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WEEKENDER

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GIVE US BETTER CHOICES SAY HEYGATE RESIDENTS

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10 March 2008

By John Prendergast

Tenants on the Heygate Estate are accusing the council of not having enough decent homes for them to move into, as they steam ahead with the £1.5billion Elephant and Castle Regeneration programme.

The estate is being emptied in phases, and as each block is tackled, tenants move to Band one, which gives them top priority when bidding for new homes through the councils Homesearch system.

Jerry Flynn (*pictured*), who lives in Cuddington, who are in the second phase of the decant, said: "We are effectively competing against each other now. As we have moved into the Band one we are just finding people on Kingshill and other blocks are ahead of us. So we have no chance of getting anywhere and our six months is ticking."

Each resident has a six month period to find a property on Homesearch before the council will issue them with a once and for all offer, which if not accepted will see the council issue eviction notices on tenants.

One resident on Kingshill, who didn't wish to be named, said: "I have bid for properties through Homesearch and thought I would be the top priority, yet I was beaten by someone who isn't on the estate and has been on Homesearch since 2005, so it's not just each other we compete against, it is those who have been on Band one for a while."

"Another property was in an area that was so awful; I didn't even go in to look at it as I knew I would not move into there."

Residents on the Kingshill and the Swanbourne have now been issued with letters stating that their final offer is due, and that the Kingshill will need to be cleared by December this year.

Helen O'Brien, who also lives on Cuddington, said: "An elderly friend of mine got this letter and saw words such as issuing notices to eviction notice, and it really upset her. Yet the council are insisting on sticking to this timetable, whatever happens."

Mr Flynn added: "It is the only part of the timetable they have stuck to."

Originally tenants were supposed to be moved to new builds on sixteen sites. As yet planning permission has not been gained for any development nearly three years after Landlords for the site have been appointed, this has meant people will now have to move twice if they wish to have a home on one of these sites.

Wendy Worrall, who lives on Swanbourne, said: "We did not ask to be moved, yet we still have to and we are just not being treated with any decency and respect at all with this."


Cllr Kim Humphreys, Southwark Council's executive member for housing, said: "We have already helped 110 households to find new properties and the feedback we've had from the overwhelming majority of residents has been positive. All Heygate tenants have been assigned a case management officer to provide as much support as required to make this process easy and stress-free for residents."

He added that Southwark had the largest housing stock in London and in each week there were plenty of properties available through Homesearch, and as Heygate residents were band one they had top priority in the bidding process.

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Comments (4)

 1. At 09:31 PM on 12 Mar 2008, Irene wrote:

I think this system is not fair for those people who are bidding for 4 years through Southwark homesearch. Everybody wants decent housing, not only those who need to move out of Heygate. I think council should make a better provision for both group of bidders-those who need to be rehoused from Heygate and long term suffering bidders from general council nominations.

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