



# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

February 2021

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# Frequently Asked Questions



## Welcome

We believe FAQ sheets are a good way of communicating answers to questions that have been asked at consultation and engagement events on the future of Wendling and St Stephens Close. This way everyone receives the same information at the same time.

The Covid-19 pandemic will have a significant financial impact on the way the Council delivers and builds future homes. Although, Camden remains committed to addressing the urgent need for new council homes for families and the need to develop modern community facilities that benefit our communities.

If you need any assistance in understanding this document or have a query or concern - our door is always open.

We welcome any enquiries or suggestions by email.

Please contact: Suzanna or Terry on the below listed emails:

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# 1 Questions about consultation and engagement



## Why is the ballot process taking so long?

We are required to conduct a formal ballot by the Mayor of London so the Council can source much needed grant funding. In September 2020, after a positive estate survey result last summer, we started sending out themed booklets and holding regular online workshops to prepare for the formal estate ballot planned for 21st June 2021.



## Is the Landlord Offer legally binding at the point of ballot?

No. The Landlord Offer is not a legal document, it is Camden's offer to residents. It sets out what you can expect to happen if there is a 'Yes' vote in the estate ballot.

Where we can make promises, the Landlord offer will clearly outline our commitments to you - for example, every tenant on the estate will receive a new home that meets their housing application needs. However, there will be other parts of the Landlord Offer that will need to be developed after the ballot, with your help, for example:- designs; materials choices; timings of new blocks being built; etc.



## What happens if residents vote 'No' in the ballot?

If the majority of estate residents vote 'No', then the CIP regeneration team will stop any further consultation and withdraw the proposed option 3 plans. There will be no new homes built on your estate.



## What happens if residents vote 'Yes' in the ballot?

If residents vote 'Yes' then the Council's CIP Regeneration team will continue to work in partnership with all estate residents of Wendling and Stephens Close alongside the resident Steering Group to design and build your new estate.



## How many votes are needed for the ballot to be passed?

The Mayor of London's guidance for estate ballots says that a simple majority vote is needed. That means if 51% of voting residents vote 'Yes' then plans will move ahead.

To make sure the Ballot is administered independently, Electoral Reform Services (ERS), the UK's leading provider of election services, have been commissioned. This organisation is approved by the GLA and entirely separate and independent to that of the Landlord, Camden Council.

# 1 Questions about consultation and engagement

## ***If there is a No vote, what are the plans for future estate maintenance?***

If there is a No vote the current plans for new homes will not go ahead, as disclosed on previous workshop boards and in booklets. There are no major or capital maintenance works programmes currently planned for Wendling and St Stephen's Close from 2019 to 2024. The Council will review its works programme in 2024. However, essential maintenance to ensure statutory landlord obligations and day to day repairs will continue to be met.

## ***Will I be able to stay in the area?***

Yes, where possible, that's Camden's commitment to you whilst your new home is developed, if you wish to return after the new estate homes have been built. Any decant move will always be local or within Camden. However please also note, that direct moves into your new home from your current home will not always be feasible due to phasing of the development programme.

## ***Will I be eligible for decant points? How will they be allocated? And when will you offer to buy out leasehold properties?***

Decant points will only be awarded to tenants who hold a secure tenancy. They can only be made available once there has been a 'Yes' vote in the ballot and that Cabinet have agreed a formal business case and phasing plan for Wendling and St Stephen's Close.

It is important to note that a phasing plan must be agreed before decant points are awarded, because the decant of residents, and the buy back from leaseholders, is of significant cost to the Council, therefore we can only agree this once we are absolutely sure we can afford to develop each phase or block.

The decant points will be added to your new housing application, for those tenants who wish to move away from the estate whether temporarily or permanently.

# 1 Questions about consultation and engagement



## **What is the housing register? How do adult children qualify for a new home?**

The Council's housing register holds data information about all secure residents and those that have applied for Council housing. The register lists all council and housing association households, as set out by criteria in the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme. We also use this data information to help understand housing need in the borough.

