

WALWORTH

'GIVE US A FAIR PRICE FOR OUR HOMES'

Aylesbury residents fight to stop compulsory buyouts

By Amelia Burr

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RESIDENTS BEING forced out of their homes of twenty years are campaigning to stop a wave of council evictions.

Forty-two residents on the Aylesbury have been handed compulsory purchase orders (CPOs) by Southwark Council so the Chiltern, Arklow, Bradenham and Chartridge blocks can be demolished and replaced by over 800 new homes.

Two residents from Waverley block affected by the last round of evictions from the Walworth estate have taken the council to the lands tribunal over what they say are low valuations of their properties. While the outcomes of those cases are still to be heard, The Aylesbury Leaseholders Action Group is registering objections to their CPOs in the hope that the Secretary of State will intervene and hold a public inquiry into the scheme.

"I think it's terrible," said Gil Mutch, 58, who has lived in her Bradenham flat for nearly twenty years. "This estate has got a lot of people who moved in when it was built and they are just being moved out."

Azad Ibrahim, 53, is a full time carer for his wife, who has a heart condition. He received a bill from the council for £5,000 this week for service charges and major works while he says they valued his three bedroom property in the Chiltern block by nearly £60,000 less than his independent surveyor.

"We are all very depressed," said Azad. "It's all very difficult."

Agnes Kabuto has not told her elderly, disabled mother who lives with her in Chartridge about their CPO. "I don't dare tell her in case she has a heart attack," said the 57-year-old, who said she was originally offered £110,000 for her three bed flat, over £60,000 less than an independent surveyor quoted her.

"My family has lived in this area for generations and now we are being forced out of our perfectly good homes to make way for luxury upmarket

housing," said Beverley Robinson, who lives in Chiltern. "This regeneration is nothing but a land grab and a council-sponsored exercise in social engineering."

Gil says the £100,000 offered for her one bed flat means she is now having to look as far afield as Ipswich.

"I'd be upset to move out of the area. I've made my life here since I was at college. There's a community here," said Gil, who wants independent certified surveyors to undertake the valuations rather than council officers.

Southwark Council said the officers were subject to the same rules as an external surveyor who would still be on the council payroll and that some of the buildings needed significant works to bring them up to standard, which had led to a drop in their value.

The Council and Notting Hill Housing Trust said they were offering qualifying leaseholders shared equity deals. This would enable leaseholders to invest the money from their Aylesbury sale into a property in the 'regeneration zone'.

They would only own half the property but they would not have to pay rent on the part they did not own, which would be funded through the council's development agreement. The Aylesbury Leaseholders Action Group says many leaseholders have paid off their mortgage and do not want to "go backwards."

"Discussions with residents and leaseholders in Chiltern, Arklow, Bradenham and Chartridge with a view to obtaining vacant possession of these blocks have been ongoing for over six years," said Cllr Mark Williams, cabinet member for transport, planning and regeneration. "We have now reached a crucial stage in the project, and in order to progress, we need to gain vacant possession of these blocks as soon as possible."

This is the first phase of the development to happen in partnership with Notting Hill Housing Trust, who have promised 50 per cent of the new homes will be affordable and 75 percent of those will be social rents.



Azad Ibrahim, Agnes Kabuto, Gil Mutch and Julius Sangbey from the Aylesbury Leaseholders Action Group with Chiltern behind



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