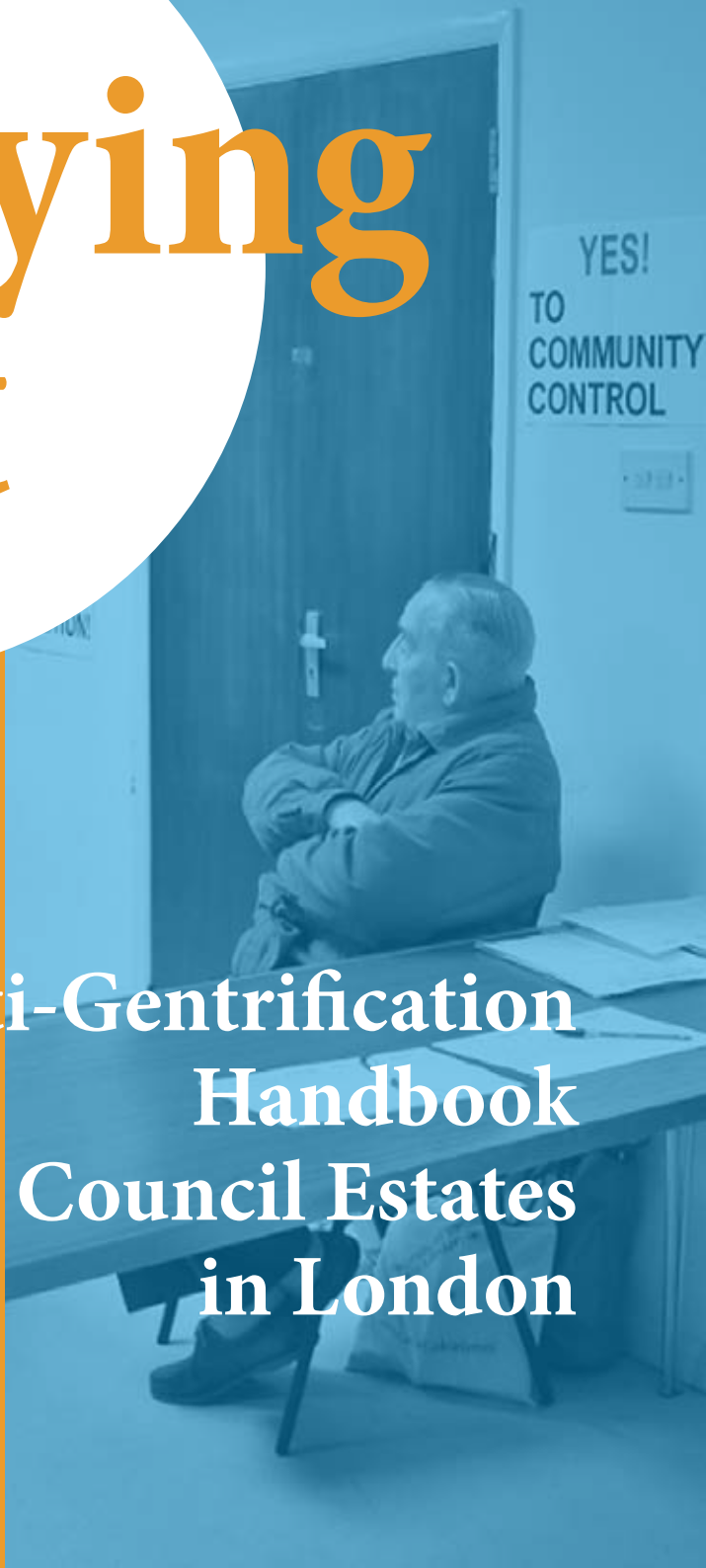
Staying Put



An Anti-Gentrification Handbook for Council Estates in London

Who helped work on this handbook

London Tenants Federation

Federation of organisations of tenants of social housing providers at borough level and at London level. LTF provides information and research on London's housing issues through accessible policy briefings and newsletters. It facilitates networking and information exchange at local and regional events, linking tenants and other community and voluntary groups. www.londontenants.org

Loretta Lees

Professor Loretta Lees is a London-based urban geographer. She is an international expert on gentrification and the policies and practices associated with it. She is working to persuade policy makers and communities that there are alternatives.

Just Space

Just Space is a London wide network of voluntary and community groups operating at the regional, borough and neighbourhood levels. It came together to influence the strategic plan for Greater London – the London Plan – and counter the domination of the planning process by developers and public bodies, the latter often heavily influenced by development interests. www.justspace.org.uk

Southwark Notes Archive Group

Local people opposing and writing about the regeneration & gentrification of the North Southwark area that has happened over the last 20 years. www.southwarknotes.wordpress.com

This handbook is the result of a research and action project with input from the London Tenants Federation, Loretta Lees, Just Space and SNAG (Southwark Notes Archive Group). This work was supported by a Scholar-Activist Project Award from the Antipode Foundation www.antipodefoundation.org

A digital copy of this handbook is available online at www.justspace.org.uk and at www.southwarknotes.wordpress.com

Cover photo courtesy of Hilary Barnes from the West Ken and Gibbs Green The People's Estates campaign

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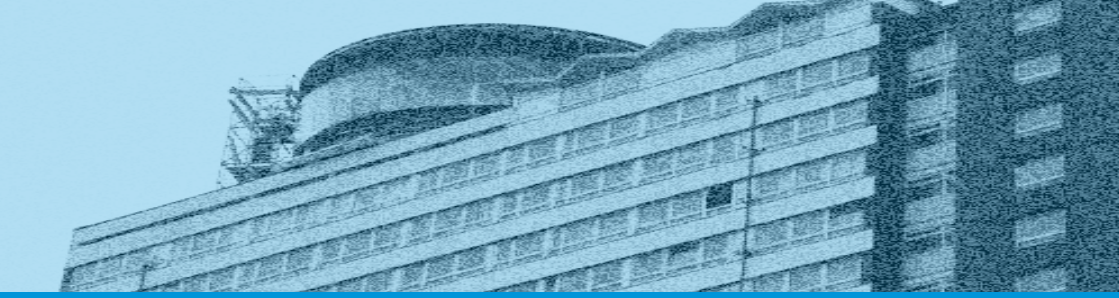


Introduction

This handbook comes directly from the experiences of council estate residents and communities organising against gentrification in London.

It brings together many examples from local and London-wide campaigning groups and networks that are currently working against demolition and gentrification. All those who worked on this handbook have been active on different estates facing the threat of regeneration. Although the examples and experiences are focused on London, most of this handbook will be useful across the country.

The greatest resource for any new campaign is the work done by groups and people: contact them, learn from them and share what you know with them. Together we can stay put!