Any new homes developed on Wendling and St Stephens Close would be subject to what is called a Local Lettings Plan. The Local Lettings Plan allows the council to give priority to residents who live in the locality and used by the Council specifically where a Community Investment Programme is in place. Using this process, we can guarantee that all existing tenants will be given a new home if they would like one.

If you're adult child or adult non-dependant has lived in your Council home for 12 months or more prior to the estate ballot, then they can be considered for their own home which is subject to a verification process to determine eligibility status. It is important that you update your housing application in order to notify the Council to any change of circumstances within your household. Alternatively you can notify your Neighbourhood Housing Officer, or a member of the CIP Regeneration Team, so that they can share this with the Housing Management Team.

Please note, if an adult non-dependant is offered their own home it may affect the number of bedrooms you will be offered on a new build or in temporary accommodation.

If you, as the main tenant, choose to move into a new home then your children must move too. This is because no one can be living in a Council home without the main tenant. If you would prefer to remain as a family and continue living with your adult children in your new home, then you are able to do so.



## **What would adult children be entitled to?**

This will generally be a one bedroom flat or the option of a studio, if preferred. The offer will not be one of the new homes developed on Wendling & St Stephens Close or on any other new developed CIP Regeneration schemes within the borough, but will be either in the same local area or elsewhere in the Borough of Camden.

If the Council is housing you in a new home with your adult children, you will be offered housing based on your assessed bed need in line with current policy.



## **What is the process within the LBC allocation Scheme that enables adult children moves to happen under CIP?**

Under 4.5.6 and 7.1.3 of the Council allocation scheme set out that direct offers can be made to adult children of council tenants where a community Investment Programme is in place. The Allocations Scheme can be found on Camden's website.

# 1 Questions about consultation and engagement

**?** ***If it takes 10 years for my new home to be built by which time my children will be grown up, what will I be offered in terms of bedrooms?***

Council tenants with larger homes, with more bedrooms than they need, will be able to downsize to a home with one bedroom more than they need, regardless of age. In this case you will be offered housing based on the assessed bed need at the time your new home is ready. It is important to note that if you are receiving benefits and choose to downsize to a property one-bedroom more than you're assessed need, you will be subject to the Bedroom Tax meaning you will have to cover the financial shortfall between Housing Benefits received and your rent.

**?** ***Who will be given the priority on which floor they live on in a high-rise block?***

If plans for a new estate go ahead and you want to move into a new home then we will ask you to provide at least four preferences based on floor level and floor space. We will try to match your preferences to a new home as far we can.

If the detailed designs for the new estate include a high-rise block then existing tenants with mobility need would get priority, for example someone with mobility issues could be considered for a home on a lower floor.

Having considered those who may need a lower floor, we will allocate new homes, based on returned preferences and if two tenants have choose the same property, the tie-breaker will be the tenant who has lived on the estate the longest.

**?** ***When will open estate meetings resume?***

We held the first round of open estate workshops in October 2020, the second round in November 2020 and third round in January 2021. Prior to each round of open estate workshops a booklet and invitation were delivered to all 241 residents of Wendling and St Stephens Close. The open estate workshops have, to date, been held virtually (by online meetings or phone calls) due to the pandemic and government restrictions, which we had to adapt to a new way of consulting and communicating with our residents safely.

These meetings have enabled all residents of the estate to ask officers any questions, whilst giving their views on key principles that will feed into the Landlord Offer document.

Between now and the ballot we will be holding a further round of digital/ virtual / telephone open estate workshops and meetings to focus on the content of the landlord offer document. This is why your continued participation is essential, as it is through your input and feedback during this consultation that will help shape the final Landlord document, which will outline our commitment to you as a landlord during the pending estate ballot in June 2021. We look forward to meeting you all in person once restrictions are removed and it is safe for all.

