

**Barking Reach Residents Association Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday 18 August 2021**  
**7.30pm via zoom**

**Attendance:** 50

**Guests:** Neil Davis, regional development director at L&Q; Neil Donald, senior technical manager at L&Q; Richard Whitby, construction director at L&Q; Tracey Gaylor, head of aftercare at L&Q; Mehran Ahmed, regional manager at L&Q; Laura Cravitz, property manager at L&Q; Steven Saville, technical director at Bellway Homes, Paul Finney, head of contracting at Bellway Homes (Pedley and Lawley Mansions); Bill Kenneally, regional director at Bellway London Partnerships (Wollcott Apartments); Matt Carpen, managing director at Barking Riverside Limited (BRL).

Alex Anthony, Thames Ward Community Project (TWCP)

**Meeting started: 7.35pm**

**The agenda:** was agreed.

**AGENDA**

1. Water damage and flooding in our homes
2. Other questions for L&Q and Bellway
3. Recognition (if time permits)
4. AOB

**Minutes and matters arising**

Pete Mason, chair of the Barking Reach Residents Association (BRRA), said that, due to the urgency and sensitivity of the main focus of the meeting, there would likely only be time for discussion on the first and second items of the agenda.

**1. Water damage and flooding in our homes**

**1. Chair's introduction**

Pete put it to the meeting that following the recent storm and downpour of a couple of weeks ago (weekend of 24 July 2021), numerous residents of phase 2 of Barking Riverside suffered with water ingress and water leaks into their properties. Some residents in Rhodes Mansions and Woolcott Apartments were displaced due to flooding in their properties.

The residents association (RA) had therefore invited London and Quadrant (:&Q) and Bellway to attend the meeting.

Pete then welcomed the attendees from L&Q and Bellway.

**2. Chair invited residents from affected properties to say a few words on the issues affecting the residents of that block**

An RA committee member and resident of **Billington House** said his property was damaged and affected by the recent flood. Many of his neighbours have also been affected. He wants to know what happened, why so much water was not drained properly as rain water did not appear to flow well through the balconies and onto the ground. He asked what the cause of the problem was and what the plan of action would be. He mentioned there would appear to be a problem with water proofing under balconies.

Pete mentioned that climate change is a real thing and all these problems will most likely get worse over time. Flats should be sealed: heat should be trapped in and water kept out. Several residents have complained about heat escaping, spotting streams of cold air coming into flats through sockets, etc. Another resident, who moved into **Ripplegate Walk** in 2019 reported to Bellway about water damage in her property since she first moved in. There were remedial works made, which have never been completed and the problem persists.

Another RA committee member and resident of **Pedley House** said that water ingress and leaks issue has been a particular problem in the duplex flats and flats which have flat roofs and balconies. Since moving in two years ago remedial works were carried out but problems persist. Residents have had water ingress problems for two years. He believes there are problems with poorly-fitted windows, balcony doors and patio sliding doors – a problem which has been reported to Bellway several times by different residents over the course of two years.

Pete said that a resident from **Rhodes Mansion** and a number from **Wollcott Apartments** were displaced to Holiday Inn accommodation, one of whom has directly contacted the RA but could not make the meeting. He added that mostly the last storm affected phase 2 of the estate, but residents on phase 1 also suffered with water ingress issues over the years since construction, but problems there have been mainly fixed.

Concern was raised by residents that the underlying damp in affected buildings needs to be properly assessed, rather than superficially painting over walls and drying carpets. Residents reported damp smells and concerns over health issues arising from this.

A resident of **Rhodes Mansions** who lives on a lower floor reported that many residents reported water leaks. L&Q were trying to remediate problems, but proper checks need to be done: under carpets, inside cupboards. Some residents are getting work done but there is no consistency or clarity on what is being done. A generic letter that was sent out to residents was not clear on what the plan is for the future, she added.

### 3. L&Q speaker to address the issues

Neil Davis apologised for the distress caused. He stated that there had been two month's average rainfall in two hours, which exceeded the anticipated range of possible rainfall events over a 90-year period, according to the forecasts on which the drainage design codes are based. He apologised that it was difficult to get hold of L&Q during that weekend because of the area that was affected that L&Q covers in London. At Barking Riverside L&Q checked the drains and there were no problems found. The drains had simply been unable to evacuate the water. Water therefore gathered on the balconies and made ingress into the flats.

However, as indicated in a letter sent to residents by L&Q dated 13 August, Neil confirmed L&Q would be enhance drainage capacity on the balconies by installing new pipes and redirecting water flow from roofs to the ground. L&Q arranged for contractors to visit all properties where there was water ingress through doors and windows, on the 17th and 18th August (the date of the RA meeting) also as set out in the L&Q letter.

Neil encouraged anyone with these issues to email Laura with "Balcony inspection" in the email subject title.

He said there was also a report for carpet cleaners through L&Q aftercare team and added that an insurance claim is being processed. Residents should claim on their own contents insurance and any excess would be reimbursed by L&Q.

### 4. Bellway speaker to address the issues

Steven Saville said that every balcony installed met NHBC standards and had a drainage system along with two overflow pipes. He said he was satisfied that the design was "up to scratch" adding that the balconies were designed to take on events like the past storm every 50 years. He blamed water ingress and leaking problems on poor workmanship. There was no direct apology but he admitted: "It's not very nice to have your property flooded."