Firstly, we explain what 'gentrification' is and give a very short summary of what are the biggest threats happening to council estates in London at the moment.

Secondly, we write about successful tactics and tools used by groups and networks to challenge councils and developers.

Finally, we discuss alternatives to the demolition of council estates and offer practical examples of how these have been recently campaigned for and brought about.

"Our lived experience of crime on the Estate does not match the myth - and this is borne out by the statistics. We need to counter these pernicious negative stereotypes. By listing and emphasising the many positive features of our homes that we now enjoy, and celebrating our diverse community, we strengthen our bargaining position"

Aylesbury Tenants and
Leaseholders First campaign
Aylesbury Estate

CONTENTS

What's going on?

Council estates under threat

Homes on council estates and the benefits they bring to London's population have been under threat for a long time now. In the 1980s changes in national government policy meant that tenants could buy their homes through the 'Right-to-Buy' scheme. Although this meant people could own their own home, it also meant that tens of thousands of council tenancies were lost for those on waiting lists. At the same time many boroughs almost completely stopped building new council housing. Cuts in local government funding meant existing estates were often poorly maintained.

Today, tenants and leaseholders living on council estates face a more dramatic threat in the form of demolition of the homes they live in, as if there were no alternatives. The Greater London Authority (GLA) and London boroughs are set to sell the largest amount of public land (on which council estates sit) for a generation. To make the case for selling the land, we are told that council estates and their residents are a problem rather than a real asset to the economy, society and culture of London.

Council estates are home to a large number of Londoners and are truly socially mixed communities in a city that is fast becoming more and more socially segregated. Through council housing, they offer secure and truly affordable homes. Many have decent size flats compared to the much smaller ones found in most new developments. Estates often have good public space, such as green space, play areas, community centres, and other facilities that are used by estate residents and local communities.

What is 'gentrification'?

Although the term 'gentrification' is not an everyday word, it is more and more being used to describe the pressures on London's poorer communities. The word 'gentrification' comes from the old word 'gentry' which means 'the better off'. Mostly the word is used to criticise, but some also see it as inevitable or even as a good thing.

This year, 2014, is the 50th anniversary of the term 'gentrification' which was developed by the London researcher Ruth Glass. She used 'gentrification' to describe how in the 1950s and 1960s traditional working class areas in inner London were seeing middle class people buy up houses for cheap. After doing them up, more wealthy people were attracted to these areas and, quite quickly, more homes were lost to the original poorer population forcing them to move away. The surrounding area changed quickly too: local shops shut and re-opened as more expensive stores or cafes that suited the needs of the new middle class residents. Gentrification was the process by which middle class people moving into an area increased the price of property and made it no longer affordable to those on lower incomes. Council housing acted as a barrier that limited gentrification and ensured that lower income households could live in central areas of London.

In the 1970s and 1980s a different picture of gentrification emerged, with entire working class areas being redeveloped as expensive private homes, luxury office blocks and shops (for instance, Canary Wharf). The difference was that the changes in these areas were not led by individual 'gentrifiers' but by property developers and local governments working together. Today, by demolishing council estates, local councils are able to sell valuable public land to developers, who then build new and more expensive housing targeted at wealthier buyers and renters. This is sometimes called state-led gentrification.


ONE LAST
RESIDENTS

When is 'regeneration' gentrification?

Regeneration is sold as bringing benefits to local communities, but, in many cases it is just gentrification under a different name. Since the 1990s Tory and Labour governments have targeted council estates for various 'regeneration' programmes justified through so-called 'mixed communities policy'. This idea was inspired by a programme in the United States, which argued that mixing low income communities with middle income communities would bring everyone 'up to the standard' of the middle classes. By redeveloping council estates into 'mixed communities', national and local governments claimed to tackle 'deprivation' and 'social exclusion'.

Councils and their regeneration partners (who include property developers and housing associations) say that council residents will be able to return and live in those redeveloped areas. However, in the worst cases, replacement homes are delayed or not built at all forcing people to move from their area into other council homes or the private sector. Many examples show that tenants can only return to housing association homes, paying higher rents and services charges. Most leaseholders can't afford to buy locally anymore. Regeneration is gentrification when tenants and leaseholders of council estates have to move out of their homes and local communities to other areas in Greater London and beyond.

Signs to look out for on your estate:

Have you been told your estate is structurally unsound?

Has your local council listed your estate as a potential development site?

What information can you find on the website of your local borough?

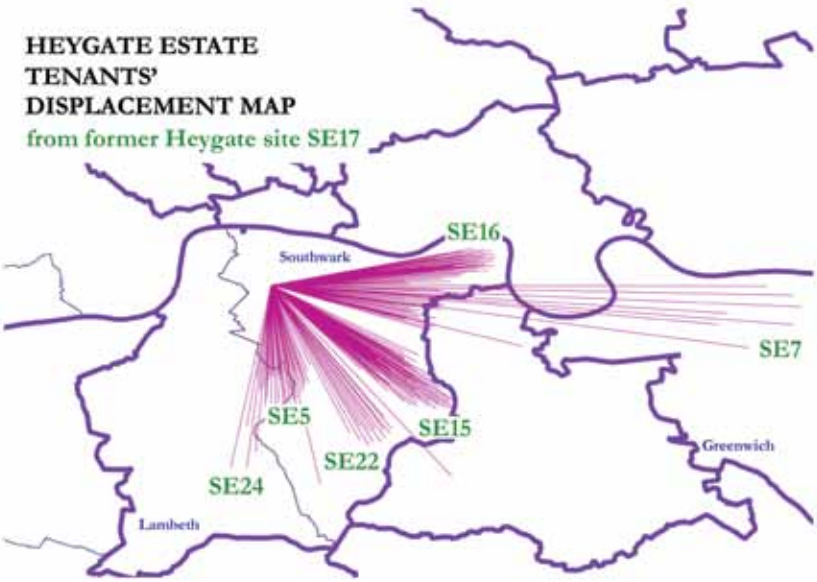
Does your estate sit within a London Plan * 'Opportunity Area'?

* The London Plan is the Greater London Authority's (GLA) development plan containing a set of ideas and rules on how London can change.

The Heygate Estate

Since the 'regeneration' programme was announced for the Heygate Estate in the late 1990s, Southwark Council stopped all but minimal maintenance of the estate and began preparations for the 'decanting' (moving out) of over 3,000 residents. In January 2001 the council stopped issuing new secure tenancies on the estate and started using some of the now vacant flats as short-term emergency housing on non-secure tenancies.

