

Letter to Mayor to intervene on Lesnes Estate demolition

Zoë Garbett stands with residents of the Lesnes estate at City Hall

Key information

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Dear Sadiq,

I am writing regarding the Lesnes Estate planning application, Ref. 21/01948/OUTEA, which has recently been referred to the Mayor for Stage 2 approval. I urge you to call in this application.

First of all, I would like to flag former Assembly Member Siân Berry's letter for your attention in October 2023. The concerns raised in this letter still stand, and should be considered in your Stage 2 decision. The link to that letter is here: <https://www.london.gov.uk/publications/letter-mayor-about-stage-2-refer...>

I would also like to remind you of the letter and accompanying petition from residents I submitted to you on 21 January 2025. In your response, you committed to acknowledging the concerns raised, including the: "proposed demolition of homes and whole life-cycle carbon emissions; the residents' ballot, public consultation, and the principles of estate regeneration; affordable housing and the viability assessment; and sustainable and green measures." The main petition is here: <https://the.organise.network/campaigns/network-re-stage-2-decision-for-...>, and the additional petition is here: <https://www.change.org/p/stop-peabody-demolishing-the-lesnes-estate-tha...>

To elaborate on Siân's letter and the submitted petitions, I would like to draw your attention to a number of additional concerns about this application, which you should consider at Stage 2.

Alternative options for regeneration

Policy H8 states that before considering demolition of existing estates, alternative options should first be considered and the potential benefits associated with the option to demolish and rebuild an estate set against the wider social and environmental impacts. Your Stage 1 report concludes "the applicant has demonstrated that alternatives to demolition have been fully explored".

Since the stage 1 report, AAB Architects have worked with residents to create a feasible retrofit plan for the Lesnes Estate, which has subsequently been approved by a retrofit assessor. I have attached both the Community Rescue Plan and the validation by the retrofit assessor.

The applicant failed to produce an alternative option for regenerating the estate, which these documents prove are realistic, and can be achieved with far fewer financial and material resources, fewer carbon emissions and significant social benefit for residents. The conclusion in the Stage 1 report that “the applicant has demonstrated that alternatives to demolition have been fully explored”, and thus the application’s compliance with London Plan Policy H8, should therefore be reconsidered.

Loss of affordable housing and maltreatment of freeholders

As noted in the Stage 1 report, The Mayor’s Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration is a material consideration for this planning application.

Siân’s letter and the petitions highlight the issues with the ballot process, and the shocking loss of affordable housing under the initial proposals, including much-needed social rent homes. This directly contravenes policies in the London Plan and guidance in the Good Practice Guide, as well as undermining a chief purpose of estate regeneration projects, “to increase the amount of affordable housing, particularly homes based on social rent levels.”

Since Siân’s letter, I have been deeply concerned that the applicant has contravened further guidance in the Mayor’s Good Practice Guide since, particularly a lack of fair treatment for leaseholders and freeholders. The managed decline of the estate in the last few years has been well documented. I am deeply concerned that the neglect and rapidly declining living conditions on the estate have pushed freeholders into accepting unfair terms – contravening the Good Practice Guide’s insistence on a “fair deal for leaseholders/freeholders”. I outlined many of these concerns held by residents direct to the Mayor in Mayor’s Question Time in January 2025: <https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/question...> This was subsequently widely reported by the media, which documented testimony from residents directly: <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/lesnes-estate-residents-regenera...>

In this context, I am also deeply concerned that social residents entitled to a right of return may have decided not to take up this right to return due to the rumbling-on of the estate regeneration process and the managed decline on the estate. This could result in the further loss of social housing on the estate, as per a quote from the applicant quoted in the Stage 1 report: “Up to 61 homes at Social Rents for existing Lesnes Estate tenants who wish to stay in South Thamesmead (or less if not all these residents wish to remain living in the area).” We could see the social housing offer on the estate fall from a pre-regeneration high of 411 to even below 61.

All of this is deeply concerning, and variously violates both the London Plan and the guidance and goals of the Mayor’s Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration.

Equalities Impact Assessment

The Equalities Impact Assessment submitted as part of this application is unavailable to view on the Bexley Council website.

I urge you to scrutinise this document in depth, as I am deeply concerned the proposed plans will have a hugely disproportionate impact on Black and ethnic minority people, many of whom are facing displacement from their homes and the area as a result of these proposals. This has been reported widely, and testimony from residents is included in this article: <https://www.voice-online.co.uk/news/uk-news/2025/03/04/lesnes-estate/>.

On account of these issues, I urge you to call-in this application.

Kind regards,
Zoë Garbett