# 1 Questions about consultation and engagement



## What is home loss payments and disturbance payments?

A home loss payment – is compensation for the loss of a resident's home and disturbance payments are made to compensate a residential occupier for reasonable expenses in moving from the home as a result of compulsory acquisition. If you need to move you will get help with costs. This can include things like the cost of disconnecting and reconnecting a washing machine, redirecting mail and removals.

You can receive disturbance payments more than once if you have to move multiple times. The Council will discuss with you in more detail in advance of moving what is and isn't covered by a disturbance payment. If you have lived in your council home for over 12 months, you will be entitled to receive a home loss payment - the amount of this is set by Government and is currently £6400.00. You will only receive this payment once. If you are temporarily relocated during regeneration and then move back to a new home on your estate, it is important to note you will not receive this payment twice. But for each move we will assist you with the reasonable costs associated with moving to a new home. The statutory home loss payment will be paid directly to the named tenant. Claims can be made for up to six years after the offer of accommodation and you may be entitled to an advance payment of at least part of the total payment.

Any home loss or disturbance payment, will be balanced by the Council, in terms of any tenant rent arrears or monies owed.



## What is the downsizing payment from the tenant options fund?

Downsizing payment is offered to tenants who are under occupying a property larger than their bedroom need, it affords the tenant the option to downsize to a property that is more suitable to their needs. In return the Council will make a payment to the tenant downsizing from the Tenant Option Fund. Payment will be made based on how many bedrooms are released. Details of the Tenant Option Fund payments can be found on Council's website. Any downsizing payment will be balanced by the Council, in terms of any tenant rent arrears or monies owed.

# 1 Questions about consultation and engagement



## **Why is there a Steering Group when you do not share anything with us anymore?**

The steering group is considered an integral resident partner in the process of consulting and representing estate residents of Wendling and St Stephens Close.

Unfortunately, due to personal circumstances of volunteer members, several of the past steering group meetings haven't quite been quorate in attendance, meaning the meetings then become information sharing.

We have, to date, shared and discussed all information with Steering group members as part of the consultation process.

There are certain aspects of the Council's obligations that we have to our tenants that means certain information must be shared with all 241 residents of Wendling & St Stephens Close. This is part of the Council's landlord obligations to its residents with this consultation.



## **Why are we not being given correct information?**

The Council always endeavours to provide accurate up to date information in an open and transparent way. Our door is open, please refer any remaining queries or concerns to officers mentioned at the top of this document who will be happy to answer your question.



## **Why don't you ask the Steering Group to be involved anymore, for example for interviews and design workshops as we were promised?**

The steering group will be involved in the interview process for the commission of a design team. This can only happen once there is a yes ballot.

The steering group will also be involved in the design workshops alongside other estate residents.



## **Would funding be ring-fenced for the estate regeneration?**

In July 2019, the Cabinet, agreed to the Regeneration Approach (Option 3 Complete Redevelopment of the Estate). It was also agreed to enable a detailed business case and regeneration strategy to be developed, this all subject to a positive resident ballot result. Funding for this stage of the regeneration process has been allocated.



## 2 Timing Questions



### **When will the ballot take place? (KD)**

The proposal for a Ballot is 21st June 2021.



### **Will works take ten years? What is your plan? When will works start?**

Building a new estate takes a long time. It is likely to take at least two years from the ballot to agree a detailed plan for the whole area and get planning permission. It is likely to take at least ten years to build your new estate, however we cannot be certain until we fully understand the financial impacts of COVID-19 or any further delays caused by future waves or localised lockdowns.

This does not necessarily mean you would have to wait ten years to move into your new home. We hope to build your new estate in 'phases' - this means that construction of the estate would be split into a number of smaller building projects each delivering a percentage of the planned new homes at a time.

However, we expect each phase would take around two to three years.

We know that the estimated construction times will cause uncertainty and that the length of the building works will cause ongoing disruption. However, we believe that the benefits of a new home built to modern standards with improved streets and outdoor spaces make the disruption and uncertainty worthwhile, but we want to be certain that residents agree, which is why we're giving you the final say in a ballot.

