

Since the last AGM one of our directors, Tim Williams, resigned at the end of August. Thanks are due to Tim for all his input into running the Estate and especially for him taking on the task of managing the collection of ground rents during his time with us. We also welcomed the appointment of a new director, David O'Connor.

Most of our activity has been evaluating the requests for alterations to properties on the Estate. Sadly, this task has not been going as smoothly as it could do with a number of residents embarking on alterations without really considering whether they need to involve the Company or the planning depart. This can lead to additional work and bad feeling down the line which is something we all want to avoid. We published an article in the last RA Newsletter on the subject, but in case anyone missed it we are repeating it here:

“The aim of the Company is to manage the land in a manner that preserves or enhances the amenity of the Conservation Area. Living on the estate is a privilege, but we should understand that this comes with conditions attached.

If you want to make changes to any property you have to work within the planning rules, but living in a Herbert Collins designed house brings its own unique set of conditions. The special architectural interest of the area led to it being declared a conservation area by Southampton City Council in 1988, and further protection was provided by the Secretary of State for the Environment in 1992, who confirmed Directions under Article 4 of the General Development Order.

The Company are custodians of Herbert Collin's vision for the Estate, so, in order to maintain the architectural character and value of the Estate any alteration or addition to a property must be notified to, and approved, by Herbert Collins Estates Limited before any work is started. This is in addition to any planning permission granted by the local authority and applies equally to leaseholders and owners of freehold properties.

All requests for alterations are considered by the directors of the Company, and they will normally approve alterations that match the original building in scale, design and materials. However it is understood that modern materials may now be appropriate for soffits and rainwater goods, but where the change has more impact, for example roofs, care should be taken to avoid the property looking different from its immediate neighbours. Reclaimed tiles can be found for small repairs. For larger areas, for example removing all tiles to re-felt, an experienced roofer can carefully remove the old tiles and replace them when the felting is complete. If any new tiles are needed they should be fitted at the rear of the property, not on the front or sides. New tiles should be made of clay, and match the style of the original. Modern concrete tiles will not be approved.

No consent is needed for like-for-like repair or redecoration, but there have been some recent examples of residents using a rather liberal interpretation of this when making alterations. The best course of action is to ask the Company before starting work if you are uncertain if your property falls into this category. The same applies to planning permission. Contact with Southampton City Council when drawing up plans will ensure that they are more likely to gain consent. It is useful to read up the Appraisal and Management Plan for the Ethelburt Avenue (Bassett Green) Conservation Area, and the Policy of Herbert Collins Estates Limited, both of which can be found on the Residents Association website.”

As most of you will be aware, ground rents for leased properties on the Estate are fixed. With inflation this means that their value in real terms reduces year on year. Our ground rent collected for the whole year was £1164. There was a small amount of extra income from the sale of freeholds and payments for survey work, but a large proportion of our income was allocated to the insurance we need for running the Company.

The directors are becoming concerned about the long-term financial viability of Herbert Collins Estates Limited, and think this is now a worthy subject for debate.