



Our regeneration plans will ensure all your homes meet the Decent Homes Standard

Independent Advice

PPCR (Public Participation, Consultation and Research) are the Independent Residents' Advisors appointed by the Leopold Estate Steering Group. Their job is to provide residents with independent advice and information about Housing Choice.

PPCR can be contacted on:
0800 317 066

So what happens next?

A formal consultation document (the offer) will be issued and tenants will have approximately 28 days to consider this and return any comments you have on the proposals to the Council. Leaseholders will also receive a notice setting out what is proposed.

PPCR, the independent residents advisors, will issue an independent review of the "offer" and their opinion on the whole transfer proposal and how it will affect you.

The Council will consider any comments received and amend the "offer" if necessary. It will then write to all tenants advising them of any amendments and will advise all residents of the arrangements for the ballot. You will also have the opportunity to make your views known to the Secretary of State.

Open Day

We will have an open day on the 30 October 2004 on the estate, to launch the offer where the plans will be on show and you will have a further opportunity to ask questions about the proposals. Poplar HARCA, the resident steering group (LART) PRP Architects, the independent advisers PPCR and the Council will all be present to answer any questions you have.

We will have a show flat open too so you can see the sort of work proposed to kitchens and bathrooms

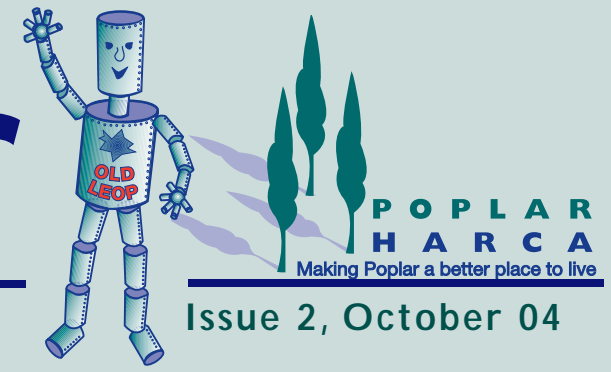
We will have a model of the estate on show to let you see how the new grey blocks could look when they are rebuilt.

We screen a computer animated film to give you a feel of what the estate would look like if the transfer goes ahead. Look out for further details at the open day.

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the Partner

Leopold and Poplar HARCA



Issue 2, October 04



Look into the future - an artist impression on what Leopold could look like

GREAT NEWS!

The Government has now agreed the funding for the regeneration of the Leopold and Burdett estates.

After all the hard work which has been put in over the last two years, Leopold residents are now getting the opportunity to decide the future of their estate.

The Leopold Area Regeneration Team (LART), Poplar HARCA, London Borough of Tower Hamlets and PRP architects have developed a set of plans that we feel will make Leopold an area that all residents are proud to live in. These plans have been developed for some time now and the final piece in the jigsaw was the government grant needed to top up the money that Poplar HARCA will raise to spend on the estate.

This means that the Council can now move forward with the Housing Choice ballot and issue the formal offer document and notice to leaseholders.

Poplar HARCA plans, on current estimates, to invest over £30 million pounds in your estate. This money would allow for the full refurbishment of

- n The Burdett Closes (Booker Close, Callingham Close, Tunley Green, Wallwood Street)
- n The 'red blocks' (Couzens House, Grindley House, Perley House, Stileman House,

Whytelaw House, Wilcox House)

- n Elmslie Point
- n 22 -30 Leopold Street

The refurbishment works will include new kitchens and bathrooms to tenants' homes and other works needed to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standards.

The plans aim to

- n Improve safety and security on the estate and to individual blocks and homes
- n Improve the appearance of the blocks and the environment of the estate to create an attractive area for all to be proud of
- n Improve the access to the blocks and the flats.

The programme also proposes the demolition of the properties in Ackroyd Drive and Shelmerdine Close. These properties will then be replaced with a mixture of new homes for rent and for sale.

Poplar HARCA also plans to build a brand new community centre, which will be designed and located so that the whole community can benefit from the facilities that will be provided from the centre.

It is up to you, the residents of Leopold to decide whether you want Poplar HARCA to become the landlord of your estate.

More of your QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Poplar HARCA and Tower Hamlets Council are often asked about the Housing Choice transfer.

We've answered some more of the most frequently asked questions...

