

Bellevue Mansions

Tpas Independent Tenant and Resident Advice for Bellevue Mansions

It's a No

- Bellevue Residents voted overwhelmingly against the regeneration proposals from Hyde in the Landlord Offer document in the recent ballot.
- The results were clear with 76.3% of eligible Bellevue Mansions residents voting against the proposals and 23.74% voting for them. The turnout was 92.24 % which was very high.
- The actual number of people eligible to vote was 64, so this means only three or four people did not vote. So, the vote itself can be said to very clearly represent resident opinion because of the high number who participated.
- The ballot itself was conducted by a reputable independent electoral organisation as specified by the GLA regulations.
- The whole point of the Mayor of London's guidance on proposed plans for regeneration and demolition on social housing estates is to ensure that residents have a real say on whether these plans can go ahead. Bellevue Mansions residents have clearly expressed their views and rejected Hyde's proposals.

We were appointed as the Independent Resident Advisor to be a source of independent advice for residents during the consultation and ballot process in relation to regeneration. Our role at Bellevue Mansions will be finishing at the end of November, so we wanted to send a final newsletter to give you our view on what the ballot result means and what we think residents need to think about going forward.

What does a "no" vote mean in practice?

A "no" vote means that things will remain as they are. More specifically:

- Hyde will continue to manage and maintain the building as they have been doing and the building will be kept as it is now.



- The building itself, whilst old, is structurally sound and Hyde will continue with its long-term building maintenance and improvement programme. (please see our separate section on this on page 4)
- For tenants and leaseholders of Bellevue Mansions this means their circumstances and rights will remain the same as they were before the proposals were put forward. The current Hyde policies that affect them and the services they receive will remain the same.

- To be clear, none of the elements in the landlord offer document will now apply to Bellevue Mansions residents. Specifically, we are referring to the possibility of moving off the estate, compensation, estate and building remodeling and the offer to purchase a leasehold property with a premium.
- In addition, we assume that your day-to-day services will continue to be delivered by the Housing Teams at Hyde.

We go into what this means in a little more detail in the next few pages of this newsletter, but if anyone has any questions they would like answering, would like to speak to us in more detail about what the result means for them or issues they are worried about then they can phone or email us on **0800 731 1619** or bellevueresidentadvisor@tpas.org.uk. We will treat any enquiries as confidential, but we can also pass on information about your circumstances to Hyde if you would like us to.

The only thing we would say is if you do want to speak to us, we would advise doing so before the end of November as we will be officially finishing our involvement on the project at that point. We will however be monitoring our freephone and contact email up until the end of December. If we do get any queries after this point, we will pass them onto Hyde if appropriate.

So, is that it?

The answer to this is yes and no.

Yes, in the sense that things will proceed on a business-as-usual basis at Bellevue Mansions.

But **No**, in the sense that during the consultation, there were a lot of issues raised about property condition, service provision and communication that Hyde are aware of and will have to consider. In addition, part of the reason the regeneration was considered in the first place was because of the age of the Bellevue Mansions building and its future long-term maintenance and improvement.



We would say that we do not know exactly what will happen next, but we can give you our assessment of what we think the issues are, what is likely to happen and what we think should be considered by residents based on our previous experience and knowledge of Bellevue Mansions.

We know that Hyde are currently considering the ballot results and what they want to do next, so we hope our thoughts will be useful to you when Hyde update you on their plans.

We would first like to talk about if there is the possibility of another ballot as a few people have asked us this post ballot and it was a concern as we spoke to people during the project.

Will there be a re-ballot?

- Under the GLA regulations landlords can undertake another ballot after a “no” vote. However, the regulations indicate they would expect the landlord to re-consult residents and produce a new offer based on what residents would be asked to vote on. The implication here is they would only do this if they think producing a different offer would be more likely to get a “yes” vote after they have consulted with residents further.



- However, the Bellevue Mansions vote was decisively against the proposals with roughly three out of four people voting “no”, based on a 92.2% turnout of eligible voters.
- We think this demonstrates the overwhelming resident opposition to regeneration plans that involve demolition of Bellevue Mansions. In addition, the landlord offer document when compared with offer documents from other housing associations was extremely good in terms of rehousing, compensation and redesign standards.
- Both these things mean that, in our view, conducting another vote would be extremely unlikely to change the result in the aftermath of such a clear “no” vote and would cause more anxiety and uncertainty for residents.

