

Concrete Soldiers UK's

INSPIRE 2 RESIST

A handbook for resisting estate
regeneration and the
social cleansing of our
inner cities.



Artwork by Fran Copeman

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Intro

2012-2018:

In six years : 150,000 homes GONE...

That's 25,000 a year, 480 a week

By 2020 a further 80,000 will go...

That's 40,000 a year, 770 a week

230,000

social housing homes gone in 8 years!

(Analysis by The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH))

BUT HOW?

The demolition of council estates mainly...

Eg: The Heygate Estate was demolished in 2014, which resulted in:

1,194 social rented homes being replaced by
82 social rented homes.

1,112 social housing units LOST..

Of course

... it's a great idea to have your estate redeveloped, of course it is, **IF** you are able to return.. and **IF** you can afford the new hiked rents.

Right to Return....

Some councils give you the right to return, but who wants to move twice, and then face a big rent increase when the only reason you are in that position is the lack of investment from the council in the first place!

Council and housing association landlords can also charge up to 80% of market rents on some of their homes, usually new-build properties. This is called affordable rent.

The only actual affordable rent is SOCIAL RENT....

“We can’t afford to refurbish”....

says Alan Strickland

(ex-cabinet member for housing in Haringey council,
- now Director of External Affairs and Partnerships at housing provider Optivo....Go figure!)

Alan said:

“The council argues that this is the only way -
(meaning to sell the estate and get a developer to redevelop)

The cost of redoing this estate would be well north of a billion - we haven’t got that money”...

Well, it’s a lie..

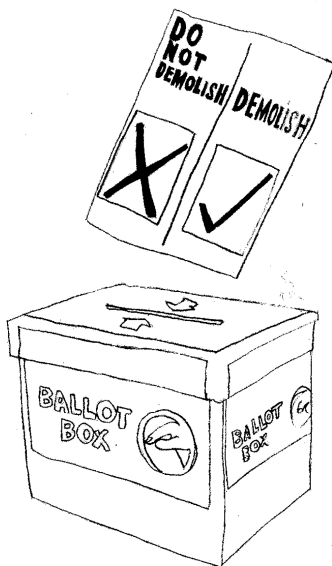
it’s actually much cheaper to refurbish than demolish and rebuild.

See the report from ASH - Architects for Social Housing, about the [Cost of Estate Regeneration](#)

So what can YOU do....



Stages where **YOU** can have a
say/object



1. Consultations

These should be fair and open, and should consult all groups and be long enough for people to react to and inform themselves.

Make sure they are.

2. Ballots

It is now compulsory for all estate regeneration programmes to have a ballot before estate regeneration can take place.

Use it OR lose it.



3. Planning Applications

When a planning application goes in it's time to put your comments in. Here are a few pointers to consider, suggestions by 35% Campaign:

There will be a comment dead-line and some councils will take comments after that, but get yours in as soon as possible.

The application will have a reference number and all the documents will be on your council website. Look out for a Planning Statement - this should give all the basic information about the application.

Try to speak to the planning officer. This can be better than reading lots of documents. Ask your local ward councillor to help you to arrange this (some councillors are better than others!).

The more comments the better. You can share a simple model comment that everyone can send, adding their own views. Most councils take comments online - share the link.

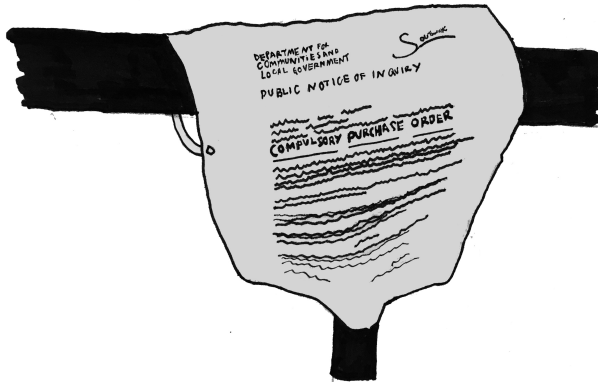
Try to connect your comment to the local plan; this is your council's rules on what should be built. An estate regeneration may have its own eg an Area Action Plan. You can make your comment a question, 'This application has not got enough affordable housing - does it meet the local plan?'

