

Achilles Street Stop and Listen Campaign

FACT SHEET

Lewisham Council is proposing to redevelop the Achilles Street area, which runs along either side of Achilles Street between Clifton Rise and Pagnell Street; and includes the flats, businesses and community organisations on the east side of Clifton Rise and the flats, maisonettes and businesses along the New Cross Road between Clifton Rise and Pagnell Street (excluding the Venue and the bank). In redeveloping the area Lewisham plans to demolish every home, business and community organisation. Lewisham claims that the redevelopment will address the shortage of council housing in the borough but these are the facts:

- **Fact 1 – Lewisham Council wants to demolish decent council homes**

The 87 homes in the Achilles Street area are all structurally sound and meet the Council's 'Decent Homes' standard. So why does Lewisham want to demolish them when there is a chronic shortage of council housing in the borough?

- **Fact 2 – Lewisham isn't interested in anything other than demolition**

At the four token 'consultation' events Lewisham have held about the redevelopment, the only option presented to residents, businesses and the local community has been demolition and the building of a high rise, high density housing complex. This is a top-down plan that is being imposed on residents, businesses and the local community by the Council. Lewisham's plan also totally disregards The Mayor and Greater London Authority's Draft Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration, which states that 'demolition should only be followed where.....all other options have been exhausted'. As far as the Achilles Street area is concerned no option other than demolition has been considered.

- **Fact 3 – Lewisham won't consider the option of infill and refurbishment**

Whilst Lewisham has spent a lot of time and money working up its plans to demolish the Achilles Street area it hasn't spent a penny on developing any other options. Infill, refurbishment and landscaping is widely accepted to be a lot less expensive and a more environmentally and socially friendly way to redevelop an area. However, Lewisham isn't prepared to put infill and refurbishment forward as an option and give residents, businesses and the local community a real choice in how best to improve the area.

- **Fact 4 – Lewisham Council has failed in its duties as a landlord and managed the decline of the Achilles Street area**

Lewisham has failed in its responsibilities as a landlord to maintain and upkeep the buildings (homes and businesses) in the Achilles Street area. When buildings become run down because a landlord has neglected them it is called 'managed decline'; and this is what Lewisham has done to the Achilles Street area. The Council is now using its own failings as a landlord as an excuse to demolish the decent and structurally sound homes and businesses in the area.

- **Fact 5 – Lewisham's plans for the Achilles Street area have been designed by private property developers**

Lewisham's plans for the Achilles Street area are based on a report by Savills (a private property developer), which was submitted to the government in 2016. In the report Savills

argue that local authorities should go into partnership with the private sector (meaning property developers like themselves) to 'redevelop' housing estates in prime locations across London. Savills idea of 'redevelopment' (most people call it social cleansing and gentrification) is to demolish so-called 'sink' estates and in their place build high rise, high density 'urban villages'. The designs that Lewisham have presented at the four token 'consultations' are identical to case studies in the report by Savills. So why Lewisham (a Labour council?) wants to destroy a long standing community and participate in a 'redevelopment' project that is first and foremost designed to boost the profits of private property developers, is only a question that they can answer.

- **Fact 6 – Redeveloping the Achilles Street area will not address the shortage of council housing in Lewisham**

To redevelop the area Lewisham will have to go into partnership with a private property developer. This means the vast majority of the new homes (currently estimated to be between 350 and 450) will be private, for sale and rent at market rates. Private property developers always use 'viability assessments' to reduce the percentage of social/'affordable' housing in any new development; and this has consistently happened in projects across London. The Lewisham Gateway project, for example, had a target of 20 percent 'affordable' housing and through viability assessments property developers managed to get away with building no 'affordable' housing at all. This was in spite of the fact that the property developers for Lewisham Gateway were given the land for nothing by the Council and on top of this they received £22 million of public funding (£20 million from the Homes & Communities Agency and the Greater London Authority and £2 million from Lewisham Council). So by going into partnership with a private property developer to redevelop the Achilles Street area Lewisham could ultimately end up reducing the number of council homes in the borough.

- **Fact 7 – Anyway, 'affordable' housing isn't affordable**

Lewisham Council defines 'affordable' housing as follows: rent is linked to the London Living Wage and it assumes that two earners occupy each flat, each paying 35 per cent of their net income on rent. This would require a household income of £37,140.80 per annum; and the rent would be £879.32 per month.

- **Fact 8 – Lewisham Council doesn't care about residents, local businesses and community organisations**

In recent years Lewisham Council has been happy to sell off and transfer land to private property developers (land, which belongs to the people of Lewisham). This has happened across the borough, in New Cross, Deptford, Lewisham Gateway and Catford to name but a few places (this was also the Council's plan for the land around Millwall, until Millwall fought back). The only people to benefit from these redevelopments have been the property developers, who have made big profits by building thousands of homes; and selling them at prices the vast majority of Lewisham residents can't afford. This is what Lewisham wants to do to the Achilles Street area

The Council's plan to destroy homes, livelihoods and the local community in the Achilles Street area will do nothing to address the shortage of council housing in Lewisham

(Notes and Sources for the Fact Sheet can be found at the web address below)

Achilles Street Stop and Listen Campaign

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