But as we said earlier in this newsletter, Hyde are still considering the ballot result and what they do next and we expect that Hyde will be writing to residents to explain what happens next and their plans for the future. **So we advise all residents to look out for this.**

The reasons Hyde may want to look into a re-ballot are because the costs of the works to be done on Bellevue Mansions are likely to be high and if they demolish and regenerate, they can provide more homes that will house people in better conditions.

The other factor is the shortage of housing and in particular, social housing in Lambeth and the potential for the Bellevue Mansions building and adjacent land to provide more homes in Lambeth.



While Bellevue Mansions residents have made their views clear in the ballot, Hyde may well want to understand the reasons residents voted “no”. So, it’s important for residents to give their feedback if Hyde ask for it.

In these next sections we are writing based on the assumption there will not be a re-ballot in the foreseeable future. Our advice is on that basis as we think this is the most helpful approach.

What about building improvements and major works in the future?

There are two sets of issues here.

- Bellevue Mansions is an old building and requires significant maintenance to the building generally and the interior of individual flats.
- This distinction is important as issues with the building generally will affect both leaseholders and tenants whereas works to the interior of the flats will only affect tenants.



What are the issues?

- Broadly speaking, these relate to the issues such as its thermal efficiency (which covers windows and insulation), the condition of the roofs, the condition of communal areas and shared building components.
- In terms of the interior of tenants' flats, these are mainly in relation to the age and condition of kitchens, bathrooms and the age/efficiency of central heating systems all of which will need to be replaced over time. This is in addition to heat efficiency, wiring and general condition of the flats in terms of floors and other components.
- The above is based on our interpretation of the issues raised in a briefing session given to the Residents' Steering Group in November 2024 by Hyde and what we have heard from residents. Hyde will be in a much better position to tell residents about the work that needs to be carried out.
- It is also worth noting that during the whole regeneration development and consultation period, Hyde collected a lot of data about the condition of the building and feedback from residents about the condition of Bellevue Mansions as a whole and individual properties.

The need for a plan and the need for residents to know about the plan

- Some issues will be addressed by routine maintenance, but a lot of these will need to be tackled on a planned basis. As with the rest of the properties that Hyde maintain, they will need to draw up a long-term plan to do this, detailing the works to be done and timescales for doing it.
- As part of doing this, Hyde will need to consult with residents on these plans. We would also expect Hyde to consider the data and feedback they have received recently on the building, alongside recent resident feedback on the issues and their expectations.
- It is also important that all Bellevue Mansions residents get involved in any consultation Hyde do on these planned works and make their views known.



The importance of resident engagement with Hyde

We understand that residents are probably tired of being asked for their views and many may be suffering from 'consultation fatigue'.

However, the reality is that now regeneration has been rejected, it is important that issues identified during the consultation process, many of which have existed for some time are addressed and that residents' voices are part of this process.



It's not just about the building

The condition of the building is a big issue, but during our conversations with residents and other feedback we have seen it is also clear that there is considerable resident dissatisfaction with service provision from Hyde, the information residents receive from Hyde and customer communication and consultation more generally. This applies to both tenants and leaseholders, although some of the specific issues they mention are different. Hyde will have their own view of these issues but clearly this feedback needs to be considered.

The regulator expects Hyde to consult with you

We would also note that recently there has been an increased focus from the Regulator of Social Housing on how effectively social landlords are engaging with residents on satisfaction with their services and actively involving them in monitoring service performance and decision about building maintenance and improvements. This means all landlords, including Hyde will need to demonstrate that they are actively communicating with and listening to their residents.

Making your voices heard

We would advise you as residents to actively feedback to Hyde when requested and, if you have time to, get involved in any consultation groups Hyde set up.

You may also want to consider setting up your own residents' group e.g. a TRA, which Hyde will support you with. This could be a one for tenants and one for leaseholders or a joint group, but it's up to residents to decide.



But the main thing is to feedback to Hyde by getting in touch with them and have your say in what's planned for the future.

Given the focus is now on Bellevue Mansions, we think this is a good time for residents to take advantage of this to be part of addressing some long-standing concerns by working with Hyde in partnership.



What if you still want to move off the estate?

Some tenants may still want or need to move from Bellevue Mansions and there are a number of options available.

