

## Demolition ballots: Ten questions to ask before you cast your vote

These ten questions are intended primarily for residents of London estates facing a ballot on a proposed demolition scheme in line with the Mayor of London's guidance. Nevertheless, some of the questions may be useful or thought-provoking to residents facing demolition where a ballot is not being held. These questions are intended to get you thinking about the kind of things you and your neighbours might want to seek clarity and guarantees on either as you enter consultation with the local authority or at least before you vote in the ballot:

1. **Why demolition?** If refurbishment or infill are not on the table, demand full and transparent evidence as to why they have been ruled out. See ESTATE WATCH Handout 1.
2. **What is my right to return?** *Better homes for Local People: the Mayor's Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration*<sup>1</sup> states that 'Where [social] tenants have to move temporarily off the estate, they must have a full right to return.' The home you return to must be of 'a suitable size' (i.e. big enough that the household is not overcrowded), 'at the same or similar level rent' and 'with the same security of tenure'. Find out who your new landlord would be and seek clarification as to what sort of tenancy you would have. If you move from a council to another type of landlord you will no longer have a secure tenancy and this will affect your rights. Ask what support there will be for private tenants, leaseholders, freeholders and any short-term council and housing association tenants forced to move.
3. **What would my full housing costs be in the new development?** Ask not just about rent but also service charges, council tax, parking and other charges. If you are a leaseholder or freeholder, check the eligibility and conditions around schemes aimed at helping you buy into the new development. If a part-buy scheme is on the table, check how much rent you will be asked to pay on the remaining share. Check what the service charges would be for leaseholders and whether there are restrictions on the rate at which charges can increase.
4. **Would the new development be suitable for families and older or disabled residents?** Ask how much family-sized social rented housing would be built and for a guarantee that all overcrowded residents wishing to return to the new development be offered a home big enough to meet their needs. Would the new scheme be fully accessible, with suitable ground floor accommodation for older or disabled residents? Would there be resources and outdoor spaces open to all, for children and adults?
5. **How big would the new homes be?** The design principles must contain information about the minimum space standards. Make sure you will be able to fit your current furniture and belongings inside your new home? Will the scheme fully meet your needs e.g. a spare bedroom if you have care responsibilities.
6. **What is the timescale for the development?** Large developments are always risky. Demand to see realistic estimates of the timescales of the proposed development as a whole and of each phase. You should ask to see an open and transparent risk assessment of potential causes of delay and the actions they would take to mitigate these risks.
7. **How many times, and at what point, would I be asked to move?** If large numbers of homes are to be demolished, this will likely happen in phases and you may need to move to temporary accommodation. The landlord should provide you with a map with proposed phasing and a plan for each stage of moving people out. Ask for the lettings policy for those moving temporarily and make sure there is help with moving costs. Ask if there will be support for leaseholders or freeholders if they need to move away temporarily.

---

<sup>1</sup>Better Homes for Local People: The Mayor's Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration - <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/improving-quality/estate-regeneration>

8. **How will we be safe and secure throughout the process?** Residents may find themselves living on or next to a building site for several years. Your landlord must provide: a commitment to continue with major works as well as regular maintenance and repairs right up until all properties are finally vacated; clear information about how residents will be protected from noise, dust and other nuisances caused by demolition and nearby works. You could ask for a risk assessment.
9. **What benefit would it bring to the community?** Make sure that all the facilities that you value on your estate will be re-provided in full (e.g. community halls, play and green spaces) and that new additional facilities offer something positive to your community.
10. **Will local shops and businesses be protected?** Have you been given detailed information about the steps to be taken to protect the local economy and affordable shops from being displaced?

## **What should be in the Landlord Offer document?**

Prior to a ballot starting, you must receive a Landlord Offer document which, according to section 8.5.11 of the *GLA's Affordable Housing Capital Funding Guide*<sup>2</sup>, 'must contain sufficient information for eligible residents to make an informed decision about the future of their estate' and should be 'easily accessible'. The following must be included as a minimum:

- The broad vision, priorities and objectives for the estate regeneration.
- Design principles
- Estimated overall number of new homes.
- Future tenure mix.
- Proposed social infrastructure.
- Details of the full right to return or remain for social tenants living in homes that are to be demolished.
- Details of the offer for leaseholders and freeholders of homes that are to be demolished
- Commitments relating to ongoing open and transparent consultation and engagement
- A map outlining the boundary of the regeneration area.

The information provided should not come as a surprise, but from thorough consultation held with you and your neighbours and any elected tenant and resident representatives. You should have had the chance to raise and discuss, not only the above points, but all the ways in which this proposed demolition could impact upon you and your neighbours.

Also see Estate Watch's briefings on the GLA Guide and the Better Homes for Local People: The Mayor's Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration.

**Freedom of Information:** Some of the most important questions to ask may also be those that your local authority officers are most reluctant to answer. If you can't get answers at public meetings, the council is required by law to respond to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. [www.whatdotheyknow.com](http://www.whatdotheyknow.com) is the simplest route to making an FOI.

---

<sup>2</sup>Links to Resident Ballot Requirement funding condition, (section 8 of the GLA / Mayor's Affordable Housing Capital Funding Guide) <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/improving-quality/estate-regeneration>