Even if it does meet the local plan, still comment if you don't like it. Estate regeneration plans are often put together for the developer's benefit, not residents or local people.

Publicise your comments - share on Twitter and Facebook.

Send your comments to the London Mayor - he has a big say on estate regenerations and can make decisions about them himself.

Remember - any regeneration MUST get planning approval!



4. Compulsory Purchase Order or CPO

A CPO is put in place when the leaseholders refuse to leave. It is possible to win against the Council but it takes a lot of help and support. The Aylesbury Leasehold Action Group (ALAG) won their first CPO with the help of 35% Campaign and other groups. This was a key victory. The Council then had to issue a new CPO, which they then did. The outcome of that 2nd CPO was a better deal for the majority of Leaseholders stating amongst other things that they can have 100% ownership of their new homes instead of the 'shared ownership' deal that the council likes to offer.

The ownership is for leaseholder's life, with one inheritance - so no payment is paid until the successor either dies or sells; the council then gets its money, 'the deferred capital receipt'

5. the Judicial Review

As a last resort, any decision taken by the council can be challenged by a Judicial Review, including a planning decision. These are hard to win and costly, but possible.

A judicial review (JR) must be instigated within 3 months of a decision (6 weeks for a planning approval). The court will look at whether the council acted properly in the way it took the decision eg did it consult properly?

INFORM

yourself about..

- The **Viability Assessment** in the Planning application. This is the assessment of how viable a development is. It's been misused a lot recently.
See this **video** for more information:



[Watch on YOUTUBE](#)

New guidelines have been published regarding the Viability Assessment and Shelter has published **their view** on these.

- The **Local Development Plan.**

This is the plan for the area and all planning applications have to be guided by this. It can have different names and there may be one just for your estate, sometimes it's called an **Area Action PLAN (AAP).**

- The **London Plan**

- the Mayor's own plan for the whole of London.

He has also written a **Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration** and a **guide to estate ballots.**

- Use your right to:
Freedom of information

Simplest way to make a F.O.I request is described here **www.whatdotheyknow.com**.

This could arm you with valuable information about what goes on behind the curtain... ie has the council already sold the land? Are the council unable to maintain the estate? Why?
Don't be afraid to ask questions...

WHAT

you are told might not be the truth...

The following is written by Tom Keene, Artist/Activist/Researcher and part of the Save Cressingham Gardens Campaign:

- Ward councillors and council officers informed some Cressingham Gardens residents that the estate was “sliding down the hill” and had major structural issues. This statement proved to be incorrect because we requested all estate surveys and none said there were major structural issues or the sort of subsidence that would cause an entire estate to slide down a hill.
- High repair and maintenance costs are sometimes cited as the catalyst for demolition, when analysis of the actual costs can reveal a different picture. Homeowners who pay service charges will have access to repairs data that tenants don't, so go through all historic service charge bills and double check repairs have been completed, done to a high standard, or have been reasonably charged.

- Residents of Cressingham contested £127,000 worth of repairs over a two year period which puts into question the information that informed Lambeth's argument that the estate is too expensive to repair.
- Use FOI requests (www.whatdotheyknow.com) to ask questions. Council officers can be slow to respond or actively block access to information requested through conventional routes. We found that FOIs keep a clear record of questions asked, and force an Authority to respond. Ignore council officers who say that FOIs are wasting their time, or the local authority's money. You have a legal right to ask questions and get them promptly answered, and if there's a valid financial reason for not answering, the local authority is obliged to detail the reason for you.

