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Estate Regeneration and Community Impacts

Challenges and lessons for social landlords,
developers and local councils

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About this report

This report is premised upon the assumption that redeveloping sites with residents in situ poses unique challenges, as opposed to brownfield development of bare sites. Looking after concerns and issues, needs and preferences of the existing community often clashes with other stakeholders' agendas, or gets simply overlooked.

This paper analyses three case studies of housing estates under 'regeneration' in London to:

- Identify the challenges posed by self-funded redevelopment schemes;
- Draw lessons for developers willing to take action on the problems likely to arise in the redevelopment process including potentially negative outcomes for residents and local shopkeepers;
- Weigh the pros and cons of demolition vs. refurbishment.

The estates have been anonymised to make sure key informants' identities are protected, and to allow for contentious issues to be discussed openly and explicitly.

The evidence supporting the conclusions made in this report, as well as the quotes cited throughout, come from the following sources:

- The author's MSc dissertation, which entailed extensive fieldwork and up to 75 interviews with residents, key informants and local shopkeepers;
- Around 500 consultation forms collected by a team of community organisers and volunteers during a consultation exercise in a neighbourhood under redevelopment about the redevelopment plans;
- The report *High Rise Hope Revisited: The Social Implication of Upgrading Large Estates*, published as CASEreport 85 by LSE Housing & Communities in October 2014.

About LSE Housing and Communities

LSE Housing and Communities is a research unit within the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) at the London School of Economics led by Professor Anne Power. CASE is a multi-disciplinary research centre which focuses on the exploration of different dimensions of social disadvantage, particularly from longitudinal and neighbourhood perspectives, examining the impact of public policy. We aim to understand the social dynamics of disadvantaged neighbourhoods; promote models of housing and neighbourhood management; develop ways to support community and resident self-help action, especially in social housing areas; and shape government policy.

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1. Executive Summary

Large scale demolition of council estates with residents in situ is a lengthy, complex and often controversial process. This report draws on evidence from two case studies to show the unintended negative consequences of large-scale demolition of council estates for tenants, leaseholders and local businesses. A third case study is introduced to weigh the costs and benefits of wholesale demolition against refurbishment.

Key findings

The report identifies a series of challenges that are likely to arise in the course of a redevelopment programme. Each one of them has a negative impact on residents' lives and can hinder the smooth delivery of the programme.

1. Frequent changes to the phasing programme and the redevelopment timetable result in disruption to people's life plans and protracted poor housing for some.
2. The lack of a coherent and well thought out decant strategy results in multiple decants, and in some instances a lack of choice for tenants or unsuitable rehousing.
3. Demolition blight and lack of cleanliness and maintenance reduce residents' quality of life in their homes and their blocks, and undermine their sense of security.
4. Inadequate compensation for leaseholders as their properties are taken over by the council or the developer creates an affordability gap and displaces homeowners, while the planning blight makes it impossible for them to sell their properties on the open market or re-mortgage.
5. The lack of a well thought out retail strategy and proper consultation with local business result in businesses declining and closing, causing the depletion of the local economy.
6. Miscommunication and lack of transparency erode trust between stakeholders, which is a vital ingredient for enabling the programme to run smoothly.

Lessons

Many of these problems are inherent to the nature of long-term, large-scale demolition schemes, but some could be avoided by means of a better management of the whole process and by adopting some damage-limitation strategies:

1. Design an incremental, manageable and 'patchwork' phasing plan to make a rolling decant possible. Contingency plans should be devised from the outset, taking into account all variables likely to impact on the timely and smooth delivery of the phasing plan.
2. Implement pre-allocation policies with newly built blocks using up-to-date housing need surveys.

3. Set aside a sufficient budget for the maintenance and improvement of old blocks during the redevelopment process, to ensure that residents can enjoy a safe and decent home environment.
4. Ensure fair treatment of leaseholders in the buyback process and provide them with priority access to shared equity properties.
5. Organise the provision of independent advice for tenants and homeowners during the transition.
6. Build a knowledgeable and committed on-site regeneration team.
7. Ensure transparency and cultivate trust with tenants, local organisations and local authority staff.
8. Invest in outreach work to support the community and guarantee genuine resident involvement, with residents' elected organisations included in planning the scheme from the outset.
9. Build replacement community facilities which are open access and truly affordable for the community.
10. Devise a sound retail strategy involving local businesses and residents.

Refurbishment vs. demolition

Although refurbishment of the housing stock is sometimes not politically or economically desirable¹, the evidence from several prominent studies shows that refurbishment can achieve benefits similar to large scale demolition without its social, environmental and economic costs. Refurbishment is obviously a disruptive and potentially challenging process, but it is far less unsettling than demolition and does not displace the community. It is also a far quicker and cheaper process than demolition and rebuilding.

The refurbishment of the housing stock therefore warrants more consideration as a valid alternative to demolition for the purpose of regenerating council estates, turning them into more desirable places to live, and delivering improvements and additional homes.

¹ The decision-making process around demolition vs. refurbishment is very complex, contentious and open to interpretation. There is often the assumption that it is more expensive to refurbish as demolition can be developer-financed whilst the landlord would need to fund refurbishment. The ending of Government funding for refurbishment has partly left landlords dependent on developers to deliver estate regeneration through demolition and sales revenues. There are also leaseholder issues around regeneration as they could incur considerable major works charges. Another argument in favour of redevelopment is that more additional homes can be obtained through demolition and rebuilding.

2. Introduction

Over the last two decades, more and more local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSL) have supported wholesale clearance schemes. With insufficient targeted resources available from central Government, councils and RSLs have entered into partnerships with private developers to cross-subsidise the redevelopment of their housing stock, often regarded as an unmanageable 'negative equity' and a burdensome liability.

Redevelopment schemes represent the middle ground where local authorities' preoccupations with their assets - which have become increasingly run down after years of neglect and disinvestment, and are now costly and difficult to manage - meet with developers' desire for prime land and profit growth. Structural defects of buildings 'beyond repair' are not usually the reason on which decisions to demolish are based, although it can be the argument used publicly by landlords as a means of limiting public opposition. There are usually broader political and financial considerations that come into play.

According to an article in the Guardian, in May 2014, 18 out of the 32 local authorities in London have signed deals with private developers that entail wholesale demolition of existing dwellings and their gradual replacement with 'socially mixed' developments. Some councils have more than one redevelopment scheme in hand. There are currently at least 63 such schemes in London alone.

The last few decades have seen a gradual refinement of clearance and decanting procedures, for example with the introduction of pre-allocation policies. Best practice on how to manage a decant process has been pioneered and tested, and there has been a growing emphasis on partnership work, as well as consultation with residents and tenant involvement. However, best practice likely to minimise negative impacts is not publicised, shared or implemented on a regular basis.

Sharing existing knowledge is crucial in ensuring that the inherently disruptive clearance and relocation process is made more sensitive to residents' concerns, and better able to deal with their individual rehousing circumstances, needs and aspirations.

This report will attempt to shed light on the challenges and problematic features of redevelopment schemes with residents in situ, particularly in relation to the demolition and decant process. It will mainly do so by drawing on the evidence from a case study carried out by the author for her MSc Dissertation, on the effects of large-scale demolition and decanting of residents and local businesses. Two complementary case studies - one on redevelopment proposals, the other on refurbishment - will also be used in turn to give a more comprehensive view of the topic, and to weigh the pros and cons of demolition vs. refurbishment. In both cases, the author has first-hand experience of the schemes, having been involved respectively as Community Organiser for a resident-led housing company, and as Research Assistant on a LSE Housing and Communities project.

The report will try to identify the key lessons to be learnt from the three case studies. Generalizability of the findings is obviously bound to take into account the different arrangements and unique features of each regeneration scheme. However, all three case studies are emblematic in their own way and the conclusions to be drawn are therefore widely applicable

3. Case studies

The main purpose of this report is to highlight the challenges of redevelopment schemes with residents in situ. The main focus is on Case Study A, with supporting evidence from two other case studies (B and C).

Figure 1: Case studies: Main features & Outcomes so far

Case study	Main features	Outcome so far
<p>A: Redevelopment</p> <p>Status: ongoing</p> <p>Number of units: 1,980</p> <p>Start date: 2004</p> <p>Projected final date: 2035</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wholesale redevelopment of existing housing stock Phased replacement with new private, affordable and social rent blocks – ‘mixed street’ approach Ratio of affordable and private homes will be 41% to 59% Delivery of new community facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A total of 441 properties have been demolished 835 new homes have been built (394 social rent; 135 shared ownership; 306 private sale) New community facilities (Academy and Community Centre)
<p>B: Redevelopment proposals</p> <p>Status: stalled</p> <p>Number of units: 760</p> <p>Proposed start date: 2014</p> <p>Projected final date: 2034</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed wholesale demolition of existing housing stock 7,500 new units to be built (6,000 for sale; 740 affordable; 589 replacement social rent) Delivery of new community facilities, business spaces, offices and shopping centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intensive opposition from residents has delayed the scheme, while a recent change of administration in the Council means the scheme is under revision The residents’ vision for community ownership has gained momentum since the Government implemented the Right to Transfer Regulations in December 2013 Residents served a Right to Transfer Notice on the council in August 2015 – the Secretary of State will now decide whether the transfer process can proceed
<p>C: Refurbishment</p> <p>Status: completed</p> <p>Number of units: 754</p> <p>Start date: 2011</p> <p>Final date: 2014</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renovation works on tower blocks and walk-up maisonette blocks, including external cladding to make them energy efficient and better insulated Internal improvement works on communal spaces, such as landings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blocks have been retrofitted: external cladding installed; solar panels fitted to provide energy for communal lighting Residents are generally happy with the works, although they would have liked more work to be done on the inside of the flats to deal with mould and condensation, as well as in communal areas

4. Challenges and lessons of major redevelopment – Case study A: Redevelopment

The estate

Case study A is a large post-war estate in North London, currently under redevelopment. In 2006, when demolition started, it was housing around 6,000 people. The tenure split was 67% tenants and 33% leaseholders, the majority of whom were resident leaseholders.

