

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF SOUTHWARK

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
AND ACQUISITION OF LAND ACT 1981

Revised Inquiry into

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF SOUTHWARK
(AYLESBURY ESTATE SITES 1B-1C)

COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER 2014

PINS REFERENCE: NPCU/CPO/A5840/74092

Proof of Evidence of
Professor Jane Rendell
For the Aylesbury Leaseholders Group

6th December 2017

1. As an independent academic witness, I am a trained architect, and an architectural historian/theorist, with over 100 publications, including 5 authored books and 10 (co-)edited volumes, one focusing on the history of London's post war social housing.

2. My statement is based on a study of the documents circulated to the meeting of the Executive Committee of Southwark Council on 27 September 2005 (**CD8**), at which the decision was taken to demolish and rebuild rather than to refurbish the Aylesbury Estate. I argue that the information provided to the Executive Committee for that meeting was inadequate for making such a decision, and that the information was unbalanced, as it did not include key design work and costings for the demolition/new build option, that could be compared with the detailed work already undertaken for the refurbishment option.

3. The information for the option to demolish and rebuild the Aylesbury Estate consisted of a one-page 'Annex C: Indicative Cashflow Forecast' (**JR1**). This forecast included figures for 'estimated land value', 'income from development', 'leaseholders CPO' and 'tenants decant', but there were no figures given for design or construction. There were also figures for 'delivery team fees' and 'master plan', but no master plan was attached, nor were there any designs or information on construction. Annex C contains no code to allow the reader to decipher the abbreviated terms, so it was not possible to understand the costs to which some of the figures referred. I concluded, therefore, that this one-page cash-flow report did not constitute sufficient evidence on which to base a decision to demolish and rebuild the Aylesbury Estate.

4. The information for the refurbishment option, consisted of a one-and-a-half page summary document titled 'Costs of Refurbishment' (**CD8: Annex A**), that estimated the total cost of refurbishment to Decent Homes Plus as £314.6 million. (**CD8: Annex A, p. 599**). And although Southwark Council had commissioned substantial research, designs and costings for the refurbishment option – specifically, a large design package (up to RIBA Stage E) provided by Levitt Bernstein Architects, (**JB CD1**), a 71-page report by Frost Associates (**JR2**) and a 20-page report by BTPW

Partnership **(JR3)** – *none* of this detailed information was provided to the Executive Committee.

5. Annex A included a figure of £148.9 million for External Works, **(CD8: Annex A)** nearly half the total estimated cost of refurbishment; yet I have been unable to correlate this figure with the calculations in the Frost and the BPTW reports. **(JR2 and JR3)** The BPTW report gave a total figure for external works for the whole estate as £24.8 million, **(JR3: np, Table entitled: AYLESBURY ESTATE (INC SOUTH WEST CORNER) SUMMARY OF REFURBISHMENT OPTIONS (DECENT HOMES BASIC/DECENT HOMES +)** less than a quarter of the Council's total; and although the Frost report did not give a total figure, even by adding up all the figures given for the external works for each relevant block on the estate I could only reach a total of £20.7 million. **(JR2)** So when faced with such a high figure for the refurbishment costs and no background details to justify it, it is perhaps understandable why the Executive Committee decided to reject the option to refurbish the Aylesbury Estate.

6. The work undertaken by Levitt Bernstein Architects for the south-west corner of the Aylesbury Estate – which was presented to Southwark Council in November 2004, nearly a year before the meeting of the Executive Meeting on 27 September 2005 – also included the only designed and costed comparison between the refurbishment and demolition-rebuild options that I could find **(JR4)**. This document and the key table on page 10 was also not circulated to the Executive Committee, and when it was circulated for the Public Inquiry in 2015 the table was not legible **(JR5)**.

7. The comparison in the table on p. 10, consisted of 3 options for refurbishment and 2 options for demolition-rebuild of the 5-6 block which required structural strengthening. It showed that – taking as an example a 5-storey block such as 1-68 Chartridge House – the cost of Option 3 for refurbishment to Decent Homes Standard, plus gas removal and structural strengthening, was £3.54 million; whereas the cost of Option 4, for demolishing the block and constructing a new block with the same number of dwellings, was £9.45 million **(JR5)**.

8. Option 5 was for demolishing and rebuilding the blocks with the addition of new dwellings. **(JR5)**. These designed costings show that a block could be rebuilt to provide the same number of replacement dwellings (68), plus additional dwellings (40), on the same footprint. If the aim of regeneration is to increase the housing density of the site, then why was this option not explored to see if the receipts from the sale of the new dwellings could cover the costs of refurbishing – rather than demolishing – the existing homes?

