

Heygate

Action Plan - answers to your questions

The safety and welfare of all our residents must be our first priority. Southwark Council has learnt the difficulties of a long-drawn out rehousing programme from our experience of other recent regeneration projects and we don't want to repeat them on the Heygate. We've established an action plan to clear the estate as soon as we can with a target date of September 2009. To make this happen as safely and efficiently as possible, we're introducing a phased rehousing programme.

Understandably many of you have asked us questions since the revised plans were announced - we've answered the most frequently asked ones. If you'd like more information about your individual situation, please contact the rehousing team on 7525 2630, 7525 2603, and 7525 2641.

Q1. Why has the demolition programme been brought forward?

- A. Even before the 100 Days of Change programme, Heygate residents had told us that they were concerned about conditions on the estate, and that people wanted certainty about when they would be able to move. The council has reacted to this by setting a target date to rehouse everyone from the estate and establishing a plan to make it possible. The highest priority is to ensure that we have early and safe emptying of the Heygate estate and that we manage any community safety problems and conditions on the estate.

Q2. I want to move to one of the early housing sites at Elephant and Castle; do I have to move twice?

- A. If you have opted for a home on one of the new build housing association sites, this will still be available to you, but we are now working to a new timetable. We want the process of clearing the estate and getting you into your new home to be as quick and smooth as possible, and it might help you to think of making two moves. When your phase comes up, you can choose to move off the estate sooner if you want to and stay in that property permanently. Alternatively, you can move off the estate temporarily and move again later to one of the housing association properties when they are ready – which is currently projected to be between March 2009 and August 2011.

You can choose where to live in the short term by bidding for any council or housing association property listed in the weekly Homesearch magazine. As a Heygate resident you'll have Band 1 status when your phase comes up so you'll have priority to move to the properties advertised in Homesearch, which will include brand new housing association homes outside of the Heygate early housing sites. Tenants who take up this option will keep their right to move back to the Elephant and Castle later on when the early sites become available. Equally, if you find you are happy with the home you move to initially, you can choose to stay there.

Q3. I've heard that I will have to move within three to six months. Is this true?

- A. No. Depending on where you live on the estate, you may be able to start the process within 3 months, but it will continue for the next two years.

The table below shows our outline timetable and the proposed sequence of the blocks on the estate.

Phase	Rehousing start date	Target date for completion
1. Kingshill, Swanbourne, Wansey St	September 2007	Autumn 2008
2. Ashenden, Cuddington	December 2007	Winter 2008
3. Claydon, Marston, Chearsley, Risborough	March 2008	Spring 2009
4. Wingrave, Rodney Rd	June 2008	Summer 2009

The phases will overlap, and within each phase some people may choose to move earlier because they find a property they want to move to – either temporarily or permanently.

Q4. Why has the phasing been decided in the way that it has?

- A. The outline phasing plan is based on where we already know there are problems. Further work is being done to finalise the sequence of blocks shown above to take account of heating services etc where we know there are particular maintenance or other problems eg lifts at Kingshill.

Q5. Will the heating and hot water remain in operation throughout the process?

- A. Yes.

The phasing programme has been designed with this in mind, but more detailed investigations will be carried out because the heat and hot water for some blocks is provided through neighbouring blocks. The council is also currently renewing parts of the heating pipework to ensure that supplies are more reliable than has been possible in recent years.

Q6. When will I know if I'll have to make two moves or one move?

- A. In September. We will be doing further work over the next two months on the rehousing sequence for the estate, and the timetable for the building of the new housing association homes.

The question of two moves will only arise if you have chosen to move to one of the housing association properties on the early housing sites.

Q7. How can I be sure that if I take a temporary move that a property on an early housing site will still be made available to me?

- A. The council is still committed to delivering new rental housing on the early housing sites to the fullest extent possible. If you move temporarily, you will be provided with a written undertaking by the council about your allocation to a new property on one of the early housing sites.

Q8. I want to get off the estate as soon as possible. How soon can I bid for a property on Homesearch?

- A. You can begin to bid immediately but your Band 1 priority status will only apply in accordance with your place in the phasing process.

If you are in a phase that starts later, but have an urgent need to move earlier, we will consider your circumstances, and try to assist you. Please contact the rehousing team.

Q9. What if I am not successful in bidding through Homesearch before my phase is completed?

- A. If you are not successful in bidding for a property through Homesearch in the timescale allowed for, the council will ensure that a home which meets your needs is made available to you.

