



Courtesy: Seth Rutt, Studio Multi

## Building Homes Network Meeting - Demolition or Retrofit?

08/12/2021

- **Deciding whether to demolish or retrofit involves a range of factors, including community views, design and technical issues, funding, site constraints, updated regulations, and housing need.** Research has shown that the balance can easily be tipped by the assumptions used, for example for future energy considerations and these need to be scrutinised carefully. It also shows the importance of the human factors which can be given insufficient priority.
- **Resident factors include health indicators, potential for job creation, opportunity for involvement and co-design and improving mental health.** Working closely with the community from the outset and focussing on 'place keeping' as well as place shaping are key to success of a decision to retrofit or demolish – residents can be supportive of either option where it works best for them and their community and they understand the factors involved.
- **Local authorities tend not to have strategies to guide their decision making but instead use a number of 'tools in the box' from their overall policy approach which help to feed into the decision-making process.** These include the overall level of housing need and existing and proposed density in an area, approach to resident involvement and use of ballots, the use of a heat network, the approach to retrofit and the use of design guides. However, although these feed into the process, the decision to demolish or retrofit very much rests on the specifics of the site and resident community.
- **The kinds of local factors which can come into play include the layout and design of the existing development, building defects which are present in the structure, energy ratings, poor or good room and building layouts, accessibility, and fire safety.** The flexibility of the retrofit options is key – these can include adding more height, the extent of strip back and build out and reconfiguration needed to the core. Resident factors include levels of fuel poverty, the need to restrict decanting to a single move, and safety and security of the development.
- **A key aspect of decision making is anticipating change, with significant changes likely over the lengthy period of a regeneration programme.** These can be managed by ensuring the project has built in flexibility, strong partnerships, good resident relationships, aims for high standard which are more resilient over time and is able to attract new funding sources as opportunities arise.



*Courtesy: Seth Rutt, Studio Multi*

## **Speakers:**

**Charlotte Johnson**, Senior Research Fellow, UCL Institute for Sustainable Resources

**Seth Rutt**, Founding Director, Studio Multi – Agar Grove Regeneration, LB Camden

**Michelle Christensen**, Technical Design Manager, LB Camden

**Neil Vokes**, Director of Development, LB Camden

**Rafe Bertram**, Sustainability Facilitator, Meridian Water Place Department, LB Enfield

**Attendees: 46**