Transfer

If you want to transfer to another Hyde home, you will need to make sure you are registered on Lambeth Council's housing register (link below). There is a huge demand for homes in London and depending on your circumstances, you may have to wait for considerable time before you are made an offer of another home.

<https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/housing/finding-home/council-housing-association-homes/apply-council-or-housing-association-home>

Swapping your home

This is sometimes referred to as a "mutual exchange" and it allow two or more tenants to swap homes with each other. There are conditions that have to be met, such as property size and having a clear rent account but it is an alternative to requesting a transfer through Hyde and allows tenants to take more control in finding a new home. It is also useful as there is a huge demand for social housing in London and waiting lists for a transfer are long. There are organisations that provide this service and it's worth spending a little time looking at their websites to see if they might be for you. The website addresses for Homewrapper and Exchangelocata are below.

<http://www.exchangelocata.org.uk/>

<http://www.homewrapper.co.uk/>

Hyde has a web page that guides you through the process and helps you understand what you need to consider if you are thinking of swapping your home. The link is below.

<https://www.hyde-housing.co.uk/find-a-home/swapping-your-home-mutual-exchange/>

Moving out of London

If you would like to move out of London, there is a scheme run by the Greater London Authority called the Seaside and Country Homes. The link is below.

<https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/housing-and-land/council-and-social-housing/seaside-and-country-homes-scheme>

Home Ownership

If you are interested in buying a home, Hyde have information on this that might help you decide if it's something you want to consider.

<https://www.hyde-housing.co.uk/find-a-home/buy-a-home/>

<https://www.hyde-housing.co.uk/find-a-home/buy-a-home/right-to-buy-and-right-to-acquire/>



Finally, we would always advise tenants who are thinking of moving home and have a preserved Right-to-Buy (as they were previously a Lambeth council tenant), to check that they do not lose this if they transfer or swap. As a rule of thumb, if you transfer to the same landlord, it's unlikely you will, but if you transfer to a different landlord keeping your preserved right to buy is less certain. In any event we always advise residents to check on this before they agree to a move.

Thanks to the Steering Group

We would like to thank all the members of the Resident Steering Group who worked with Hyde on the consultation approach during the project and the development of the landlord offer document.

This group was made up of a mixture of tenants and leaseholders, some of whom were in favour of the proposals, some who were not and some who were undecided.

Regardless of this, they volunteered to work with Hyde (and us) to ensure residents were consulted properly, their issues were considered and the proposal document that was produced represented as good an offer for tenants as it could. They were also key to explaining to Hyde about issues on the estate and resident concerns during the process as well as current service issues.

Part of our role was to support and advise the Resident Steering Group at and between meetings. The members gave up a considerable amount of their own time to do this for the benefit of their fellow residents.

We would like to recognise and thank them for this and for helping us better understand the issues and perspective of Bellevue Mansions residents.

Thanks to all Bellevue Mansion residents

Finally, we would like to thank all the residents who spoke to us over the duration of this project and took the time to read the information we sent out. We really appreciate you giving us your time and what you told us was important in helping us understand how residents felt generally as well as understanding the issues that different people faced.

We were particularly grateful as we know from experience that these projects can be very stressful for people due to the uncertainty they create.

We would also say that the feedback you have given us will be important for Bellevue Mansions going forward as much of it related not only to people's circumstances but also issues they had experienced in terms of service and communication with Hyde. We have fed all this back to Hyde (anonymously) and we think that this will also help to improve the services you receive in the future.

Finally, we would like to thank the residents of Bellevue Mansions for voting in such large numbers and ensuring their voices were heard.

We would like to wish all the residents of Bellevue Mansions the best in the future both individually and as a community.



Contacting Us

If you would like to discuss anything in this newsletter or any other issue, please get in touch with us.

Just remember though, we will be leaving the project at the end of November so if you do want to contact us please do so sooner rather than later.

We will be monitoring our freephone number and emails until the end of this year.

We have also put this newsletter and some additional information on our website which you can find at:

Web:

<https://www.tpas.org.uk/our-projects/hyde-housing-belle-vue-mansions-itra>

Your Independent Advisors



Dave Smethurst



Matthew Wicks

You can get in touch with us in the following ways:

Freephone:

0800 731 1619

Email:

bellevueresidentadvisor@tpas.org.uk

