

**Notes of Tonbridge House Consultation Event
Wednesday 9th October 2013**

Notes from tenant consultation meetings regarding re-classification of Tonbridge House, South Norwood from sheltered to general needs use.

Officers:

Leonard Asamoah, Head of housing solutions
Joy Gardner, Special projects officer
Tim Nash, Resident involvement and scrutiny coordinator
Liz Collins, Resident involvement officer
Rosa Muggleton, Sheltered and support service manager (first session only)
Angelique Banton, Senior tenancy Officer (first session only)

10 residents attended (first session only)

4 residents attended (second session)

Residents accepted the reasoning that homeless families need to be rehoused in flats, not bed and breakfast hostels. However a number of issues and concerns were raised about the reclassification and suitability of Tonbridge House for this purpose.

Resident: The only reason why Tonbridge was chosen rather than Sevenoaks is because Sevenoaks has a tiny club room and an office whereas the club room in Tonbridge could be converted into a habitable flat. However this is misguided because there is no bathroom in the club room in Tonbridge.

Resident: The neighbourhood is dangerous, with criminals, drug addicts and people with mental health problems around. Not a good place to bring up young children.

Resident: Some of the residents in the block have mental health issues which could pose a risk to young families.

Resident: Comment that it was the council that lowered the age limit for sheltered housing eligibility and this is now being used as the criteria for reclassification.

A. A whole range of criteria was used to select the block in order to minimise disruption. This consultation is to help minimise disruption, we are asking for residents' help with this process

Resident: One flat will be lost if Tonbridge House is used rather than Sevenoaks because the club room in Sevenoaks can be converted into a flat but the club room in Tonbridge cannot.

Resident: The laundry room was specially built for sheltered residents. It would not be suitable for use by families.

Officer: In Gillett Road the use of the laundry room has been restricted to older residents. This or a different solution will be found for Tonbridge house.

Resident: Waiting for people to die or move on in order to free up flats for families is nit-picking, not solving a critical problem. On average only 18 flats are re-let per year. We should be building new homes by British workers for British families.

Officer: Residents and the Council do not want to move everyone out to free up flats, it is a slow process but just one of several strategies.

Resident: Will tenants be able to vote on the decision?

Officer: No, it is not a vote, we are just asking for residents' views on what issues arise so that they can be answered and dealt with.

Resident: The decision is already made. It is not a real consultation. The proposal is a recipe for disaster.

Officer: The consultation purpose is to listen to views to improve a proposal and make it work better. To make sure nothing is overlooked and to weigh up all the views. We will take on views and opinions from different points of view to make the proposal better.

If you disagree, say why in the consultation so that all concerns can be addressed and measures put in place as a direct response.

Resident: Worries about security – the intercom, key fob, car parking. Not all single parent families are bad, but if they start letting people in, the car park will be misused, fly tipping will take place, crime and drug abuse will be a problem if the single mums let their criminal boyfriends in.

Resident: It is a high crime area and not good for bringing up children.

Officer: Security is a good point. We will look for solutions. We cannot fix wider society but will consider what can be reasonably addressed.

Resident: Residents agree that the issue of homeless families is a problem that needs a solution.

Resident: Stress levels are an issue for older tenants who have moved to sheltered accommodation to get away from stressful neighbours.

Officer: Concerns should be written on the consultation documents. All information will be submitted to cabinet in your own words.

Resident: Concerns raised about strange men coming in and out of the building all night, drugs and prostitution.

Resident: Will people who want to move be able to?

Officer: There will be a two stage process. First the decision on whether to reclassify the block and then to help those residents who want to move to transfer to other accommodation. Cost of moving, redecoration and reconnecting utilities and appliances will be covered by the Council. Moving out of borough is also a possibility. Move to non-sheltered properties is unlikely

because other people with higher priority will be ahead in the queue for general needs props.
People who stay in Tonbridge house will have their status and tenancy agreements reclassified as general needs along with the building.

Resident: The alarm in communal areas will have to be deactivated to protect from children running wild and unsupervised setting them off. This will add risk to older tenants who may need to use them.

Resident: The amenity fund that was closed when the sheltered housing officers were removed has never been disbursed by Andrew Stone.

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Session 2

Resident: Why would people want to move?
Because they don't like young children
They want to seize the opportunity to move somewhere else
They want free decorations and a different place to stay
Their needs have changed and special sheltered accommodation is now more appropriate.

Resident: We want a clean, quiet environment. We understand that families need somewhere to stay. It would be better to move older under-occupying tenants into the sheltered block and give the families the larger homes.

Officer: This proposal is one of a number of options. 39 units will not solve the homeless problem in Croydon and there are other programmes to help/ encourage/ give incentives to move under-occupiers on. Every little bit helps so this proposal is one step.

Resident: There are safety issues. Young children in high rises, single mums with children, boyfriends who should not be there, car park issues, lack of respect for older people, noise from kids. We don't want to be forced out of our properties by noise and neighbours. We like the quiet peaceful environment.

Resident: Will there be a warden to manage behaviour, visitors and car parking?

Officer: We will raise it with colleagues to find a way to mitigate (car parking) problems/concerns. This will be added to the proposal to the cabinet.

Resident: Demand for upper floors (4th floor upwards) is low from older people. As offers of vacancies come up who gets priority?

Officer: If older people want to stay in the block but take the opportunity to move to a lower floor they would get priority if a lower floor flat becomes available. The speed of relocating depends on when the vacancies come up.

Resident: Can't pick and choose who moves in – anti social behaviour, visitors, DOGS... generally messing the place up. Is there a precedent for mixed use?

Officer: Tonbridge House used to be general use when it was first built.

Resident: Someone was offered to transfer to a lower floor flat but it was in a terrible state. He was told he would have to redecorate it himself, which he could not do. But when it was void the council redecorated it before re-letting it to someone else.

Officer: Cannot comment on that, but people's individual needs and preferences will be taken into account. Assistance with the move, redecorating, flooring and connection of appliances already owned will be provided. There is no entitlement or legal obligation for this support because tenants are choosing to move. The package is as good as if it were a forced move.

Resident: Seaside and country homes scheme and moves out of borough was discussed as opportunity to get support with applications and costs to do something different. (See earlier note).

Resident: Importance of completing comments was reiterated. The consultation is not a quantitative vote, it is an opportunity to mitigate and address concerns. Responses will influence the cabinet's discussion and the support package put in place.