

# A CITY FOR ALL LONDONERS

Housing Workshop  
21st November 2016, 9.30 – 13.00

## Estate Regeneration Table 10 Session 1

**Facilitator in bold facilitator – comments in bold**

Respondents in regular text

These notes are a summary of the conversation

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*Session 1, Table 10*

### **Facilitator, Dominic Curran, Greater London Authority**

Tom Tyson, Lambeth Council

Henry Smith, Town and Country Planning Association

Pat Turnbull, Hackney Council Resident Liaison Group

Mark Green, Savills

Nick Powell, London Borough of Waltham Forest

Steven Burak, Reclaim Our Spaces

Angela Epps, Peabody

Jamie Simpson, London Borough of Barking & Dagenham

Peter O’Kane, Waltham Forest Housing Network

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### **What constitutes good estate regeneration?**

Resident support and delivering new homes.

Place making; infrastructure design; support community needs, for example jobs.

### **Links to wider area?**

Corruption. It is cheaper to renovate and restore estates, but they are being demolished and rebuilt and many of the homes are bought and then left empty.

### **Should other options be considered, for example a sliding scale?**

It is about communities and the built environment. Ensure social problems do not reoccur. Look at cost effectiveness of refurbishment, understand the motivation for demolition.

### **Understand lifecycle of homes?**

Social homes replaced by market homes that do not meet the needs of existing and future tenants.

What happens to people as soon as demolition is started is that they must move three or four times. The right to return is theoretical.

Demolition is a serious undertaking.

From a landlord perspective, we need to look at sustainable ways to improve the environment.

We are improving the environment. There is a financial issue, but doing nothing is not an option.

Balance the longer-term benefits. What is the interim offer to people who must leave?

Creating as few gaps as possible is critical. Ensure people do not have to move very far so there is minimal disruption. People need to keep a local connection, keep children at existing schools and so on. Timescales should be short.

We need to look at this in a sophisticated way. It is not an either/or situation.

Invest in the community. Ensure organisations have capacity. Continuity is key.

**Landlords need to be upfront about their priorities.**

Who decides? Tenants should decide. They should be the driver.

Tenants need to be resourced and given a full range of choices, not a contained range of choices. More transparency. Wider agendas need to be clear.

Free housing revenue account funding. HRA assets are subsidising shared ownership. 90 percent cannot afford shared ownership in Islington.

Tenants are concerned about security of tenure. Current legislation creates doubt. Clarity around that would be helpful.

**Lifetime tenancies no longer exist. Is that what you mean?**

There will be exceptions. If tenants are forced to move, they should get a lifetime tenancy, theoretically.

No regulation relating to estate regeneration.

Re the housing gap, ten years is the figure that I got from a housing expert

Tenants want lifetime tenancies.

## **Councils could offer a series of ten-year tenancies.**

A range of inconsistent tenancies can create a problematic dynamic on estates. Registered providers' choice about tenancies.

People are moved on to estates while estates are being regenerated without an assurance of tenure or obligation to rehouse.

Tenants are being asked to move more than once.

Some people want to move.

Promises are often made and then broken.

It is hard to set out goals at the outset and be sure that they won't change. Clarity from the outset and engagement is important.

## **Tricky.**

Some people want different outcomes. How do you manage that?

I agree with you on that point, but there is general agreement that social inequality is a serious problem. For example, £3.5 billion was spent on temporary accommodation last year.

We need to reassess before the bubble bursts for everyone involved.

Look at this in an integrated, collective way.

## **Do we need to increase overall housing supply?**

I don't believe so. There are more than 600,000 empty homes in England alone.

## **Is building the wrong focus?**

There is no registry of empty homes.

There is.

It is a voluntary register, and by its very nature must be incomplete.

It is a fairly good representation.

Building council houses would reduce the risk.

What is in our control is the issue. Estate management is in our control, but can we afford it from existing rental schemes?