### 3 Design Questions



#### ***How many family homes will be built on the new estate?***

The option appraisal is still in its early stages with a proposal for the number of family homes stipulated within the information booklets and workshop boards. We have estimated between 650 and 700 homes, but this has not yet been fully decided.

If residents vote 'Yes' for new homes then architects and designers will draw up detailed plans. We want residents to help us design the homes they want, so your participation and feedback is important to us in making sure we get the balance right.



#### ***Will there be enough parking on a new estate? Will there be disabled bays?***

Local planning guidelines require all new housing developments to be car free, this means any new residents moving into the area will not be offered parking, garages or street permits. This will help reduce the amount of traffic congestion in the area. The only exception to the provision of parking for a new resident is if they are registered disabled and the holder of a valid Blue Badge.

We understand there are some existing residents on Wendling & St Stephens Close who have cars for work or personal use, or are currently renting hard standing bays and garages by separate licence agreement to that of your housing tenancy or leasehold title.

On other new developments car parking spaces have been re-provided for existing residents who need them whether this be on the new development or within local proximity to the local area. We will work with you to try and guide this through the planning process. Parking spaces for blue badge holders are not restricted or covered by these rules and will be provided for.



#### ***Will Wendling and St Stephen's Close residents who already have gardens be assured a garden on the new estate?***

We cannot guarantee any individual resident a garden until more detailed estate designs have been developed. However, planning rules require all new homes to have private outdoor space, either as a garden, balcony or patio. We want to continue working with you as the architects draw up detailed designs, that way we can make sure your priorities are reflected in the final plans. The designs will also include improved green amenity spaces and play areas.

### 3 Design Questions



#### ***Will the new flats be a mixture of flats, houses and maisonettes?***

There are no detailed designs for the new estate yet, but we can say that houses were not included in the Option 3 appraisal that residents said that they preferred in 2019. This is why we want to keep working with you throughout the design process so that you can help us shape and design new homes to meet your estate community needs.



#### ***When can we see examples of 3 and 4 bedroom homes?***

Any property examples shown or displayed within a booklet, or as a board, are just illustrated examples only, and do not reflect the potential internal lay out designs of any regeneration proposal for Wendling & St Stephens Close. No detailed design work will be undertaken until after a "Yes" estate ballot.

The purpose of the illustrated examples we have shown are only to give you a visual example of what the internal floor space could look like, once design work starts.



#### ***Will there be improvement to the recycling facilities on the new estate? Are there going to be improvements to the soundproofing in our homes? Will crime, safety and accessibility be designed into our new estate?***

Yes, modern planning and building regulations will address all of these important subjects.



#### ***Will we be voting on detailed designs for our future homes and a phasing plan?***

No. These will be developed after the ballot, if there is a Yes vote.



#### ***Have you produced detailed plans and an approved phasing plan already?***

No. If there is a Yes vote we will recruit a design team who will work in partnership with the Council and the residents of Wendling and St Stephens Close to produce a detailed masterplan and phasing plan.

### 3 Design Questions



#### ***What's this I hear about a possible First Phase involving the site of the Health Centre?***

We have always been clear the project will be developed via a phased programme, which means a phasing plan would not be developed until after a positive ballot result.

We have also been clear that the Health Centre, Nursery and Hostel will be considered as part of the redevelopment, with the proposal to either include these facilities within the development or consider other possible future relocations close to the estate. This has not been decided.



#### ***When will the design team be selected?***

Appointments for the design team will only follow a positive ballot result.



#### ***Where are the designs for a first phase and why have these not been shared with residents and residents not been involved with the design?***

There are no designs done to date.



#### ***What about the residents that live near the health centre, do they live on a building site that they have not been told about?***

The estate redevelopment will involve residents being close to phases being demolished and rebuilt. However the health and wellbeing of our residents is paramount and accordingly we will ensure that the regeneration process will have the residents best interest at heart

We will work with the contractor and residents to ensure that the minimum of disruption occurs for any resident.



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