9. Even if one estimated the cost of refurbishment at Decent Homes Plus (that is, including new kitchens and bathrooms), then refurbishment remained at £6.01 million for 1-68 Chartridge House **(JR2: p. 8)** ie 64% of the demolition-rebuild cost.

10. The Government Inspector's Report **(CD 50)** states that: 'The figures put to the Executive Committee are more than 10 years old, and there is no submitted evidence which would allow me to compare them with the costs of the scheme for the Order Land.' **(CD 50: para 383)** The London Borough of Southwark submitted no evidence on which to make such a comparison in the 2015 Public Inquiry. It is still not possible to make costed comparison between refurbishment and demo/new build, because despite numerous requests **(See the Witness Statement of Simon Morrow)** the London Borough of Southwark has still not provided evidence of the costs for the scheme for demolition and rebuild on the Order Land.

11. Additionally, and importantly, the objectors have not had access to the substantial funds that are required for professionals to produce such a fully costed and designed scheme. If funding could be made available then the refurbishment scheme prepared by Levitt Bernstein could be updated.

12. The Government Inspector adds that a refurbishment scheme 'would be unlikely to deliver a comparable increase in the number of dwellings'. **(CD 50: para 418)** But the costed design options produced by Levitt Bernstein provide evidence of how, working with the existing footprint of the estate and the refurbishment of existing blocks, it is possible to

increase the number of dwellings, see para 6 above and the fully designed scheme **(JB CD1, vol 1, Executive summary, p. 1.3)**

13. There are many excellent refurbishment examples that can be drawn on for comparison, including currently the Alton Estate, which combines refurbishment of existing post-war buildings and new buildings. **(JR6)**

14. We do know from the *only* designed and costed comparison between demolition-rebuild and refurbishment that I have been able to find – in the options report provided by Levitt Bernstein in 2004–05 that:

- (i) Refurbishment was the cheaper option. **(JR5)**
- (ii) New dwellings could have been added while retaining the existing footprint of the estate. **(JR5, and JB CD1, volume 2, 02 Introduction, 2.1).**

15. We also know from Levitt Bernstein's designed and costed refurbishment scheme 2004–05 that:

- (iii) “For an average cost of about £50,000 per unit the scheme promises:
 - * Significant improvements to the environment and conditions for residents on the SW Corner.
 - * A shift in both perception and reality of the image of living on the estate.
 - * Decent Homes and Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) works to common areas and to an extent within dwellings agreed.” **(JB CD1, Volume 1, 01 Executive Summary, p. 1.3)**

16. However, the information in paras 11 and 12 above was not put before the Executive Committee in 2005, and was not responded to at the Public Inquiry into the Aylesbury Estate CPO in 2015.

17. Despite the fact that the Second Stage Tender documents were due to go out on 31 May 2005, **(JB CD1, volume 2, 02 Introduction, 2.1)** and detailed planning permissions for the refurbishment to Bradenham and

Chiltern had been granted. **(JB CD1, Volume 1, 01 Executive Summary, p. 1.2, and JR7)** Levitt Bernstein state that 'an instruction to suspend the project and tender preparation was issued by the Client on 1st April 2005, pending resolution of estate-wide funding matters'. **(JB CD1, volume 2, 02 Introduction, 2.1).**

18. On 2 October 2017 one of the objectors asked Southwark Council to explain who took the decision to give that instruction and the reason for it. As of 6 December 2017, no response has been received.

List of Annexes referred to:

CD8: Annex A 'Costs of Refurbishment'

CD50: CPO Report to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government by Lesley Coffey BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI, an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Date: 29 January 2016.

JR1: Annex C 'Indicative Cashflow Forecast' (omitted from CD8).

JR2: Frost Associates, Aylesbury Estate Regeneration Total Cost Review, 6 May 2005.

JR3: BPTW, Report on Estimated Costs for Estate Wide Refurbishment Options on the Aylesbury Estate April 2005, np.

JR4: Conisbee, BPTW, Aylesbury Estate Regeneration Briefing Report on Structural Robustness of 5 and 6 Storey Jespersen Blocks, November 2004.

JR5: Table, Conisbee, BPTW, Aylesbury Estate Regeneration Briefing Report on Structural Robustness of 5 and 6 Storey Jespersen Blocks, November 2004, p. 10.

JR6: Alton Area Masterplan Report, October 2014.

JR7: Planning Permission Granted for 1-172 Chiltern House, 10 February 2010.

JB CD1: Levitt Bernstein, PTE, BPTW, Aylesbury Estate Regeneration, SW Corner, July 2005, Volume 1 Executive Summary and Stage E Report and Volume 2, Supplement to Stage E Report.