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A positive future for social housing in London

The London Tenants' Manifesto



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Content

| | |
|----|--|
| 5 | Introduction |
| 6 | The London Context |
| 13 | Our Manifesto |
| 14 | Tenants' rights to determine our future |
| 17 | Safe, well-designed and managed homes |
| 19 | Economically sustainable social rented homes |
| 21 | Sustaining strong and resilient social housing communities |
| 23 | Environmentally sustainable social rented homes and neighbourhoods |
| 26 | References |
| 27 | Glossary |

Introduction

As social housing tenants, we and our homes are often written about by government ministers, journalists, think-tanks, charity policy teams, architects and academics. Some portrayals are sympathetic to us, but many are not.

The vast majority of these ‘experts’ have no experience of living in social housing.

It is essential for us that a strong and articulate social housing tenants’ voice is heard in respect of the decisions made about our homes and communities.

Our manifesto focuses on what is needed in order to achieve a positive future for social housing in London.

It is drawn from tenants’ experiences of changes that have happened to public housing over the last forty years. This includes severe cuts in public funding and the failure of the market alternative to deliver the homes that most people can really afford, alongside the growth of negative portrayals of working-class social housing tenants and their homes.

How this has impacted on tenants and the damage it has done to our communities, our collective voice and our involvement in decision-making is included in the London Context section of this document.

Our manifesto is drawn from

- * discussions held at our 2019 conference in partnership with the London Federation of Housing Co-ops and the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations, which coincided with the celebrations of the 100 years of council housing;
- * tenant analysis of the Social Housing Green paper at our 2018 conference;
- * our experiences of working to influence regional policy on housing and planning; and
- * how our homes are managed and maintained at the local level.

In part, our manifesto argues for a return to large-scale publicly funded provision of good quality social rented homes, where people can comfortably raise their families and from which household members can play an active role in their communities.

It looks to sustainability in its widest sense; economically, environmentally and socially.

It places tenants at the heart of decision-making about our homes - to help address our concerns about the current absence of democracy and accountability.

We feel that most proposals in our manifesto could be implemented in 15 years, if common sense were to prevail and there is political will.

The London Context

1. London's housing crisis

Between 2005 and 2018, an additional 397,000 homes were built in London. Just 12 percent were social rented; an average of 3,801 each year¹.

The Mayor of London's assessment of Londoners' housing needs, in 2017, showed that to address existing unmet need and that of newly forming households in the capital, a total of 65,878 additional homes would have to be built each year from 2016-41. 30,972 (47%) would need to be social rented².

The ongoing failure to build the homes actually needed, compounded by housing benefit cuts, introduction of universal credit and household debt have resulted in:

- 62,670 statutory homeless households living in temporary housing (as of June 2020) including 89,850 children³
- 4,227 people sleeping rough in London from April-June 2020 - a 33 per cent increase on the same period in 2019, and a 63 per cent increase on 2018⁴
- As many as 12,500 hidden homeless - staying temporarily with family or friends but not included in official homelessness figures - each night in September 2017⁵
- 118,000 families living in overcrowded social rented homes in 2020⁶
- Households that should be able to access social rented homes, living in expensive, insecure and poorly regulated private rented homes or being displaced from the capital
- 60% of London's private renters living in unacceptable conditions including vermin infested, damp or dangerous homes as of 2016 (according to a Shelter research)⁷
- London poverty rates which double when housing costs are taken into account⁸.

London's 2017 assessed annual housing need

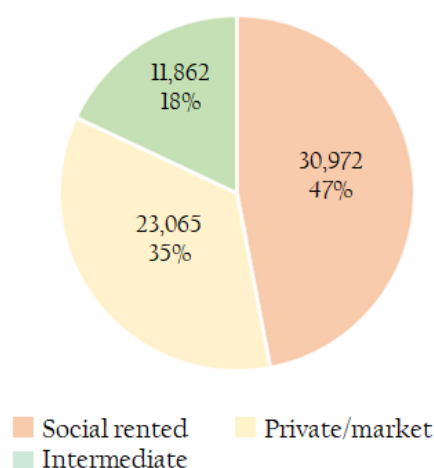


Figure 1

London's 2017 unmet housing need

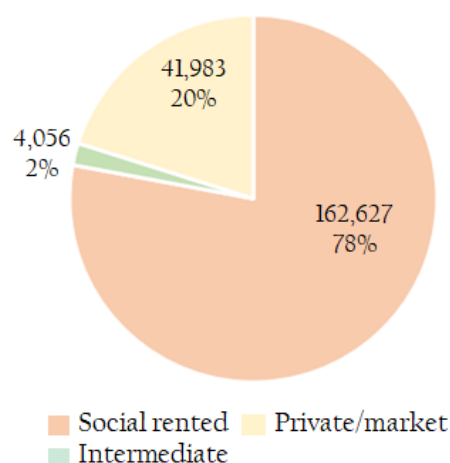


Figure 2

2. London's Housing Market

Market ideology applied by governments of all political persuasions over the last 40 years has failed to ensure that all Londoners have access to a good quality home that they can afford.

Housing in London has become a prime investment and has significantly increased land and property values, predominantly benefiting global investors. Public land and land once preserved for industry have become choice pickings for development of expensive homes, high end business and finance.