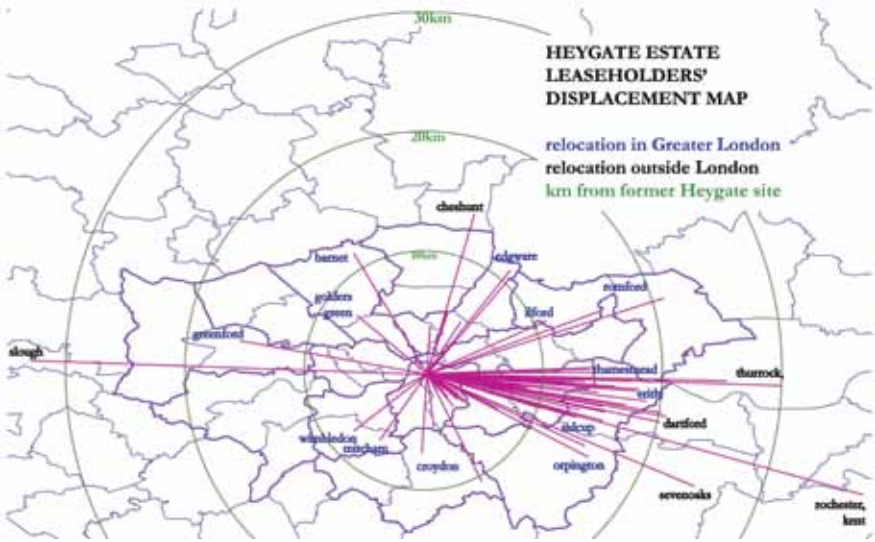
Initially, council tenants and leaseholders were promised that they would be rehoused in new homes built on the site of the estate once it was demolished. However, in 2004 they were told that the replacement new homes were going to be built on nearby land. By 2007, none of the replacement housing had been built, yet the council approved an 'Action Plan' that pressured secure tenants to bid for existing council housing and move out. At the same time, the 400 non-secure tenancies were ended; most had no right to re-housing and had to find a new home elsewhere.



The council homes that were offered to Heygate residents were limited in number, of a lower quality and smaller than the spacious ones they had on

the estate. They were also further away from people's place of work or their friends and family. Tenants with disabilities had to wait the longest for lack of suitable existing properties or had to accept unsuitable temporary accommodation.

A total of 198 households on the Heygate were issued with 'Notices to Seek Possession' and many tenants accepted any offer of a replacement home for fear that their right to social housing would be taken away from them or that they would be evicted through the courts. The lack of maintenance and of central heating since 2010 also forced many, among them elderly and long-term ill, to leave.



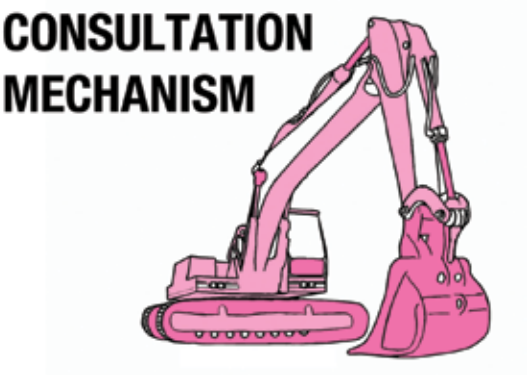
In the end, the regeneration promise that Heygate tenants would all be rehoused in new homes was watered down to a so-called 'Right to Return'. Tenants were now expected to move twice, the first time to existing council housing elsewhere, and then to 'return' to newly built but more expensive 'affordable' housing in the area. Out of the original 1,000 secure tenants, only 250 signed up to the 'Right to Return'. Many elderly residents and families just could not face the stress of moving home twice. The whole 'decanting' process took the best part of ten years, until the physical eviction of the last leaseholders in November 2013. By then, only 45 tenants had actually used their right to return and moved into new homes in the Elephant.

The 'consultation con'

Since the late 1990s developers and local councils have been required to involve local communities on any regeneration plans and to allow them to participate in developing those plans. The idea was that local communities have a better idea of their own local problems. By being able to take part in developing an area, people and communities would be able to decide about solutions to those problems. It was said that local people's knowledge of their area was a necessary and valuable resource for urban regeneration partnerships. With local people on board helping with decisions, regeneration should then be more democratic.

In practice, such 'consultation' is rarely a place where communities get to decide. Often, the professionals who run the consultations find ways to turn any disagreement into an agreement in favour of the developer and the local council. Decision-making in 'urban regeneration' remains as top-down (the council/developer making decisions for council estate residents) as it was during the 'slum' clearances after World War II. Researchers call this 'the new urban renewal'.

There is more information on this in 'The consultation game' section later in the handbook!



The 'affordable housing' con

Often residents are told that by demolishing council estates, better new 'affordable housing' will be built for them but this is a con! Why?

• 'Affordable housing' is actually only affordable to few, if any, ex-council tenants;

• The bulk of it is called 'part rent/part buy intermediate housing' that requires on average an income of £33,000 p.a. Or it is what's called 'affordable rent' which means rents up to 80% of the price of private rented homes in the area;

• The 'right to return' to this supposedly 'affordable' housing is limited by the small number of new 'affordable' homes built on the site of the old estate. Also, on moving out, many tenants do not move back because they have found new jobs and schools, and become settled elsewhere.

In 2012 the London Tenants Federation exposed London's 'affordable housing' con. They found that half of all newly built homes that were supposed to be 'affordable' were not affordable for Londoners as a whole, let alone low income, ex-council tenants. They showed that the only type of housing that is truly affordable for the many Londoners who earn an average London wage (or less) are council homes at council rents.

The Affordable Housing Con:
www.londontenants.org/publications/other/theafordablehousingconf.pdf

What is displacement?

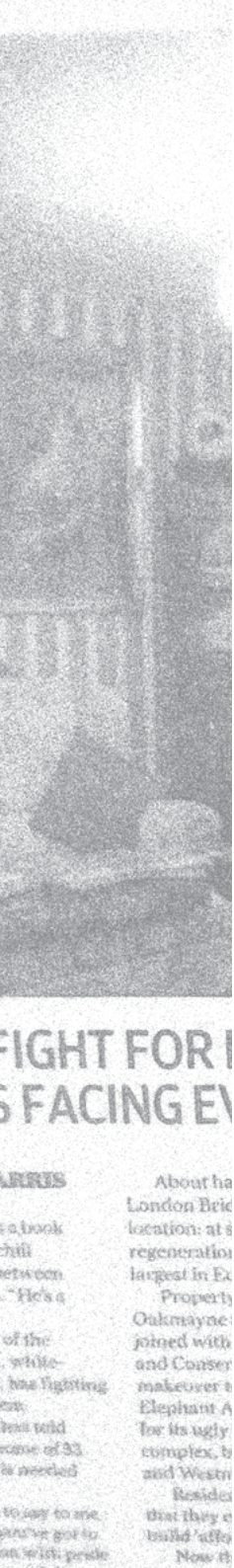
Displacement is when people are forced to move away from their homes and communities by people with greater resources and power, who claim they have a 'better' use for a building, housing estate or neighbourhood. Displacement can happen in different ways. Tenants can feel pressured to leave if the council fails to maintain the estate, including cutting off electric, gas and water services to a block. Residents can be physically evicted by bailiffs, or threatened with this if they do not move. Local businesses are displaced when they can't afford the rent rises caused by gentrification and when they lose their customers as they are moved out of the area.