The estate has an ethnically mixed composition, with a significant Turkish community (around 19% of the population). It is one of the most deprived areas of the country according to the English Indices of Deprivation 2015. An overwhelming majority of residents feel a very strong sense of belonging to their community, and want to continue to live locally.

The estate is being redeveloped by a partnership comprising the council, the developer, a Housing Association as RSL, and the council's Arms' Length Management Organisation (ALMO). The project started in 2006, and will span over three decades, with an end date set at 2035. The new social and affordable units are handed over to the Housing Association as they are built.

Evidence base

Evidence on the ground-level impact of this scheme comes from a qualitative study carried out by the author as part of her MSc Dissertation.

The study set out to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are the main problems arising from the wholesale demolition of a large council estate, especially in relation to the unfolding of the decanting process, and what is their impact on residents and local businesses?
- 2) What positive and negative outcomes are there for residents and other local actors?

Data was gathered over a two year period (February 2012- July 2014), using a multi-method approach to data collection. This allowed for data and methodological triangulation, and maximising of the validity and reliability of the findings. The length of time spent on site has proved invaluable to get a thorough understanding of such a complex regeneration scheme.

Data was collected via:

- A series of preliminary and follow up site visits;
- Regular attendance at local community group Board meetings and Executive meetings as participant-observer;
- Analysis of relevant policy documentation, including 50 local newsletters covering the years 2006-2014;
- A total of 40 'observation interviews' carried out as participant-observer at drop-in surgeries, held at the local Independent Tenants & Leaseholders' Advisor (ITLA)'s office, where people seek independent advice and support to deal with their housing and rehousing problems;

- 40 face-to-face interviews, including: 17 focused interviews with key informants; 16 in-depth interviews with residents (including the Chair of the local community organisation, the ex-Chair and the Representative for Leaseholders); and seven in-depth face-to-face interviews with local shopkeepers, including the Representative for Retailers.

Challenges of major redevelopment

Challenge 1: Phasing & timetable

One of the main problems highlighted by Case Study A relates to the **frequent changes to the phasing programme and the redevelopment timetable**, which resulted in a group of blocks being switched between phases as many as three times in the course of the redevelopment. These blocks were originally included in phase one, in recognition of their particularly bad conditions, but they were finally pushed back to phase six in the 2013 revised Master-plan. Residents in these blocks will now be decanted between 2020 and 2021, ten years later than originally planned.

The developer claims the decision was based on **‘financial viability’** considerations. This is how the developer’s Development Manager explains the viability argument:

“At the moment [these blocks are] not going to reach [the profit] cap, it’s in one of the lower value areas of the estate, there are quite a lot of leaseholders that need to be bought back and that needs to be funded by the scheme, so to make that part of the scheme financially viable, we need to use the surplus generated by [the previous phase] to help to cross-subsidise it, so that phase can come forward as well. If we try to deliver it now, it’s just not financially viable, and there is no surplus available at the moment to cross subsidise it, so we need to deliver some of the high value phases first to generate that surplus that helps to cross subsidise that particular phase.”

It is impossible to determine the extent to which the viability argument is actually substantiated. Senior officers in the Council and the Housing Association have expressed serious concerns about it. One of them explicitly defines the viability argument as *“a smokescreen”*. Their comments denote an underlying lack of trust between the developer and its institutional partners.

“It’s not about viability, it’s about maximising their profit margins. It’s all about assumptions, what the strength of the market will be next year etc., there is no crystal ball, it’s not an exact science, you can switch a variable a little bit and suddenly it becomes very viable. Developers will always try and produce something that will maximise their profit” (Project Manager – Council)

The recent changes to the phasing have been a source of major turmoil and upheaval in the community. As the research findings strongly indicate, they had huge repercussions on residents, in terms of:

- **Disruption to people's life plans** (e.g. residents enduring unacceptable living conditions and missing/turning down rehousing opportunities, on the assumption that they would be rehoused sooner than was actually the case);
- **Protracted poor housing**, as the council has not invested any substantial money in the upkeep and improvement of the blocks, apart from day to day repairs.

Figure 2: Redevelopment challenge: Phasing & Timetable

Case Study A: selected quotes

“They left us in limbo for so long, I would have fought for my transfer years ago if they had told me that I had to wait another 10+ years, over the last 6/7 years the house has really bothered me but I thought in 2013 we might get a move. I’ve never thought of myself as being a depressed person, but now I can admit it, this is definitely making me depressed, the stress of the household...” (Single mother living with her two sons and 16 year old autistic brother in a two bedroom flat. Council tenant)

“We’ve got huge cracks, we have black mould, we have a toilet system that has been there since the flat was built, we have windows that apparently I was told didn’t work with the brickwork, so that’s why we now have this condensation. [...] The pipe outside has been there for 60 years and has never been maintained. [...] Also the block is subsiding. The cracks have become worse, it’s now an opening gap. How could I live with that for another 10 years?” (45 years old, lives with 20 years old son in two bedroom flat. Council tenant, has lived in the flat for 14 years)

Challenge 2: Decanting tenants

Case Study A is characterised by the **lack of a coherent rolling decant strategy**, both because of bad management of the process and the frequent changes to the phasing plan. Specifically, this is due to:

- The council’s **failure to implement proper pre-allocation policies**, i.e. allocating flats to residents in advance of them being built, so that people can inform the design of their new homes;
- The council’s **failure to carry out housing need/occupancy surveys**. In this case, the council only gives rough percentages to the developer when it comes to the number of flats requiring walk-in showers, for instance.

The disjointed decant programme, which *de facto* narrows down the range of choices available to residents, has a huge negative impact on residents, in terms of:

- **Multiple decant**: finding the right match is usually quite challenging for the council, because by the time tenants have to move, there are sometimes no properties available that match their preferences and needs, particularly enclosed vs. open-plan kitchen, ground floor vs. top floors, walk-in shower vs. bath. As a result people have

turned down properties in the new blocks, and have had to be double or triple decanted to refitted empty properties within the estate;

- **Lack of choice and unsuitable rehousing:** a number of residents, often elderly and vulnerable people with complex needs and preferences, or families with small children, have been pushed into accepting housing offers that are ultimately unsuited to their needs (e.g. not having walk-in showers or a separate kitchen).

Figure 3: Redevelopment challenge: Decanting tenants

Case Study A: selected quotes

“We would like residents to have more choice, but it’s the council that nominate and allocate people. If we knew the design and type of all the homes earlier, there would be more tenants’ choice, but we’ve never got to the point. When it comes to allocating properties the building is already built and so [the developer] can’t really instruct the constructors. It’s all about bad management of the decant process”
(Regeneration Manager – Housing Association)

“I have always stated that I wanted to be rehoused back into [xxx] site, which is where I was before moving to [xxx]. But I was not allowed to wait until the new units in [xxx] site will become available, I was told I should move as soon as possible. I panicked and I made the wrong choice, and agreed to take on this flat which has a separate kitchen which is my preference, but the 6th floor is too high and gives me health problems. I feel dizzy all the time, I feel sick and unable to sleep” (Elderly lady in her 70s suffering from vertigo and other health problems, rehoused three times over ten years, desperately wanting out from her newly allocated flat on the 6th floor of one of the new blocks)

Challenge 3: Demolition blight, cleaning & maintenance

In the example of Case Study A, the council are not investing any money in the upkeep and improvement of the blocks, apart from day to day repairs. **Because of the regeneration plans, the blocks were excluded from the Decent Homes programme.** Basic external repairs (such as roof repair, window replacement, concrete and brickwork repair) were carried out in 2010-2012, as part of the £19 million Interim Repair Programme for properties in phases awaiting demolition. However, **the programme ran out of money** before the much-needed internal repair works could be implemented.

Demolition blight is putting considerable strain on residents’ quality of life, especially for those living in the worst blocks which have been pushed back in the redevelopment. Residents say they feel **neglected**, and are **ashamed** of inviting friends and family around because of the appalling conditions of the stairs, balconies and flats. **Security is also an issue** because some blocks do not have security doors, and there is not enough patrolling. A resident mentions broken street lights in the alleys not being replaced for several years.

Leaseholders living in partially decanted blocks complain they are charged with the usual service charges despite repeated problems with lifts breaking down, lengthy repairs and **sub-**

standard cleaning. Some interviewees believe that **the council let the estate run down as a strategy** to keep the value of the properties low, and therefore minimise buy back costs.

Figure 4: Redevelopment challenge: Demolition blight, cleaning & maintenance

Case Study A: selected quotes

“We didn’t have anything done in these blocks. The blocks were literally falling down, never being maintained. These blocks have never been touched, except for last year when they put new windows and the new doors. [...] We desperately wanted security doors but we’ve never got them as the other blocks did. These blocks are really down [...]. It’s never clean, you’ve seen the state of the chutes, at night you have drug dealers, gangs of guys and nothing is done about it. I’ve got damp in my bedroom and in my loo...People are actually living here, and the council keeps saying nothing is wrong. These blocks are solid, they are alright, but have never been maintained since 1949” (72 years old, council tenant, lives alone in a two bedroom flat, has lived on the estate since 1949)

“There has been a culture in the council that because the estate was going to be regenerated nothing should be done to the blocks, but [the residents’ organisation] had made them understand that this shouldn’t be the case” (Chair of local residents’ organisation)

Challenge 4: Leaseholders

Case Study A reveals two problematic issues specific to leaseholders, namely **inadequate compensation** for the buyback of their properties, (the so called ‘affordability gap’), and **planning blight**.

