

EMBASSY VILLAGE SITE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Security and access/egress strategy evolution

Introduction and Background

Within the approved consent (ref: 129923/FO/2021) planning permission was granted for a site reception/ entrance pod. It was noted in the planning submission that the Site Reception Pod would be located at the entrance to the Site, providing an outward facing, active frontage; it was referenced that this would include a reception desk, from which pedestrian and vehicular access would be controlled and an area for searching arriving residents.

On this basis the planning consent established that the approved reception pod would be utilised to house security personnel and to support the searching of individuals entering and leaving the village site.

Within the Planning Statement (prepared by Deloitte) and the Site Management Strategy (prepared by Embassy) it was noted that the on-site operation would have a 24/7 staffed presence, accommodated by the approved staff accommodation pod to facilitate security and management outside of normal office hours. At this stage it was therefore not established that a 24/7 security staff presence would be provided, but that the 'staff' would be a representative of the charity.

Staff Presence

Currently Embassy typically operates under an 8-hour day Monday to Friday and most days are office hours. With the Village there will be a larger staff presence, with Embassy planning to adopt an early shift and a later shift, with an overlap for handovers. This would see Embassy Staff on site 8am-8pm Monday to Friday.

Embassy Village will utilise the approved staff accommodation to provide staff presence in evenings and weekends. It is anticipated that the staff accommodation pod will be utilised by one of Embassy's responsible graduates of the program, who would stay in the accommodation, alongside having a full-time job elsewhere. They would receive rent free accommodation in return for being present overnight and at weekends, in case of emergency – where staff members may need to be called out to handle an issue or in the unlikely event that the police need to be called.

Design Development

Following the grant of full planning permission, the proposals have been subject to detailed design development, further cost and feasibility analysis resulting in updates and reconsiderations on the site management strategy, including access.

It is proposed that the approved site reception /office pod at the entrance be omitted, however an alternative solution is proposed which does not undermine the security and safety measures established in the approved management strategy.

Proposed Amendment to Remove Site Entrance / Reception Pod

Further detailed design development in relation to the site reception / office pod has indicated that this approved site entrance / reception pod is challenging to build.

The key considerations in the proposed removal of the site reception / office are as follows:

- Buildability and physical constraints associated with site levels / topography impacting on viability.
- Below ground servicing / infrastructure requirements to serve the site as a physical constraint
- Fire access safety concerns

Site Topography / Levels

As part of the design development process alternative configurations, build methods and layouts for the site reception pod have been developed and reworked to try and overcome challenges with the site topography/ levels in the approved location.

Despite testing various design options, this testing process has indicated that the site pod is not buildable and therefore not feasible. In total three locations towards the entrance to the site have been considered, which have all proved challenging. For further details on site levels / topography please refer to supporting information prepared by AEW Architects.

Servicing and Infrastructure

The existing below ground services required to serve the site are currently located beneath the area originally proposed for the entrance pod. Due to the constraints of the site, with canal on three sides the services need to be located on the entrance slope. As such making the necessary foundations for the site entrance pod is therefore not practically achievable for either a block work or pre-fabricated option.

Fire Access

Whilst three alternative locations at the site entrance have been explored as part of the detailed design development process these all present safety challenges as would compromise fire service access in terms of access down the ramp and the distance for staff to attend the gate to allow access. A smaller pod has also been considered but this would result in an internal area that wouldn't function as it would be too small

Proposed Site Security Solution at Entrance

In response to the above challenges a fence and intelligent gate system that would use CCTV and a smart entry system to allow access and egress is proposed; this would also not compromise the fire safety access concerns referenced above. Embassy staff or security staff would be based in the Village Hall during normal office hours, and come to the gate once alerted.

Precedent Scheme: Recycling Lives, Preston

Recycling Lives is a well established project in Preston which houses former prisoners and employs them in their recycling business. Embassy differs in that they don't employ residents in house and most residents are not straight out of prison, but there are similarities in terms of the operation.

Recycling Lives houses people who are homeless in 9 small ensuite rooms much like the village. There is then a common room and training kitchen, staff office and laundry – similar to the Embassy Village Hall.

Embassy have visited Recycling Lives in Preston on two occasions to understand their experience in adopting a largely similar management strategy to the updates site management strategy proposed above. Embassy was impressed with Recycling Lives' management strategy. For context, Recycling Lives residents have had almost no trouble or issues to date when using the same approach and system proposed above, with all Recycling Lives residents coming from more complex and difficult backgrounds including being former prisoners.