Bill Kenneally, in charge of construction of **Woolcott Apartments**, said that an investigation had been launched as to the cause of the new homes being flooded but took the view that no amount of extra drainage would have solved the issue at Woolcott. He said the water stopped going down the drain pipes because the drains filled up, so it had nowhere to go, and just overspilled.

Pete noted that this does not address why water penetrated into the flats – should they not be waterproof? If water can pass under the balcony doors, surely that would also be a big source of heat loss.

Bill said that going forward all balconies in new phases will be inset balconies. Bellway will also be adding additional overflows and separately draining inset balconies rather than connecting them to water pipes.

#### 5. Water damage and flooding Q&A session

Pete said that the flood of the 25 July has affected many people, and that the RA had knowledge of 22 homes affected in the Rhodes, Pedley and Billington blocks alone, but it is a persistent problem.

Neil Davis said that in relation to damp, each property needs to be treated individually. All residents affected should be contacting Laura and the aftercare team for support in individual cases.

A resident asked Steve from Bellway about her consistent water leak of 1.5 years. The Bellway team identified a design issue in her case, where water has been leaking into her bedroom, which for the most part that she lived at the property, the bedroom has a temporary ceiling.

Steve apologised for not being aware of this particular situation but he said that it would most likely be a workmanship issue.

Paul at Bellway said that further investigations are being carried out at Pedley House and Lawley Mansions – scaffolding has been set up in preparation of works.

Venilia Amorim, the RA's treasurer said that all the comments so far had been from affected residents on phase 2 of the estate, but the fact of the matter is that properties on phase one, including townhouses on Galleons Drive had all suffered from water ingress and leaks for the past nine years coming from the balconies. She asked what were L&Q and Bellway doing or learning from this past phase that should not be repeated in future phases.

Steven said that Galleons Drive houses were due for wooden wall cladding to be removed along with balcony flooring, which may rectify problems there.

Residents pointed out that when the L&Q call centre was needed most urgently at this time, residents were waiting for hours on the phone as their flats filled with water. Neil apologised for the wait times, stating that L&Q was inundated with calls at that time.

Venilia suggested that a more robust communication plan is put in place as residents were left with hardly any specific information about works being carried out to their properties to rectify water ingress problems.

On Lawley Mansions a resident said that ceiling tiles had been pulled back near a fire stopping. Paul noted that works had been completed regarding fire safety checks and that all ceiling tiles should be put back soon.

Pete asked about previous concerns about airflow, and how in some flats that were hard or impossible to heat in mid-winter to a reasonable standard – cold air could be felt streaming in from places like plug sockets and other fixtures, as well as windows and balcony doors.

Surely this was the same conduit as for water flows. And would not smoke and poisonous gases flow from flat to flat the same way?

Steven said that the pressure of water forces itself through hydraulic pressure downwards and that could not be compared to airflow. He added that the airflow was always tested and it met regulatory standards.

Pete said he had seen the airflow test of Pedley House, and it seemed that the test required only a few flats to be tested, and that a more thorough test would show many flats where the airflow was far too high.

Steven simply reiterated that the building passed the airflow test.

Nuno Amorim, the RA's secretary, said that the 50-year scenario to which properties are prepared to endure is flawed. Claiming to have complied with regulations and blaming issues on poor workmanship in buildings that are not even two years old, is not good enough.

Steven said building companies need to follow a benchmark but Bellway has indeed identified some workmanship issues on Pedley House and Lawley Mansions.

A resident from Billington House said that works related to this particular remediation should not be reflected on residents' service charges. Neil and Mehran both confirmed there shouldn't be any costs to the service charge.

## **2. Other questions for L&Q and Bellway**

A resident noted that the new local park was closed and the car park was not being cleaned. Neil asked for such queries to be sent to Laura.

An RA committee member and resident of Rhodes Mansions said that during the storm water came through sockets and other electrical fixtures. Also, walls had not been checked properly and there was visible bubbling where the water had followed conduits. She said that communication was very poor, and added that she had been asking for the supplier invoices and costs that go into making the service charges as per her rights under the 1985 landlord and tenants act but had only been shown a few.

L&Q said that she should email Laura. She had done so, but has had no response. Laura said the service charge invoices were yet to be issued for the current year.

A resident of Billington house asked why residents had reported that the water was turned off while the floods were making ingress into the electricity sockets. Surely the thing to do was turn off the electricity as it was surely a fire and electrocution risk. The L&Q team responded that they will look into what happened.

## **3. Recognition**

Item 3 on the agenda was postponed due to lack of time.

## **4. Any Other Business (AOB)**

Alex on TWCP mentioned a collaboration with the British Red Cross on formulating a fire safety action plan. There will be three workshops available for residents that want to take part. He also mentioned TWCP and LBBB were launching a Wellbeing Navigators pilot and are looking to recruit 20 health and social care volunteers who will go out into the community and connect with isolated people. Interested people should contact him via email: [alex@twcp.org.uk](mailto:alex@twcp.org.uk).

The next residents meeting is Wednesday 29 September 2021 at 7.30pm

**Meeting ended 9.11pm**