The research shows that the council and the developer’s preoccupation² is to keep the value of the buyback valuations low, in order not to set a precedent, to avoid spreading rumours, and to keep overall buyback costs to a minimum. What is offered by the council’s surveyor is on average **20/25% below the true market value** as acknowledged by an independent surveyor, whose job is then to try and negotiate a higher figure.

Negotiations with the council to reach an agreement on buyback price are extremely difficult and lengthy. It usually takes months, sometimes even years, to come to an agreement and get a ‘proper’ offer. The price agreed is usually not enough to allow people to find somewhere local to suit their housing needs and personal circumstances. Residents under a CPO are in an even worse negotiating position, because once the council has served a Notice to Treat, they only have a few weeks to agree a price and leave.

²Between schemes buy-back arrangements vary according to whether the Council or the developer is responsible. In Case study A, for instance, the agreement was that the developer would be in charge of buying properties from leaseholders, with the costs involved in buying back leaseholders being the “*real land value*” (Development Manager – Developer), while the Council would be responsible for appointing an independent surveyor to negotiate the amount. In Case study B, in contrast, the responsibility for buying back properties would be exclusively with the council who would have to bear the costs.

Another issue for leaseholders is the **planning blight** caused to their properties by the demolition plans. No prospective buyer would buy into the estate, since no mortgage company would lend money for a property which is scheduled for demolition.

The issues of affordability gap and planning blight result in two negative outcomes for residents:

- **Involuntary displacement:** the overwhelming majority of leaseholders have to move off the estate, usually far away to the outskirts of London or outside of London, since the buyback price they finally negotiate with the council is not enough to allow them to buy anywhere on or near the regenerated estate.
- **Lives on hold:** because of the 'planning blight' affecting the area, leaseholders cannot sell or re-mortgage their properties. As a result, their life plans are disrupted or hindered, and their financial situation worsens as they cannot consolidate their debts.

An option for leaseholders willing to remain on the estate would be to move to a **shared equity property** in the new development. However, in Case Study A there has been a very low take-up of shared equity properties, with only a three resident leaseholders buying a shared equity flat on the estate, because:

- ✓ They are not very popular: leaseholders are often reluctant to downgrade to 70% ownership;
- ✓ The shared equity option has not been properly publicised and understood by leaseholders.

Resident leaseholders also report **lengthy paperwork and disputes** around Disturbance Payments holding back deals with vendors, and putting them in an uncomfortable position as sellers threaten to pull out and give preference to cash buyers.

Figure 5: Redevelopment challenge: Leaseholders

Case Study A: selected quotes

"I feel as leaseholders we have been neglected, the options left for us is not that much, we haven't got that many options. We've worked through leasehold swaps, but that would only happen if your block has been decanted, and then you can choose another similar property within [the borough] and then swap, move from your flat into that property based on the valuation of your flat and where you move to. As far as I'm concerned, I don't know of anybody who has taken up that option. I know that where people have moved is not where they want to live, because the money that they are valuing our properties here is not going to give you anything very good anywhere else. [...] They finally accepted my request to be bought out of phase, this was November 2012, and in the meantime I lost one property because of all the battles and the negotiations with the council taking so long, everything takes so long for you to have a reply or an answer back from them, and in that time there was a property that I wanted to buy. Even this one, recently two or three weeks ago, the vendor from whom I'm buying was threatening to pull out because it's taking so long" (leaseholder in the process of

moving off the estate. Has lived on the estate for over 40 years, with her three children in a two bedroom flat)

“Last year they sent the surveyor around, he valued my home at £210,000, I was looking at £300,000. I didn’t know anything about property, then I started looking online and I couldn’t find anything around here for that price. Then I managed to get [the Independent Chartered Surveyor], he managed to get it up to £220,000, then £230,000. He actually valued it at £280,000, but he said they won’t pay you this because for anything over £250,000 they have to pay 1% extra [Stamp Duty]” (leaseholder who has lived for 40 years in a three bed maisonette with front and back garden)

“it is difficult in practice to pursue other leaseholders’ options other than buying another property in the open market, which means people are being forced out of the area” (Independent Chartered Surveyor)

Challenge 5: Retail

Another big issue in Case Study A concerns the **selection process for the shops** and the **retail strategy**. Originally there was a shop parade comprising 13 retailers. When negotiations started they were all promised they would be offered a new unit. However, in practice, only three of them actually managed to relocate on the estate.

Research shows two negative outcomes for local shopkeepers:

- **Involuntary displacement:** happening either indirectly, by means of higher rents and service charges, or directly, by explicitly banning certain types of shops from the new units. It was the developer’s marketing agenda that informed the selection process for the shops, the reason being that the old shops did not suit their clientele, and that prospective private buyers would not get mortgages for properties above certain businesses, such as fast food restaurants;
- **Business strain:** in the absence of a well thought out retail strategy, the few retailers that were able to relocate were deprived of customers for a series of reasons:
 - ✓ The hoardings cut part of the estate off from them, separating them from some of their clientele;
 - ✓ There were restrictions within the leases dictating that shopkeepers could not put banners or signage on their windows, and they could not display their goods outside on the pavement, which meant the shops were poorly visible;
 - ✓ Not enough parking spaces were promptly re-provided to accommodate customers;
 - ✓ Shopkeepers were charged higher rents and business rates.

Local shopkeepers feel they have not been properly consulted on these matters, and maintain that some of the problems they encountered could have been avoided by means of a better retail strategy. Residents say the shop parade – which was very much a community hub - is **badly missed**.

Figure 6: Redevelopment challenge: Retail

Case Study A: selected quotes

“We were supposed to be going across the road: when they made the plans, they showed us the shops we were going to have, and I picked up the last one [...], but nothing was written down, everything was just by word of mouth, and we trusted them, but obviously when they started building everything changed. When the time came that they knocked us down, for compensation they gave us only £8,000, because our lease had expired, they knew what they were doing. The rent in the new shop across the road would have been £16,500 (a year), we asked about the rates [council tax], they said they didn’t know, I said but you should have rates by the size of the shop, and then I found out that it would have been about £10,000 (a year) plus 20% VAT on top, we’ve never paid rent VAT on top, so I couldn’t accept it, I didn’t take the shop. I would have liked to be there but I could have never survived there”
(Ex-owner of coffee shop)

“The council and the developer were in charge of deciding which shops would get offered the chance to come across. There were quite a few disappointed people who wanted to come here but couldn’t [...] I don’t know why they wanted some shops, they probably discussed this behind closed doors, and maybe it’s their policy that they didn’t want these sort of shops. [...] There is something going on: they sort of said what kind of shops they want, and if we don’t fit the criteria, we are out. They didn’t want a fish & chips shop here, and yet many people would like it, especially the older people, but they say they don’t want it. The owner wanted to come here, they said no” (Representative of local shopkeepers sitting on the board of the local residents’ organisation)

“Nobody went to the shops, because they weren’t allowed to display their goods on the pavement and they had all these restrictions...it was a total mess, a total and absolute mess. [...] That has proved a disaster, there is no question about it, and that because the retail strategy wasn’t thought of, it wasn’t clear what it was at the time”
(Chair of local residents’ organisation)

“We are struggling, it’s terrible, terrible. [...]When they shut the shops down and the other shops went away, the take-ins through the shop plummeted overnight, 100% overnight, within a week everything had gone down by a 100%. We’ve had lorries coming up and down here for three years; a lot of people have moved away; from when they’ve shut this road off, our business dropped by 100% overnight. [...] The worst thing is that they cut our trading in half by doing what they’ve done: they blocked this road and that seemed to kill us off, just overnight. Whether this is because there were no other shops here where they used to go, there was a laundrette here, a betting shop, a Chinese takeaway, a fish and chips shop, and that would bring people down; now there is none of them here. It might get better when

this lot comes up and they open the road, but I don't know – but these people are different kind of people, and that lot is only for the private, a lot of the locals are moaning about it. Rent is now 100% higher than what I was paying before” (Local shopkeeper)

Challenge 6: Communication & consultation

Case Study A residents, especially those living in the worst blocks, feel **disenfranchised** and do not usually attend meetings, unless to protest. They claim the council and the developer ‘*are just telling lies*’, and see them as **making decisions behind closed doors**. A resident says they have all ‘*lost faith*’, and do not believe anything the council is telling them anymore.

Resident representatives think there is still an **imbalance of power**, despite the local community organisation having joined the Masterplan Review Partnership Board. Although the local residents group recognise they have achieved several things over time, the council and the developer are still perceived as having the final say and the strongest arguments to play with (such as the **viability argument**). There is an underlying **lack of trust** towards the council. Resident representatives maintain that **too many promises have been broken and expectations disappointed**, particularly in relation to the provision of community facilities and the layout of the new blocks. They feel they need to act as ‘**watchdogs**’, constantly keeping their guard up.

Figure 7: Redevelopment challenge: Communication & Consultation

Case Study A: selected quotes

“The developer is trying to rush us into making decisions, they are not used to operating in a way that is transparent, democratic and accountable [...]. We have to constantly make sure that they stick to what they said...their preoccupations are not ours, the developer is here to make money for stakeholders. [...] To get things through to planning the developer has to show that they've consulted people, but that doesn't mean they do everything the community wants. They just need to show that the scheme has got local support ” (Chair of local community organisation)

“The developer made certain promises about the design of the new homes, but then they didn't stick to these promises. Especially they delivered less separate kitchens than promised. They didn't fulfil the promises that they made. They betrayed the trust that was put on them, now we can't trust them anymore” (Ex-Chair of local community organisation)

Lessons of major redevelopment

The case study analysed shows that there are several lessons that can be learnt to minimise disruption to residents, achieve better outcomes, and facilitate project management to avoid extra costs. From a developer's point of view, keeping residents' resentment and opposition to a minimum is vital, along with the minimisation of:

- Delays and associated cost overruns;

- Negative publicity and reputational damage.

