

### Achilles Resident Question

In a letter to residents of Achilles Street area dated 19 October 2016, Lewisham Council said "I want to make it clear that no demolition and redevelopment will proceed unless the following conditions can be met" All current council tenants who wish to stay in the new development will be able to do so at the same rent levels and tenancy conditions as they have today. Any resident leaseholder who wishes to remain in home ownership on the new development will be able to do so.

Are these guarantees made by Lewisham Council legally binding?

### Cllr Egan reply

**No decision on whether or not to redevelop the area around Achilles Street has yet been made.**

**Council officers are currently working on proposals that will be presented to Mayor and Cabinet in Spring 2017. The Council wants to invest in the area with the existing community at the heart of any plan, and to ensure this happens we have committed that the proposals for redevelopment will not go ahead unless the following four conditions are met:**

- 1. All current Council tenants who wish to stay in the new development will be able to do so with the same rent levels and tenancy conditions that they have today;**
- 2. Any resident leaseholder who wishes to will be able to remain in home ownership on the new development;**
- 3. The number of Council homes will be maintained in any new development, and we will increase the number as far as is possible within financial constraints;**
- 4. In addition to new Council homes, more affordable homes of other types, such as shared ownership, will also be provided when any additional homes are built.**

**These conditions will form part of the proposals that will be presented to Mayor and Cabinet in Spring 2017. Whilst they are not legally binding, if Mayor and Cabinet decides to proceed with the proposals it will publically commit that no redevelopment on Achilles Street will take place unless these conditions are met. The proposals aim to provide high quality homes for the current residents of the Achilles Street area and to build much-needed new homes for the borough.**

### Achilles Resident Question

**Lewisham Council is proposing to redevelop the Achilles Street area and in doing so it intends to demolish all the homes, businesses and community organisations in the area. At the consultations held to date, no options other than demolition have been put forward, why hasn't the council provided residents with a genuine range of options to improve the area including refurbishment and infill?**

### Cllr Egan reply

It is important to be clear that no decision to redevelop the area around Achilles Street has been made.

What is happening at present is that Council officers and partners are exploring ways for development in the area to enable new Council houses to be built, whilst enabling existing residents to remain. The objective is to invest in the area with the existing community at the heart of any plan.

This process started in 2014, with consultation on proposals for limited “infill” development, of 22 homes on the site of the current garage block next to Azalea House.

However during this feasibility work it became apparent that there was wider potential to build significantly more new homes in the area, as a large amount of land in the area is given over to surface level car parking, and that therefore a limited development may not be the optimum solution.

Since then, officers have been considering high level proposals for a more comprehensive redevelopment of the area. The Council first got in contact with residents in the area around Achilles in January 2016 and consultation on the proposals is still on-going; three consultation events have been held so far where the proposals have been discussed. The proposals have been shaped by resident feedback and will continue to develop before any decision to proceed with redevelopment is taken.

In the course of consultation work carried out in the blocks surrounding Achilles Street, Council officers were made aware of persistent issues with damp and vermin by residents. Many of these issues relate to the original design and age of the blocks and could never be completely resolved through refurbishment. If the current blocks are demolished and replaced with new homes, these will be built to much higher modern standards, be far more energy efficient and will be better designed to avoid these problems.

The proposals currently being developed for the Achilles Street area will deliver two important strategic aims; to provide much needed new homes and to improve the homes of the existing residents. To ensure this is the case the Council commits that no redevelopment on Achilles Street will take place unless the following conditions can be met:

1. All current Council tenants who wish to stay in the new development will be able to do so with the same rent levels and tenancy conditions that they have today;
2. Any resident leaseholder who wishes to will be able to remain in home ownership on the new development;
3. The number of Council homes will be maintained in any new development, and we will increase the number as far as is possible within financial constraints;

**4. In addition to new Council homes, more affordable homes of other types, such as shared ownership, will also be provided when any additional homes are built.**

**No decision to go ahead with the redevelopment of Achilles Street has been taken, and Council officers are working to present the proposals to Lewisham's Mayor and Cabinet to decide whether or not to take them forward in spring 2017. The proposals aim to provide high quality homes for the current residents of the Achilles Street area and to build much-needed new homes for the borough.**

#### **Achilles Resident Comment**

**Lewisham is the landlord-if there are problems with damp and vermin it is Lewisham's responsibility as landlords to sort out these problems.**

#### **Achilles Resident**

**Supplementary question asked as allowed in the terms of asking a public question, here is the question : Refurbishment is far less costly and more environmentally friendly. Refurbishment has been put forward by residents at the consultations as an option. How do you know it's not an option – have you carried out structural surveys and done any costing?**

**Still awaiting response.**