Displacement always has hidden costs. Breaking up long-term communities can lead to people feeling isolated. It is not uncommon for displaced people to suffer from a variety of mental and physical health issues caused by the stress of leaving an area and the people you know. Sadly, in some cases it has lead to premature death of elderly residents. For working adults, it often means a longer commute to work. Children are badly affected as they have to move schools and lose established relationships.

The Pepys Estate

The Pepys Estate in Deptford, Lewisham, was an award-winning riverside social housing estate built in the late 1960s and made of three 24-story tower blocks, ten 8-story blocks and several 4-story blocks. In the late 1990s Lewisham council marketed one of the tower blocks, Aragon Tower, to housing associations without telling the tenants, and quietly began to move them out. In 2002 the tower was eventually sold to the private developer Berkeley Homes Plc for over £10 million and became a gated development called 'Z apartments'. 144 council flats were replaced by 156 luxury apartments, many of them sold to foreign investors, and let out. The sale and demolition of the five adjacent lower-rise blocks by Hyde Housing Association lost a further 250 social housing units.

ONE LAST
RESIDENTS



Two groups, Tenants Action Group (TAG) and the Pepys Community Forum (PCF, set up in 1999), fought a long campaign trying to protect their 'right to stay put' and also their 'right to return', making significant changes to the redevelopment plans. More recently, PCF challenged the Convoys Wharf redevelopment plan by employing consultants to do a social impact assessment, a transport study and a report on the impact on education and health. The Convoys Wharf application was stopped for 13 years. PCF is now based in a warehouse that they converted themselves into office spaces, where they give support and space to local businesses, charities and community groups.

Tenants Action Group
http://www.mcad.demon.co.uk/tag1.htm

Pepys Community Forum
http://www.mcad.demon.co.uk/pcf.htm

2014 also marks 30 years since the American urban planner Chester Hartman campaigned for the 'right to stay put' for lower income groups struggling against gentrification in the U.S. He was involved in the San Francisco-based "Anti-Displacement Project", a national campaign to protect affordable housing occupants from displacement pressure in America's inner cities during the 1970s. Their struggle was led by tenants' organisations with the support of non-for-profit organisations under the slogan: "We Won't Move".

"Success is putting the argument forward. Making a difference. We've had lots of small wins along the way and we made significant changes to what has happened in terms of what's got built after it got demolished. It's still not very good, but if we'd had not intervened to make some changes, it would have been really appalling"

Malcom Cadman
Pepys Community Forum
Pepys Estate

CONTENTS

Gentrification
What can you do about it?

There are many different ways of getting active locally if your estate is at risk from demolition or gentrification. In this part we share how community groups in London have challenged plans that developers and councils wanted to impose. These tactics have been successful in bringing people together, exposing plans, delaying and opposing the destruction of council homes. Opposing gentrification is not easy but communities can learn from each other to prepare themselves for their own battles.

Finding out what's going on!

The best way to start to find out what's going on in your estate or in your neighbourhood is simple: ask people! Talk to your neighbours, to friends who live locally, ask your local shops or pubs and get in touch with your estate's Tenants and Residents Association. It's also really helpful to look for changes in your area:

- Have you noticed more 'for sale' and 'for rent' signs than there used to be?
- Are newspapers and estate agents saying that your area is 'up and coming'?
- Are local shops being replaced with more expensive ones?
- Are local community spaces (parks, community centres, health and service facilities) being closed down, sold off and redeveloped as private homes?

None of these changes come from outer space! A lot of them are subject to planning permissions from the local council, and are published on their website and the local paper. This is incredibly useful to see which addresses, streets and areas are undergoing changes.

Public libraries have local newspapers and newsletters from different local groups such as Friends of Parks groups,

community associations, housing groups, and so on. Most boroughs have a local history library that's also good for information. Try asking the librarian there for info and news. There is also a lot of information on the Internet. Look for local online forums, local newspapers' sites, personal blogs and websites. Try searching for your local area or estate and the word 'regeneration' or 'development'. Twitter has a search function that shows who is writing about your area.

Public resources and Freedom of Information

Council officers are often hesitant to answer difficult questions. The Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) are legal ways to get answers on sensitive issues because councils are required by law to respond. People on the Heygate Estate were successful in using FOI requests to expose broken promises about the 'decant' process. With that information, they challenged the council showing that only a handful of residents moved back to the area since 2008 when most people were moved off the estate.

On the Heygate Estate and in the Earls Court redevelopment scheme, residents' groups also made successful FOI/EIR requests for confidential information about the finances of the development schemes (known as 'viability assessments'). In both cases, they went to and gained the support of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who declared that it was in the public interest for residents to have access to the information that was considered crucial for deciding the future of their homes. In the Heygate case, residents took part in an Information Tribunal hearing, challenged Southwark Council's refusal to disclose and won! This has set a good precedent for other estates to follow.

Simplest way to make an F.O.I is www.whatdotheyknow.com

More than just you!

Any campaign starts small. It's more important to build good relationships with other people who share your concerns rather than worrying about getting large numbers on board straight away. Public meetings can be a useful way to meet more people on your estate who are interested or concerned, but there are other ways of getting together. People have different time commitments and may find it easier to pop by a community picnic or BBQ on a weekend. Sometimes people need time to make up their own mind before being involved in a group. It's always useful to have lots going on (even if only small events) to keep the arguments in people's mind. In some cases local communities made 'permanent exhibitions' in public spaces with laminated newspaper cuttings and facts and figures and organised 'gentrification walks' for anyone interested in looking at and chatting together about local changes.

Your estate's Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) can be a useful way to meet others on your estate. Find out if it is active and when and where they meet. Have they already been involved in negotiations or consultation with the local council and/or developers? What was the outcome? All TRAs are different. While some can feel like a 'closed shop', many are dynamic and open to new people getting involved.