It is interesting to note that key informants were aware of or willing to explore what went wrong, or able to suggest a possible way out only in a few instances. The Independent Tenant and Leaseholder Advisor in particular was acutely conscious of the problems of the redevelopment, and capable of recommending ways to better manage and deliver the project. Overall, informants seemed to be focused on day-to-day problem solving and attempting to 'keep their heads above water'. This apparent lack of insight could be either because they were anxious to provide the researcher with an optimistic picture, or most likely because problems were perceived as overwhelming and inescapable by-products of the redevelopment itself.

Lesson 1: An incremental phasing plan to include contingency provision

- Getting the phasing plan right is crucial to the smooth and timely running of the redevelopment. Frequent changes to the phasing make the management of the decant programme more difficult, eventually resulting in:
 - Residents being multiple decanted;
 - Allocation policies having to be constantly updated, creating confusion and resentment in the community;
 - Blocks being left half empty, and therefore difficult to manage
 - Delays on the overall delivery of the scheme;
 - Residents' fatigue and stress-related symptoms due to uncertainty
- Scale makes a huge difference: an **incremental and piecemeal phasing plan** is likely to be more manageable by making a **rolling decant** possible, i.e. decant, demolish, build, rehouse decanted tenants, phase by phase.
- An effort should be made **from the very outset** to foresee, and take into consideration, all or most of the variables likely to impact on the phasing plan, e.g. land swaps, listing of buildings, viability considerations. **Contingency plans** should be devised to fall back on. They should be conceived with the full involvement of resident representatives, and widely publicised. It would also be good to devise models of outcomes, and potential coping and damage limitation strategies, in order to prepare for any eventuality.

Lesson 2: Proper pre-allocation policies with newly built blocks based on housing needs surveys

- **Proper pre-allocations policies to inform a rolling decant programme**, alongside a coherent and well thought-out phasing plan, would minimise the damage from multiple decants, lack of choice and wrong rehousing.
- **New blocks should be built based on detailed housing need or occupancy surveys**, to minimise the risk of people turning down unsuitable properties, and ultimately having to be multiple decanted. Housing needs surveys should be **done on a regular basis**, to

ensure that knowledge of the changing and evolving needs of each family is always kept up-to-date.

Figure 8: Redevelopment lesson: Phasing & Pre allocation policies

Case Study A: selected quotes

“[...] The phasing hasn’t worked properly...so, it’s not as if people have been pre-allocated their properties, and they have got the opportunity to make choices as to how their property is laid out and how it’s decorated, and then they move in, which is the way it should be under the legislation. If it went down the way it should go, rather than the way it has, then it would be easier because then you would be emptying a block, and two years before that block is empty you would sit down, carry out the household survey, you’d then sit down with the architects and you’d work out what the mix of the new building would be, and then you could take into account that Mrs. Smith wants to live next to Mrs. Brown, and Mr John’s bedroom needs could be met. Now, that hasn’t happened [...] Decant process should happen in a much more sensible, structured, phased, formal development programme. Because what we you have here is...let’s call it an eclectic mix, you’ve got people who have moved for two or three times before they got their new property, you’ve got people who were promised they would move in two years and then they weren’t, you’ve seen blocks that have been in and out of the phasing. It all ended up a mess, and what we are trying to do is make the best out of that mess”
(Independent Tenant & Leaseholder Advisor)

“The biggest harm was the uncertainty over the phasing, and it was the council who messed it up. [...] We would like residents to have more choice, but it’s the council that nominate and allocate people. If we knew the design and type of all the homes earlier, there would be more tenants’ choice, but we’ve never got to the point. When it comes to allocating properties the building is already built and so the developer can’t really instruct the contractors. It’s all about bad management of the decant process” (Regeneration Manager - Housing Association)

Lesson 3: Sufficient budget for maintenance & improvement of old blocks during the redevelopment process

- It is important to ensure that residents live in a **safe and comfortable environment** while awaiting rehousing. This is especially true for those residents living in partially decanted blocks with many sealed up properties, but also whenever the long end date of the programme results in some blocks being left untouched for decades.
- Enough money for the **improvement and upkeep of old blocks**, in terms of both **external and internal repairs**, should be budgeted in advance in the programme’s viability test.
- **Additional security measures**, such as security doors, concierge service, or patrolling, should also be budgeted.

- There should **not be a double standard between old and new blocks**, in terms of maintenance, cleanliness and patrolling.
- **Residents' legitimate repair requests should not be left unaddressed** on the grounds that the estate is under regeneration, especially when it relates to health hazards such as mould and damp in the properties.

Figure 9: Redevelopment lesson: sufficient budget for maintenance & improvement of old blocks

Case Study A: selected quotes

"I think the residents in the [...] [blocks pushed back in the phasing] are not anti-regeneration, their issue is that they are having to wait a long time for them to get new homes, and their properties are in a particularly poor state. That's the main issue we've got at the moment, and unfortunately there is not much that we can do about it. We ended up being about £85/90 million in red before we've started to see some profits and revenues, we've spent a hell of a lot of money upfront, and this money came from other developments, so that's where the benefits of having a big organisation help, however we always have to be mindful of that if we invest a pound up here, than we need to be making a profit on that pound, and that's what our shareholders would expect. Regeneration schemes do need to show that they are making a return, we can't just do this one for free because we are making a lot of money down the road" (Development Manager - Developer)

"They want to pay you as low as possible. But if you look at the money they are making, the difference is just incredible" (Independent Chartered Surveyor)

Lesson 4: Fair treatment of resident leaseholders when buying back their property

Resident leaseholders are likely to be those most attached to the neighbourhood, having bought into the estate long term, and yet the worst off when it comes to rehousing options. Ensuring fair treatment of resident leaseholders could:

- Save money on legal expenses, and costs incurred in lengthy negotiations with valuers;
 - Minimise the risk that lengthy and contested negotiations hold up the whole scheme (in cases where there is no Compulsory Purchase Order in place);
 - Reduce stress-related symptoms for vulnerable resident leaseholders less able to cope, and avoid the displacement of long-term residents.
- A **generous budget for out of phase buybacks** should be included in the overall financial viability considerations, to make sure resident leaseholders can **escape planning blight**, and avoid being vulnerable to changes to the phasing plan.
 - Valuations must reflect **real market value unbiased by viability preoccupations**, and possibly take into account **residents' specific circumstances, rehousing needs and preferences**, particularly in relation to their desires to remain on or near the estate. In

order to do so, the number of leaseholders should be included in advance in the viability test³.

- **Shared equity properties** should be **properly publicised**, and possibly reserved in advance so that prospective buyers can influence their layout and design⁴. If more bedrooms are needed, wider availability of leasehold swaps to ex Council homes would also help.

Figure 10: Redevelopment lesson: Fair treatment of resident leaseholders

Case Study A: selected quotes

“They knew how many leaseholders were [in Phase x], so they can’t turn around and say that there are too many leaseholder to buy back” (Resident leaseholder, long standing member of local resident organisation)

Lesson 5: Independent Tenant & Leaseholder Advisor (ITLA): role & remits

- A team of truly independent and committed Independent Tenant & Leaseholder Advisors is a **precious resource** in redevelopment schemes. Unlike Resident Liaison Officers, ITLAs are appointed by a panel mainly made up of residents, and are directly accountable to them, despite being paid for by the council. This means they are usually highly trusted by the community.
- Enough human and monetary resources should be put in place to allow ITLAs to:
 - Keep and maintain a **database of their caseload** to achieve monitoring and evaluation goals, as they are in the best position to collect disaggregated household data;
 - Carry out **outreach work** with the most vulnerable residents who need tailored help to understand their entitlements and options.

Figure 11: Redevelopment lesson: Independent Tenant & Leaseholder Advisor

Case Study A: selected quotes

“We should do more outreach work, door knocking and visiting. We should let people know about things by directly approaching them, that would be much better” (ITLA)

“We don’t have a database, so we can’t really provide the council with quantitative evidence, it’s more like anecdotal evidence....we could make our arguments stronger if we had a proper database, but we only have individual files, and sometimes they are not even updated properly...we just don’t have the resources to do it” (ITLA)

³Some local authorities use Commercial Valuers and share the valuation reports with leaseholders. This makes the process more transparent and enables their independent valuer to negotiate a price without Council interference. Other Councils often use the District Valuer who undervalues and do not share any info or even value homes individually.

Lesson 6: Staff

- **Staff motivation** is crucial to achieve excellence in the delivery of the project. Motivated staff are prompt in addressing residents' concerns, deal with issues quickly and proactively, and are better at problem solving. On the contrary, overworked or demotivated staff act reactively and often perform inefficiently.
- Factors that contribute to **dampen drive and enthusiasm**, and significantly erode staff motivation, are:
 - **Frequent hurdles and delays on the project**, which further stretch the already long time lag of redevelopment schemes. In contrast, small but visible achievements can be crucial in boosting morale;
 - **Residents' frustration, resentment and opposition.**
- **Continuity** of staff helps to maintain historical memory, and means the learning curve, which is peculiar to each redevelopment scheme, can be sustained. High levels of staff turnover could lead to:
 - Loss of expertise with waste of time and resources;
 - Promises being broken as they were in the form of personal commitments by certain individuals who have now left;
 - Waste of time investment made in building trust relationships.
- A **well-resourced, knowledgeable and experienced team** is essential for redevelopment schemes of a complex nature. Having a social scientist on board would help prevent problems and avoid having to react to them once they have arisen.

