

Ocean New Deal for Communities Report: Concerns raised by Respect Group

The Respect group have raised a number of concerns about the report and to aid discussion at Committee it was agreed to circulate these with the report.

Lack of Consultation

The report proposes far-reaching changes to the tenure, social, economic and ethnic mix of the Ocean estate without sufficient consultation with residents.

Governance Issues

There should be more detail of the role, function and regulation of the Ocean Regeneration Trust (ORT) included in the report. The report offers no assessment of the different types of community land trust, their potential costs / benefits and an assessment of their relative merits. In addition, for a transfer of £millions of public assets Members should see the draft rules (Memorandum and Articles of Association) with legal comments before authorising a transfer.

RSL Involvement

The involvement of (an) RSL(s) would mean extra costs in administration, bureaucracy and legal costs by creating two leasing and management agreements. For tenants and leaseholders, the involvement of (an) RSL(s) means potentially worse conditions in terms of tenure security and accountability.

Refurbishment

It is not clear what level of refurbishment the proposals will result in, and whether the proposals will result in a 'transformational' programme of refurbishment and improvement, as desired by residents. Technical evidence should be produced before agreeing the demolition of seven blocks of structurally sound homes, when other blocks on the estate are in poorer condition.

Housing to meet real need

The proposed tenure mix does not meet the needs of those living in the ONDC area, or in Tower Hamlets, as almost all the non-rented housing options are unaffordable. The report projects an average cost of homes for sale as £200,000 which may be an underestimate.

Community Centres and Facilities

There is no evidence or cost benefit analysis as to why the demolition of Dame Colet, Haileybury, St Dunstan's Resource Centre and LIFRA hall are justified. The impact of losing this community space should be highlighted.

Leaseholders

There is a track record of escalating costs for leaseholder buy outs in the ONDC area. In light of this firm evidence-based estimates of costs for buy-backs and Compulsory Purchase are required, with an assessment of the risk (including costs) of a successful legal challenge in the context of residents' opposition to the proposed options.

Homeless Families

Further information is required on where the 300 homeless families to be moved from the estate will be rehoused. Further information is also sought on whether these families can be offered secure tenancies, reducing temporary accommodation costs and promoting community cohesion.

Costs

The costings in the report are not clear and further clarification is needed on the costs of the tendering process, detailed planning approval preparation, retained development and legal consultation and decant.

Economic impact

The economic impact of regeneration is not sufficiently addressed in the report and more information should be provided on how the proposals will affect the economic prospects of current residents and particularly the shops under Memora House on Ben Jonson Rd.

Displacing the community

More evidence is required to demonstrate that changing the tenure balance of the estate (and the social, economic and ethnic mix) will benefit the existing community and contribute to community cohesion.

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