in density of a minimum of 1.5 new properties for each existing one. This and more is achievable if the developer is ambitious and flexible.

Flats should be built to a high standard with off road parking and lifts. This will enable a far greater range of residents to be housed in flats, from young families with push chairs to older people with mobility issues.

Off road parking to be provided for houses.

Cycleways to be built in to the scheme.

Bus services to the remoter parts of the estate to be developed.

Currently most houses are rendered and differ in appearance from most other parts of the City. This look and feel should be retained to reduce a clash with none regenerated housing.

That the regeneration consider all possible areas in Matson – the problems are not confined to the Matson Avenue corridor and the SPD does not indicate how the parts of the estate which are in the ownership of GCH and where there are opportunities to increase density will be improved. There are opportunities for negotiations with local schools and other organisations which may also free up land.

Gloucester City

This SPD will become the Councils policy for regeneration in Matson. The need is urgent and it is vital for the community and the City that the early stages must provide significant increases in both social and affordable rent. The community welcomes the prospect of regeneration but has reasonable concerns about managing the impact of significant change over a decade or more. The Council should support a resident led approach, working with existing and new organisations.