How do we afford regeneration when grants do not cover regeneration and rebuild?

Blurring the lines creates problems.

**Clear motivation from the landlord is crucial.**

Quantify cross-subsidy. Public funding is reimbursed from the pot of gold.

Cross-subsidy increases the supply of financially accessible homes.

Local authority high-rent regime. Fewer homes at a more affordable rent may be better.

Taking open space from estates may be okay if existing tenants can afford to stay living there. For example, 100 social rented rather than 200 affordable.

Tenure is an issue. Unsuitable bedsits on estates could be remodelled. Lose bedsits and gain family-sized homes. This means fewer units but meets the needs of those on the housing list.

**Retain floor space measure?**

Need a definition of affordable linked to the lower quartile income of the locality.

London living rent linked to that.

80 percent of the market rent is not affordable under any reasonable definition.

Barking & Dagenham and Bexley are the only Boroughs where 80 percent is affordable.

Welfare caps must drive down rents.

Local authorities need support to lobby and act as developers to provide homes. Need greater flexibility around borrowing.

Last Mayor lobbied for full HRA devolution.

Right-to-buy receipts could be more flexible.

Accessible rather than affordable is key. Needs to be linked to a concrete definition. Language clarity, consistency and simplicity of language are all important.

Affordable is unaffordable. Consistency in language is key. For example, suburban densification and outer city intensification are the same thing. Linguistically and legally language needs to be clear.

Jargon is an issue. For example, 'decant' is a horrible, dehumanising word.

There are a range of options. Might have to demolish if you cannot upgrade the homes.

Landlords get rent from the estate, which should cover the upkeep of the homes.

Lots more is possible.

Some situations need other sources of funding, including cross-subsidy from demolition and rebuild.

Barber estate in Edmonton was an example where the tenants wanted to demolish and rebuild. This was possible because there was a mix of funding from the sale of land and a grant of £60,000 to £70,000. That grant is not available now. I don't know how the maths would work now.

Upkeep of the estate could be an issue. Do not use statements from tenants to justify demolition.

Ten years down the line, how can landlords take a view of the waiting list?

But there will be other people living on the estate.

Landlords should account for the future. Everyone should have a say if they have a stake or buy into the area.

Listen to views, create a plan. Communication builds trust.

How will homes be built if not through estate regeneration?

Measure the wider needs of society. We are not meeting them now, especially with social rented homes.

Grant funding is cut, which links to the problem. Need more investment to build more. There is far less money from government to invest in social housing.

London is in a good position. Because of the local plans, there is an opportunity to work holistically.

### **Do we need to increase overall housing supply?**

Simply looking at social issues is not enough.

Need to see the bigger picture. Units create new homes that are future proofed.

Building seems to be the focus, but I think it is the wrong focus.

Perpetuation of the same pattern is problematic.

Community, improve lives of people who live on the estate.

We do not have the investment that we had before.

Landlords are in a financially worse situation. The GLA could argue for a different regime.

Local authorities must do something and have a regard for their social role.

Need to balance people's lives with the number of units.

Increasing the units on local authority estates is easier because it is more convenient to deal with relatively disempowered tenants.

Additional housing is needed. Meet social needs; don't just add up the number of homes. Need to generate the pot of gold.

### **Extra homes would cross-subsidise the better-quality social homes.**

Who can access these homes?

People from across London.

Building more social homes at the expense of market homes not being built.

In summary, over and above that, chase the social need not the number of units.

I would question the notion of better quality.

### **Planning considerations?**

Place making is important. Regeneration benefits the wider area, including jobs etc.

Social needs and better quality of homes.

Stacking up the numbers is not the way forward.

When choosing demolition as an option you have to have to build in the cost of rebuilding, the carbon footprint and other hidden costs.

Understand the qualitative nature of the problem.

Benefit for the wider area – moving a few middle-class people in has the underlying assumption that this brings benefit to an area.

Working class council estates can be very strong communities.