If a TRA is unsympathetic or unresponsive, you can form your own group. People who had bought flats on the Aylesbury estate felt unrepresented by their TRAs and formed the Wolverton Leaseholders group to challenge the Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) that were issued to evict them. Councils often make separate negotiations with tenants and leaseholders, but in the end they are all in the same boat when it comes to regeneration and so it's important that groups work together and keep open communication between all tenants, including those in short-term or sheltered housing.

Organising a local group

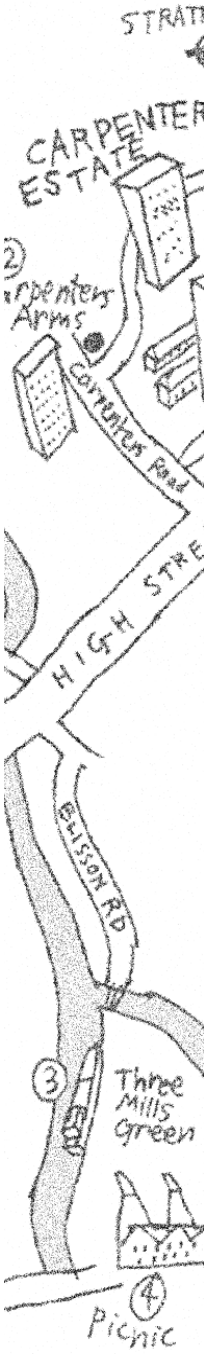
Besides leafleting door to door and posters, to reach people you can set up a Facebook group or a website. Having a named group makes it easier to approach people, to ask questions to the council or talk with journalists. In any group people have many different skills and abilities that can cover the basics: making posters and leaflets and finding ways to print them; organising events: cooking or donating food, or negotiating free or cheap use of church halls or meeting spaces; reading planning applications or council reports and making a summary for everyone else. It's good to share tasks so that jobs don't always stay with the same people.

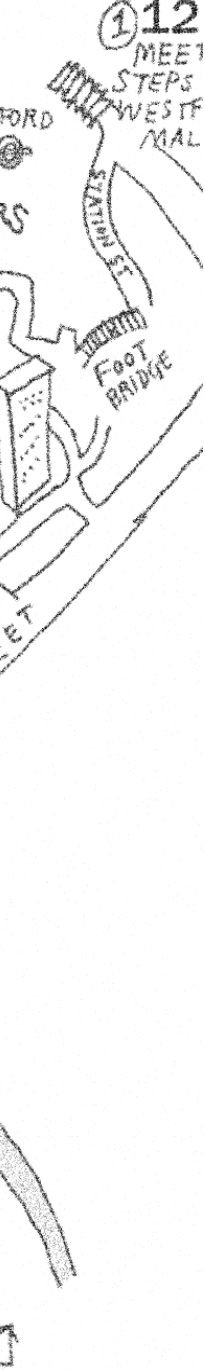
To start a group you don't need to be officially recognised by the council or be large in number; but if you want the support of the majority of tenants, your group needs to get in early and win the arguments against demolition. Being able to build wide support rapidly means that you can make demands rather than fighting each step of the way. On the Carpenters Estate in Newham, Carpenters Against Regeneration Plans (CARP) brought together tenants, leaseholders, freeholders and businesses. In 2012 they successfully resisted plans for a new UCL campus by drawing additional support from academics, UCL students union, trade unionists and activists.

www.savecarpenters.wordpress.com

In 2010, Islington Council announced a proposal to demolish part of the Bemerton Estate. 250 leaseholders on the estate formed the Bemerton Leaseholders Association to challenge the proposal. They campaigned to show that the proposed demolition of 800 homes didn't make financial sense: to break even the Council would have needed to build an extra 350 homes for sale. By organising early in the process, they were able to stand up for their rights and in 2012 the Council had to scrap the plans and promised improvements to open spaces and buildings on the estate.

Bemerton Leaseholders Association:
www.bemerton.org.uk





Telling your story is important

Community groups are always pitted against 'official experts' in the form of the council or a developer who use a lot of spin to sell regeneration schemes. Fancy brochures might look good but often only offer vague promises to local people. Once you have found real facts and information it's important to start a local public debate on what's going on. Be clear and factual. Rumours or sweeping generalisations could make people lose interest. Getting your story across can be complicated as it means having to simplify the 'expert' language of the law and government without losing the important details. It also means learning how to tell your story to reach different audiences.

Local and free newspapers are important official sources of information. Writing letters to the local press and working with local reporters can help you reach people who don't read news online. If you organise an event or make a public statement it's useful to send a short press release to newspapers. There are many websites available with good practical tips on how to make a press release. Knowing how to talk to the press is absolutely key. Be prepared: reporters will want your story 'in a nutshell' and will ask for someone they can name and quote. Having an updated facts sheet at hand can help you stay focused. Even if they might not use the information on this occasion, you are proving to be a trustworthy source of information and they might come back to you for comments later on.

Internet tools are also very useful to reach a wider public. You can set up a basic website using free online templates (such as wordpress, tumblr, blogspot etc) and create Twitter/ Facebook accounts. The more noise you can make on social media the greater the chances that your local councillors and MPs will have to address your concerns. You may also attract the attention of local, citywide and national (sometimes international!) newspapers and researchers. We all learn from each other about what works best and what is a waste of time.

Other community organisations fighting displacement might contact you and ask for support. It is important that you have a way to share information and be in contact with groups with the same concerns as yours.

Build evidence for your story through photographs, videos, and radio recordings as well as documents. As the campaign develops, it is important to archive these along with newsletters, reports, interviews, minutes of meetings and so on, so that community activity against gentrification and displacement is recorded for use in the future and opened up as a resource and a space for reflection and debate.

The consultation game

If your estate or neighbourhood is affected by a regeneration plan, it is likely that there will be a 'consultation'. There are two types of consultation: 'statutory' consultation means that the council has a legal requirement to seek comments from local residents on planning in their area; 'non-statutory' consultation is not a legal requirement. In either case councils and/or developers often hire 'consultation consultants', who are paid to listen and persuade, build phony agreement and write what's called a 'statement of community involvement', to pretend that the community is behind the regeneration.

Participating in consultation is often time-consuming and frustrating. Yet, many residents and community groups do decide to engage to try to find out information. In Elephant and Castle, local campaigners tried to make the consultation into a platform to share information and keep a record of broken promises. They constantly brought up the real stakes of the development and pressured locally elected councillors through blogging, independent and mainstream media, as well as at official council meetings.

Public consultation days were challenged by some groups through leafleting and running an alternative consultation stall to publicly ask difficult questions on the new plans, such as:

- How does it compare with existing housing provision and waiting lists?
- What are the rent levels like in the new homes?
- Does the redevelopment comply with your council's planning policy on levels of 'affordable housing'?
- What are the benefits for the local community under Section 106 or the CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy)? Both S106 and CIL are ways in which communities take money from developers' profits for local benefits.

