



**Benhill Estate Resident Steering Group Meeting  
The Salvation Army 12.30 pm - 2.00 pm  
Daytime session - 27 September 2021**

Attendees

Ian Simpson - CFF

Lauren Fabregas & Geeta Le Tissier - LBS

Colin Hawkins - SFTRA

Residents : 2 tenants (details withheld for circulation) - had not attended meetings before. One resident goes to the library to use the computer and check the website sometimes.

1. Introduction

IS welcomed the residents and introduced the meeting which was organised to reach residents who were unable to attend the virtual meetings held in the evening and/or prefer either daytime or physical meetings.

A number of residents attend the meetings online/evening, but it is recognised that some people are unable to due to day-to-day and jobs/occupations. From a Sutton point of view we will try to accommodate residents.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide an update on what had been happening.

2. The Role of the ITHA

- Does CFF have any input in what Sutton wants or what we do?

London and the South East have been looking at Regeneration across the boroughs to increase the number of homes. We are here to look at the pro's and cons

- How does Sutton influence the ITHA?  
CFF relies on Sutton to have the information as to what it is they are hoping to do, asking them questions, understanding the proposals and intentions, and getting the two sides to communicate/talk to each other.
- How does CFF stay independent?  
The truth is to some extent is for residents to judge, speak to other residents, or even speak to other estates that CFF have worked on. Residents are the experts on their estates while CFF brings the knowledge and experience from other estates we have worked on. CFF shares this information to residents and to the Council and helps work towards a two-way partnership.

The Regeneration of housing estates is still quite new to Sutton, Benhill may be one of the first. Residents have to be involved or schemes just wouldn't work. We work on several estates in the same situation to offer support and advice.

Geeta from LB Sutton explained that when employing an ITHA, the Council requires a good knowledge of the law, so that the ITHA is able to explain to residents what could and could not happen. This can include whether the Council has the funding/money needed and whether the legislation allows the Council to do certain things.

2.1. Colin Hawkins of SFTRA pointed out that it was very important to look right across London at Council estates that are 50-60years old and at how they can be made better.

This was the first thing that he did when looking for the important role of the ITHA, and CFF put themselves forward as one of the organisations to Tender for the job. CFF are the constructive partners who bring the Residents and the Councils together to get the facts and build the foundations for both to come together.

In working towards the vote on plans for regeneration, CFF will enable residents to raise their own priorities to get the answers the residents want and need.

### **3. The Options and The Vote for Residents**

IS explained that over the next few months the Council will make a decision as to the best options for the estate. When the homes were built, it was known that they

would last around 60 years. The Council will need to decide whether the best option is redevelopment or whether to bring them up to modern standards and find a way to build additional homes.

Options include Partial redevelopment, maybe build on top or infill in open spaces, full redevelopment etc. The Council have undertaken a Stock Condition Survey of the properties across Sutton to see what it would take to keep the properties in a decent state for the next 30 years.

Sutton is currently procuring an architect to work on the options. It is possible that the Options are known by the summer of next year. CFF will be able to explain to residents the Options and what they mean.

If redevelopment were one of the options, the council would have to ask residents whether they would like this to go ahead. If residents voted for redevelopment, it was likely that Sutton would aim to be on site by 2023.

#### **4. Questions & Answers**

##### ***4.1 How will the impact of building new homes such as higher or infill how would it be managed in the local area?***

IS replied that the Planning department would not give permission if the plans did not fit with the Local Plan and they had to be within keeping with the conditions regarding maximum heights/ max numbers of homes etc. Planners will also have plans as to the maximum population acceptable in Sutton, based on the impact this could have on neighbours, ie lighting, parking, local businesses, planning of building regulations. The architect will have to take into account all of the planning restrictions that are in place such as the number of homes, materials used etc. There are some basic protections, such as the height of the buildings and the number of homes allowed.

The Council will have to work closely with residents to see if the plans match what the residents want as if they did not like the plans, this would be reflected in the ballot.

GLT explained that requirements changed over time, in particular in relation to the law/regulations, size and layout of rooms, the outside area etc. For example, there were maisonettes on Benhill which under regulations would not meet the criteria for lifetime homes. Lifetime homes means that residents are able to live there whether they are 15-85, and whether they have different abilities including physical disability etc.

IS referred to the London Mayor guidelines and standards, whereby there were strict requirements in London compared to other areas. For example the resident ballot did not apply in other areas outside of London. You can only win a ballot if the Council was providing better homes for residents. Residents will get the opportunity to say what you like/dislike about the proposed plans. The best protection is to stay involved throughout the process so you influence the outcome.

#### **4.2. What about population growth?**

IS - Like everywhere in the SouthEast there are hundreds of families on the housing waiting list to get a property and a home in Sutton. The Council also needs to ensure existing residents get new homes as well as those on the waiting list.

Often if there is a growth in population overtime it increases the number of services, ie, schools, GP surgeries, possibly the tram link might be introduced, it could be a car-free development which would keep existing rather than creating new parking spaces.

GL - It works better if we get residents' views every step of the way, right from the beginning of the process as it is a long process. Areas change over time; when there is investment in an area there will be new facilities as part of the conditions placed on the developments. We need to understand the needs and wishes from residents. There are so many people in Temporary Accommodation. It is a cost to everybody as T.A. is expensive and it is funded through the Council Tax which is paid by all residents. Also, everyone has a need for change in their lifetime; people's personal circumstances change through having families, having medical needs or getting older; suitable homes need to be provided for those times.

Colin said that CFF was residents' own personal expert to help guide you through the way. You can put the process in your own personal control. There are 441 properties, some residents will be misinformed as poor information will travel. Residents need to be as informed and knowledgeable as possible by staying in touch with reality, so that you can steer and shape things in a positive way.

Colin pointed out that the hardest part for residents on an estate is not being able to make plans. Council tenants have very strong rights and the council needs to make sure residents have a suitable property to move into. Residents also have the right to return. If the estate is developed in stages it might be possible to aim for a one time move although that is not always possible. Some may want to move off of the estate or even stay in the area but that will be a decision for individuals to make. There will be a lot of opportunities to put on the table for residents. The comfort is that the new homes were being built as new Council homes for local people.

#### **4.3. Will we know how big the population will be in 10 years time**

GL said that the projection is based on a mathematical assessment. The decisions being made now are for present and future generations as areas do not get investment that often.

She pointed out that it was really positive that the residents attending were Tenants as tenants need to be involved and to help steer the way. Residents were encouraged to look at the regeneration webpage that is always updated with meetings minutes, newsletters etc.

### **5. Conclusion - Keep In Contact**

5.1. CH said that he worked in Sutton 30years or more, and has learned that a Local Authority is akin to running a small country. Local Authorities are often short of funding but have a lot of work to do. Local Councillors are very involved.

He noted that the newsletter is a good way to keep updated and that it should contain 3,4 key points and suggested that a personal way to contact people is better than the list of links to web pages that can look overwhelming. The digital way isn't always the best way, human links are better ways to communicate information.

5.2. IS made clear his availability to see residents including on weekends and after hours. He also said that he will be available at Newlyn House every Monday for residents to visit and have 1-2-1's.

Residents said that they would you like face-to-face meetings again and that they preferred daytime meetings.

The meeting finished with some personal questions and advice on the residents' situations.