Figure 12: Redevelopment lesson: Staff

Case study A: selected quotes

"We would have done a lot better if we had had a social scientist on board. It's just that the council and the developer's mind-set is different from ours. The mistakes that have been made should have been foreseen" (Chair of local resident organisation)

"Council officers have got 17 things to do, and time to do 3! They just haven't got the time to do things. They're under-resourced, so they don't get things done in time" (Chair of local resident organisation)

Lesson 7: Transparency & Trust

- Communication is not just a matter of providing frequent information, e.g. via regular newsletters. Communication is above all about being **transparent and truthful, honest and open** about what is going on.
- **Transparency** is crucial in cultivating **trust**, which in turn fuels cooperative effort, coordination and shared goals
- The procurement process for developer partners could include a **corporate social responsibility framework**, which would require the developer to be **fully transparent** with the council and community representatives by disclosing the full details of the financial modelling used to determine viability.

Figure 13: Redevelopment lesson: Transparency & Trust

Case study A: selected quotes

“Do not believe anything that you are told [...] I trusted them, but you have to take everything with a pinch of salt, over the years we’ve learnt that it is vital to minute everything that is said, because otherwise they would change things around. Make sure that things are minuted and ask a lot of questions, and try and push and push, don’t relax back thinking that it somebody’s job and they are going to do it, find out and learn for yourself” (Longstanding member of local resident organisation)

“I don’t trust any developer, it’s not just [this particular developer]. We have the Principal Development Agreement and that’s a way to try and achieve guarantees, but they will always try to push the door open, so it’s a matter of getting to know how the developer operates – each one has got a different style – and then you can introduce mechanisms to try and protect the interests of the local authority and the project as a whole as much as we can, like we have independent financial checking and modelling that we bring in to ensure that what [the developer] are saying is true. [The developer] will have a percentage mark-up that they will reveal to us, and there will be a percentage mark-up that they won’t reveal to us, like a double accounting system, again all developers are doing it, so for example they will be saying that they make 20% profit margin, when they’ve actually achieve 30% plus. [The developer] will produce something that is palatable for us as an authority, to make it believable, and financially believable, in the meantime they will look at other activities to increase their profit margin to push it up that they won’t reveal...but it’s quite normal practice to do that” (Project Manager – council)

“We don’t share figures with [the local resident organisation] because we have to be mindful of commercial sensitivity. We agreed that with the council because of the reinvestment perspective, and it’s also extremely complicated the way the financial model works, we’ve got fully qualified accountants to get the heads around the cash flows, and even the council, they employ a specialist external consultant, so to be able to share the numbers with [the local resident organisation in a way that means anything to them, would be quite difficult. And there is the commercial sensitivity. Profit margin is commercially sensitive” (Development Manager – Developer)

“It’s difficult for the authority, when you make promises we want to keep them, sometimes we are guarded on how we present stuff because we always know that things can change, and therefore we try to be pretty much open and transparent with residents... but breaking promises is never good for either individual officers or the authority, and we try not to do that, but there are certain instances when we have no alternative but to do that. The changing of the phasing is a difficult one, is not a nice position to find yourself into” (Project Manager – Council)

“Promises were made by anybody and they were broken by anybody. There is no trust anymore” (Ex-Chair of local resident organisation)

“They are trying to rush us into making decisions, they are not used to operating in a way that is transparent, democratic and accountable” (Chair of local resident organisation)

Lesson 8: Resident Involvement

- **Consultation events**, such as road shows, workshops and postal or administered surveys, are perceived by residents as **tokenistic exercises** carried out to meet statutory requirements, rather than genuine efforts to discover the community’s views. Residents’ views are not usually perceived as taken on board.
- Involvement is a bi-directional process which involves feeding in (providing information) and feeding back (collecting views and preferences). Access to transparent and up-to-date information is a key factor to resident satisfaction. **Outreach work**, in other words **door knocking and visiting people in their homes**, might prove more effective in reaching out to hard to reach, vulnerable residents who do not usually get involved by attending meetings.
- A deeper and more decisive degree of resident involvement is needed. A **resident organisation** elected by the majority of residents needs to be included in planning the scheme from the outset. Proper governance mechanisms should be put in place to allow this.
- The establishment of a **community-based housing association** pursuing a **stock transfer** with residents’ representatives in charge of their homes, would definitely tip the balance towards renewal strategies that put people rather than profit at the heart of redevelopment. The Government’s recent implementation of the **Right to Transfer Regulations** could provide an interesting opportunity for communities willing to explore this route.

Figure 14: Redevelopment lesson: Resident Involvement

Case Study A: selected quotes

“The majority of the people on the estate want a new home, but they do not want open plan kitchens, but properties in [xxxx] were all open plan, because of that people refused to move. That was something that was ignored, and yet [the local resident organisation] made the case that the community, especially the Turkish community, didn’t want open plan kitchens. I remember a Turkish woman standing up and saying we have children, they will run up and down indoors, so if I’m in the kitchen cooking it’s a dangerous place, this is what we are used to, we want separate kitchens. [The developer] said you’ll get what you want. OK, fair enough, [phase 1] was at the beginning, people were rushing, so we couldn’t have any input, but I remember we had a whole estate workshop...people made their preferences clear right from the beginning. There are people on the estate who like open plan kitchens, like young single people or the elderly who don’t do much cooking, but the majority wanted enclosed kitchens, so we were hopeful that they would take this into account. But then we found out that [the housing association] had signed off new blocks without enough enclosed kitchens being built, and without letting us know!” (Resident leaseholder, long standing member of local resident organisation)

“The main issue is how do you make sure the developer is listening to residents’ concerns and have the community needs at heart [...] If you owned the land, then we would have been in charge” (Chair of local resident organisation)

Lesson 9: Community facilities

- It would be preferable if community facilities were genuinely for the community, i.e. **open access and truly affordable**. Some examples include:
 - A new community centre charging the same amount as the old one for renting out a meeting room or the hall to community groups;
 - A new subsidised gym;
 - A new local community school;
 - A new shopping centre or town square with mixed shops, to cater for different needs and purchase powers.

Table 15: Redevelopment lesson: Community facilities

Case Study A: selected quotes

“What they like to introduce are things that will have a direct impact on their profit margin, so they will introduce a swimming pool, a gym... They like to go up in the air because they benefit from high and they can gain more profit, maximise profit margins, and of course this is in conflict with what we want to achieve” (Project Manager – Council)

“The developer is putting pictures of the private swimming pool on the hoardings...I told them they shouldn’t have to advertise it like that, it makes people resentful! The answer was: our marketing people want it up” (Chair of local resident organisation)

“We have spent hours and hours designing [the new community centre], it was meant to be more affordable for residents, now it’s £60 an hour, I only know of one person on the estate who used it for a function. That was not our aim, our ambition, our ambition was that it would be for the people. The old community centre was £25 an hour. I was mad about it, the expectations that we had at the beginning are all falling by the way” (Longstanding member of local resident organisation)

“The Academy is not as much a community facility as we would expect. They promised us that it would be open access, but it’s not” (Chair of local resident organisation)

Lesson 10: Retail strategy

- A **retail strategy** should be devised from the outset, **in tune with the wishes and preferences of the community**.
- **Affordable retail space** should be provided, so that higher rents and charges do not prevent local shopkeepers from relocating to the new commercial units.
- **Local businesses** should be properly **consulted with**, and their needs taken into proper consideration in terms of provision of parking spaces, access and advertisement strategies.

