

# COMMUNITY HOUSING PLAN UPDATE - MARCH 2005

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM

### THE SPECIAL HOUSING COMMUNITY FORUM

**1. When negotiations to purchase/sell break down is there a dispute resolution process in existence? (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Sustainable Communities recommends such a process).**

We are trying to buy houses by agreement in order to deliver the New Deal for Communities (NDC) Community Housing Plan (CHP) proposals. We are happy to continue dialogue with property owners in order to continue buying properties by agreement, and see Q4 below.

**2. Will there be compensation where sellers will be subject to Capital Gains Tax?**

We cannot compensate directly for tax liability.

**3. What arrangements are there for Homeswaps for Landlords? Is a 10 point standard to apply?**

The Homeswap Scheme is NOT available to Landlords. We have a small number of unrefurbished properties which Owner Occupiers did not want to take as Homeswaps, therefore in order to maintain active negotiations with property owners we have offered some landlords the opportunity to buy one of these properties in return for selling us their demolition property.

**4. There seems to be huge variations in valuations of similar properties e.g. between Duke Street and Slater Street, how is this?**

Hartlepool Revival does not value properties; valuations are carried out by an Independent valuer who is registered with the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors. If a property owner disagrees with the outcome of the valuation they are entitled to obtain a second valuation (providing it is carried out by a similarly qualified valuer). If the two valuations are different the two valuers will discuss why and try to agree on an appropriate figure.

**5. Of the Homeswaps there seems to be 24 left. How many people have applied for Homeswaps and how are applications prioritised?**

There are less people who have applied for a Homeswap than we actually have Homeswaps available. Homeswap properties are offered to Owner Occupiers on a 'broadly equivalent' basis, however the Board of Hartlepool Revival considers individual circumstance where necessary.

**6. Of the 13 bungalows in Angus Street, how many people applied and how will priority be decided?**

We believe there are 17 residents currently waiting for New Build bungalows. The bungalows which will be built on Angus Street will be let and managed by our partner Endeavour Housing Association. Older or less mobile residents will receive priority for these bungalows.

**7. If the quality of work on Homeswap properties is poor, could there be an effect on neighbouring properties? (e.g. in Richardson Street).**

We recognise that there is an issue here although we believe it may be more to do with the standard/age etc. of the property itself rather than the work. We aim to meet with a group of residents who have recently benefited from the Homeswap Scheme to get feedback on what we could have done better etc.

**8. Does the 10 point agreement still stand? It appears that new roofs are not necessarily happening.**

Yes a Homeswap property is still subject to a 10 point standard (unless otherwise agreed with the new owner) and a survey is carried out by a suitably qualified professional to determine the works that will need to be carried out.

**9. When will Richardson Street residents be contacted about homeswaps?**

Anybody who is affected by demolition can contact Hartlepool Revival to discuss his or her relocation needs. Hartlepool Revival currently has numerous Homeswap properties available for any Owner Occupier affected by demolition who is interested. If there are 'general' rather than 'individual' issues in any particular street, Hartlepool Revival could organise a meeting.

**10. What is the timescale from agreement for housesale to moving into a Homeswap?**

It is taking an average of 3-4 months for refurbishment works to be carried out, however it has become apparent that issues with some residents' individual circumstances may result in this work taking longer.

**11. How long does it take to move into Homeswap? When should residents move fittings?**

Residents moving into Homeswaps will be in regular contact with Hartlepool Revival staff who can advise people as progress is made.

**12. What if there are specific needs e.g. disabled and/or elderly people needing like for like properties?**

Homeswap properties can be adapted if required.

**13. Can people be offered Homeswaps in the Belle Vue area?**

Belle Vue is still under discussion so there is currently no Homeswap programme in this area.

**14. How much are new houses likely to cost?**

At the recent NDC Community Forum Yuills quoted £90,000 - £120,000, however we are still in discussions with Yuills to try to get the prices fixed.

**15. There is much speculative investment going on by private landlords and investors. Who are they? Are they accredited/registered landlords? Can we do anything to encourage them to register as responsible landlords?**

We are aware of this. Through our scheme we aim to offer advice to landlords in order to try to direct investment for the benefit of the Community.