Every citizen has a right to audit local authority accounts once a year. It provides another means of accessing data. See:

www.thepeoplesaudit.info

- On Cressingham, with the help of local design and construction professionals such as architects and a quantity surveyor, we put together a costed alternative plan to demolition. Do download the .pdf and steal ideas!: www.cressinghampeoplesplan.org.uk
- Be aware that consultation, even when facilitated by supposedly-independent advisors hired by your local authority, is often aiming at a predetermined result, and will be stage-managed to achieve that result.

Remember

Don't wait

If your block/flat is threatened, start by galvanising support around you. Get people involved and use your contacts.

Reach out

There are many people and groups out there who can guide you, support you and help to make it happen....

Here is a list of some of the campaigns and helpful housing organisations in the UK:

Shelter

PricedOut

Radical Housing Network

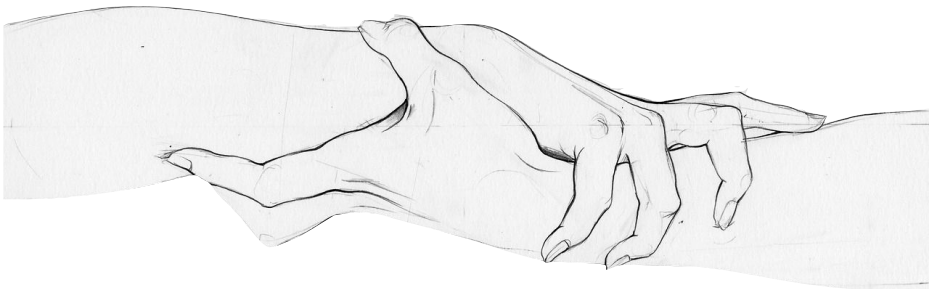
Defend Council Housing

Homes For Britain

Architects For Social Housing (ASH)

35Percent Campaign

Acorn



Get Organised

Trade Unions are also a great resource - they can play an important part by helping people with technical skills, developing alternative plans, and with providing access to other resources (such as meeting rooms/photocopiers etc.).

E.g Unison have specific training courses aimed at activists and how to run campaigns. They even help you with printing flyers and other helpful materials and resources. Well worth the few pounds you pay yearly for membership.

BUT

The Councils are not listening...

It is very difficult to get the councils to make any changes to their plans.

Often the planning has been going on for years and the communities only get to know about the new developments at the last minute when deals with private developers have been struck and signed off.

This creates a problem when your campaign takes off....

SO

what to do...



Here's how people have made changes....

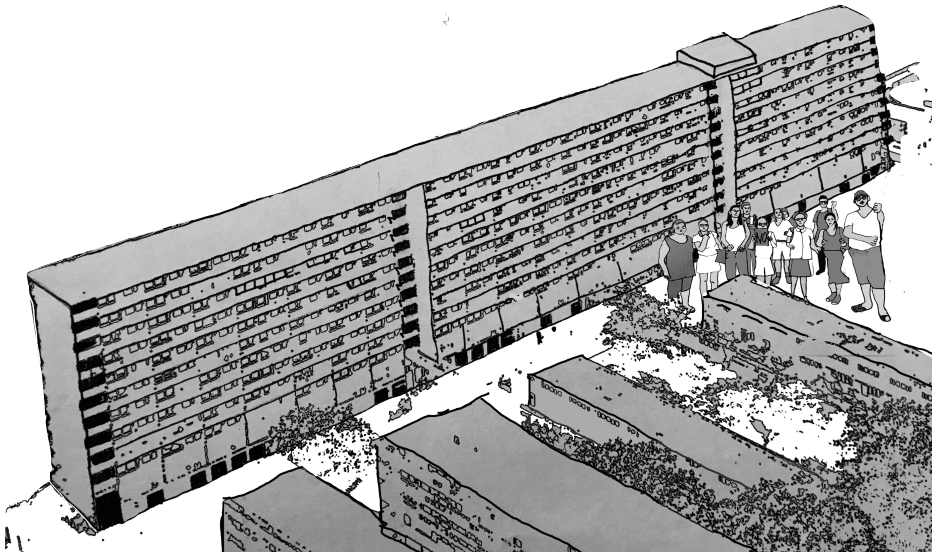
Start

1. A neighbourhood plan

You are entitled to design your own neighbourhood.