In summary, Recycling Lives successfully operate under their management strategy, following previous negative experience in adopting a formal security personnel presence:

- When paying for security personnel overnight and at weekends the employed personnel gave rise to management concerns, including smoking with residents, sleeping on the job.
- As a result a number of complaints were received by residents on the poor quality monitoring provided by the employed security guards.

In response to this for the past few years Recycling Lives have adopted a swipe card system that operates much like the room card-system a hotel would use, except that it controls access to both the front gate and the doors of individual apartments/ dwelling. The Recycling Lives access cards have a curfew and so residents are required to be home by 11pm or they are unable to gain access into the site and so would have to come back in the morning.

When engaging with Recycling Lives, Embassy queried its initial concerns with tailgating. The Recycling Lives team confirmed that this was rarely a problem because security cameras at the entrance provide surveillance, with residents also being made aware of the strict, clear instructions that allow non-residents is not acceptable and so should be actively seek to minimise the risk of tailgating.

Embassy are currently considering different smart entry systems for access, and they are being evaluated against the requirement of the Embassy Village development.

Conclusion

Embassy's approved management strategy with the original planning permission was prepared not long after the charity had been running a shelter. Under Embassy's separate shelter operations body searching each individual was considered appropriate given the

short notice and variety of individuals arriving. A number of individuals utilising Embassy's shelter operations were and are also considered to have very high needs, however these individuals are not considered appropriate for Embassy's housing scheme at the village.

As set out in the approved management strategy future residents of Embassy Village will be subject to an extensive selection process.

Embassy operate as a housing provider rather than a shelter and as such potential residents are interviewed and triaged. Only those who are ready and, crucially, keen to work and improve themselves will be offered accommodation at Embassy Village. Embassy has developed its selection process over time to better fit a model for intermediary accommodation combined with training and mentoring support. This has been developed using Embassy's experience to date with operating the Embassy Bus shelter and more recently intermediary housing.

Embassy has moved its operating model to offer intermediary accommodation only, not operating as a shelter. This means that Embassy cannot ask people to leave our properties except under very specific circumstances because they have a rental contract with us as their landlord. Evictions have been rare but they can involve a court order and significant time to execute. As a result, initial referrals, usually from the local authority, continue on the same basis but this is now the first stage in the process. Following referral, two members of the Embassy resettlement staff team will then meet with the individual and this interview will be deliberately timed for the following day. Embassy's experience of this has resulted in identifying individuals who have a genuine interest, willingness and commitment to the training programme, and who are therefore likely to fully engage with the services and support offered.

Embassy is responsible for the resident selection process and because of the scarcity of its services it ensures that they find those who are:

1. Genuinely without anywhere to go.
2. Fully aware that they are expected to engage in time in the programme of training and work.
3. Accommodation is a part of that programme.
4. Aware the programme is not optional.

The previously proposed search procedure has been revisited, and it is considered that such processes would be overbearing on future residents. For context, Embassy currently operates 3 properties having closed the shelter because of Covid and no complaints from neighbours have been received at any of the properties, there has been no violent incidents at all, and Embassy haven't had the police out ever to any of its properties. Embassy have a well-established, effective onboarding process in place. Future residents, (exactly as currently operated) will have medium or low needs which can be accommodated and supported at the Embassy Village. Those needs are related to literacy, education, training, confidence, past trauma and some low level addiction but not associated to life controlling addictions, schedule 1 criminal convictions or difficult behaviour.

In summary, Embassy will seek to retain the right to search residents as set out in the approved management strategy but it is proposed that regular searches when entering the

site are considered unnecessary and invasive. Embassy Village seeks to provide a roof over their head, providing longer term benefits such as improving overall wellbeing, giving back independence and providing mentoring to encourage resettlement – strict search procedures are considered to counter the resettlement ambitions of the scheme.

Summary

This revised management strategy has sought to set out and establish a rationale for revisions to the approved strategy. The revised strategy and associated proposed amendments are set out below:

- Removal of site entrance / office pod.
- Embassy retaining the right to search all residents, but residents not being subject to search procedures when entering the site every time.
- Installation of smart entry system for entry into the site.
- Clarification on the proposed staff presence on the site, including utilising the dedicated staff accommodation pod.