

Aldgate Estate Residents' Association

Email: SinglePoint@AldgateTA.com

To:
Margaret Dodwell
Managing Director
Guinness Trust and Guinness Midsummer
Henshaw House
851 Silbury Boulevard
Milton Keynes
MK9 3JZ

Monday, 19 July 2010

Dear Ms Dodwell,

My MP Mark Field wrote to you recently about concerns over the “Decent Homes” programme implementation at Guinness Court in Mansell Street, London, E1. You asked Ann Bell the Interim Technical Manager to respond to Mark, which she did, and he passed this on to me.

I reported the contents of the letter to the Residents Association on the 14th July. The letter provided a little re-assurance to the residents. The Association asked me to follow up. There was additional confusion when Koddus Miah (the local Housing Officer) told us that at a recent meeting with Ann Bell he had been told that the work would start in February 2011. Why was this not put in the letter? Why was the far vaguer wording “latter part of 2010/2011” used?

The letter of Ann Ball itself contains a paragraph, which is by way of an apology for previous failures in communication. This is an understatement of the failure. Despite firm commitments by the Trust, the scale of the works has been consistently reduced, consultation has not taken place, a show flat has not been made available and start dates have been passed with no apology or explanation: For details please see the attached appendix.

The open ended wording in the letter has not restored the confidence of the residents who simply no longer believe any commitments given by the Trust. The Trust appears to be disinterested in the residents wishes and happy to break any promise with no regard whatsoever for the well-being or the feelings of the residents. Given that we are now only eight months away from the latest promised start date, “ the latter part of the financial year 2010/2011” there is a belief amongst many residents that more detail must be made available now if we are to have any faith whatsoever in the Trust sticking to this date and not postponing it yet again.

We would ask you to please address this by providing us with much firmer details of the works and the dates as follows:

1. A date when consultation will take place
2. A date when a show flat will be available to visit.
3. A date when the works will start
4. How the Trust intends to communicate these details to the residents
5. Information on any choice residents will have.
6. How much disruption can each resident expect i.e. Will they have to move out of the flat, for how long and what arrangements will be made to minimise disruption?

The Residents' Association is keen to have as substantive a relationship with the Trust, based on mutual respect and trust. We hope you will be able to address these issues quickly and give the residents fixed promises and then keep them, in order to restore The Trust's damaged reputation on the estate.

I understand the Trust's policy is to reply within 10 working days so would greatly appreciate a detailed response within that time scale, so that we can communicate it to the residents, prior to the next meeting.

Yours sincerely

John Fletcher
Decent Homes Co-ordinator
Aldgate Estate Residents' Association

Copy to. Mark Field MP
 Mr Alderman Michael Bear.
 Ann Bell, Interim Technical Manager

Appendix:

Brief Summary of the changing commitments given by Guinness Trust to the Aldgate Estate over the last 18 months:

Following the decent homes meeting on 18th May 2009 and the estate issues meeting of 3rd Nov 2009 we were informed that tendering for decent homes would take place in December 2009, with expenditure planned before the end of the 2009/10 financial year, the first phase to comprise of Kitchens and Electrics, Bathrooms would be upgraded in phase 2.

In January 2010 we were told that Kitchens and Bathrooms would now both be rolled out at the same time, and that a show Flat (So that tenants could choose their individual options) would be completed by end of Feb.

In April 2010 we were told that Guinness Trust changed their plans again: likely that Kitchens & Electric only will begin, now in 2010/11 financial year (autumn 2010). The show flat was completed, but as roll out was now put further back the show flat was converted back to an ordinary flat and let.

At our July 2010 meeting the local housing officer informed us that that Decent Homes will begin in Feb 2011.

Guinness Trust also offered to monitor noise levels, we are not aware that this has been done.