

Elephant & Castle plans threatened by housing row

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Development consortium and community forum could pull out of £1.5bn regeneration scheme

The £1.5bn regeneration of south London's Elephant & Castle is under threat after the development consortium and the local community forum warned they might withdraw from the project.

A source close to the project said that Southwark Land Regeneration (SLR) has told Southwark council it wants a development agreement in place by the council's next ratification meeting on 26 February. 'There has to be a point at which everything comes together, otherwise there is no point in carrying on,' said the source.

The main bone of contention is control of the area's council housing and the land it is built on. Southwark wants to maximise its land values by handing over the units to a housing association. The forum and SLR prefer creating a community land trust, which would give them and local residents a bigger share of the profits.

SLR, a joint venture between Godfrey Bradman and [Frogmore Estates](#), had expected an agreement to be finalised by the middle of last year. Work ground to a halt on the scheme's masterplan last October because of SLR's reluctance to commit resources.

A crunch meeting of the forum is planned on 4 February. The forum wants a 'comfort letter' setting out safeguards for local people.

Forum development co-ordinator Richard Lee said: 'If we don't get the comfort letter or if it doesn't say what we want it to say, we are going to have to seriously consider our stance.'

The forum has a unique 'third developer' status in the regeneration alongside the council and SLR, and its withdrawal would scupper the development's future.

Negotiations have proceeded more quickly following Southwark's defeat over its plans to redevelop the neighbouring Aylesbury estate, which has dented the council's confidence.

In a statement the council said: 'We are making significant progress in the negotiations with SLR and are close to a deal on core commercial and financial terms. Given the recent positive progress that has been made it is unlikely that SLR would choose to withdraw just because final drafting of the necessary documentation has not been completed by some artificially imposed deadline. We anticipate making a report to the ratification committee on 26 February.'

SLR director Nicholas Taylor said: 'The position is the same as it has been for several months. We are in commercial negotiations with the council over the next stage.'

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