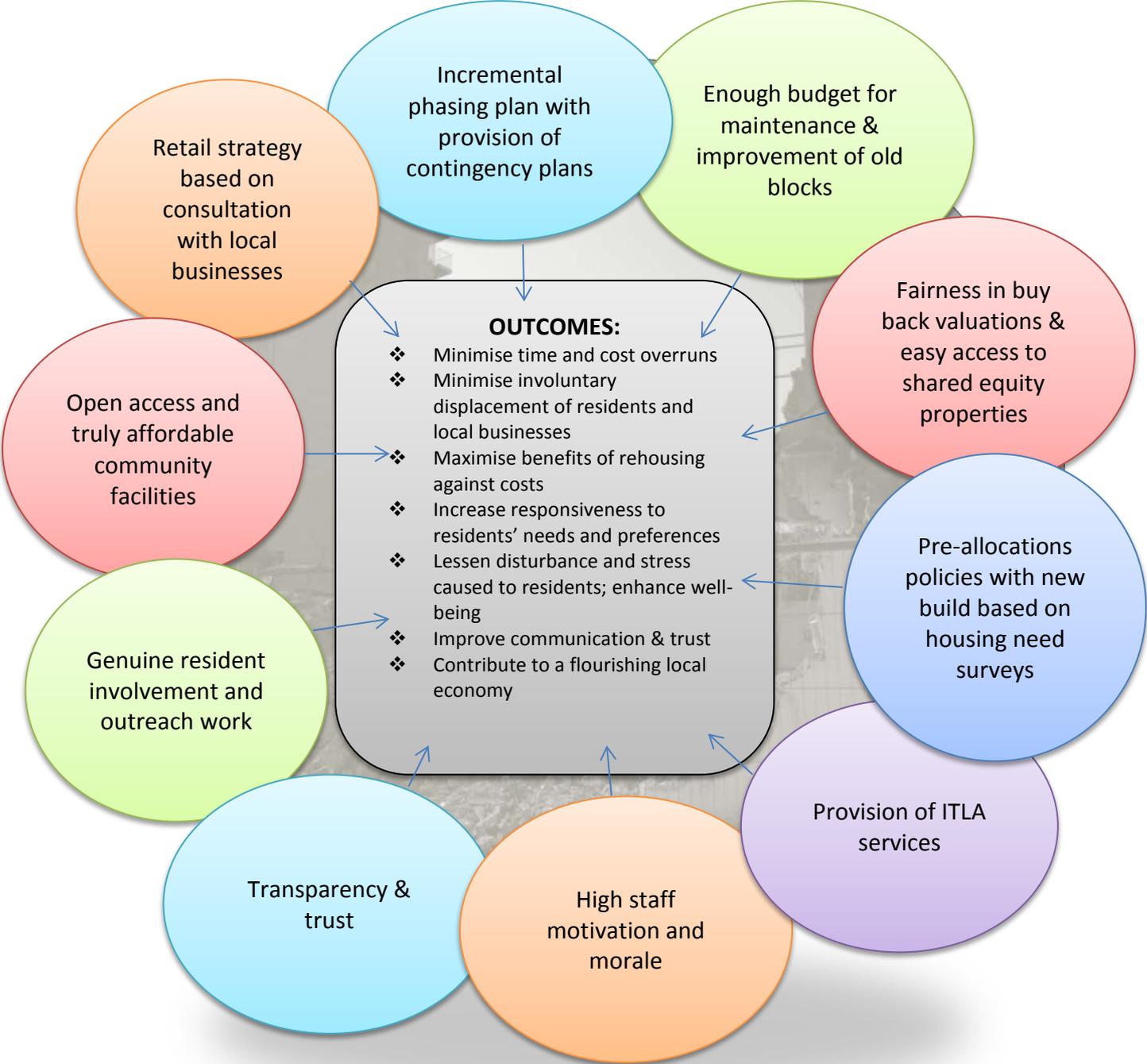
Figure 15: Redevelopment lesson: Retail strategy

Case study A: selected quotes

“Nobody estimated the impact that the closure of the shops would have had, everybody got that wrong! [...] For a period the heart of the community went, it did go. But we are learning now, so for example we agreed the pub will be replaced by alternative provision before it’s knocked down. And we’ve learnt we don’t want certain types of shops [posh shops]. [...] We have to learn lessons as we go along” (Chair of resident organisation)

Figure 16: How to reduce negative impacts of redevelopment

LOW IMPACT REDEVELOPMENT SCHEMES: MAIN INGREDIENTS



5. Challenges and lessons of estates subject to redevelopment proposals – Case Study B: Redevelopment proposals

The estate

Case Study B is an estate in West London under threat of demolition. The 760 households contain around 2,000 people. The tenure composition is around 70% tenants and 30% homeowners.

Of the total residents, 24% are under 18. Ethnic minority residents account for 43% of the population. The largest single group is Somali. According to the English Indices of Deprivation 2015, the area's population is ranked in the 15% most deprived and the 7% most income deprived in England.

The Council proposes to sell to a developer for demolition the 760 homes on the estates in favour of a high-density wider residential development of 7,500 flats. The Masterplan includes 760 "replacement" council homes, plus 740 "affordable" homes. This means the developer was allowed to provide 11% affordable when the Council's policy was 40%. These "affordable" homes will be priced at 80% of market prices. The developer is currently marketing the second phase of its scheme with one bedroom flats starting at £795,000. Only a handful of the "Replacement" homes are houses with garden. Currently approximately 304 existing resident households have houses or maisonettes with a garden.

On many occasions residents have shown a strong attachment to their homes and community. In 2009, the two Tenants & Residents Associations collected a petition against demolition and in favour of self-determination that was signed by residents from 83% of households. Since 2011, 634 residents from two thirds of households have been recruited to join the resident-controlled company established to take over the estate. The Council's formal consultation on the demolition scheme, elicited a response from residents that was four to one against demolition.

Evidence base

Evidence for this case study comes from the author's two-year involvement in the residents' anti-demolition campaign as Community Organiser. As a result of her role she visited and built trusted relationships with over 400 households. As part of a consultation exercise, her team helped over 500 residents to express their views by answering a series of open ended questions in an estate-wide survey.

Challenge 1: Communication & Consultation

The main challenge involved in redevelopment proposals relates to communication and consultation with residents. In Case Study B the council and its developer partner, along with other major stakeholders, have decided to go ahead despite residents' fierce opposition. Case Study B residents are concerned that the council is **not taking their views on board**. The outcome of the most recent consultation exercise, with the overwhelming majority of residents voting against demolition, was **overruled by the council**. It is only after strenuous efforts that the residents' organisation was finally given the opportunity to hold regular meetings with the council, and yet they continue to find it very difficult to get answers to

their questions, and have their concerns addressed. There is **no trust whatsoever** between residents and the council.

Figure 17: Proposed redevelopment challenge: Communication & Consultation

Case study B: selected quotes

“I don’t think the council is listening to what people are saying or they want to know how people feel about this development” (council tenant, 30 years old)

“The council treat people like idiots. I am not stupid. I don’t believe one word you say” (council tenant, 75 years old)

“You don’t listen to what the residents say, you are just trying to fool us into going along with your plan” (Leaseholder, 72 years old)

“I don’t trust the council. It’s just a money making exercise. They don’t care about the tenants” (council tenant, 44 years old)

“The communication so far from the council has been completely unsatisfactory. I feel uninformed and herded towards a council’s decision already taken” (council tenant, 52 years old)

“The council has its own plans and do not listen to the tenants” (council tenant, 67 years old)

“Your communication is below zero” (Housing Association tenant, 46 years old)

“I do not think the council has done enough to hear what I have to say. I would like to stay here. Please listen to me” (council tenant, 47 years old)

“You just don’t care about me and my family and how we feel. I get the impression from what the council said that it is going ahead regardless of what the residents say” (Housing Association tenant, 45 years old)

“It is a one way conversation. The council should stop hiding things and be transparent” (Housing Association tenant, 27 years old)

“Where are they going to put me? I don’t know what’s going on, what to expect. It’s mysterious – where I am going? When will they bring me back? What will they offer me? Nobody contacted me, they sent me some letters, I don’t understand them [as I speak Arabic]” (Council tenant, 76 years old)

Challenge 2: Resident opposition

Since the plans for the wholesale redevelopment of their estate were announced five years ago, Case study B residents have consistently fought against the demolition scheme, both

through their Tenant and Resident Associations, and via a purposely set up community-based company.

This is consistent with historical trends dating back to the 1970s, since when there has been a growing public opposition to clearance. Wholesale redevelopment schemes are often highly contested. This is especially true when it comes to successful and popular council estates, where demolition often cannot be justified on the basis of structural defects of the blocks, as in the example of Case Study B.

Case Study B residents are fighting against the redevelopment scheme despite its promises to deliver brand new homes, job opportunities for local people, and new community facilities. Residents do not want it to go ahead because they:

- Fear the dispersal of the existing long established, close knit community;
- Cannot see the reason why the council should demolish perfectly sound homes, some of them having been built only 15 years ago;
- Say they would miss their current homes and neighbours;
- Are concerned with the disruption that demolition and decanting would cause to their individual and family life, especially in cases where there is a possibility of being forced to move further away from school and work, friends and neighbours;
- Those living in houses with gardens do not want to lose precious outdoor space;
- Oppose the idea of high rise living, and have concerns over the way the new neighbourhood will look;
- Resent the uncertainty of the situation they are pushed into;
- Perceive the council as politically biased against social housing and acting in the interests of the developer;
- Want to stand up against what they see as social cleansing- a perceived desire to 'get rid' of them, to make room for a more affluent class.

Figure 18: Proposed redevelopment: Reasons for opposition

Case Study B: selected quotes

"I think it is stupid that you are knocking down houses that aren't even 10 years old. People with gardens lose out. It's unfair to force families into small flats" (Housing Association tenant, 20 years old)

"It's a waste of time and money as the houses we live in are still newly built. My life will be destroyed as my college is just down the road from my house, and all these changes will stress me out" (Housing Association tenant, 20 years old)

"We have recently moved here and don't want to be moved again. My family have settled well within the estate. We have got family members who live nearby and give support to each other. It had taken over 6 years to finally get the house we have now. I don't feel the estate have to be demolished as there is nothing wrong with the homes. [...] Just the thought of moving is enough to cause stress" (Council tenant, 36 years old)

"We have lived on the estate for 40 years. We had a big family which was very happy living in this house. [...] Leaving this house means we would have to live in a flat, and we [would] also lose our garden which is so important to us" (Council tenant, 70 years old)

“When I first heard about I was shocked because I have lived here all my life. Why would you knock our houses down? This estate is not run down at all, it should be left how it is. The scheme is not designed for people on the estates, it is only for people very rich. I do not want to lose my garden and parking space. The whole road are friends and family, we all grew up together. I do not want to lose my space and be cramped. I think you are just going to force us into a flat and that’s it” (Council tenant, 18 years old)

“It is wrong because the buildings are in good conditions and to maintain them is cheaper than redevelopment. Also [it] is a form of social cleansing and a way of destroying the community. I feel part of the community as I have lived here since I was a child and have very close links to my elderly neighbours. I feel stressed out due to the uncertainty of the housing situation, [...] It is a money making scheme that will not benefit the residents” (Leaseholder, 36 years old)

“This is a nice area and I have all the amenities I want, you are wasting valuable assets. I don’t want to lose my garden, all my plants and play equipment for my children. My house is new and I have made many improvements including a wood floor throughout the house” (Housing Association tenant, 39 years old)

“It is not possible that the council can guarantee all residents are rehoused in like for like property therefore the proposal is valueless. [...] Loss of land is a key factor which has not been I feel given due regard” (Freeholder, 60 years old)

“I’ve been a council tenant for 40 years & I don’t see why I should move. These buildings are structurally sound. The proposed demolition of these buildings would only be for the benefit of the developer” (Council tenant, 77 years old)

“I believe the council should be trying to improve the estates in some way but not by forcing us all to vacate our homes for the financial benefit of the council. This is a selfish intention that should be dropped. [...] Demolishing this neighbourhood would get rid of what it is known for which is a community of loving families. [...] It is obvious that the council is doing this for their benefit not for us” (Housing Association tenant, 67 years old)

Lack of trust, and the perception of being bullied into something they do not agree with, has led some residents to fiercely **oppose the redevelopment** and run a **sophisticated anti-demolition campaign**, which in several occasions has succeeded in **delaying the scheme’s progress**. This has resulted in the developer suffering **losses**, and incurring **higher legal costs**.