The Mayor of London's London Plan, first produced in 2004, has supported this through its identification of 'opportunity areas'⁷, for large scale growth.

Homeownership, which has been central to political discourse since the 1970s, has become almost out of reach for all but those with the highest incomes. According to the Office for National Statistics in the year to August 2020 London homes were selling at £489,000 on average, compared to £239,000 for the rest of the UK. Fewer than 50 percent of household in London are home-owners compared to 63 percent nationally⁹.

Public subsidy has been increasingly levered in to prop up a failing housing market through schemes such as Help to Buy, Starter and First Homes as well as shared ownership.

Shared ownership has always been the most popular choice for developers in terms of delivering sub-market (mis-leadingly described as 'affordable') homes. The promise, however, that this housing type is a stepping-stone to full ownership has always been challenged. And increasingly the tenure has been exposed as creating hardship for shared owners - in terms of the cost of repairs, the security of the tenure and purchasers' ability to sell.

Twenty seven percent of London households now live in private rented homes.

In 1981, 35 percent of London homes were social rented (mostly council). By 2019, the capital's total housing stock had grown by around a million, yet the number of social rented homes had fallen by 146,000. Just 23 percent of all London homes are now social rented¹⁰.

The market has edged increasingly into the social rented sector since the early 1980s, with the government favoring housing associations, rather than councils, to deliver new homes. The expectation was that housing associations would match public funding with private cash.

Large housing associations such as those that make up the G15 have moved away from their philanthropic origins. Many of them now behave more like developers, focusing increasingly on building private/market homes. See Figure 3, overleaf.

"We need to have a say in how housing associations use their huge assets to build."

"Currently they are machines for getting rid of social housing and replacing them with more expensive homes with market related rents."

"We have the problem that housing associations develop most new homes and thus weaker types of tenancies are given."

Comments made by attendees of our 2019 conference

The London Context

| Housing delivery 2019/20 | Social rented | Affordable Ren | Intermediate | Market | Total | % Market |
|----------------------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-----------|
| A2 Dominion | 47 | 38 | 0 | 225 | 310 | 73 |
| Catalyst | 160 | 158 | 0 | 469 | 787 | 60 |
| Clarion | 198 | 729 | 0 | 1174 | 2101 | 56 |
| Hyde | 38 | 62 | 0 | 587 | 687 | 85 |
| L & Q | 199 | 411 | 90 | 1733 | 2433 | 75 |
| Metropolitan Thames Valley | 45 | 229 | 0 | 962 | 1236 | 78 |
| Notting Hill / Genesis | 207 | 213 | 27 | 1399 | 1846 | 77 |
| One Housing | 18 | 17 | 0 | 375 | 410 | 91 |
| Optivo | 20 | 368 | 0 | 305 | 693 | 44 |
| Peabody | 388 | 38 | 0 | 622 | 1048 | 59 |
| Southern Housing Group | 14 | 133 | 0 | 272 | 419 | 70 |
| TOTAL | 1334 | 2396 | 117 | 8123 | 11970 | 70 |

Figure 3 - From Inside Housing's Top 50 biggest builders analysis July 2020¹¹

3. Destabilisation of Social Housing Communities

While social housing estates still have relatively stable and supportive communities, policy changes over the last 40 years have increased transience and loss of family and other support networks.

Between 1980/81 and 2019/20, 311,305 London council homes were sold via the Right to Buy¹². Forty two percent of them (130,748) are now privately let¹³.

Stock transfer - of council homes to housing associations, driven particularly through the government's Decent Homes programme, from 2000 - weakened tenants' rights; replacing secure council tenancies with housing association assured tenancies. The strength of the representative tenant movement was also undermined with most housing associations not supporting formal tenant structures, in the form of tenants associations and federations, in the way that councils had. We assess that more than 188,500¹⁴ London council homes were transferred to housing associations by 2010.

'Mixed tenure communities' policies, introduced in the early 2000s, were purported to benefit lower income households through reducing geographical

concentrations of poverty (mostly on council housing estates). In reality, this meant displacement of social housing tenants and replacement with wealthier households. Since 1997, 55,000 London council homes on 166 estates have been demolished and 131,000 tenants and leaseholders have been displaced¹⁵.

Designs of new mixed tenure developments have often included separate block entrances for social housing tenants and at times their exclusion from certain amenities.

'Target rents', introduced in 2002, set social rent levels closer to the market through a national formula. This 'rent restructuring' weakened council tenants' collective negotiating abilities with their landlords on annual rent setting.

'Affordable rents' (at up to 80 percent market rents) were introduced along with insecure 'fixed-term' tenancies in 2011. The majority have been developed in the housing association sector since 2011.

As well as building new affordable rent homes, 19,960 London social rented homes were converted to 'affordable rents from 2012-20¹⁶. This has left neighbouring tenants paying different rents for the same size and types of homes, with the same service, on the same estates.

4. Setting the Record Straight on Subsidy

For decades, working-class social housing tenants have been labelled by sections of the national media and some politicians as work shy, uneducated, lacking in aspiration and getting something for nothing (or being heavily subsidised by the taxpayer), particularly when it comes to their housing. These negative stereotypes are often seen on TV shows, where they are drawn upon for cheap laughs by unimaginative comedians.