Evidence exists for investing in social housing.

Understand the situation that landlords are in.

For example, providing a new plaza, public space or supermarket makes a better place for everyone.

The London Plan does not look at consultation and monitoring. Is there a role for the London Plan to be explicit about this?

You could run it through section 106.

Yes, definitely.

**More buy in if this monitoring and consultation happens.**

Lambeth are rebuilding six estates by keeping ownership of that rebuilding and not giving it to developers. Tenants are generally okay with the plan, but leaseholders are not okay with it.

Ensuring access is a key point.

Need to get access to people who are not usually engaged.

GLA should pass that money down to the local authority as part of the planning process.

Sometimes there is a vocal minority. Need a formal voting process with monitoring milestones along the way.

**To recap, our points are: be more explicit about the consultation before the process starts; have a full spectrum of interventions; address and reconcile competing objectives; focus on protecting and increasing existing social housing by making sure it is financially accessible; broader sense of regeneration, not just rebuilding; HRA account flexibility for local authorities; and GLA has a role in shouting for a different framework – this one creates inequality.**

# Residential design quality standards

## Table 10 Session 2

**Facilitator in bold facilitator – comments in bold**  
**Respondents in regular text**

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*Session 2, Table 10*

**Facilitator, Dominic Curran, Greater London Authority**

Mark Baigent, Tower Hamlets Council

Shanaz Zaman, Royal Borough of Greenwich

Glyn Robbins, Quaker Court Tenant Management Organisation

Mick O'Sullivan, London Federation of Housing Co-ops

Councillor Matthew Bennett, Lambeth Council

Steve Cole, London First

Richard Lee: Just Space

Rick Martinez, London Borough of Sutton

Tatiana Telles Ferreira, Allies and Morrison

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### **What constitutes good estate regeneration?**

Referring to an academic paper I read recently, I prefer refurbishment over regeneration.

Existing tenants are moved off, social housing is reduced, damage to the social fabric of the community.

There are fewer homes for ordinary Londoners: 1,000 homes for social rent, 100 are re-let, 500 for social rent and the waiting list increases.

The bottom line is that there needs to be a net gain in affordable housing. The question is whether housing rules support that.

No net loss of floor space is the criterion in the London Plan, not number of units.

On the surface it may look like we lose homes, but a different unit size may suit the need for family homes.

Estate regeneration can vary.

Lambeth has six schemes where refurbishment was not an option because of grants and specific needs. Planning criteria should state that there is no loss of socially rented units. This is a priority for Lambeth. Lambeth is in a unique position because of the land value. It can keep the developments under local authority control and increase the number of social homes. Making use of land value means the scheme

can break even. That increases the opportunity to offer private rented tenancies. Lambeth benefits from high land values, but other areas are in a different situation. Funding would be needed from the Mayor for those areas.

Planning criteria must match the aim of estate regeneration.

There are different drivers. There is pressure to deliver additional housing. We need to find ways to do that. Estates can do that.

Good point, but some policies need to deal with the social issues explicitly.

Estate regeneration by private developers – social rent is not retained, there is disruption, existing and future communities get a raw deal.

We need mandatory language in the London Plan as a minimum.

Maintain social rents and increase them. Now it is ball and chain led.

Has Sadiq Khan implemented a ban on demolition?

The manifesto states that demolition should be a last resort where all other options are exhausted.

Evidence shows that demolition makes the rent increase worse.

### **Should the landlord's motivation be clear at the beginning?**

Yes, but with genuine consultation with the existing communities.

It's Hobson's choice.

The decision in Lambeth was to rebuild the estate or let it go into disrepair.

The London Plan is a 30-year plan. Should we not be trying to change the framework?

On a local basis, the land was developed in the 1960s and 1970s and now needs to be changed.

### **Should policy stipulate that a developer has to prove that demolition is required?**

Uplift in density on paper, but is there a planning argument to demolish estates because of housing need?

