

# UK: Residents lobby Haringey Labour council to oppose plans to demolish residential homes

Our reporters  
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On Tuesday evening local residents lobbied a meeting of Labour Party-run Haringey Borough Council in north London. They were protesting plans by the council to demolish two residential tower blocks, Tangmere and Northolt, in the Broadwater Farm area, after safety tests found that they have been structurally unsafe for years.

Many residents fear that the council's plans are part of a broader social cleansing agenda that will lead to the breaking up of a long-established working-class community, who have been kept in the dark for years about the dangerous conditions they have been living in.

Members of the Broadwater Farm Residents Association attended the lobby to demand: Full transparency over structural problems, including release of the original structural survey reports; independent expert advice to scrutinise the reports; choice of rehousing during any work, not limited to one offer; and consultation and balloting over the future of the blocks.

At the meeting, the Cabinet members of the council voted unanimously in favour of demolishing the two blocks and rehousing the 300 tenants who live in them elsewhere by October. The council said they plan to build new housing on the land after demolition.

They launched a 28-day consultation with residents, after which they will decide on their preferred option to demolish or whether to retain the towers and strengthen them structurally. As is standard practise by local authorities, such consultations are carried out only to provide a veneer of democratic consent, while the council imposes its pre-determined policy.

The council, following May's local elections, is now

controlled by backers of Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, with members of the Corbyn-supporting Momentum group now in control of key positions.

One of these is cabinet member for housing and estate councillor, Emine Ibrahim. At the meeting, Ibrahim outlined the council's intention to demolish the blocks, saying, "It would be irresponsible not to express a view on what we think is the best solution for our residents.

"That is why our preferred option is to demolish the blocks."

Claiming that "residents' safety was of upmost importance" to the council, she was met with hostility from angry residents in the public gallery who shouted "rubbish" and "liar."

Speaking to the New Civil Engineer website, the secretary of the Residents Association said, "To assume hundreds of people can be rehoused by October is simply not possible. The truth is that fitting a new boiler at Tangmere would cost the council £1.3 million and they simply want to save money. Instead we will end up in hotels and B&Bs and we want assurances that that won't happen."

At the lobby, Socialist Equality Party members distributed copies of several *World Socialist Web Site* articles, including, "UK: Pro-Corbyn councillors vote with Blairites against scrapping Haringey Council's social cleansing project" and London Labour councils in league with property developers. WSWs reporters spoke to several of those attending the lobby.

Tia said, "I'm here today because I feel for what the people in the community are going through, having lived through it myself with Metropolitan Housing [a housing association that manages 38,000 homes]. I used to live in one of their properties. They made sure

that they never repaired the property to the point where it had mould, and rats were getting in because they refused to fix the roof.

“When I left, they then fixed it. When I go back and get my mail, speaking to the resident who now lives there, they’ve raised the rent an unbelievable amount. So that I think it goes to show what all these housing associations and the council have in mind. Either they’re going to make sure that you’re not able to stay or, well, whatever’s going on with Broadwater Farm, they’re going to try and demolish the towers and replace them with more ‘affordable houses,’ which people can’t actually afford. It’s obviously nonsense and everyone knows that, but the fact is the council and property developers don’t care. We come ... we do what we can to try and support others but it almost feels like a losing battle.”

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On the pre-election claims by the Momentum councillors that they would oppose the social cleansing policy being imposed by the previous right-wing Blairite Labour leaders of the council, Tia said, “Whether it’s Labour or Conservatives or whoever in power, they all have the same agenda really. You know with the devolved budgets they’re thinking about their purse strings and how they can get the most money. Labour and Conservative, they’ve all got the same end game. It makes no difference who is in power.”

Tia said that after last year’s Grenfell inferno, “I think that people feel change needs to happen, but the councils are just covering their backs. For example, as with Grenfell, I’ve had it where I’m calling and making complaints about things which aren’t safe and no one really cares. After something like Grenfell they all try and cover their backs but they will do the bare minimum. At the end of the day what’s going on with Northolt and Broadwater Farm, I’m sure that there are other ways than demolishing and building brand new flats that they could use to make these estates safe. But it’s all about making more money. So they’ll demolish it and say it’s in the best interests but it’s really not.”

John said, “They plan to demolish the tower ... but as far as I am concerned they have not convinced me that there is a good reason why. For me, it could be a scam, they are saying it’s about safety, but using it to carry out something else.”

John said there had been no prior consultation with residents over the plans to bulldoze the towers. Asked if he thought it was about social cleansing and forcing working-class residents out of the area, he replied, “Yes.”

Councils all over London were “trying to force poor people out of the central London area,” he said. “They talk about affordable housing to replace the demolished flats. Well, what is affordable housing? I can’t afford it, you can’t afford it, how is it affordable?”

On the fact that the demolition was to be carried out by a Labour council, by councillors who claimed to be a socialist alternative to the Blairites, he said, “They are trying to help the [Conservative] government. They are in agreement with the government.”



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