Residents told us that they were made to feel like ‘second-class citizens.’ They reported being treated as ‘an underclass’ and ‘benefit scroungers’, rather than hardworking honest people¹⁷

From the 2018 Social Housing green paper

Describing social housing as ‘subsidised’ reinforces the stereotype that social housing tenants get something for nothing. The implication is also that market housing is not subsidised, which is factually incorrect.

As highlighted in the Chartered Institute of Housing’s UK Housing Review 2020, the government actually provides three times more subsidy to prop up private market priced housing than it does for all types of housing described as ‘affordable’ including shared ownership¹⁸. *Figure 4*

The March 2020 budget promised additional funding for affordable housing. This amounts to a £0.5 billion¹⁸ annual increase for 2021-26, compared to the last three years, but does not change the overall picture.

The running costs of social rented homes are covered by tenants’ rents and service charges. Over the course of a lifetime, many social tenants will more than repay the cost of building and maintaining their home through their rents. Many other social tenants’ rents contribute to paying off interest on loans taken out by their landlord to build new homes.

When it comes to subsidy in the form of housing benefit, it is private landlords who Hoover up the most per unit of housing. It cost the tax payer £205.60 per week for an average London private tenant’s housing benefit in 2019. This is 70 percent more than that for an average London council tenant’s benefit, of £121.30 per week.

Note that, just like private tenants, many social housing tenants pay all or most of their rent themselves, without benefits, and many of those who do need to rely on housing benefit are also in work.

Distribution of planned government subsidy for new housing 2019-24

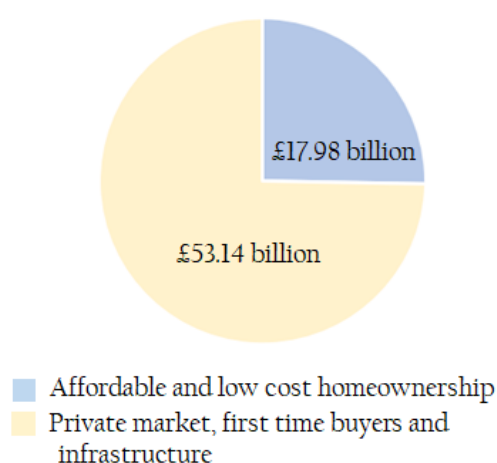


Figure 4 Data from UK Housing Review 2020

5. Undermining Tenants' Collective Voices

While evidence shows that social housing tenant involvement in the management of our homes provides better service delivery, there has been severe weakening of tenant involvement in the sector.

The traditional way in which social landlords involved tenants about our homes was to support us working together at the estate- and landlord- wide level in the form of democratic and accountable associations and wider organisations.



Tenants coming together at LTF conferences



Elected tenant representatives were armed with a majority mandate to negotiate with their landlord and to feed back to others.

However, the provision of that collective tenant voice has been increasingly replaced by individualistic consumer style interactions. This has included landlord selection of individual tenants to join boards or forums who are then 'trained' to understand landlord policy and practice.

Those selected have neither a remit to couch the views of others nor to feed back to them, leaving many other tenants feeling that their voices are just not heard.

Comments from our 2019 conference

“Our landlord rides roughshod over us. They suggest they hear what we say and feel our pain, but in the end, they will do what they want to do anyway”

“Our cabinet member for housing and director are happy for tenants to scrutinise but not to be involved in making decisions”.

“All we are at present is consultees, and the consultation is meaningless, it just provides a box to tick”

“Tenants are not involved in real decision-making, particularly with the cabinet system introduced by New Labour. We vote for councillors; they give the power to the portfolio holder and then delegate this to the bureaucrats. We fear that the establishment of housing companies will make this worse.”

6. Playing Politics with our Safety

As far back as the 1960s, local and national governments and private companies cut corners, reducing funding and legislation that should be in place to protect us in our homes, for short term political and financial gain.

What is most devastating about the Ronan Point, Lakanal House and Grenfell tragedies is the loss of life could have been prevented by proper resourcing, due diligence and government being vigilant in ensuring comprehensive and up-to-date building safety regulations.

Just as lessons were not learnt at Lakanal House, we are concerned that the current government is failing to learn the right lessons from the Grenfell Tower fire.

The government says that the safety of residents is of paramount importance, that they are determined to ensure that the views of residents are at the heart of a new safety regulatory framework. However, we fear that proposed reforms set out in the Draft Building Safety Bill fall short on this.

We are concerned about: the height threshold for regulated buildings being too high, the lack of requirement for new buildings to have a building safety certificate and the failure to cover existing buildings in the regulations.

Shared owners and leaseholders, who bought their public and housing association homes in good faith, are now picking up the

bill for the government's failure to regulate unsafe cladding and are under financial strain and distress.

GRENFELL



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Launched this summer, the government's latest Planning White Paper threatens to ramp up the 'bonfire of regulations' which helped to establish the climate of cost-cutting in which the Grenfell Tower fire took place.

Permitted development rights have already resulted in homeless families being placed in out-of-town former office and retail parks which threaten both mental and physical health. Proposals to expand permitted development and ride roughshod over local democratic accountability in planning decisions and in developing planning policy threaten the safety and wellbeing of those on the lowest incomes who will be expected to live in the resulting poor-quality developments.