Yes, but it would not be classed as regeneration.

Viability of £360 million of eco funding for affordable housing grants. Need to work with developers and housing associations because the local authority does not have

the capital, unless lending rules change. Everyone needs to be up front with communities.

Transparency is a good point.

With estate regeneration, what would we do with existing housing estates?

People who live there may not have the right home but they would not say, "Knock down the estate." You need to take people with you. Most people do not have confidence.

Participation in the process should be central to this discussion, but that does not exist right now.

Technical aid is needed to assist tenants. The process feels like an imposition for tenants.

Need a longer-term plan and get changes in strategic thinking into the plan.

**Does everyone agree that more support and transparency is needed?**

Consultation is complicated. Some tenants are afraid. They need to learn to be more open.

Specialist architects can do this process well. Put the good examples in planning and learn from that. Need money, private and public working together.

**The GLA is writing a good practice guide to pick up best practice and lessons learned.**

The good developers should have been part of the discussion. Tenants should be part of the discussion. Should incorporate the good practice guide into the new London Plan.

Good practice guide could be part of funding applications. Embed it into the planning process in the long term.

In 2000 it was said that the only way to save council housing was stock transfer. Estates that did not participate have survived. There is a danger in presenting emotional blackmail as legitimate arguments. There is overwhelming evidence and a cost benefit analysis showing that refurbishment is the best choice.

People sense that estate regeneration is being used for social engineering. I am not sure how the plan can address that.

Britain is bad at retrofit. In light of that, demolition might be the better option. With a new build failure there is a two-year window for redress.

On retrofit, the London Assembly Housing Committee did a full investigation and the evidence is in favour of demolition.

Academic research showed that the cheapest option is retrofit. This analysis was accepted by the London Assembly Housing Committee, but retrofit is a low priority for section 106 or other funding.

The solution is to make it a higher priority within programmes.

Refurbish or rebuild is a separate conversation. Clear justification is needed.

One of the demolition schemes in Lambeth was an estate of bungalows in good repair. Lambeth could not justify such low-density housing.

In planning guidance, densification needs to be a justification.

Phasing of development and the right to return needs to be built into guidance.

Myatts Field North is another Lambeth development. 80 percent of tenants have stayed on the estate.

Be clear who the rebuild is for. Tenants are often supportive of the rebuild and owner-occupiers against it.

How do you listen to the other people in society who are not on the estate, for example people in temporary accommodation and private tenants who would benefit from the development? Quality of delivery varies across Boroughs. The role of the GLA is to provide a minimum standard that is enforceable.

There is estate regeneration that doesn't need Mayoral funding. Make it part of the planning condition.

### **Section 106 implementation is limited until 2019.**

Good practice guide will recommend things. GLA needs to find out what is legally possible.

How can we make this possible in legal terms, to ensure good practice is mandatory?

Publicise examples of poor practice. Create a league table of developers that local authorities can use when tendering.

Planning inspectors sometimes give approval to dodgy plans.

Put something into the London Plan.

Housing associations are not always benign. Local authorities and the Mayor need to demand that they change their practice.

We need to build more houses: greater legislation would stop that. Procurement, upskill the Boroughs' procurement processes.

Deregulation is inevitable for housing associations.

Housing associations build 95 percent of all social housing, but for other people at the table that is a discrepancy, because it is rented as affordable housing not social housing.

What is the balance of the percentage of tenants and the percentage of the needs of people across London?

Involve the community in its wider form.

Voluntary and community sectors are not stakeholders on the Homes for London Board, which is a major problem.

A tripartite approach is needed: public, private and community. Recognise, value and resource this.

**Our points to feedback are: landlords to be open about their intentions at every stage; resource key stakeholders; accept differing priorities of landlords; be explicit in planning terms, with consideration for densification; how to account for the views of future residents and the wider community; and the GLA as an information resource with real-time database of developers, look at existing models.**