# Wards Keep housing dispute nears resolution as council and developer agree way forward



Walsall Council and developer Countryside Properties have announced progress towards resolving a prolonged dispute concerning the Wards Keep housing estate in Darlaston. The estate, comprising 205 homes constructed in 2022, had been subject to disagreements over breaches of a Section 106 planning agreement relating to the management of the estate’s open spaces.

Originally, the Section 106 agreement required the establishment of a Management Plan that would transfer control of the estate’s communal open areas to residents through a management company. However, the management arrangements that were put in place instead granted Countryside Properties, part of the Vistry Group, ultimate control over these spaces. This arrangement included provisions allowing Countryside to impose unlimited charges on homeowners and, in extreme circumstances, to evict homeowners for non-payment.

Concerns escalated in 2024 when Walsall Council indicated it was preparing to seek a High Court injunction against Countryside Properties. At that time, Councillor Adrian Andrew, deputy leader and portfolio holder for regeneration, criticised the developer for consistently failing to remedy the situation and described their stance as a lack of cooperation.

Earlier this week, Councillor Andrew shared an update signalling that the council and Countryside Properties had found a constructive way forward. Speaking about the development, he said: “I’m glad we are close to reaching an agreement with Countryside Properties on what has been a difficult and convoluted issue. We are working towards a positive outcome.”

From the developer’s perspective, Michael Moore, managing director for North West Midlands at Countryside Properties, expressed optimism about the progress made. “I’m delighted that we now have a way forward and are working closely with the council with a view to reaching a resolution,” Moore said. “This is a very positive step. I hope this will reassure residents of our genuine commitment to resolving their concerns. We have a step-by-step plan and will be writing to homeowners very shortly to explain our approach in more detail.”

The council and developer have not yet released specific details of the forthcoming agreement, but the statements indicate a collaborative effort underway to address the concerns of the homeowners affected by the management arrangements. The Wards Keep estate dispute highlights the complexities of housing estate management and the importance of clear accountability in shared community spaces.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/newsroom/walsall-council-and-countryside-properties-agree-way-forward-wards-keep-estate-darlaston> - This URL corroborates the progress towards resolving the dispute between Walsall Council and Countryside Properties regarding the Wards Keep estate in Darlaston, including the collaborative efforts and commitment to addressing homeowners' concerns.
* <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/newsroom/council-prepares-take-legal-action-against-developer> - This article details Walsall Council's preparation for legal action against Countryside Properties over breaches of a Section 106 planning agreement, highlighting the developer's failure to comply with planning obligations.
* <https://www.expressandstar.com/news/local-hubs/walsall/darlaston/2024/03/01/residents-talk-of-issues-with-developers-and-what-dispute-means-between-council-and-developers/> - This news article discusses the impact of the legal dispute on residents in the Wards Keep estate, reflecting the allegations against Countryside Properties regarding the Section 106 agreement breaches.
* <https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/planning/401-planning-news/56591-council-sends-national-developer-pre-action-letter-over-alleged-breaches-of-s106-agreement-for-large-scheme> - It explains the pre-action letter sent by Walsall Council to Countryside Properties over alleged breaches of the Section 106 agreement, outlining the council's intent to seek an injunction if compliance is not achieved.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source provides the original article that outlines the background and recent developments in the dispute over Wards Keep estate, though specific factual validation might not be directly available.