

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

**Objection of non-statutory objector
Piers Corbyn**

12 December 2017

1. My name is Piers Corbyn. I am a local resident on the Alvey estate which is just a few hundred yards from the Aylesbury estate. I confirm and continue to rely on my submission to the previous inquiry of 12 May 2015 – document (Id36) – and make the following additional points in paras (2) onward.
2. I object to the compulsory purchase order on the grounds that the scheme underlying it fails to comply with the requirements of the development plan policies governing it.
3. Part of the development plan includes emerging London Plan policies including the draft ‘Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration’ (**CD74**). The guide says this about consultation:

“The Mayor believes that for estate regeneration to be a success, there must be resident support for proposals, based on full and transparent consultation.”

“Once adopted, the Guide is intended to reassure Londoners that they will be given real opportunities to shape estate regeneration, that engagement and consultation will be meaningful.”

“Where estate regeneration takes place there should always be full and transparent consultation.”

“Responsive – consultation should result in clear actions that arise directly as a result of the views expressed by respondents.” (**CD74**;para 20)

4. I submit that the consultation process for the scheme underlying the order does not comply with these requirements. The consultation has not been ‘responsive’ – it has not resulted *“in clear actions that arise directly as a result of the views expressed by respondents.”*
5. This is evidenced in the fact that the Council has ignored the only ballot held on the scheme to date. The ballot saw demolition plans overwhelmingly rejected by residents on a high turn out (over 70%).

6. The Council's own consultation report for the Area Action Plan (**SC4**) said the following about the findings of the formal consultation for the AAAP preferred options version:

"Demolition/retention: Many of the representations supported the preferred options approach, although a significant number rejected it. Some people believed that further consideration should be given to refurbishment, particularly of the red-brick blocks." (SC4; 3.1.14)

"Many of the representations supported the preferred options approach, although a significant number disagreed on the basis that the council should respect the outcome of the 2001 ballot and that there should be no loss of council-owned homes." (SC4; 3.1.14)

"Around 60% the respondees rejected all the preferred options on the basis that the estate should not be demolished and the council should respect the 2001 ballot." (SC4; 3.1.14)

7. The decision to progress the demolition plans in spite of the views expressed by the estate's residents during both the ballot and the subsequent AAAP formal consultation, is therefore in conflict with the Estate Regeneration Guidance's requirement that *"there must be resident support for proposals"* and that the actions of the Council must *"arise directly as a result of the views expressed by respondents."*
8. I note that in paragraph 7.39 of its statement of case, the Council claims that the Area Action Plan's demolition plans were *"supported by 82% of the residents who attended the final exhibition of the plans"*.
9. However, paragraph 3.1.20 of the Area Action Plan consultation report (**SC4**) shows that this was 82% of only 149 people who made a written comment at the exhibition. This is an extremely dubious mandate given that the Aylesbury estate is home to over 7,000 people.
10. Further, the report doesn't say how many of the 149 'consultees' were actually Aylesbury estate residents. This in conflict with the Estate Regeneration Guidance

which says that consultation should target “*primarily the residents of an estate*”.
(paragraph 20)

11. I submit that the compulsory purchase order should be rejected on the grounds that the scheme underlying it does not comply with the consultation requirements of the development plan and does not have resident support.
12. It should be noted that the claims by the Council at the Executive Committee meeting of Sept 27th 2005 (**CD8**) that (as I mention in para7 of my Id36) inferred that there were supposed structural weaknesses and problems with district heating pipework. These key factors in deciding for demolition over refurbishment were utter misrepresentations.
13. It was established during the previous inquiry that there are no structural problems with the buildings on the estate (see Catherine Bates’ evidence to previous inquiry). The buildings comply with current building requirements for structural robustness – if they didn’t then the Council would be breaking the law by continuing to use them for housing people in.
14. I understand that there was a visit by the original architects in 2016, in which it was confirmed that the estate was built to conform with the revised, more stringent building regulations brought in after the Ronan Point disaster in 1998.
15. I understand that in 2002/3/4 a council-commissioned consultant attended the Taplow (local) Tenants neighbourhood forum and stated that in his expert opinion there was nothing fundamentally wrong with the pipework of the heating system that could not be dealt with using modern technology. He did not appear at the subsequent or any other meeting. It appears his expert opinion was not welcome by the Council.
16. It should further be noted that the notion that a whole estate should be demolished because of supposed faults in pipework is absurd. If there were real problems the district heating system could be turned off permanently and the flats heated individually instead.

17. At the Executive meeting of 27 Sept 2005 (**CD8**) the Council agreed to 'adopt a demolition option'. I sought clarification at that meeting if this meant the whole estate would automatically be demolished. I was told it did not mean that; it meant demolition of some or all blocks was now a matter for consideration.
18. The false information relied on by the Council on supposed structural weaknesses and supposed problems of the heating system and failure to properly consider the refurbishment option (the true cost of which had been grossly exaggerated) render the decisions of 25 Sept 2005 invalid.
19. I submit that the Council should have respected the ballot decision of 2001. It should be noted that the Labour Party nationally and London Labour Party and other bodies have now adopted (2017) in unanimous votes that (legally binding) ballots must precede any regeneration / redevelopment schemes of any Council estates and other developments and such should not proceed without residents' ballot support.
20. The resolutions (available) also stated that developments must be in the interests of the residents (tenants and leaseholders) and that all residents must have the right to return with no loss of housing standards or rights such as full council tenancy security. The Aylesbury scheme does not meet any of these obligations therefore the (Labour) Council must drop the scheme and revert to the original ballot decision.
21. Subsequent to the Sept 2005 decision Arklow House (a five story old-style red brick block, not concrete) which was in the area of the early phase of works was deemed to be a building which would not be demolished.
22. Two years after the 2005 decision to demolish (approx 2007/8) we were informed that Arklow House {and a whole lot of other blocks such as Michael Faraday blocks, a series of small tower blocks, some individual houses, Brockley House and Eccles House; covering in total approx 20% of the whole estate (300 dwellings)} for which there had never been any suggestion of structural weaknesses and most of which were not part of district heating would in fact be demolished because the (potential) developer(s) wanted the whole estate footprint.

23. The decision to go for the demolition option and then total demolition of the whole estate, rather than in-fill or partial redevelopment was, it appears, a political decision, which was taken by - or involved - a high level of Government beyond the Council. The decision(s) involved (Minister) David Miliband MP who attended a number of special meetings regarding the scheme.

24. Frankly, in my opinion, the scheme is an abominable anti-democratic social cleansing operation and must be opposed absolutely.

25. I look forward to giving further evidence regarding the above to the inquiry when it convenes in January and am happy to respond to any questions that may arise from the assertions in my evidence.