Q10. Will I be forced to move temporarily if I don't want to? Can I refuse to move and stay on the Heygate instead?

- A. We do not want to have to force anybody to do anything but there will be a point at which the council will need to act to ensure that safety is maintained.

You will not be able to stay on the Heygate estate because it will be demolished as part of the redevelopment programme.

We'll talk to you individually about your needs. We'll provide support and assistance to everyone throughout the process so your move – either temporary or permanent – will be as smooth as possible. If possession action does prove necessary, the council will have to demonstrate to the Court that a suitable property was available.

Q11. Won't crime, squatting and anti-social behaviour on the estate get worse with more empty properties, not better?

- A. We are concerned about maintaining the safety and security of residents while the rehousing process is going on. We will have joint management arrangements for community safety, policing, and dealing with empty properties. We will also manage the general upkeep and care of the estate more intensively.

By doing the rehousing in stages, we can concentrate on one part of the estate at a time. The council had recent experience at Wooddene in Peckham where a whole large block needed to be emptied from start to finish, rather than in stages, and it is not the best way. For Heygate, as units become empty we plan to secure them as soon as we can and make them uninhabitable. As sections of blocks become empty, we will secure them off and we will be fencing off whole blocks when the last person moves out. We will start demolishing blocks as soon as possible thereafter.

Q12. What happens if I move to a temporary home and decide that I don't want to move again? Will I have to?

- A. No, if you find that you are happy in your new home, you will be able to stay there. You will have permanent, not temporary rights in any property you are housed in.

Q13. What support will the council give to elderly and vulnerable people who are worried about the physical and mental stress of moving home?

- A. All residents will be fully supported throughout the process.

The rehousing team will know which households have particular needs and we will be liaising with other council departments and partners eg Health and Social Care, to make sure that the appropriate support can be provided. Contact the rehousing team if there is anything else you think we should know.

Q14. What tenancy will I get in the new housing association homes?

- A. Housing associations use assured tenancies. Information about assured tenancies is in the Heygate Re-housing Toolkit. All social housing tenancy history counts towards the Right to Buy / Right to Acquire discount.

Q15. What if I have opted to move into a council property?

- A. The process will work in the same way as you have already been advised. The only thing that has changed is the introduction of the timescale.

Q16. What about those people who wish to move out of Southwark and London altogether. Will help be given to them to relocate and will they get Band 1 status?

- A. There are some possibilities, but they are harder to achieve than a move within Southwark.

Whilst every assistance will be given to those people who wish to move out of the borough, residents should be aware that this is a difficult and lengthy process. The local authority in the area you want to move to will have their own policies and waiting lists. The rehousing toolkit explains more about the possibilities.

Some opportunities arise in neighbouring boroughs eg Lewisham and Greenwich, which are advertised in Homesearch. We will also be seeking to establish an arrangement with our partner housing associations who have housing stock in other local authority areas.

Contact the rehousing team for more information.

Q17. I currently have an extra bedroom, will I lose this when I move?

- A. Qualifying households who have more bedrooms than they need can qualify for an extra bedroom in the property they move to whether it is a new housing association home or a council re-let.

Restrictions will apply to those tenants who have rent arrears.

Q18. I've heard that if I give up a bedroom and move to a smaller property there's a financial incentive to do so – would I get that incentive payment as well as the decant package?

- A. No. The incentive to downsize is the underoccupation initiative, called Small is Beautiful.

This policy is available until the active rehousing process starts, when if you qualify for the extra bedroom, you will also be receiving the full home loss and disturbance compensation which is more than the Small is Beautiful payment.

Q19. What about those people who require adaptations to their existing properties, will they still be able to have them done or will they be told there's no point, as the block will be knocked down?

- A. It depends on the timing. If you require adaptations, we would encourage you to pursue enquiries about that as normal.

We will discuss with you whether full or part adaptations should be made, and the timing, depending on how long you will have the benefit of them before you move. If you would rather pursue your rehousing first, please contact the rehousing team.

Q20. How do we secure adaptations to our new build housing association properties?

- A. These will be identified through the referencing process and the occupational therapy service will advise what adaptations are required. This will also apply to relet council properties.

Q21. There are rumours that if you vacate the Heygate by the bidding scheme before the active rehousing starts, you do not qualify for your moving costs.

- A. No, now that the action plan for Heygate has been adopted, you will qualify for compensation.