7. Impact of Covid-19

Despite early statements that ‘we are all in this together’, the evidence relating to the impact of Covid-19 continues to expose existing and deepening inequalities in London. That includes poverty, health, the costs of housing, poor quality and overcrowded homes, homelessness, and digital exclusion.

The most recent data on this was set out in *Health Equality in England: the Marmot Review 10 Years on*²⁰. In a comment in the Guardian, 15.12.20, Michael Marmot said “The more deprived the area, the higher the mortality rate. This looks rather similar to the picture for all deaths. Another is the high mortality rate of members of black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. Much of this excess risk can be attributed to living in more deprived areas, working in high-risk occupations, living in overcrowded conditions and, in the case of Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups, a greater prevalence of relevant pre-existing conditions.”

In June 2020 the Office for National Statistics data also showed that people

living in the poorest areas of England and Wales were twice as likely to die from Covid-19 as those in less deprived areas. Nine out of ten local authorities with the highest Covid-19 age-standardised mortality rates were in London.²¹ Brent and Newham, boroughs with some of the highest levels of poverty and overcrowding, have also suffered most in terms of Covid-19.

The Resolution Foundation’s Housing Outlook report of April 2020 found 79 percent of social housing tenants (nationally) were at risk of an income shock due to coronavirus, whether because they were working in sectors directly hit by lockdown (such as retail and hospitality), unable to work from home or were having to care for school-aged children, compared to 50 percent for home owners and 59 percent of private renters²² A Child Poverty Action Group survey in August 2020 found that, among low-income households: 83 percent said that Covid-19 had affected their ability to pay for food; 76 percent struggled to pay for utilities; 49 percent for housing costs and 53 percent for childcare products. Nearly 60 percent said they were struggling to pay for three or more of these basic essentials²³. In May, it was reported that food bank use during the pandemic in London had nearly quadrupled and more than quadrupled in Newham and Tower Hamlets²⁴.

Without London’s existing social rented homes, it is likely that Covid-19 related death rates and the levels of poverty and insecurity relating to lockdowns could have been higher. Had funding for public homes been held at levels that meet need, they could well have been less.



Silverlock Hall TRA, Southwark, delivering Christmas gifts to residents - December 2020. @SilverlockTra

Our Manifesto



1. Tenants' Rights to Determine our Future

Social rented homes are no less important to tenants who live in them than the homes owned by their occupants. Having equivalent rights to stay in our homes and to be involved at the heart of all decision-making about our homes and communities is essential to guarantee social, economic and environmental sustainability for tenants and the wider community.

A positive future for social housing would include the following:

- 1.1 Tenants' rights are integral in all strategic decision-making and housing management structures. Tenants' rights to organise collectively and to take a full and equal role in decisions made about our homes at the local, regional and national levels are enshrined in legislation.**

Tenants and landlords are seen equally as the caretakers of public and community owned and managed homes for existing and future generations.

Tenants, working together in democratic and accountable associations and organisations, are acknowledged and respected as authorities on their homes and communities. This is acknowledged across all types of landlords and management organisations and all levels of government.

Tenant structures operate in a bottom-up framework from the local to the regional and to the national level, with consensus decision-making to ensure wide and open debate and that minority views and concerns are fully taken into account.

- 1.2 All social housing tenants (individuals or couples) are treated**

equally and have lifetime security of tenure.

- 1.3 All social housing tenants (including housing association tenants) have the right to scrutinise their landlord under an expanded Freedom of Information Act, to use a 'Right to Manage' to take over control of some or all of the services on their homes/estate as they choose and to use a 'Right to Transfer' to switch to a local authority or tenant-led landlord if they so wish.**

- 1.4 Active and thriving locally-based tenants' associations are widespread. Social landlords have a legal duty to encourage and support tenants associations' establishment, to maintain up-to-date records of those that are formally established and provide them with committed funding to support their activities.**

Tenants associations are active in decision-making structures and in building and sustaining their communities (see section 3).

Elected tenant association and organisation representatives are mandated to engage in negotiation with their landlords by those to whom they are accountable.

- 1.5 Social landlords are required to provide reliable funding to support the formation of independent borough and landlord-wide tenant federations or organisations.**

These organisations create opportunities for the exchange of local knowledge, ideas and mutual support amongst tenants' associations and tenant-led co-operatives, including through open meetings and conferences

for tenants within their boundaries.

They lead to effective ways of working and provision of best practice case studies, which are promulgated by regional and national tenants' federations.

1.6 Tenants' associations and organisations are actively engaged in wider strategic local authority level policy decision-making. They are active in, and/or have connections with, other community-based networks.

1.7 All institutions which exert direct influence on tenants' homes and neighbourhoods are accountable to tenants through democratic structures and operate in an open and transparent fashion.

- * Social rented homes are owned by local authorities, tenant directed housing associations, or tenant-led housing co-operatives. Homes are managed by staff employed directly by landlords or Tenant Management Organisations.
- * Local authority housing companies or special purpose vehicles have been closed down, with homes brought back into public or community ownership.
- * All housing associations have tenant-majority decision-making structures. Most tenant directed housing associations and tenant co-operatives are locally based, serving contiguous areas and relatively small numbers of properties to best provide democratic and accountable bottom-up ways of working.
- * Local authority housing committees

have been revived with a new structure. They are made up of locally elected councillors and tenant representatives, who form the majority on the committee. Tenant representatives are elected by tenant structures and are accountable to them. The committee is jointly chaired by tenant representatives and councillors. It is required to provide regular reports that are open to public scrutiny. Individual tenants' associations or campaign groups may request to speak at the Committee's open meetings. Priority is given where a request is supported by a majority petition of an estate, block or street.