Figure 19: Proposed redevelopment challenge: Resident opposition

Case Study B: selected quotes

“I don’t think the council care about residents, I won’t let it happen” (Council tenant, 24 years old)

“I don’t believe anything they say, they are merely sweet talking trying to get their own way! [...] The council are trying to bully people out of their homes! There is

nothing wrong with where we live [...] I will fight against this demolition all the way to the end!” (Council tenant, 34 years old)

“I don’t trust you no more. You promise, but you leave us with nothing. You are not trustworthy. [...] I am ready for action. I cannot walk properly, but if there is a march tomorrow, I am willing to walk as far as I can to stop you” (Council tenant, 55 years old)

“I will chain myself to the doors and barricade myself in my house” (Council tenant, 44 years old)

“We will not move for the world” (Council tenant, 56 years old)

“I will keep protesting to save my home” (Council tenant, 61 years old)

Lessons

The **lessons** to be learnt from redevelopment proposals are that:

- Social housing residents have the capability to set up and run sophisticated anti demolition campaigns.
- Resident opposition can hold up redevelopment schemes through direct action and legal challenges.
- The scale of potential profits involved in the redevelopment are so large that they obscure arguments for retaining the existing homes and preserving the community.

6. Challenges and lessons of retrofit – Case Study C: Refurbishment

The estate

Case Study C is a high rise estate in West London, built in the 1960s, where a major refurbishment programme has recently been carried out. It houses around 1,600 people, predominantly council tenants. Because of the high proportion of studio and one bedroom flats, the estate is home to a high proportion of single adults, single elderly people and lone parents.

Ethnic minority groups account for 54% of the population, the biggest group being Black African, Black Caribbean and Black British (38%). The estate ranks amongst the 12% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country according to the English Indices of Deprivation 2015, with a higher than average percentage of people claiming JSA or Incapacity Benefit. Research shows that residents are generally very happy living on the estate.

The estate has recently undergone an ambitious retrofit scheme, devised to improve the appearance of the tower blocks and tackle fuel poverty. The decision to refurbish to high energy standards, instead of demolishing, stems from the council's willingness to experiment in energy saving and pioneer new approaches. This high rise estate has been intensively managed since the early 1980s - as part of the government's experiment in estate rescue through Estate-based Housing Management. The estate had already received some significant investment, and had an established and successful on-site caretaking service when the estate retrofit was undertaken. The reputation and image of the estate was therefore quite positive. The council took into consideration the valuable infrastructure, dwellings and location of the estate, and estimated that retrofitting it to high energy standards could help add value and attract private buyers to the new penthouse flats to be added to the tower blocks. It would also minimise disruption to tenants and save on costs. It was not, however, a cheap option. The commitment to retaining the estate pushed the council into seeking funds, prioritising reinvestment, and doing a much fuller cost-benefit analysis.

The project involved fitting external cladding on the blocks, fitting stairwells and corridors with double glazed windows, and installing solar panels to provide electricity to lifts and light to communal areas, such as entrances and landings. The refurbishment was delivered by the council in partnership with a renowned insulation provider.

Evidence Base

Evidence for this case study comes from a LSE Housing and Communities research carried out on the estate between 2011 and 2014. The aim of the research was to find out about the wider social impacts, potentials and benefits of the retrofit scheme. 48 residents were interviewed as part of Round One (before works started). Another 50 residents were interviewed as part of Round Two (after completion of works), 24 of them being follow ups from Round One. The author contributed to data collection for Round Two.

Challenge 1: Timetable & Delays

One of the main problems highlighted by Case Study C relates to **delays**, as the end date of the project was constantly postponed. Residents reported being upset by the shifting deadlines, as they felt they were not given accurate information about the real progress of the works. Uncertainty over the end date and frequent delays caused notable distress, frustration and mental strain to residents. However, these delays were significantly less than in Case Study A.

Figure 20: Retrofit challenge: Timetable & Delays

Case Study C: selected quotes

“One big lie! Look, I work in the construction industry: we know we are going to do this job for two or three years, but the contractor says 18 months. Every time they keep telling you we are going to finish next month, next month, in two months’ time....for two years! It came to the point where everybody on the whole estate just gave up! They kept stretching the end dates, and up until now they have not finished yet! You never get the actual progress of what’s going on, it’s just to put your mind at strain, that’s it” (Resident working night shifts, lives with wife and two young kids in a one studio flat)

Challenge 2: Disruption

Another problematic feature highlighted by Case Study C is that, although 46% of residents rated their experience of the works as good/excellent, vulnerable residents, families with young children, and those working night shifts, regretted not having been offered the opportunity to be **temporarily moved to another property while the works were carried out**, or having a day-time respite centre while works went on.

Figure 21: Retrofit challenge: Disruption

Case Study C: selected quotes

“I almost got sacked at work because I couldn’t sleep during the day, ‘cause I was doing night work at that time and I was working 7pm to 7am, so I would come home at around 8am and they would start working at 8am, and imagine I’m living right on top of a building work. [...] there is a lot of drilling. [...] I had my boy in it, he was a baby like this, and imagine all they told me was to bring my baby in the container [the respite room] downstairs every day. And I said: ‘Can you put your baby in this container every day? [...] The council should have rehoused everyone who will be affected, because there are people with children” (Resident working night shifts, lives with wife and two young kids in a one studio flat)

Challenge 3: Cleanliness

Another big problem in Case Study C has to do with **dust levels and cleaning in communal areas**. Residents felt more could have been done to keep dust away from flats. Some residents reported stairwells and landings being a ‘mess’ while the works were carried out.

Figure 22: Retrofit challenge: Cleanliness

Case Study C: selected quotes

“The only thing I would suggest is they should not lie about the dust levels. That’s the only problem. They cannot help with the noise, we all understand that. There is nothing you can do: you have to drill to put all these beautiful things. But the dust, they thought they took the best precautions for them, but it didn’t help us at all. So, in the future they might find something that reduces the dust” (council tenant, lives with 10 and 15 year old boys in two bedroom flat)

Challenge 4: Communication

Case Study C shows residents felt **communication could have been better**. Residents contend that the council should have been **more honest and transparent about deadlines**, and have made clearer from the outset that delays might happen.

Figure 23: Retrofit challenge: Communication

Case Study C: selected quotes

“So before giving any dates to be quite clear that this is a planned date but things can happen and things do happen. That would probably help the most, especially when it comes to relations with residents. People would be more willing to put up with things if they have some idea that things can go wrong rather than being definite. The issues I mentioned about trust, and then any information from the company becomes meaningless, you lose it and that’s when friction occurs between residents and the developers” (leaseholder living with partner in one bedroom flat. Moved into the estate during the works)

Lessons

The **lessons** to be learn from Case Study C are the importance of:

- Devising a realistic timetable in order to minimise resident fatigue;
- Providing respite rooms, and temporary alternative accommodation in exceptional cases to vulnerable households;
- Considering more effective ways to keep dust away from flats;
- Providing honest and transparent information;
- Appointing an on-site Resident Liaison Officer to establish trust relationships and regularly visit residents to keep them informed and address their concerns greatly helped in this case.

7. Weighing up benefits and costs of large scale demolition vs refurbishment

Some of the problems of large-scale redevelopment and associated negative outcomes for residents and local businesses can be avoided through better management of the process, and by applying the practical lessons detailed in this paper.

However, as the evidence shows, other problems appear to be **inherent in the nature of large scale demolition schemes**, and therefore **unavoidable**. This is because of their lengthy timeframe, their organisational complexity, and the difficulty in securing enough funding to cover the extraordinary costs involved in decanting and rehousing residents. In other words,

as much as we try to design low impact redevelopment schemes, there will inevitably be **casualties**, and sometimes unpredictable **negative knock on effects**.

It is therefore worth exploring the feasibility of alternative ways to regenerate council estates, such as **selective demolition**, i.e. part demolition/part refurbishment, or **refurbishment tout court**.

Case Study C is a good example of a successful attempt to renovate the outlook of a council estate, tackle fuel poverty, and provide residents with a more comfortable living environment, without causing unnecessary upheaval or involuntary displacement.

It is apparent that more or less the same individual, community and wider societal benefits brought by redevelopment schemes can be achieved by refurbishment schemes alike. **While benefits are more or less the same, refurbishment schemes pose less – and more easily manageable – challenges.**

For example, quite severe delays on the project were experienced by residents in Case Study C as much as residents in Case Study A. However, because the life span of project C was originally set at 18 months, the **deadline could only be stretched so much**, and the works lasted overall for three years. Large scale demolition schemes usually have a life span of 10, 20, sometimes 30 years, which means **delays are proportionally larger**, and much more conspicuous.