Be prepared to work within and outside the consultation space. Often campaigns get stuck in consultation processes and forget to continue working in the area and pushing their argument to local people. You may have to argue for real power to affect decisions, e.g. by having your representatives on consultation committees or by having your organisations recognised as 'local stakeholders'. Your aim is to turn consultation into negotiation rather than just a talking shop with no real power to change council and developers' plans. To this end, it's great to organise your own 'consultation' activities to gather local communities' own visions and desires for the area.

A word about the law

Legal challenges to plans to demolish and redevelop estates can be useful as a delaying tactic and as a way to set precedents for other campaigns.

Some estates threatened with demolition called for a Judicial Review (JR) of their planning application decision. This more or less means that residents take the planning decision to court. You will need a sympathetic lawyer to help on this. Judicial Reviews can be won and can stop existing planning applications but developers often just submit fresh applications with minimal changes. Recently, new planning powers at the Greater London Authority mean that the Mayor can intervene in local plans by approving a planning application in dispute and taking the planning power out of the hands of the council.

If an estate is set to be demolished and if negotiations with leaseholders and commercial tenants fail to reach an agreement about relocation or compensation, councils can use Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) to force them to leave. They have to have more than 7 years left on their leases to gain the right to object. Often people are not aware of this right or are afraid to go to court as it can be quite intimidating. Legal representation can be expensive but it is possible to object without a lawyer. Importantly, the council can only apply for CPO after the planning application for the estate redevelopment has been approved. Strategically, then, focus on winning the argument against the plans first.

Recent experiences show that the chances of a successful challenge are small and the council (or other 'acquiring authority') will most probably keep re-applying until the decision goes in their favour. However, calling for a Public Inquiry into a CPO usually receives a lot of media coverage and can be useful to learn important new information about the development plans that had previously been a secret.

The first many council tenants will know of any threat is when they get a letter from their council saying that they are going to regenerate their estate and that they are invited to consultations on it.

Here's a list of questions about where you live:

CONSULTATION

If a 'consultation' about regeneration comes to your local area, you can ask:

- Who is running it? Is it run by the council? The developer? Or a private company working on their behalf?
- If it is a private company, what other consultations have they been involved with in London? Were local people happy with it or not?
- What decision-making power do local people have in the consultation process?
- What guarantees are there that local people's views will be listened to, respected and turned into reality?
- How can you make sure local groups are part of the official mechanism to make decisions?

CHANGES LOCALLY

- Do you know how changes happen in your estate and community? Who do they involve - local or national governments, private individuals, property developers? Are there websites, newsletters or council letters that explain what they are doing and how it might affect you?
- Have local residents been part of any local decisions about these changes? If so, how easy and clear were the processes to make decisions?
- Is anyone challenging or opposing these changes? Who are the people opposing them? What are their issues and the arguments?
- Are these changes justified, for example: should your council sell off an open green area or a community facility near you so that private homes can be built? Who benefits from this?

"Carpenters Estate has the potential to be a true example of Olympic legacy, showing not just Newham but the world how empowered communities can derive low carbon and sustainable living in a diverse and cohesive community"

Carpenters Estate Resident
Quoted in The Carpenters
Community Plan (2013)

CONTENTS

Staying put

Community alternatives to fight for

When your estate is faced with demolition or redevelopment plans, you can organise to develop your own alternatives. The options in this section draw on tenants and communities in London coming together to maintain truly affordable housing and community control in their estates. The section starts with ways of using the planning process by and for local communities (community planning, neighbourhood planning and lifetime neighbourhoods), continues with the alternative to the demolition of council estates (including housing co-operatives and community land trusts) and ends with recent examples of refurbishment and community-led-self build as alternatives to demolition.

Community planning

There are many examples of plans led by local communities that have succeeded in stopping public and private sector development proposals, and realised alternative visions in their place. For example, King's Cross Railway Lands Group submitted a 'People's Plan' to Camden Council as a planning application in opposition to developer's plans in the early 1990's. Wards Corner Community Coalition followed the same course of action in 2013-14

King's Cross Railway Lands Group
www.kxrlg.org.uk

Wards Corner Community Coalition
www.wardscorner.wikispaces.com

Carpenters Community Plan

The Carpenters Estate is a council estate adjacent to Stratford Town Centre and the Olympic Park. Constructed in the 1960's, its 703 homes are made up of terraced housing, 3 storey apartment blocks and 3 tower blocks. Newham Council's masterplan for Stratford proposed the redevelopment of the Carpenters Estate, with at least part of the estate (the tower blocks) to be demolished. The aim of the Community Plan was to produce a positive community-led vision for the estate as well as to oppose the plans of Newham Council and their development partners. London Tenants Federation and Just Space received some funding from the Antipode Foundation to work on the Carpenters, while voluntary support was provided by Planning and Geography students at University College London.

The policies of the Localism Act (2011) and its support for neighbourhood planning were encouraging and other examples of community plans offered positive inspiration. Also, the planning responsibilities of the newly formed London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) offered an alternative to the local authority route that people wanted to test.

The Community Plan was produced through workshops and walkabouts with residents, a door-to-door survey (completed by half of the households) and interviews with local businesses. An exhibition of the draft Community Plan was held in 4 different local venues. The greatest challenge was how to deal with community organisations which were under the influence of the Council as this had caused divisions on the estate. Key issues in the Community Plan were:

• Making the case for refurbishment of all homes by carrying out analyses of costs and benefits, both environmental (embodied energy) and social (including the extreme shortage of social housing);
• Strengthening existing community facilities, developing

an accessible community hub for young and old including leisure, sports, educational and faith activities as well as spaces to meet and socialise;

• Reversing the depopulation of the Carpenters Estate in order to enable existing local businesses to return and grow.

The Carpenters Community Plan brought together local residents, businesses and other stakeholders. It was adopted at a public meeting and presented to the LLDC. It provided a much stronger community voice for the Carpenters Estate and interest in developing a Neighbourhood Forum

The Carpenters Community Plan (2013) is available on the LTF web project 'Communities influencing and challenging development in London' (cicdl):

www.cicdl.info/opportunity/20-lower-lea-valley-including-stratford

Neighbourhood Plans

The Localism Act provides a number of 'community rights', including a right for communities to develop Neighbourhood Plans. This means that community groups can create a Neighbourhood Forum and develop a Neighbourhood Plan as part of the official planning system. To develop a Neighbourhood Plan, an application must be made to the Local Authority to designate a Neighbourhood Area and Neighbourhood Forum. Government regulations say that the Neighbourhood Forum must:

• Have at least 21 members who live or work in the area and reflect its character and diversity;
• Have a constitution (this can be as short as 1 page);
• Register a 'catchment area' that the plan applies to.