But start BEFORE the Council has decided to regenerate the area!

Look up **Lifetime Neighbourhoods...**

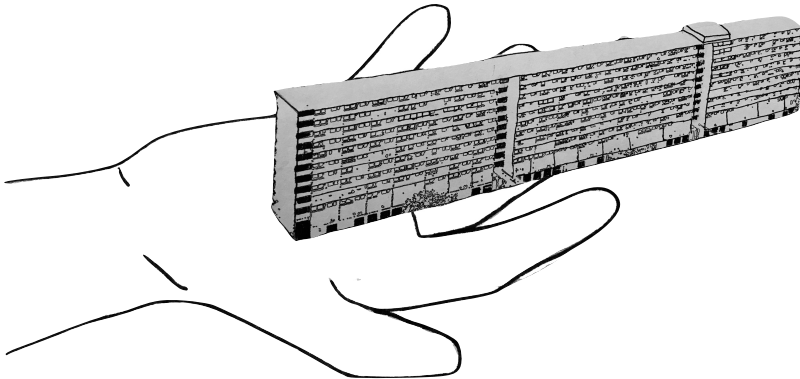


2 Right To Transfer (RTT) ...

What is a Right To transfer?

The Right to Transfer is the right that all Council Tenants have to “**transfer their social housing stock away from the control of the council and to a private registered provider.**”

Create a **NOT FOR PROFIT** organisation and request to take ownership and control of your home.



An example:

West Kensington & Gibbs Green

represent 2 estates in west London, containing between them around 760 households.

The estates were on the verge of demolition by an international business conglomerate to make way for luxury flats on the highly valuable freehold.

They set up West Ken Gibbs Green Community Homes, the resident-controlled non-profit Community Land Trust (CLT) which aims to prevent demolition and put the community in charge. And they fought back; pioneering the use of the new Right to Transfer to basically do a reverse Compulsory Purchase Order on their own estates buying them back from the local authority. This kept the homes safe and in community ownership.

The Right to Transfer requires a feasibility study of the potential refurbishment of and, where appropriate, infill development on the estate. On the West Kensington and Gibbs Green estates this was co-ordinated and designed by **ASH**, who produced a 40 page booklet you can access here: [wkgg report by ASH](#)

3 Right To Manage (RTM)

Cressingham Gardens residents exercised **both** these rights (RTM and RTT) **before** any decision was made to demolish. This puts Cressingham in a legally grey area as legislation states that preventing regeneration should not be the reason for pursuing the RTM or RTT transfer process. These rights are aimed at improving things like repairs and maintenance. Equally, local authority regeneration plans should not get in the way of RTM/RTT. Both RTM and RTT ensure that tenants have an independently managed vote on future management of an estate. This kind of vote can be argued to express residents' views more clearly and directly. More clearly than council consultation reports, which often use methods (such as multiple choice answers to questions, rather than written answers) which can leave residents opinions open to misrepresentation.

Did they succeed? - Well it's still going, the Council is stalling to respond to their Transfer requests..

4 **STOP the HDV** (Haringey Development Vehicle - a Private Partnership)

In Haringey, the Labour council proposed entering into a £2bn partnership with Lendlease, the international property developer (and destroyer of the Heygate Estate in Southwark). Public land and assets – people’s homes, businesses, schools and libraries – would have been transferred to the Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV), a 50:50 partnership between Lendlease and the council.

It was claimed that the HDV would deliver an estimated 5,000 new homes across the borough, with 40% of them described as “affordable”, but this would have involved the destruction of two estates – Northumberland Park and Broadwater Farm – and well-founded fears that other estates would follow.

The borough’s leadership faced a battle. Both of the area’s Labour MPs, a vigorous grassroots campaign, and councillors sitting on the housing and regeneration scrutiny panel, which reviews the authority’s housing strategy, lined up in opposition to the scheme.