1.8 A thriving independent London-wide tenants' federation brings together elected tenant representatives from across the capital. It is funded by social landlords and the Greater London Authority.

Its members are elected and mandated by borough- and landlord-wide tenant organisations. Lines of accountability are through member borough and landlord tenant structures to the local level.

It has a formal consultation role with the Mayor of London on all strategic housing and related community infrastructure issues.

It links with other tenant and community sector groups and promotes bottom-up policy making.

1.9 A thriving national federation of tenants, funded by central government, brings together elected tenant representatives from each region of England. It has a recognised

remit to be consulted by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and other governmental departments on housing matters.

The chairing of meetings is shared by regional tenant representatives.

Decisions are made by consensus, with regional differences fully acknowledged. It promotes bottom-up policy making.

Its members are elected by, and are accountable to, regional tenant structures.

Case Study

Gascoyne Estate Tenants and Residents Association, Hackney



In 2013, some neighbours on the Gascoyne Estate, Hackney, got talking about persistent disrepair of their homes. One had cracks in their walls that made it almost impossible to heat their home and another had an external waste pipe leak penetrating into their kitchen and bathroom.

Estate management was little better. The estate community centre, which had once been a hub for residents, was now run by a company delivering an expensive and poor-quality service. The hall was double booked for tenants' meetings and staff once failed to turn up on a Saturday morning to open the doors for a pre-booked children's party. Worse still, workmen were piling refuse from other sites on the estate, directly outside a block of flats, causing a fire hazard.

Having had some success in getting some of the worst cases of disrepair addressed, the neighbours decided to take action on the communal issues, and set up a Tenants' and Residents' Association.

The first general meeting in 2016 elected a committee. The committee arranged

meetings with Sanctuary officers and soon managed to get issues, such as the open pile of refuse, dealt with. From then on more people began to come to the TRA meetings and dozens of people responded to an informal survey about estate issues.

The following year, the TRA set up a Twitter account to expose the disrepair in tenants' homes. Within a few days, Sanctuary's Head of Housing got in touch and arranged a meeting. After this, he often attended the TRA meetings. A dedicated line of contact was set up, and Sanctuary's responsiveness to repair and management issues has vastly improved since then.

The TRA has now taken back control of the community centre, which has been opened up during the Covid19 lockdown for volunteers providing food distribution and sewing face masks for the community.

"One or two people being vocal isn't enough," says Alana, Chair of the TRA. "When you've got a group of residents around you who are supporting you, it's empowering and it helps you develop as a person."

2. Safe, well-designed and managed homes

It is critical that tenants are involved in all aspects of the safety, design and maintenance of our homes, given the impact this has on all aspects and stages of our lives, particularly our physical and mental health and well-being.

A positive future for social housing would include the following:

2.1 Effective systems are in place for reporting and resolving the management and maintenance issues of our homes and communal areas.

The local staff teams are well trained and responsible for undertaking of day-to-day repairs to our homes and the management and maintenance of communal areas.

They are proactive in identifying potential health and safety issues.

They understand the construction and layout of our homes and estates.

They are active in establishing good relationships with tenants.

These developments are all essential to enhancing the lifespan of the buildings and communal areas. They ensure that necessary works and improvements, including in response to repeat issues, are identified early and included in forward management and maintenance plans.

2.2 An archive, of health and safety reports, financial information and annual reports relating to the construction, improvements, major repairs and management and maintenance of tenants' homes is available via an online portal which is easily accessible to staff and tenants alike. This also includes monitoring

reports on forward plans and major projects, as well as tenants' reports on their involvement in decision-making. Updated archive data is collated with tenants' associations or organisations.

TRAs are able to scrutinise and request amendments to the archive. Where any past data is missing, surveys are carried out and / or material held by tenants and residents is added.

The ownership of the archive lies jointly with landlords and tenants.

2.3 Once reported, tenants are able to monitor what's happening to any repair or identified management issue.

A target date is always provided for completion of repair works and early updates are provided when there is a reason for delay.

2.4 Tenants are supported in understanding the construction of their homes and provided with resources to help them accurately identify and report repair and management issues.

This ensures that repairs are safely carried out and management issues effectively resolved without unnecessary delay. Well-designed and accessible information packs are available on- and offline.

2.5 Democratic and accountable tenants' organisations engage in the monitoring and evaluation of local staff teams and management and maintenance systems.

Tenants contribute to the selection and periodical assessment of any

Safe well-designed and well-managed homes

contractors. They also provide opportunities to pool resources such as local repairs teams, without compromising the local knowledge needed to ensure local effectiveness.

2.6 Local public sector construction and maintenance jobs are well paid and desirable, attracting highly skilled workers trained in local building colleges. In line with wider sustainability, they are encouraged to work locally with local authorities or tenant owned and managed co-operatives.