Also, in both redevelopment and refurbishment schemes there are likely to be issues to do with miscommunication. In Case Study C, however, the majority of residents positively bought into the project, despite being upset by stretching deadlines not being communicated properly. Although more could have been done to improve internal living conditions for residents, they generally like their homes, say they enjoy a good or excellent quality of life, and are proud of living on the estate. **Opposition was kept to a minimum**, and it certainly did not get to the point of intentionally delaying scheme, as has been the case in Case Study B.

It is also apparent that refurbishment schemes have **lower social costs**, i.e. can be delivered without the associated harm and negative outcomes that characterise demolition schemes, and **fewer potentially problematic issues** are likely to arise.

It may be argued that refurbishment does not address the issues of provision of additional housing and social mix to 'drive up' neighbourhood standards. However, increased density can be easily achieved through **infill development and building extra floors on existing blocks**. Land disposals for infill development can also finance block and estate refurbishment works. In Case Study C, for instance, 12 penthouses for private sale were built on top of the tower blocks by adding extra floors.

As for the mix element, Case Study C clearly shows how **refurbishment projects, especially those with a focus on retrofit, can be decisive** in persuading prospective leaseholders to buy into the estate.

Figure 24: Leaseholders & Retrofit

Case Study C: selected quotes

“Overall, it’s going to be quite amazing. When we were looking for a property and I was doing research, they had a picture, even on the [...] website about the plans and how it’s going to look, and that actually swayed my decision towards this place. Considering the work that’s being done, and a lot of the energy saving elements to it...it made me think “they’re actually doing something - we know it’s actually happening” – it swayed my decision, it made it far more an attractive place to purchase than anywhere else” (leaseholder living with partner in one bedroom flat, moved into the estate while the works were carried out)

“I’m not sure if I had moved here without the works, because I knew the bills would be less” (leaseholder living alone in a two bedroom flat on top floor, architect)

From the leaseholders’ point of view, refurbishment schemes are beneficial because:

- They result in improvement works without additional service charges⁵;
- They benefit from long term savings on communal lighting and lifts;
- Refurbishment pushes the value of their properties up.

In mixed-communities initiatives which entail wholesale demolition, there is often an element of **social engineering**. As Cases Study A shows, demolition and rebuilding can too easily result in the involuntary displacement of leaseholders and local businesses. In other words, large-scale demolition has the potential to disrupt close knit and settled communities. Refurbishment works, on the contrary, can **attract well-off new residents without necessarily displacing any of the existing residents**. Local businesses will then naturally **evolve** to cater for the new community needs, or **adjust** to supply a specific section of the community.

Figure 25: Case studies: Outcomes

	Outcome
CASE STUDY A: Demolition	High cost High benefits for some High costs for others
CASE STUDY B: Demolition proposals	High risks Uncertain outcomes
CASE STUDY C: Refurbishment/retrofit	Lower costs than full-scale demolition, but still significant High benefits for all

⁵ Although the works may be chargeable dependent on lease terms if not pure improvements.

Figure 26: Large-scale demolition vs. Refurbishment

	LARGE SCALE DEMOLITION Phased wholesale demolition of the existing housing stock, and replacement with new higher density mixed income developments	REFURBISHMENT Improvement works to upgrade the existing housing stock, could entail energy efficiency measures (retrofit), as well as selective demolition of unsound blocks and/or infill development
CHALLENGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Phasing & timetable ○ Decant ○ Demolition blight, cleaning & maintenance ○ Leaseholders ○ Retail ○ Communication & consultation ○ Potential resident opposition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Timetable & Delays ○ Disruption ○ Cleaning & Maintenance ○ Communication ○ Finance
BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provision of high quality replacement housing, additional affordable housing and new private housing ✓ Improved landscaping and layout of public open space ✓ Enhanced community facilities ✓ Upmarket retail offer ✓ Relief of overcrowding ✓ Reduced fuel poverty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Marked improvement of external conditions of the blocks ✓ Marked improvement of internal living conditions, both in the blocks (walkways, lifts) and in the flats ✓ Reduced fuel poverty ✓ Reclaim of infill sites for new build ✓ Refurbished community facilities ✓ Refurbished communal areas, such as playgrounds ✓ Retention of close knit, well settled communities ✓ Local economic development
COSTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 👉 Significant capital costs 👉 Lengthy timeframe/long time lag 👉 Displacement of majority of leaseholders 👉 Planning blight 👉 Multiple decant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 👉 Disruption to residents' lives while works are carried out (noise, dust etc.)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 👉 Lack of choice 👉 Rushed choices leading to wrong rehousing (especially under Compulsory Purchase Order) 👉 Demolition blight and disrepair 👉 Higher service charges and rents (from social rent to target rents) 👉 Disruption to people's life plans, stress, resentment, frustration 👉 High levels of opposition 👉 Displacement of local businesses 👉 High levels of pollution and carbon emissions 	
<p>POTENTIAL PROBLEMATIC ISSUES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Affordability of new community facilities ❖ Business strain in the absence of a proper retail strategy ❖ Wholesale demolition schemes usually prove unpopular; top-down decision making and implementation erode trust, fuel resentment and create tensions between residents and institutional stakeholders ❖ Developer's marketing agenda likely to prevail over other considerations in the name of viability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Vulnerable and/or homebound residents likely to experience considerable distress, unless temporarily rehoused ❖ Miscommunication and lack of transparency can make residents feel that works are not carried out for their own benefit, but rather to 'make the area look good' for someone else's profit

Figure 27: Low Impact Redevelopment Schemes (LIRS) Action Checklist:

Phasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incremental and piecemeal phasing plan • Contingency plan
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enough budget for improvement and upkeep of old blocks • Additional security measures for old blocks • No double standard between old and new blocks • Repair requests properly and promptly addressed
Leaseholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generous budget for out of phase buybacks • Evaluations reflecting real market values and sensitive to residents' rehousing needs and preferences • Shared equity properties properly publicised and easy to access
Independent Tenant & Leaseholder Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-resourced ITLA service • Up to date database of caseload by tenure, household characteristics and issues • Outreach work (door-knocking and visiting)
Allocations & Lettings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre allocation policies & rolling decant programme • New blocks built based on occupancy or housing need surveys
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors likely to dampen staff morale (delays, delivery hurdles and residents' opposition) kept to a minimum • Continuity of service • Well resourced, knowledgeable and experienced team
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular provision of transparent and truthful, honest and open information • 'Open book' approach with council officers and residents' representatives
Resident Involvement & Community Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experimentation of alternative involvement strategies such as door knocking • Provision of open access and truly affordable community facilities
Retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail strategy in tune with the wishes and preferences of the community • Provision of affordable retail space • Consultation with local businesses
Community Ownership & Corporate Social Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you explored the option of residents' empowerment through community ownership? • Have you considered signing up to a corporate social responsibility framework?

Figure 28: Low Impact Refurbishment Scheme Action Checklist

1. Timetable & delays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realistic timetable to try and stick to • Not giving false expectations to residents
2. Disruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of temporary alternative accommodation to vulnerable households • Provision of respite rooms on site
3. Cleanliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures to keep dust away from flats • Proper maintenance of communal spaces, stairways and lifts

4. Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing truthful, honest and transparent information • Resident Liaison Officer to establish trust relationships and regularly visit residents to keep them informed and address their concerns
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8. Conclusions

This Report has built on the evidence from three case studies of regeneration schemes – Case Study A (redevelopment), B (redevelopment proposals), and C (refurbishment) – in order to:

- Highlight the challenges of redevelopment schemes with residents in situ;
- Identify valuable lessons to learn for future schemes;
- Weigh up the benefits and costs of large scale demolition vs refurbishment.

The **main problematic features of redevelopment schemes**, which are bound to have a negative impact on residents, their community and their families' lives, are:

- Frequent changes to the phasing and delays;
- Lack of coherent rolling decant programme leading to multiple decanting, lack of choice and wrong rehousing;
- Worsening conditions of the old blocks, disrepair and substandard cleaning and maintenance;
- Inadequate compensation to leaseholders resulting in an high proportion of leaseholders' displacement, and planning blight;
- Harsh selection process for the existing shops, lack of provision of affordable retail space, and lack of retail strategy, resulting in involuntary displacement of local shopkeepers or business strain.

The **lessons that can be learnt** from conducting a redevelopment scheme are that it is important to:

- Devise an incremental phasing plan to include contingency provision;
- Implement proper pre-allocation policies based on updated occupancy surveys;
- Allocate enough budget for maintenance & improvement of the old blocks;
- Ensure fairness and flexibility in buy back valuations;
- Appoint an ITLA officer to support residents and do outreach work;
- Build a knowledgeable and committed team and minimise turnover by keeping staff morale high;
- Give transparent and honest information;
- Involve residents in ways other than formal consultation exercises, e.g. door-knocking to reach out to the most isolated and vulnerable tenants and build trust relationships;
- Secure open access and truly affordable community facilities;
- Devise a proper retail strategy and consulting local businesses.

The Report has also highlighted the challenges of redevelopment proposals, showing that there are high risks involved in pushing schemes forward despite resident opposition. As evidence from Case Study B shows, social housing residents have the capability to set up and run sophisticated anti demolition campaigns. Resident opposition can hold redevelopment

schemes up via means of direct actions and legal challenges, and result in conspicuous losses and higher legal fees for developers.

The report has attempted to weigh the benefits and costs of demolition versus refurbishment, with a specific focus on impacts on existing residents and businesses. It has concluded that refurbishment of the existing housing stock can potentially bring the same benefits as redevelopment schemes, while involving far less financial, social and environmental costs.

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