In the end, the local activists, including those who were in the Labour Party and part of Momentum, de-selected candidates for the council elections in May 2018 – or saw the standing councillors de-select themselves as they sensed the tide turning – and at the elections the pro-HDV group of councillors was largely wiped out.

Council leader Claire Kober and housing chief Alan Strickland resigned, and the new administration formally scrapped the HDV in July 2018.

However, changing an administration over one battle doesn't necessarily mean that the war has been won. Lendlease are still involved in deeply contentious plans to demolish the Love Lane estate near Tottenham Hotspur's new football ground, and the council recently attracted serious criticism for approving the demolition of a well-established Latin community in Seven Sisters for more private developer-led housing.

5 Empowering the Communities...

There's talk about an independent regulator to hear your complaints:

The Government's new Green Paper states:

“The importance of highlighting and empowering local communities...”

Within this chapter there's a section on complaining to an independent regulator about the mis-management of estates and non repair issues.

ASK FOR IT!

6 Making financial sense...

Islington Council Vs Bemerton estate 2010.

People campaigned that the Council's proposal didn't make financial sense. The Council would have had to build an extra 350 homes for sale and their scheme would have provided only a few extra affordable homes. They won it.

“We have ruled-out a comprehensive redevelopment, permanently..”

said Cllr. Paul Convery...

“Much of the estate is in good condition and most people like their homes. We were not presented with a compelling case for redevelopment and there plainly was no clear, widespread support on the estate.”

7 Ask them to change their plans...

Incredibly Southwark have listened to residents on Lindley Estate!!! - and changed their plans for the proposed new build to 100% council homes & reduced the height from 11 to 6 storeys in line with residents wishes.

Unprecedented and a great step forward for people power!

Just shows...

there is still hope

8 Sue the council...

Have trouble with the Council doing repair? Now there's a way to sue the council if they don't keep up repairs....

If you are a council tenant you can take them to court. More here:

<https://newsfromcrystalpalace.wordpress.com/2018/08/08/revealed-why-lambeth-council-dont-prosecute-themselves-for-not-doing-housing-repairs-they-cant-but-if-youre-a-council-tenant-you-can-take-them-to-court/>

OR

**build new housing
with and for your community**

with a...

Community Land Trust (CLT)

Heart of Hastings started a CLT and managed to buy land which they are now going to build social housing on....

What is a CLT?

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are a form of community-led housing, set up and run by ordinary people to develop and manage homes as well as other assets important to that community.

Here's what **Heart of Hastings** say:

As well as trying to retain affordable accommodation, community-led housing is building new homes. Because communities are driven by other priorities other than profit, they can develop new solutions to housing market problems. A Community Land Trust, like Heart of Hastings, can link rents and sales to what people earn locally, rather than the market, forever. A development can meet a range of housing need and avoid polarised communities of open market housing dotted with pockets of social housing. Housing development can also be an opportunity for local people to train and can lead to community management that unlocks their entrepreneurial potential.

Although community-led housing is a growing movement, there is resistance. The common obstacles are acquiring land, even when it has been left unused by the market, and confidence in the community to deliver. To overcome these, any community-led housing project has to have local support. Heart of Hastings built this support by creating a connection between the land and local residents, many of whom had issues of isolation and exclusion. As people explore improving their environment and think about what an environmentally sustainable development might be like, they make connections, grow in confidence and see opportunities to lock wealth into their area.

There are now almost 290 Community Land Trusts in England and Wales, and the sector has grown six-fold in the last six years. The largest Community Land Trusts have over 1000 members each. Community Land Trusts have developed 826 permanently affordable homes to date and are working to develop an additional 5800 homes in the next few years.

Read more at www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk

Self-build

RUSS (Rural Urban Synthesis Society) is a members-led Community Land Trust based in South London.

They signed a Development Agreement with Lewisham Council in 2016 for a 'community-led, affordable, self-build housing development' in a derelict former school and industrial site.