The Neighbourhood Plan has to be generally consistent with the local borough's Local Plan. Once a Plan is produced, it

has to be examined by an independent planning expert and approved by a majority through a local referendum.

Neighbourhood Plans are being developed across London, including by communities where there is a high proportion of social housing. Examples include: Somers Town (Camden), Crouch Hill and Hornsey Rise (Islington), Church End and Roundwood (Brent), Grove Park (Lewisham) and Elephant and Castle (Southwark).

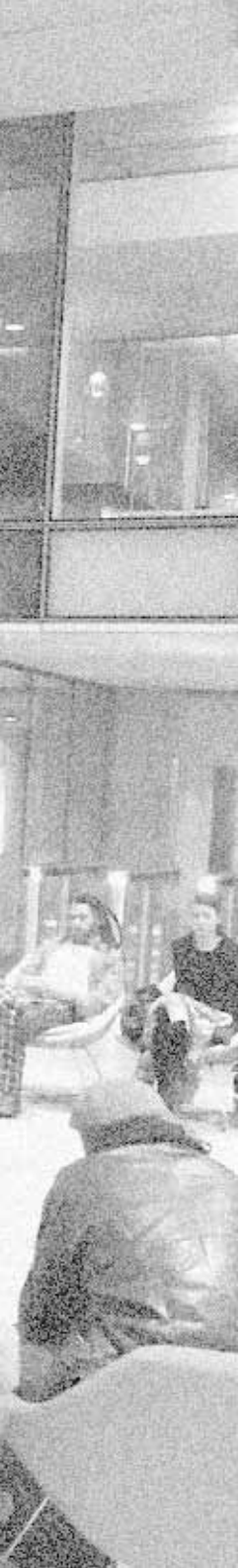
My Community Rights:
www.mycommunityrights.org.uk/neighbourhood planning

Lifetime Neighbourhoods

Lifetime Neighbourhoods (LTN) are designed to be places that meet the needs of the local community at all stages of their life. LTN principles include community well-being, social networks, a thriving local economy and sustainable environment. There are many useful tools for assessing your neighbourhood including the walkability matrix and the building for life and future communities checklist. The concept can help define the long-term community aims for your neighbourhood and could be a feature of a Community or Neighbourhood Plan.

The London Tenants Federation have developed a tenants' definition of LTN as 'neighbourhoods in which communities are empowered and in which local shops, social and community facilities, streets, parks and open spaces, local services, decent homes and public transport are affordable and accessible to everyone now and for future generations.'

See:
www.londontenants.org/publications/other/LTF%20Lifetime%20neighbourhoods.pdf



Community Land Trusts

Community Land Trusts (CLT) are a legal way to make housing truly affordable on a permanent basis. Rights, obligations and responsibilities for the housing are shared between the CLT and the individual homeowners/tenants. In CLTs the land is legally separated from the buildings; it is owned by the CLT and leased (for a very low fee) to homeowners/tenants. The model can be applied to different forms of affordable housing, commercial and community spaces: affordable homeownership, social rented housing, limited-equity co-operative housing, mutual housing, small businesses, parks and offices, often for not-for-profit and community groups. In CLT's housing is permanently affordable because:

• Homes are sheltered from price increases due to gentrification. The rent and the price of purchasing the home do not include the land value, but only the improvements on the land;

• If you are a homeowner, you cannot sell your home at market-value. Resale restrictions written into the deeds require that the homes be sold to other low income groups;

• CLTs have resident and community control built into their governance. A standard CLT board usually includes tenants/homeowners in the CLT and representatives of the wider community.

Most CLTs in the UK are in rural areas. In London, the main difficulty is to have voluntary transfer of land from local authorities, but a recent high profile campaign in East London has secured a former mental health hospital as a CLT, the East London Community Land Trust.

See:
www.eastlondonclt.co.uk

The UK National Community Land Trust Network has recently developed a useful CLT Legal Toolkit:

www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk

The Andover Estate

The Andover Estate at Finsbury Park is the largest council estate in the poorest ward in Islington. Built in the 1970s, it has 1064 homes. Issues faced by the residents included disrepair, safety, street violence, insufficient access to GPs, not enough nurseries and overcrowding. The community on the estate was very organised, with an active Tenants and Residents Association (Andover TRA) and a very active community centre, 'Finsbury Park Community Hub'. They began talking to the council and local politicians and stakeholders to discuss issues and negotiate with them. They co-opted different professionals, including an architect and a landscape designer, to engage with the community. They also received funding from CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) and the National Community Land Trusts for a small study to explore self build on the estate.

After two and a half years the study became the Andover Estate Development Plan for a bottom-up regeneration of the whole estate. Proposals include 100-140 new homes for families living in overcrowded situations on the estate, a new sports pitch, a youth club and a health centre. Participation activities along the way included study tours, exhibitions, and design workshops with a strong emphasis on working with young people. Since 2012 the plan has been taken forward by the Andover Future Forum, which includes tenants, and homeowners in the neighbourhood, the TRA and other local stakeholders, including council officers. A key aim of the Forum is to establish a Community Land Trust to develop and manage the estate on a long lease from the Council. The CLT will also allow community-led development of new homes through a mix of self build on vacant land and conversion of unused garage sites into flats.

Andover Future Forum:
www.andoverfuture.org

Co-operative housing

Co-operative housing is defined as housing that is:

• developed by, with and usually for a democratic community membership organisation;
• is controlled (and in some cases owned) by a local democratic community membership organisation.

Housing co-operatives are a form of housing based on tenants' self-management. They are not-for-profit organisations and this means that their rents are usually lower than market rents in the same area. In housing co-operatives members collectively manage their homes. This involves taking responsibility for arranging repairs, making decisions about rent and co-op membership. Membership is usually limited to current tenants but sometimes includes prospective tenants. Tenant self-organisation ensures that all residents are responsible for their homes and that decisions are taken democratically. Co-ops can house anybody, but some give priority to groups that are excluded from housing waiting lists as 'non-priority homeless'. These include minority ethnic groups and single people on low incomes.

In London there are around 83 housing co-operatives, the greatest concentration in the country, which house an estimate of 20,000 people. Some co-ops are short-life, which means that they provide housing by taking on and refurbishing empty homes on a short-term basis. By using empty properties, they promote refurbishment and the reuse of existing resources.

