

EXCLUSIVE: THE FUTURE OF COUNCIL HOUSING

# 11,000 NEW HOMES, 11,000 TO BE LOST

**A WINNING election pledge to build 11,000 new council homes in Southwark over the next 30 years will only maintain the numbers we have now, after thousands are expected to be lost through Right to Buy and redevelopment, the News can reveal.**

A report by housing law expert, Jan Luba QC, commissioned by the council, predicted 9,000 council homes would be sold to their owners under the Right to Buy Scheme over the next 30 years, while the demolition of vast estates like the Heygate and the Aylesbury will also make a dent in the council's stock.

Once all of the 11,000 new council homes are built in 2044, Southwark's cabinet member for regeneration, Cllr Mark Williams, estimates we will have just about the same number as we do now.

With the Office for National Statistics predicting London's population will rise by thirteen per cent in the next decade alone, the council's housing waiting list, which currently has over 18,000 people on it, could balloon at the same rate.

"Right to Buy is an absolute killer," said Cllr Williams, who revealed Southwark was now receiving hundreds of applications per year since the

By Amelia Burr

amelia@southwarknews.co.uk

discount offered to tenants was raised to £100,000 by the coalition government last year. "The knock on effect on our housing stock has been severe."

The Liberal Democrats have criticised the council for not building more new homes to replace those sold through Right to Buy, in line with government policy. Figures published by the Department of Local Government, show that since 2012, Southwark has received nearly £42million in Right to Buy sales but has only started to build a total of 42 in the same time period.

"For every million pounds raised through Right to Buy, Southwark Council has started just one new affordable home. That is a truly staggering statistic," said Simon Hughes, MP for Bermondsey and Old Southwark. "The Labour-run council are sitting on pots of Right to Buy cash, enough to make a real difference to the chronic shortage of social housing in our borough, but are instead leaving almost 20,000 people languishing on the housing waiting list."

Southwark Group of Tenants' Organisations (SGTO) is concerned the borough's stock of social

housing will be further reduced if the council wants to 'redevelop' other blocks or estates in the future. "The major concern is about how much social housing stock we are losing as a result of the regeneration," said Chris Claridge, chair of SGTO, who says a community consultation launched by the council which talks about estates being 'redeveloped' and 'regenerated' has sparked fears that more stock will be demolished.

Cllr Mark Williams said there were no firm plans to demolish any other estates but he could not rule out the possibility, as each block is reviewed to check it can continue to provide suitable living standards for residents.

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COUNCIL LEADER Peter John at the husting before the election pledging 11,000 new council homes



## TEN YEARS UNTIL WE MUCH COUNCIL G

**IT WILL be ten years before anyone knows how much Southwark Council will make from the controversial sale and regeneration of the Heygate estate... including the council, the News can reveal.**

In an exclusive interview with Southwark's cabinet member for regeneration, Cllr Marl Williams said the council's share of the profits made from Elephant Park would not be calculated until the project was finished, which at the earliest would be 2025.

Cllr Williams says the council will get £100million from the sale of the land and other payments guaranteed in the overall planning application for Elephant Park, but will not know the total they will bank from sale of the 22 acre site until developers Lend Lease have calculated and covered their costs at the end of the project.



**WHEN THE last wall has been painted in the 3,000 new homes on Elephant Park, Lend Lease will calculate their total costs and they will be covered first.**

# Southwark loses its battle to lower rents

**SOUTHWARK COUNCIL has vowed to fight for lower rent levels in new developments, after a legal challenge to the Mayor of London's plan to allow 'affordable housing' to rocket to 80 per cent of market rates was dismissed earlier this year.**

Along with the London boroughs of Islington, Camden, Brent, Enfield, Greenwich, Lambeth, Hackney and Tower Hamlets, Southwark argued that this would mean properties would

be unaffordable to most of their residents.

Mrs Justice Long ruled in March that the mayor had acted within his power and that councils could fight for lower rents on individual developments.

Cllr Peter John, Leader of Southwark Council, said: "Eighty per cent of the market rent is completely unaffordable to many people living in this borough. We will continue to negotiate lower rents for our residents at project inception."

# Council: 'We are not hiding anything'

**SOUTHWARK COUNCIL has been accused of "intentionally dragging its heels" over the publication of a report detailing the council's deal with Lend Lease over the amount of affordable housing on the former Heygate estate, after a tribunal ordered most of it to be made public over four months ago.**

Cllr Mark Williams said the criticism from Southwark Liberal Democrat leader, Anood Al-Samerai, was unfair as the tribunal asked the council to negotiate with the Information Commissioner on the few items which

could be redacted from the document before it was published.

The council submitted its proposal to the Information Commissioner within the given time frame, according to Cllr Williams, who has argued that some parts of the agreement should be kept private to ensure Lend Lease can get a good deal from their suppliers, in turn protecting the council's return from the development.

A case management hearing next month will still make further directions to both parties but will not give a definitive ruling on the release of the document.

# WE KNOW HOW MUCH PROFITS FOR HEYGATE

## How big is our slice of the pie?

Then they will take the first twenty per cent of any profits. What is left after that will be split 50/50 between Lend Lease and Southwark Council. With fluctuating construction costs and property sale prices, Cllr Williams says it would be pointless to even hazard a guess at the final figure. "I could pluck a figure out of thin air but that wouldn't be honest of me. It's better to just wait and see what we get," he said.

Last week the News reported that the council was paying

millions to Lend Lease for the demolition of homes on the Heygate. Cllr Williams confirmed that the £20million in costs to knock down the 1970s estate would start to be paid back in total this year and that all costs incurred by the redevelopment would be covered by the £50million made from the land sale.

The council says it funded the demolition because it wanted to start work on site straight away and a technicality in the agreement meant Lend Lease were not obliged to make payments to the council until the project had reached a certain stage, which it did this month.

## WALWORTH

# Another Green Flag awarded

**THERE WERE two reasons to celebrate in Nursery Row Park on Saturday afternoon – the raising of its new Green Flag and Apple Day, marking the changing of the seasons.**

Visitors to the park, the latest of nineteen in the borough to get the award for excellence in green space management, got to press their own apple juice, build their own haystack and scythe the wildflower meadow. "I am honoured to have helped with the Green Flag Award celebrations, which coincided with the Friends' Group's Apple Day annual event," said Cllr Barrie Hargrove, Southwark's cabinet member for Public Health, Parks and Leisure. "It was wonderful to see so many people in the park enjoying the event and having fun in this great open space."



# How will Lions fare against The Rams?

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## Step-free travel

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