**16. Can the Council control grants going to landlords who aren't accredited or registered and who may use their tenants to get grants?**

Hartlepool Borough Council's grants policies are mainly aimed at providing grants to owner occupiers and not to landlords/tenants. For example, the Renovation Grants and the Homes Plus Grants (for minor works) can only be applied for by an owner occupier.

There is a grant, the Re-occupation Grant, which under exceptional circumstances and subject to approval by the Cabinet Portfolio Holder (ie. an elected politician) could be given to a landlord, but he/she must be on the Voluntary Accreditation Register. Current policy is to steer such grants towards properties in areas which are to be regenerated, adjacent to demolition areas.

The Disabled Facilities Grant is, however, personal to the occupier, who may be a tenant, and is about his/her needs, so Hartlepool Borough Council would not expect to control these by reference to any status a landlord may or may not have. Furthermore, these are more about facilities than about possible increases to the capital value of a property.

**17. When new homes are available, how is it to be decided who gets priority for them?**

See Question 6 also. Apart from Angus Street, properties will be built for sale. There will be MORE properties built than the number of local people have told us they need.

**18. Can people taking any 'loan' be given guarantees that they may choose to pay it all off and owe nothing to Hartlepool Revival, even if 'profit' is made?**

'Equity Stakes' is a new idea, the details of which have yet to be finalised. The option to pay back the equity stake at a later date will be built in.

**19. What happens if there is a change of Government, will New Deal stop? (Michael Howard says he will stop it).**

Incoming Governments generally try to honour existing commitments. (Possibly the reference by the Conservative Party is to New Deal for Employment rather than new Deal for Communities).

**20. What about protection of houses still lived in with boarded up properties on either side?**

A considerable amount of money has been spent on ensuring Hartlepool Revival owned properties are secure. Hartlepool Revival will continue to liaise with Police and the Community Wardens etc.

**21. What about damage to properties not included in demolition but on the fringe of the demolition area?**

NDC and Hartlepool Revival respect the wishes of residents who have voted for no demolition. We are trying to encourage investment in streets surrounding demolition.

*There follows a series of questions of detail around financial ideas which are not yet finalised.*

**22. Why is the equity share claw back on proposed Home Improvement Grant not comparable with the 'Homeswap' and new build 7 year charge?**

Hartlepool Revival will prepare a project appraisal to NDC in the near future, which will include the means for delivering home improvement loans through Equity Stakes and priorities for physical improvements to the environment. The detailed work on all the aspects of questions 22 – 28, 31, 39 and 45 is to be done over the coming months, as part of this appraisal process.

**23. How will the equity share be agreed?**

See Q 22.

**24. Will there be grants not loans?**

See Q 22.

**25. Can we see Home Improvement Loans as opposed to Equity Shares?**

See Q 22.

**26. Can there be multiple choice on Home Improvement Loans?**

See Q 22.

**27. Would the Equity Share work both ways if there was an increase or decrease in value of the properties?**

See Q 22.

**28. How will the street improvements be decided and when?**

See Q 22.

**29. What can be done in Sandringham Road? i.e. condition of pavements, dog fouling, alley (keep it open) – petition (See Q 57 re alley), welcome Angus Street proposals, alleygate (rear of Sheriff/Sandringham) left open.**

NDC and Hartlepool Revival will liaise with Hartlepool Borough Council regarding some of the issues on Sandringham Road.

**30. Strategy – is demolition necessary?**

Yes, the NDC has regularly reviewed Strategy with Residents and key partners as changes in the housing market have occurred. A reduction in the oversupply of terraced housing is needed to reverse the decline in the area.

**31. What is happening to the idea suggested for ‘Victorianisation’ improvements suggested at a Milton Area Residents Association meeting?**

This is to be considered as part of the project appraisal in Q 22.

**32. What happens when demolition starts if there is a change of Government?**

See Q 19.