Confederation of Co-operative Housing UK:
www.cch.coop

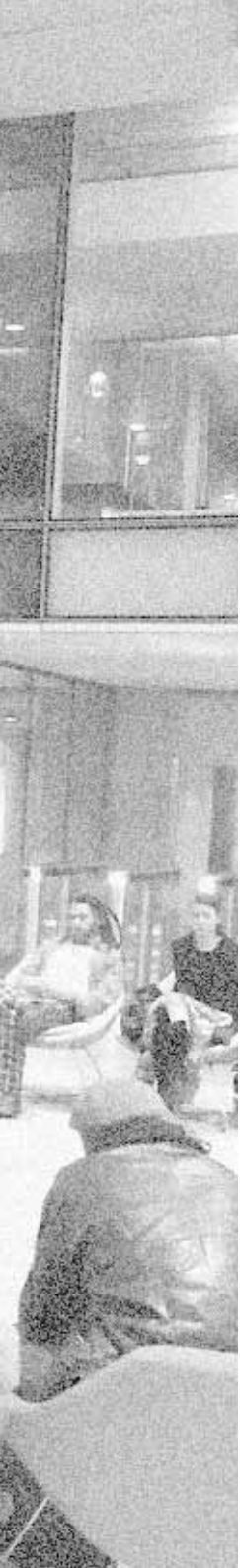
London Federation of Housing Co-ops:
www.lfhc.org.uk

Community Housing Associations

Community Housing Associations are housing associations created and run by the community/residents. They are managed by a board made up of a majority of residents elected by the members. Historically, community housing associations come from grass-root organising for community control. In the mid-1980s residents of the Walterton and Elgin estates in Westminster successfully fought the sell-off of their homes to private developers, taking ownership and control of 921 homes in 1992. They were able to do this by using the tenants' choice provision of the 1988 Housing Act and received advice and support from Paddington Churches Housing Association and the Housing Corporation. Between 1993 and 1997, Westminster Council paid over £22 million to WECH to implement a high quality refurbishment programme in which resident participation in the design and fitting of new homes was central. In 1996, a report found that the tower blocks on the Elgin Estate were asbestos-ridden and these were demolished by WECH and replaced with low-rise housing.

Today, Walterton & Elgin Community Homes (WECH) continues its legacy as a successful resident-controlled housing association. It has 640 homes, 489 in Victorian terraces on Walterton estate and 151 in the Elgin estate. 496 are tenanted households and 144 leaseholds. The WECH Board consists of 14 members elected from WECH shareholders, over 70% of whom are residents and the remainder co-opted for their knowledge and expertise. The organisation provides high-quality truly affordable housing and serves as a powerful example of people-led solutions to displacement and the privatisation of our public housing stock.

Walterton & Elgin Community Homes:
www.wech.co.uk



Refurbishment

Council tenants are often told that their estates must be demolished and rebuilt because they are structurally damaged beyond repair. But often this story is not based on real surveys, and in most cases council estates, even those in real disrepair, are structurally sound and can be refurbished. Sometimes, surveys are conducted but ignored, because developers and councils prefer demolition and rebuild. For instance, the Heygate Estate was structurally sound and could have been refurbished, as has been the case with many estates built in the same period and with the same construction method, including the Doddington and Rollo Estate in Battersea.

Refurbishment as an alternative to demolition and rebuild is often part of community plans and can be argued through social, economic and environmental costs. Refurbishment protects communities by avoiding the displacement of existing residents and by reducing the personal social and economic costs of rehousing. It is usually much cheaper than demolition because it reuses existing buildings and infrastructure, and it is more environmentally friendly because it avoids the 'embodied carbon costs' of demolition and rebuild.

The Edward Woods Estate

The Edward Woods Estate is a 1960s 528-homes council estate in Hammersmith and Fulham. It is made up of 3 tower blocks and 4 walk-up blocks. The refurbishment of the estate in 2010 included improving the insulation and external appearance of the tower blocks and the installation of photovoltaic panels to generate renewable energy to power communal lifts and lighting. The £16.3 million refurbishment was funded by a combination of organisations: the GLA (Targeted Funding for energy saving); CESP (Funding for energy saving); S106 (planning contribution) from previous regeneration schemes; HRA capital and Capital Receipts.

For more information Just Space and the London Tenants Federation: 'Demolition or Refurbishment? A review of the evidence' (2014)

Community Self-Build Housing

The recent National Planning Policy Framework encourages self build housing and Government guidance calls on Councils to measure the demand for self build and identify land available for self build development. The Mayor of London has created an £8 million fund for self build projects in the capital. It is called 'Build Your Own Home - The London Way' and responds to the Community Right to Build in the Localism Act. The scheme provides £5 million repayable finance for house builders and £3 million revenue grants for organisations looking to develop self build community projects. Council tenants can come together and identify vacant sites on their estate that could address housing needs through self build and create programmes to learn and share self building skills. As a legal model, the community self build could be:

- A series of individuals;
- A community company;
- Mutual co-operative;
- Community Land Trust.

The land could be owned by the council, put into a Community Land Trust or sold to the self builders. As for the finance, community groups can raise a mortgage, find a private sector development loan or apply for a public sector loan or grant (from the local council, the Mayor of London or Central Government).

Community groups don't usually have the capital to pay the same market rates as private developers, so there has to be a shift in how the community and public bodies calculate value. This can be saying that the project is going to remain affordable in the long-term and be of more benefit to the community than a tower block of expensive flats.

At the moment there are 21 community self build (also called group self build) projects at feasibility or development stage in London. Lewisham pioneered community self build in the 1970's and 1980's, led by Walter Segal in Honor Oak. RUSS (the Rural-Urban Synthesis Society) a Community Land Trust has been campaigning for self build housing in Lewisham for the past two years and has developed plans for 20-25 self build homes at Church Grove in Ladywell. The site is a former school, that has been demolished, with surrounding terraced houses. The group's board structure includes a place for the council in return for a long-term lease on the land, providing the Trust with a means to raise cash by having something to borrow against, rather than relying on council subsidy.

Church Grove Ladywell group self build:
www.churchgrove.info

Community Self Build Agency:
www.communityselfbuildagency.org.uk

Walter Segal Trust:
www.segalselfbuild.co.uk

National Self Build Association UK:
www.nasba.org.uk

Are you a council tenant or leaseholder?

Is a council estate part of your neighbourhood?

Have you heard that your council estate will be 'regenerated' or demolished?

Are you concerned about what that means and how it will impact upon you and your community?

Staying Put

An Anti-Gentrification Handbook for Council Estates in London

This handbook explains why the regeneration of council estates often results in established communities being broken up and moved away, and housing becoming more expensive. It is designed to help local communities learn about gentrification and the alternatives they can fight for. Through the experiences of council tenants, leaseholders and the wider community in London, it contains ideas, stories, tools and resources.