2.7 All homes, regardless of building height have essential fire safety measures in place. All block of flats and multi-occupied homes have sprinklers, and fire detection systems in place. They are all required to have regular compartmentalisation assessments and to have plans and procedures for any necessary evacuation, which all tenants are involved in planning and made aware of.

Tenants groups are involved at all levels of decision-making and regular inspections of fire safety in their homes which are conducted by qualified chartered fire engineers.

Tenants have access to training on and are involved in monitoring health and safety, including fire issues.

2.8 Fire engineers are involved throughout the design and

construction of all new housing developments and refurbishments.

2.9 All new homes are designed as lifetime homes, adaptable and accessible to households of all ages.

2.10 All new blocks of flats are designed with lifts and any additional features necessary to ensure accessibility for older and disabled residents - not just to their own flats but to those of friends and neighbours they may wish to visit.

2.11 Tenants are involved from the outset in identifying opportunities for new social rented homes in their localities. They are involved in producing design briefs for new, and refurbishment of existing, homes on their estates and informing designs as they progress.

Tenants' local knowledge is highly valued. All key stage decisions - including the selection and appointment of consultants and contractors - are made by majority tenant votes. Architects, surveyors, clerks of works and contractors are required to engage well with tenants.

2.12 Tenant representatives have funding and support to secure independent advice for tenants on their estate in dealing with issues they are concerned about.

This might include issues relating to major works, refurbishment and health and safety issues.

3. Economically Sustainable Social Rented Homes

Public and community-owned homes, let at social rents with lifetime tenancies, are the best form of housing, especially for those who need and/or want to live in low-cost rented homes. Social rents ensure that, once housing costs are paid, tenants will still have sufficient to meet all other material needs and allow them and their family to fully participate in society.

A positive future for social housing would include the following:

- 3.1 All households have a right, enshrined in law, to a secure, well maintained, social rented home of a suitable size, if they are unable to afford or do not want to buy or rent a home in the private sector.

Government at all levels has a duty to support and expand the provision of new social rented homes.

- 3.2 The need for social rented homes is addressed via adequate (as assessed by requirement studies) long-term and consistent funding from the government. It has long been acknowledged that the market is unable to deliver the social rented homes in the numbers and quality required.

- 3.3 All government grant funding for new social rented homes is ring-fenced for public and tenant owned and managed social rented homes.

The government does not subsidise home ownership, shared ownership or housing set at higher than social rents.

- 3.4 Private Registered Providers maintain their existing housing stock and develop new homes, but without access to public funding.

- 3.5 Tenants of large housing associations have the right to transfer to locally-based community owned and managed co-operatives or to local authorities.

- 3.6 There is no expectation that new developments of public or community-owned and managed homes include more expensive tenures.

- 3.7 New social rented homes are required by law to be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

- 3.8 Refurbishment and retrofitting of existing homes is the norm.

Tenants, working with landlords, lead in any development plans for major repairs and refurbishment of their homes. The cost of this is covered through rents and government grant funding.

- 3.9 Rents for social rented public, community-owned (and private registered provider homes that were built with access to public funding) reflect the running cost of social rented homes, with a small amount towards capital costs.

Rents are no higher than council rents were in 2019, (in real terms). Additional housing stock, transfer of housing association homes to councils or community owned and managed co-operatives and better planned management and maintenance of homes help to keep rental costs low.

- 3.10 Borrowing (from the Public Works Loans Board) for the purpose of developing and refurbishing public and community owned homes.

Capital costs are repaid via rents over 40 to 60 years.

3.11 The Right to buy has been scrapped.

Social rented homes are retained as long-term public- and community-owned assets. Wherever possible, homes once sold under the right to buy have been bought back into public or community ownership.

3.12 The sale of public land suitable for residential development to developers has been halted.

This land is retained by local authorities and community-owned and managed organisations for delivery of social rented homes, sites for gypsies and travellers and any related social and community infrastructure.

Case Study

Refurbishment of Social Housing, Grand Parc, Bordeaux by Druot, Lacaton and Vassal Architects

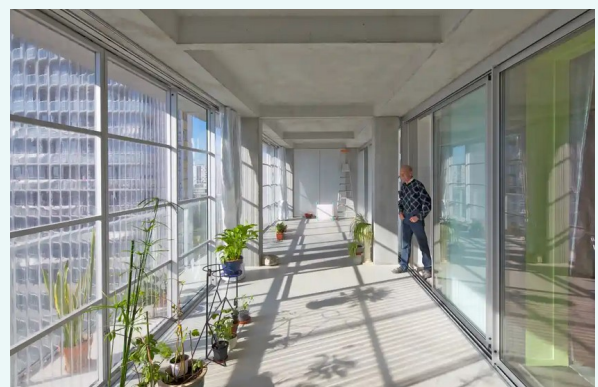
Grand Parc is a 150-acre post-war housing estate comprising 4,000 homes. Three of the 1960s housing blocks with 530 flats were refurbished by Druot, Lacaton and Vassal architects in 2016. This included the construction of free-standing concrete structures which extend each floor out by almost 4 metres on the south side of two 16-storey blocks and the east and west sides of an 11-storey block. New floor-to-ceiling openings in each flat have sliding glass doors accessing a shallow balcony, separated by reflective thermal curtains and sliding polycarbonate panels. These create conservatories or what have been described as 'winter gardens'. New lifts were also installed and entrance halls were renovated.

