

Stakeholder communication improvements in a hostel development project

Project type: Construction

Location: UK

RICS/APM stakeholder principles: Communicate; Consult early, and often; Relationships are key; Compromise

Stakeholder terms: stakeholder expectations, communication

Abstract

A case study on the development of a hostel for the homeless in central London with strong local opposition.

Background

The redevelopment scheme was focused on redeveloping a derelict former nursing home into a hostel for homeless people. The charitable foundation behind the plan had identified a substantial need in the vicinity and had the backing of the local areas social services and support groups. The particular building in question was a viable option due to the comparatively easy and cost effective refurbishment relative to other options.

The issues

The main issue was the local resident opposition to the proposed plans posed a real risk of planning permission refusal due to the lobbying group and extent of local concerns. Due to the established need for the facility in the area and the financial incentive to redevelop this site as opposed to others, these local concerns would have to be heard and steps taken to resolve the problems to allow the renovation.

The challenges

Frequent general stakeholder meetings had failed to persuade as many were still firmly against the proposal, with such amendments as the introduction of a cafe run by residents brought forward in the elected stakeholder meetings alongside other amendments being required to help shift public opinion.

The solution

A series of stakeholder meetings were held, initially with all the residents, in order to understand views and to explain the exact nature of the accommodation being provided. In parallel to the on-going general stakeholder meetings that continued throughout the scheme, a smaller 'elected' group of residents formed and met with the foundation. These more strategic stakeholder meetings were the key to unlocking an informed dialogue which led to amendments to the scheme.

The benefits

These revisions were sufficient to satisfy some residents to a point where planning authorities were able to grant planning permission, a fundamental step for the project which was in real jeopardy without an effective stakeholder engagement programme.

The learning points

It became clear that both a general and a specialised stakeholder engagement program were necessary to address such a locally contentious issue as the hostel development. Such an extensive and also compromising outlook (as the decision to include the cafe facilities) could be useful again in the future for other projects for which there is strong local opposition.

This case study was written by the APM Stakeholder Engagement Focus Group.

- *For more information on the group or stakeholder engagement, [click here](#).*