

SOUTHWARK COUNCIL

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

(ORDINARY MEETING)

WEDNESDAY 14 JULY 2010

URGENT QUESTION

1. URGENT QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR LEWIS ROBINSON

Can the leader of the council confirm that he has failed to achieve “best consideration” in the regeneration agreement agreed by the cabinet for the Elephant and Castle, one of the most valuable land sites in London, and explain what precise part of the legal agreement with Lend Lease justifies his claim in the Southwark News that in respect of social housing “we hope to end up with close to 35%, maybe more”?

RESPONSE

The achievement of best consideration in the respect of the disposal of the council's land holdings is a key test when disposing of land.

The regeneration of the Elephant and Castle has to be about building a new community there, not just about making a huge profit. The previous administration, by failing to negotiate a minimum, or any level of affordable housing, were willing to sell-out the existing community and displace them with no opportunity for them to return.

We have taken a purposeful political decision to give up the guarantee of some of the profit that the council would have made in the future so that we have a guarantee of affordable homes. We believe this is the right decision. It reflects our priorities for the Elephant and Castle and the original vision for the regeneration of this part of our borough.

We believe that we have undertaken a robust process to achieve best consideration. We are hopeful that the planning process and improvements in the property market will mean that we do achieve a higher level of affordable housing, but we were simply not prepared to take the risk that this should be any less than 25%.

2. URGENT QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI

Under the terms of the deal he signed last week will the leader confirm that there are no circumstances where the regeneration of Elephant and Castle can now take place without the building of a new swimming pool and library?'

RESPONSE

No deal has yet been signed, and none can be signed until the formal call-in period for the cabinet's decision has expired. However, I believe that it is in the interests of all of the residents of this borough that the agreement which the cabinet has decided to enter

into with Lend Lease is signed at the earliest possible opportunity and continued and futile attempts to hinder this process are brought to an end.

Whilst I can foresee no circumstances in which a swimming pool will not form part of a new leisure centre at the Elephant and Castle there are currently no plans for a new library. However, we will continue to consult with local residents about their views on library provision within the Walworth area throughout the regeneration process.

The regeneration of the Elephant and Castle will deliver new homes, new jobs, and new opportunities for the people of Southwark, and the sooner that we start delivering on this vision, the sooner we will all see these great benefits.