

# **BENHILL TENANTS' MEETING NOTES 22 MARCH 2021**

- Attendees:** Keith, Michelle, Phoebe Connell.
- Officers:** Geeta Le Tissier (LBS), Ian Simpson (Communities First), Lauren Fabregas & Lewis Toop (SHP), Palma Black (CF).
- Observers:** Bev Brigden (Sutton Leaseholders Association), Colin Hawkins (Sutton Federation of TRAs), Cllr David Bartolucci.

## **1. INTRODUCTIONS**

Ian welcomed everyone to the meeting and people introduced themselves. Communities First have recently been appointed as Independent Tenants and Homeowners Advisor (ITHA) for Benhill.

## **2. PRESENTATION – REGENERATION AND TENANTS**

Ian summarized Sutton's overall Commitments to secure tenants, which include a choice (if redevelopment is the preferred option) to return to a new home on the estate or have priority to move to an existing Council home across the borough.

The current Home Loss payment on redevelopment schemes is £7,500, and Sutton would also have to pay the costs of moving (the "Disturbance payment").

Ian ran through the options that will need to be considered in the forthcoming *Option Appraisal* for the estate, including refurbishment, infill and full redevelopment. The Mayor's guidance for regeneration schemes requires landlords seeking funding for new homes to complete a full Option Appraisal. Ian added that some options may not be realistic in terms of viability or practical delivery and could be ruled out at various stages of the process.

If regeneration is the preferred option after consultation, the Mayor's Guidance will require a *residents' ballot* if Greater London Assembly (GLA) funding is sought. The Council's existing commitments would form the basis of the "Landlord Offer" on which residents would vote. However, the offer document would also be shaped by local issues and consultation, which could include a "Benhill Residents Charter" to set out additional guarantees.

A ballot on the Landlord Offer would be a Yes / No vote decided by a simple majority of those voting. Those eligible to vote would be secure and introductory Council tenants, homeowners who have been resident for at least one year and residents who have been on Sutton's Housing Register for at least 12 months.

Ian said leaseholders and the RSG should be fully involved in the Option Appraisal process to ensure their voices can shape the future of their estate.

## **3. DISCUSSION**

Keith said he still has outstanding questions from the previous consultation, including rent levels in any new homes. Ian explained that it is not possible to give rents until architects can estimate the value of the new homes, as this is an element of the rent-setting formula used for social rents. But Sutton would need to include this information in any Landlord Offer prior to a ballot.

***ACTION: contact Keith to discuss outstanding questions (Michael Hunte)***

Geeta explained the earlier consultation was part of the wider redevelopment plans for the area, and that the decision to explore regeneration of Benhill grew out of this earlier work. David said Benhill residents' response to the Council's Local Plan in 2016 had helped focus attention on the need for regeneration.

Residents asked about the sizes of the new homes, pointing out that many of the rooms are 18 feet long. Geeta explained that the architects will be appointed soon, and asked if residents wanted to be involved in the selection process.

Phoebe said there are many things that people like about their existing homes and estate. Ian suggested features that residents would want to see preserved could be included in the Residents' Charter.

#### **4. STAYING INVOLVED**

Keith asked why meetings must be held during the coronavirus lockdown. He was concerned that separate meetings for tenants and leaseholders would divide residents. Geeta explained that the two tenure-specific meetings were in response to a request at the last Residents' Steering Group meeting.

Colin stressed the importance of maintaining momentum in the consultation. Ian said a ballot early in 2022 would have to be followed by a planning application and decanting (temporary moves) before the first phase of any development could happen. Keith said he had been told that redevelopment could take 10-15 years.

Ian said Communities First will door-knock on the estate and meet residents in person as soon as Covid guidelines allow. They also want to set up drop-in sessions on the estate as soon as possible. Meanwhile, he will be very happy to talk with individual residents in confidence and discuss any questions.

Michelle asked if it would be possible to hold both daytime and evening meetings so that more people can attend. She said this had worked well on a nearby estate. She also suggested earlier starts for evening meetings while people are working from home, e.g. start times of 5 pm or 5.30 pm.

Keith asked if Communities First would stand up for residents? Ian said advocacy was an important part of their work, although their main aim is to enable residents to stand up for themselves. He said they cannot do is to recommend or oppose any of the options; that was for individual residents to decide for themselves.

Phoebe would like to have a tenant Chair of the Residents' Steering Group.

The Residents Steering Group meeting will be held on Zoom on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> March at 6.30pm. The link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86252232132>

Contact details are as follows:

Communities First – Tel 0300 365 7150, email: [benhill@communitiesfirst.uk.com](mailto:benhill@communitiesfirst.uk.com)  
Ian's mobile number is 07740 611817.

Sutton Council – [estateregeneration@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:estateregeneration@sutton.gov.uk)

Benhill Residents Steering Group - Vice Chair email: [brsg.vicechair@hotmail.com](mailto:brsg.vicechair@hotmail.com)

**Links to helpful websites:**

**Mayor of London - Better Homes for Local People, Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration (February 2018)**

<https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/better-homes-for-local-people-the-mayor-s-good-practice-guide-to-estate-regeneration.pdf>

**GLA Capital Funding Guide, Section 8 - Mayor of London - Funding Conditions that require Resident Ballots for Estate Regeneration Projects (July 2018)**

[https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla\\_cfg\\_section\\_8\\_resident\\_ballots\\_-\\_18\\_july\\_2018.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla_cfg_section_8_resident_ballots_-_18_july_2018.pdf)

**GLA Housing Standards - Minor Alterations to the London Plan (March 2016)**

[https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/housing\\_standards\\_malp\\_for\\_publication\\_7\\_april\\_2016.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/housing_standards_malp_for_publication_7_april_2016.pdf)

**HEB Report - Estate Regeneration Rehousing and Compensation Scheme (15th October 2018)**

<https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=40537&PlanId=0&Opt=3#A139427>

**Estate Regeneration Good Practice Guide (December 2016)**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/estate-regeneration-good-practice-guide>

**Benhill Estate Regeneration Webpage**

[https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200502/housing\\_advice\\_and\\_options/1781/benhill\\_estate\\_regeneration](https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200502/housing_advice_and_options/1781/benhill_estate_regeneration)

**Sutton Link**

[https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/trams/sutton-link/user\\_uploads/sutton-link-consultation-report.pdf](https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/trams/sutton-link/user_uploads/sutton-link-consultation-report.pdf)

**Report It (Sutton Council)**

[https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200447/report\\_it](https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200447/report_it) or telephone: 020 8770 5000

**Report It (Sutton Housing Partnership)**

<https://www.suttonhousingpartnership.org.uk/report-it> or telephone: 020 8915 2000 or contact Lara Amota (SHP Housing Manager) on 202 8915 2181