Tenants did not have to be displaced, the works took 12–16 days on each flat, the thermal performance of the building was improved and rents have remained the same.

Financially, the renovations cost €65,000 per flat, roughly half as much as building a new flat.



The architects say their approach is encapsulated by the philosophy: “Never demolish, never remove or replace, always add, transform, and reuse!”



Photographs - Philippe Ruault

4. Sustaining Strong and Resilient Social Housing Communities

Achieving a positive future for social housing means that our neighbourhoods provide not just the homes that we need, but include all the facilities and amenities that sustain us throughout our lives. Lifetime neighbourhoods support community resilience and enable strong collective voices through new as well as existing networks. They are the focus of our shared values and concerns.

4.1 Lifetime Neighbourhoods are acknowledged by local, regional and national government as an effective means of supporting social sustainability.

They offer a blueprint for sensitive, bottom-up neighbourhood development, a positive community focused alternative to property speculation and the exclusive developments driven by developer profits.

4.2 In line with the principle of Lifetime Neighbourhoods, each housing estate or neighbourhood has many of the physically and financially accessible facilities and amenities that people will need during their lives, within a short walking or cycling distance from home. They include:

- * Lifetime homes, which have space to support working from home; space for a family member or carer to stay when additional support is needed, particularly for older and/or disabled people.
- * Warden-staffed sheltered/supported housing and care homes.
- * Accessible indoor community spaces to hold a variety of meetings, events and social and physical activities for young and old: spaces where

households might access: healthy low-cost meals, reading rooms, sports and games activities, play and music-making, artistic and educational activities and spaces to enjoy films together. They are managed and maintained by tenants' groups on their estates and by community-led organisations in wider neighbourhood areas.

- * Communal green and gardening spaces, play spaces and other outdoor areas for physical activity and social events.
- * A variety of affordable local shops, services and amenities within a ten-minute walking distance, including: nurseries and creches, youth facilities, doctors, dentists, work spaces, primary schools, places of worship, pubs and cafes.

4.3 Lifetime Neighbourhoods have affordable and easily accessible local transport and safe walking and cycling routes.

These provide access to centres of employment and recreation, such as swimming pools, bowling alleys, sports centres, cinemas and theatres, schools, colleges and universities, and public transport hubs to take people further afield.

4.4 New and existing neighbourhoods developed in this way are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. They support active and resilient communities. They have and promote:

- * A greater awareness of shared values, needs, concerns and objectives.
- * Good physical and mental health.

- * Active and shared involvement in local decision-making and life-long educational activities.
- * Chances for residents to engage and connect with one another, reducing transience and isolation.
- * Provision and protection of valued local assets - existing and new.
- * Self-sufficiency.

Case Study

Carpenters Estate and Neighbourhood Forum Area, Newham

Despite the selling-off of local public facilities and amenities in many working class areas of London, there are still social housing estates and surrounding areas that retain parts of the Lifetime Neighbourhoods ideal.

The Carpenters Estate, built in 1967, and the wider Greater Carpenters Neighbourhood Area (established by a Forum in its attempt to provide a community-based alternative to Newham Council's demolition plans) is one example.

The estate has 700 flats, play spaces, a Multi Use Games Area, green spaces and what the local community consider to be their village green.



On and around the edges of the estate are: a primary school, Building Crafts College, community centre with a sports hall and work spaces, places of employment, some relating to construction, artists' studios, local shops and two pubs. The estate's former Tenant Management Organisation's

office space and meeting rooms were originally built as a tenants' community hall. A doctor's surgery, although still nearby, was originally based here.

Buses, underground and overground trains are all in close proximity.

Newer housing association and private blocks have been developed around the edges of the estate, which include sheltered housing but few green or play spaces and no additional community facilities.

The estate and neighbourhood area are also situated adjacent to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Newham's Council's plans during the development of the Park were to demolish the estate and existing employment places, shops and amenities, to build three or four times the number of current homes (although few or no additional social rented homes).

Community-based campaigns and alternative plans have constantly stalled the council's plans for demolition.

Most recently, the Planning Inspector's April 2020 Report on the London Legacy Development Corporation's Revised Local Plan, supported the Neighbourhood Forum's arguments to remove a target for 2,300 new homes in the Forum area, which would include demolition of all the existing homes on the Carpenters Estate²⁵.

5. Environmentally Sustainable Social Rented Homes and Neighbourhoods

Through stronger grass roots involvement in the design, management, maintenance and monitoring of environmental initiatives and with better understanding of the connections between environmental, economic and social initiatives, we more effectively build the local knowledge and self-sufficiency that we need to provide sustainable homes and neighbourhoods

This includes the following:

5.1 Self-sufficiency is a key element in estate- and neighbourhood-based environmental initiatives.

5.2 Tenants take the lead in designing estate-based sustainable green projects and an active role in those that are wider neighbourhood-based, a source of community pride:

- * Local energy schemes, providing affordable heating, cooling and power to our homes and preventing fuel poverty.
- * Grey water recycling, rain harvesting and sustainable drainage schemes - all of which help to reduce household and estate management costs.
- * Recycling and upcycling (providing job opportunities and creative community activity).
- * Greening - including in communal areas, on balconies, walls and roofs.
- * Gardening and food growing activities, involving tenants of all ages and abilities working together and some specifically designated areas for children, older people and / or those with disabilities.
- * Estate and neighbourhood bike pools and car share schemes.