**33. Where will Yuills start with their redevelopment (after Angus Street)?**

We are in discussions with Yuills about future demolition and the possibility of phasing etc.

**34. Are Endeavour Housing Association going to be working with Yuills on shared Equity?**

See Q 6. These new build bungalows will be for rent or possibly shared ownership, if the demand is there.

**35. How much will the new homes cost?**

See Q 14.

**36. What if there are not sufficient of the right type of new homes to meet everyone’s requirements e.g. bungalows?**

According to what residents have told us, the current requirements of residents have been built into the developer selection. See Q 17 also.

**37. Once all those affected by demolition have had their requirements met, will the remaining new homes be sold on the open market?**

Yes

**38. How do you stop landlords buying them?**

You can't, but trends show that investors tend to acquire the cheaper, older terraced houses in order to maximise their amount of rental return. More expensive properties are not as attractive to investors as they would not receive enough rental income to make the investment worthwhile.

**39. How will you prioritise street improvements in areas remaining?**

See Q 22.

**40. When will you know how much the new houses will cost?**

We will know when the developer agreement has been arranged but further information may be available at the May 2005 exhibition.

**41. When will the new houses for sale be built?**

Subject to a successful Compulsory Purchase Order process new homes should be built in 2007.

**42. Will there be access to the back street in Slater Street once demolition starts?**

Yes

**43. How will the elderly afford the new build? How much will they cost?**

Possibly Equity Stakes, together with the £30,500 Homeswap package.

**44. Could residents have a copy of the demolition sites – with dots to see how and what progress is being made – monthly update if possible?**

No, this could hamper individual negotiations with owners.

**45. Do we have any time scale for traffic calming measures – corner of Sheriff and Duke Street?**

See Q 22.

**46. What if any, proposals are being made or implemented for the safety of residents and/or people working in the NDC area (care in the community workers)?**

Hartlepool Borough Council are aware of the work Hartlepool Revival is doing (demolition) etc. and are offering a wide range of support. NDC also fund Health projects and other projects aimed at promoting safety.

**47. What will be the cost of homes to rent?**

Endeavour Housing Association should provide this information on the properties they plan to own in time for the May 2005 exhibition.

**48. Why will it take so long to start building?**

Re-building on cleared sites is much more difficult and lengthy than building from scratch on 'greenfield' sites. Also Hartlepool Revival has no powers to Compulsory Purchase properties and has been buying by agreement only for the last 18 months. Hartlepool Revival and Hartlepool NDC Partnership must wait for the Council to decide when/whether to make Compulsory Purchase Orders. If there are objections, a neutral inspector may be appointed and an Inquiry held.

**49. What plans are there for phasing the development?**

See Q33.

**50. Equity Loans – How do Hartlepool Revival get investment back if resident does not move?**

We do not, but we anticipate the property will change hands ultimately.

**51. What happens if a resident wanting a Homeswap cannot find anything suitable?**

We will continue to support residents to help them to find something suitable.

**52. Would a resident get 'like for like' in terms of decoration/well kept/space? (Someone not physically capable to decorate may effectively get downgraded. Also people should not be financially compromised).**

See Q7. We aim to continuously review how the Homeswap Scheme operates.

**53. When will it happen? Could residents be informed regularly of the latest information?**

Hartlepool Revival intends to continue meeting with Residents Association and specific groups i.e. older residents who may require more support from us.

**54. Why should there be renting/shared ownership and people be burdened by any additional financial responsibility?**

We are aspiring to help Owner Occupiers in line with the law and available resources. Equity Stakes are one way of trying to achieve this.

**55. As the development takes place, who will own the land?**

Subject to the development agreement, Yuills will own the land during the development process after which the new properties will be sold as freehold.

**56. Will there be 'Covenants' or the like that would stop people doing any particular thing in the new homes provided?**

There will be no covenants which are not conducive to the quiet enjoyment of their houses by residents.

**57. Why is the cut between Sandringham Road and Sheriff Street to be closed?**

This has been subject to extensive consultation between Hartlepool Borough Council, local residents and Councillors, and Hartlepool Borough Council has taken a decision on the closure.