The council is legally obliged to make the home loss payment, which is currently £4000 per household, when the active rehousing starts. However, the council will use discretionary powers to make equivalent payments when people are able to move earlier than their phasing. You will also qualify for a disturbance payment when you move – there is more information about this in your rehousing toolkit.

Q22. Will I get two lots of compensation money for having to move twice?

- A. Yes. If you move on a temporary basis, you will qualify for your home loss payment after you leave your Heygate property.

When you move a second time to your Elephant and Castle housing association property, you will also qualify for a sum equivalent to the home loss payment. In these circumstances, you will also receive two disturbance payments for the costs of moving.

Q23. I have found a private rented property that I'm interested in. Will I still be entitled to moving costs.

- A. Yes.

Q24. What happens if I want to take up the option of moving temporarily, but can't find somewhere near my childrens' school?

- A. The council wants to be able to support families through this process and housing staff will work together with the pupil access team in Children's Services to co-ordinate the availability of school places with rehousing.

Q25. I need to stay in the area because of the location of my GP or a particular hospital. Will that still be possible?

- A. If this was a priority for you in deciding on your preferred housing option, please discuss with the rehousing team.

The council is committed to assisting with all requirements; it is important that we are made aware of any specific needs that you may have if you have not already done so.

Q26. Are intra – estate transfers still available?

- A. Intra-estate transfers are available at the moment, but we know that this does not affect many of you. The opportunities are limited and will reduce over time as the phasing plan takes effect.

Q27. What happens to residents who may wish to move off the estate early to a new property in say Bermondsey Spa but are left until the later stages of phasing? Will they miss out on the opportunity because all of those properties will have been taken already by people in earlier phases?

- A. The council's approach is to manage the rehousing opportunities for residents on a phased basis.

Properties will be under construction at Bermondsey Spa and other developments in the borough right through the timescale of the Heygate Action Plan. If you have any specific requirements, please contact the rehousing team, who will be able to find out about progress on new developments for you.

Q28. Have you been talking to Heygate residents about this major change?

- A. Heygate residents have made their views clear over the course of ongoing discussions where they told us that they wanted certainty, safety and a clear timetable and that led directly to the change. The council was concerned about the increasing level of complaints that have been coming in from Heygate, and was very keen to react as effectively and as quickly as possible.

Leaseholders

Q29. I am a leaseholder – what does the new action plan mean for me?

- A. None of the policies and processes previously advised to you has changed. The only thing that has changed is the introduction of the timescale.

We will undertake individual discussions with all leaseholders as soon as possible so that we can begin to understand your individual circumstances. The first discussions will be about the value of the property and you may already have got to this stage.

There are several options available under the leaseholder policy. We are currently working on the detailed arrangements for making the options work, and we will have these in place before we start the process in September.

If you are able to buy an alternative property directly, these options will not apply. If you are unable to make your own arrangements, then leaseholders can be considered for three other options outlined in the rehousing toolkit. These are :

- Buying a shared ownership unit
- Buying a retained equity unit
- Swapping your property for one of equivalent value elsewhere in the borough.

Resident leaseholders who cannot afford to buy an alternative property, or take up one of the three options, will qualify for an offer of rehousing as a tenant, on the same terms as Heygate tenants.

The council will continue to undertake negotiations with leaseholders on a consensual basis but we will also be seeking to get a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) to safeguard the council's interest in the scheme, and if necessary it will be enforced.

Q30. I am a leaseholder and I don't agree with the valuation I have been given on my property. How is the value set?

- A. We carry out our own valuation on behalf of the council and we provide financial support so you can obtain an independent valuation through your own surveyor. The actual value set is reached by an agreement between these two valuations. The government sets the legislative guidelines for the acquisition of leasehold interests. We pay leaseholders current market value plus ten per cent (seven and a half percent for non-resident leaseholders).

Temporary licensees

Q31. I am a temporary licensee, what does it mean for me?

- A. If you have been accepted as homeless by the council, and are living on the estate on a temporary basis, the decision to start the rehousing of the Heygate will not affect your entitlement to housing.

It does however set a timetable for emptying blocks that means you will need to pursue your permanent rehousing through the Homesearch process if you are not already doing so. The council will need to discuss what you need to do, and the options that you have, on an individual basis. Arrangements will be made for this shortly; you will be supported through this process by staff from the temporary accommodation unit not the rehousing team. For more information contact 020 7525 4177.

The council aims to have discussions with individual households as soon as possible, if you have any questions that haven't been answered here or you would like more information, please contact the rehousing team on 7525 2630, 7525 2603, and 7525 2641.