5.3 Landlords, consultants and contractors are required to supply tenants with comprehensive analyses of the environmental issues associated with different approaches to estate management as well as refurbishment and new build.

This includes providing calculations of embodied and operational carbon emissions in respect of all options for new development or refurbishment and being mindful of them in day to day repairs and minor improvements of our homes.

Demolition of social rented homes is widely recognised to be environmentally, socially and economically unsustainable.

5.4. Legislation only permits demolition of social rented homes where they are structurally unsound and at least one for one replacements are provided.

5.5 Legislation requires that new homes be designed to last for at least 150 years, with scheduled refurbishments to extend their lifetime further.

5.6 Passive heating and cooling is incorporated in the design of new and refurbishment of existing homes.

5.7 Tenants have access to independent advice, training and peer learning in respect of understanding and addressing environmental issues.

5.8 Tenant representatives, in consultation with other tenants, are involved in borough, regional and national policy discussions on environmental and climate change issues.

Case Study - Energiesprong

The Dutch 'Energiesprong' concept is now being trialled or used in the Netherlands, UK, France, Germany, Italy delivering or working towards net-zero energy homes.

The retrofitted works generate the total energy required for heating, hot water and electricity in homes - using technologies such as prefabricated facades, insulated roofs with solar panels, smart heating, and ventilation and cooling installations.

The refurbished homes come with a multi-year performance warranty on both the indoor climate and the energy performance of the homes up to 40 years.

Either renovation, or new build, carried out in this way is financed by the future energy cost savings plus the reduced budget for planned maintenance and repairs over the next 30 years.

Nottingham City Homes, the ALMO that

manages Nottingham's council homes, are working with the Energiesprong UK team who have completed 10 pilot council home renovations and more are underway.

Some tenants in homes already refurbished in a pilot scheme have seen monthly energy bills cut in half, so it is clear these techniques will help to lift tenants out of fuel poverty and greatly reduce carbon emissions



Case Study - Brixton Housing Co-operative

Founded in 1976, Brixton Housing Co-op provides tenant controlled social housing. It is a fully mutual member-led co-op. The mortgages on its 80 homes were paid off in 2020. Its street property homes are mostly one and two bedrooms, but the Co-op also has some family-sized homes.

BHC cyclical repairs programme has focused on carrying out external works to a few properties each year. Smoke and CO2 detectors have been installed and electrical works have also been carried out to meet the requirements of building regulations.

Whilst the co-op has two members of staff, its tenant member committees look after the finances and set policies and direction for the co-op.

It has an established green working party, and as the co-op moves towards completing double glazing works to all its properties the working party is now looking at options and funding sources to get the homes to Carbon Neutral standard.



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Glossary of terms as currently used

Assured tenancy: A housing association tenancy starting after 15th January 1989. Assured tenants have rights to get repairs done, pass on their tenancy to certain people and acquire their home at a small discount. They must have permission from their landlord to exchange properties, to assign their tenancy or to take in a lodger. If a tenant is taken to court by their landlord for 8 weeks to three months rent arrears, this is a mandatory ground for eviction.

Community managed housing: Housing that is managed via a majority tenant-led management organisation (i.e. a Tenant Management Organisation) on behalf of a local authority.

Community owned housing: Housing that is collectively owned, managed and sometimes built by tenants and residents. Decision-making lies with its tenants and residents.

Housing Associations: Private Registered Providers of 'affordable' housing, including social rented homes, affordable rented homes and shared ownership.

Lifetime homes: Lifetime Homes are thoughtfully designed homes that provide decent, suitable and adaptable living environments for residents at all stages of their lives, whether they are raising small children or coping with illness or dealing with reduced mobility.

Lifetime neighbourhoods: Lifetime Neighbourhoods provide a good quality environment in an active and supportive local community for people of all ages and abilities. They are planned to empower communities through effective local decision-making. Homes are within walking distance of local shops, services, community facilities, parks and open spaces that are accessible and affordable for everyone now and into the future.

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Public owned housing: Owned by elected local or regional authorities.

Right to Manage: A right of council tenants to take over the management of some or all of the management services to their homes/estates.

Right to Transfer: A right all tenants of local authorities have to collectively seek to change their landlord to a community owned landlord.

Secure tenancy: A tenancy that has no mandatory ground for eviction. An eviction can only take place if a court has agreed to evict. Most council tenants are secure tenants. Housing association tenants whose tenancy started before 15 January 1989 are also secure tenants. Secure tenants have a rights to: exchange, manage, repair, buy/rent to mortgage, to assign, succeed and to take in a lodger. Council tenants have the right to information, to be consulted and the right to transfer.

Social housing: Public and community and Private Registered Provider owned housing.

Social housing tenants: Tenants of public/council and community owned landlords and housing associations. Right to Buy leaseholders who pay service charges to their local authority are classified as social housing tenants.

Social rent: Rents paid by social housing tenants that are set using a government formula, based in part on the relative value of a property, the size of the property and relative local income levels.

Stock transfers: The transfer of public owned council housing stock to housing associations, which was introduced in 1988, but was driven particularly by central government from 2000 through the introduction of Decent Homes programme.

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