RUSS received £988,000 from the Mayor's Innovation Fund to build 33 homes on the 0.4ha site.

RUSS aims to establish a model development process for creating groups of low-energy homes in sustainable neighbourhoods managed by residents, which will remain **genuinely** affordable for future generations and which can be replicated in Lewisham, London and across the UK.

To begin to achieve RUSS's aim they are seeking to regenerate empty sites in London. This will create sustainable communities with affordable housing and improved environments for people and nature alike.

Note: 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.

There's more information on the internet. Here's a guide to Selfbuild:

<https://www.homebuilding.co.uk/self-build-the-complete-guide/>

Co-ops

The humble housing co-op started life about 40 years ago and there are now over 300 of them all over London providing low-cost social housing to their members. Members who simultaneously own and rent their homes. Offering truly social housing.

How to do it? by Co-ops for London:

Set up a co-op with a group of people.

Write up your core rules of membership (including how to manage exits)

If you are in London contact the Community Led Housing Hub for advice and funding.

Elsewhere in the UK try the Nationwide Foundation.

Borrow money from an ethical investor

(e.g. Triodos or the Ecology Building Society)

Ask your nearest housing co op or Radical Routes to help with the deposit via a low-interest loan called rootstock

Buy a house or lease one from a community land trust. You can check with your local council too.

Result: Your home, you pay the rent to yourself as a group, you organise your own maintenance and provide your and your family with long term security.

Contact Coops for London for more advice and help.

Links

Nationwide Foundation <http://www.nationwidefoundation.org.uk>

Community Led Housing <https://www.communityledhousing.london>

Ecology Building Society <https://www.ecology.co.uk>

Radical Routes Ethical Investment <http://www.rootstock.org.uk>

Triodos Bank <https://www.triodos.co.uk>

Remember

We need to demand housing as a human right and create an awareness of the housing problems we are facing.

By generating resistance at local levels

- we can make it global.

LOCAL - GLOBAL

be a part of it , not apart

Research and Inspiration

‘Staying Put - an anti-gentrification handbook’ by Just Space, London Tenants Federation, Loretta Lees and Southwark Notes Archive Group.

<https://southwarknotes.wordpress.com/2014/06/13/staying-put-an-anti-gentrification-handbook-for-council-estates-in-london/>

More about **consultation**:

[The Mayor’s draft Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration](#)

The **Green Housing Paper**:

[A new deal for social housing web_accessible.pdf](#)

Social Housing - What the Government’s new deal means for your organisation - A study of the Government’s Green paper.

The opinions laid out will inform what regulatory changes are required to deliver regulation that is fit for purpose. It highlights the most important resident concerns that housing authorities need to address. It sets out a new vision for social housing that values and respects the voices of residents, with landlords treating them with decency and respect, backed up by clear consequences when they do not.

<https://guides.plentific.com/plentific-on-social-housing-green-paper>

More about **Ballots**:

https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla_cfg_section_8_resident_ballots_-_18_july_2018.pdf

Also ASH’s report: **The Good Practice Guide to Resisting Estate Demolition**, which is a detailed commentary on the Mayor’s Draft Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration, including advice to residents about how to oppose it. It can be accessed here:

<https://architectsforsocialhousing.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/homes-for-londoners2.pdf>

Thanks to the contributors:

Tom Keene - read more about his [Regen Sheet](#)
at www.db-estate.co.uk

Andy Worthington - read his blog here
www.andyworthington.co.uk

Jerry Flynn - member of the 35percent campaign
35percent.org

Jessica Jacobs and Emily O'Mara - Founders of
www.coopsforlondon.org

Heart of Hastings
www.heartofhastings.org.uk

ARTWORK by the brilliant Fran Copeman @
francopeman.co.uk

“After spending 3 years in the field of housing campaigns, researching and filming CSUK, I managed to gather a lot of information and knowledge about resisting regeneration. All this info is here, in this handbook.

Hope it helps you.”

Nikita Woolfe, director and producer of the documentary
‘Concrete Soldiers Uk’.