

Holding onto existing social rented homes and keeping tenants and residents united

We must make the strongest possible case for the refurbishment of social rented homes. If we don't, tenants and leaseholders will continue to be displaced from their communities; public land on housing estates will continue to be handed to developers to build luxury flats and the funding allocated for desperately needed additional social rented homes will be prioritised instead for replacing demolished homes.

Plans for regeneration/demolition can go on for many years. Older residents find that friends and neighbours they have known for decades are gradually being displaced and that they suffer deteriorating health conditions as a result. Tenants that are moved temporarily, with promises of a return to a redeveloped estate, will also find that this temporary move is for many years.

Despite landlords being required to engage with tenants and leaseholders at the early stages of any regeneration plans, most will already have decided what they want to do before starting any consultation. Tenants and residents will find that have to work hard to avoid always being on the back foot. To help deal with this, we suggest:

- 1. If you don't already have an established tenants' and residents' association or campaign group set one up.** It will support in holding tenants and residents holding together with one strong collective voice. Your association will need to be - independent of your landlord, as representative as possible of your estate tenants and residents and be fully accountable to them.
- 2. Encourage as many of your estate tenants and residents as possible to be active in your association or group.** You will need people who will:
 - keep their ear close to the ground and talk regularly to their neighbours;
 - carry out door-knocking, surveys or petitions
 - write newsletters or information sheets;
 - keep up-to-date with what your landlord is agreeing or intending to do, perhaps by scrutinising local authority meeting papers

The more involved in an association or campaign, the better. Tenants and residents risk burnout, and the council may begin to negatively refer to active tenants as - the usual suspects - if too few are involved.

- 3. Provide regular, easy to read information so that everyone living on your estate can make informed decisions about the future of their homes and community.** These can be newsletters to distribute to each household on your estate or information sheets to pin up in each block of flats. Include information on the reasons to reject estate demolition and the alternatives to demolition as often landlords don't. Perhaps set up an estate Facebook page to distribute information and encourage discussion.
- 4. Hold tenant-led and chaired meetings so that everyone on your estate can discuss the issues and hear from invited speakers. Speakers could be the**

landlord officers and/or advisers but should also be those with alternative views to your landlord. Provide time in the meeting for tenants and residents to discuss the issues without your landlord or their advisers being present.

- 5. Holding your estate community together is very important but can also be difficult to achieve.** Ensure that everyone has a chance to have their say at meetings. This will help to leave open the opportunity for people who initially feel they want demolition to change their minds through informed and reasoned debate. If people don't feel they can have their say, they will stop coming to meetings and could begin to work against you.

Where landlords have neglected repairs, tenants may be more easily be persuaded to support demolition. But do remember that landlords should keep our homes well-maintained; this is what we pay our rents and service charges for. Justifications that future estate regeneration will address any problems are not good enough.

It could be that your landlord is neglecting your estate in the hope that tenants and residents will support their demolition plans. You could lobby councillors and/or send out press releases (with photographs) about the repairs that need to be done. If this doesn't work, you might find a local law centre or housing solicitor to advise you on what tenants can do to get repairs done.

Some ways of campaigning against demolition / for refurbishment:

- **Petitions** can be a powerful way to show that most households on your estate want their homes to be refurbished, not demolished. To be effective, get 50% or more households on your estate to sign your petition.
- **Send regular press releases and letters to your local press.** Getting articles published in your local press will reassert what you have said at estate meetings and in newsletters or information sheets. Obtaining good press coverage can help to put pressure on local councillors that have not supported you. Sometimes having a letter from your association, group or individuals published in the local press can be as effective. However, avoid inviting local journalists to your meetings, so that they don't pick up any divisions amongst tenants and residents. Write your press releases and send them to your local after your meetings.
- **Window posters** can provide a visible show of strength of feeling and might also provide the basis for a press release.
- **Hand your newsletters and information sheets directly to residents at their doors (where possible) and introduce yourself if they do not already know you.** This will help you to build trust in your association or group.
- **Accepting offers of help from non-residents** of your estate can, at times, be helpful. This might be speaking at a meeting, writing newsletters or press releases or providing technical support. However, we suggest that you do not extend this to doorstop campaigning, as they will not have the same intimate knowledge of your estate that you have, and this could result in the loss of support for your association or group.