1. Are RSLs as reliable as the Council? Could I lose my home if things go wrong?

RSLs are carefully monitored by the Housing Corporation and the Audit Commission, who ensures that their finances are in order and that they maintain certain standards. It is very, very unusual for anything to go wrong, but in the rare instances where it does, the Housing Corporation will step in to ensure that people's homes are not at risk.

2. Why can't the council just borrow the money necessary to repair and modernise its estates in the same way that other social landlords can?

The government has previously carefully controlled council spending by only allowing it to borrow money up to a certain level each year. This financial year, Tower Hamlets' maximum budget is set a long way short of what it needs

From 1st April 2004 the system of local government borrowing changed to enable councils to borrow money for capital investment without Government approval. However, councils will only be able to borrow money if they have the resources necessary to repay the amount borrowed. Tower Hamlets Housing Service will not have the money to pay for any additional borrowing unless the government provides this.

3. Will I be able to transfer to another home in the same

area under an RSL (Registered Social Landlord)?

The Council will require Poplar HARCA to participate in a Common Housing Register as it currently does for its existing estates. This means all tenants will keep their place on the transfer list. Poplar HARCA and other RSLs are also members of HOMES, the national scheme to enable tenants to move to other areas of the country, and will allow tenants to take part in mutual exchanges of their homes.

4. What will succession rights be for tenants after transfer?

Poplar HARCA operates a similar policy to the Council, which is as follows:

All tenants would start from the date of transfer with a new right of succession, and any previous successions that had taken place would not count

As with the Council, there will be two rights of succession. 1. To a family member and 2. For that member to pass on to a member of their family. Both must have lived in the property as their principal home for the previous 12 months.

Poplar HARCA may allow succession in other circumstances at its discretion

In the case of a partner (husband or wife for example), they would be entitled to stay in their present home. For other family members who succeed, Poplar HARCA may require them to move to a home more suited to their family size. This is the same as the current position with the council.

5. Will I be less secure as a tenant after the transfer if this goes ahead?

No, you will still have security of tenure and Poplar HARCA will enter into a contractual obligation in the tenancy agreement to only use the same kind of grounds to gain possession that were available to the Council.

6. If I transfer to Poplar HARCA, and move to another flat within Poplar HARCA after transfer, will I keep the Right to Buy?

In most cases yes, although this would be subject to the cost floor rule under the Preserved Right to Buy. This is set out in the formal offer

7. What extra charge will be put on the rent for the improvement works?

In general, the costs of any works to tenants homes will not result in an extra charge but would be covered in the rent. Some works may mean additional costs – e.g. new concierges or improved estate security may result in an additional charge where this is a new installation and tenants agree.

8. Will I still get housing benefit/rent rebate?

Yes, transfer does not affect your ability to claim Housing benefit You may be asked by Poplar HARCA to have your benefit paid directly by the Council to them.

9. What improvements will leaseholders be liable for?

Repairs and improvements carried out to the block you live in and the immediate environment in accordance with your lease and any current Section 125 notice. No works to tenants flats or work on other blocks can be recharged to you. A new council policy means that there are some improvement works that are now exempt from recharge and you will be given details of what will and will not be charged for as soon

as possible.

10. Who gets a vote at the transfer ballot?

All secure and introductory tenants, including each joint tenant. Leaseholders will be invited to take part in a separate consultation exercise and invited to vote so that the Council can assess their views.

11. Who counts the votes and are the votes kept secret?

Somebody like the Electoral Reform (ballot) services, part of the Independent Electoral Reform Society, usually run this type of ballot and count the votes. All votes are secret.

12. What is the Decent Homes Standard?

This is the standard that the government has set for social housing to reach by the year 2010. It covers things like the standard of kitchens and bathrooms, weather proofing.

Find out more

Housing Choice surgeries:

For further information about the process or our proposals for the estate, pop in and see Geoff and Shaheda.

Wednesdays, 1-3pm Cafe ReConnect, St Pauls Way

T: 020 7510 9900

Over the coming weeks Poplar HARCA officers will be visiting all residents in the housing choice area, to discuss plans for your area and answer any queries you may have.

PPCR: 0800 317 066

Email the Leopold steering group:

lart@leopold.org.uk

Call the LART helpline on:

0709 231 1974