

LONDONASSEMBLY

Darren Johnson AM, Chair of the Housing Committee

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Richard Blakeway
Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property
GLA

29 July 2014

Dear *Richard*,

You may be aware that the London Assembly's Housing Committee is currently undertaking an investigation into the demolition and refurbishment of London's social housing estates. The primary purpose of the investigation is to understand the criteria and processes used by local authorities and other social landlords when they make decisions regarding the demolition and refurbishment of their estates. A call for evidence has been sent out to social housing providers and residents inviting their views on the purpose of regeneration programmes, the factors considered in the decision-making, and the involvement and consultation of residents.

In addition to hearing from providers and residents, the Committee would like to get from you a clearer understanding of how some aspects of the new £150m estate regeneration fund will work. In particular, the Committee would appreciate further information on the following questions:

- How will shortlisting be coordinated with the Homes and Communities Agency – will all projects the GLA recommends be funded?
- How will the shortlisting factors be prioritised? For example, what weight will be given to the number of affordable/social homes vs the weight given to early delivery?
- What quantified evidence will be required to demonstrate that local people have been involved and have influenced delivery? Many residents and some professionals who gave evidence to the Housing Committee suggested that consultation is usually inadequate and ineffective. How will you assess whether the evidence submitted results from a truly engaged consultation which has listened to and reflected on the views of all residents? Will the "serious options" which need to have been offered have to include refurbishment and infill building, not just design and layout questions relating to new build?
- The initial deadline is very tight – a general criticism of government funding for regeneration made by experts at our June meeting. Is quality being sacrificed to speed of delivery?

- The emphasis of the Fund appears to be on new build (for example the Secretary of State's Foreword to the Estate Regeneration Programme says: "mere tinkering won't work", he speaks of "redesign", the "potential to go back to traditional streetscapes", and says that "whole-scale" regeneration encourages development of many more homes; the Introduction talks about "better use of land that allows more housing without unpopular and expensive tower blocks"). What proof will be required to demonstrate that existing blocks are too expensive to maintain and will this assessment of maintenance costs trump the need for local influence?
- Will you use George Clark's twelve point plan (referred to in the FAQs) and specifically follow the implied hierarchy, by ensuring that all options for refurbishment are rigorously explored and market tested and that demolition will only be undertaken where this is the preferred choice of the community?
- How will you ensure the other points in George Clark's plan are implemented?

We would be grateful if you could respond to these questions by **5 September 2014**. It would be very helpful if you could copy your reply electronically to the Committee's Scrutiny Manager Lorraine Ford on lorraine.ford@london.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely



Darren Johnson AM
Chair of the Housing Committee
London Assembly