



Better Environmental Vision for Edge Lane

The Inspector will note please the date I received the information enclosed in this document **ITEM 7** of my (ESP) own evidence (7th October see E-mail). He will also note that I am still awaiting missing information. Hence this document was not, as Mr Lockhart-Mummery will no doubt bring to our attention (out of its context) submitted to the Inquiry 4 weeks before the start (I think he actually meant 3 weeks). The Inspector will be aware that despite all obstacles put in our path we did get in on time a survey of property condition / worthiness of refurbishment, on time.

In any event I do feel it was not necessary for it to have been received by the other side in advance of the Inquiry start because the other side already new full well all of this information, as they were holding it (back). And most surely, as with the NRA, and the things my son asked for, these have been withheld because they fully realise the damage this information does to their case. It cannot be because they do not have the resources to produce it. So this document should be acceptable, even if what I do with the information is new to them and I hope lives up to their worst expectations. It is possible that I may have missed a little.

I have decided **not to present it graphically**, as having done so (3D effort on the plan, height for cost, colour for date, shape for status) it is not clear at all.

There are various issues to present pulled from this document

- 1)** The reason that so very many properties are boarded up, and for so many years, south of Edge Lane is that far more of these have been long term owned by agencies than those north of the Lane. Houses on the north side are highlighted in blue on the sheets, (yellow is their own colouration). An indication of this long term ownerships in part is that there are no price tags.
- 2)** The Inspector will also see that there is some duplication. That is because I acquired the information from two sources, C7 did it overnight, LLDC took rather longer, finally I got it, as much else, due to the efforts of Michelle Naylor of Eversheds, whom I guess, being lawyers, knew they must. There is more information (somewhere in the heap of paper work which is what my home has become) I acquired independently (costing £2 a go) before I was told that such should be acquired from the agencies at no cost (time or money) to me. I identified very early on which issues we needed to address / research, this being one to a) prove that the worst properties were agency owned b) the voids were owned by agencies, c) and that the voiding process had been insidious, presumably to deliberately blight the area by the LA / and the other agencies (* see transcript BBC of Max Hutchinson, former president RIBA) and c) d) we have no market failure because the agencies are paying higher and higher prices, which also proves they know that to be the case full well.

As in they knew it before the NRA told them September 2004 we have failure (NOT) because so many properties were empty (see NRA analysis). The Inspector will notice that

- a) one sheet is headed "properties transferred to HMRI March 2004" when the NRA upon which the HMRI decisions were to be made came in Sept 04. I think it was started just after March 2004 (when so many more had just been boarded up)
- b) a great number of properties were acquired for public ownership in 2002, but all on the south side of Edge (and Adrian Rodgers got his notice to quit summer 2002) as the pressure was then put on
- c) no properties were acquired north of Edge Lane until late 2004 (after we had been told we were to be CPO'd), so the plans must have been very recently switched
- d) the CPO warning (last summer) was in advance of the NRA (last autumn) We do have a few houses our side in public ownership, eg 6 and 7 Adderley, but these are publicly owned for many years (so don't count for conspiracy)

3) The Inspector may find as did I that quite what is happening here as shown in these sheets is difficult to work out. Ian Hassall was kind enough to explain this to me after giving his evidence.

Antecedent to state of affairs: Not long ago (2 years? Or less) there was a stock transfer of LCC housing to the major RSL, a new sub-company of Riverside called C7 soon after that came into legitimate existence just a couple of years ago. This was "a gift".

What (I am willing to bet a substantial amount of money on) will not be found on the other side's core documents regarding the community's consultation / participation in the decision making process re our "regeneration" is that

- a) We said we want nothing whatever to do with Riverside, a detested RSL with a dreadful reputation, who did not actually own much in our community. This deserved reputation is admitted to in my interview with C7's boss, Tom McGuire in my dissertation (part of my evidence). North of Edge Lane Riverside owned just 7 properties out of about 800 in my immediate neighbourhood. Now C7 owns getting on for 40%. Seemingly not a good thing, re market confidence / diversity / sustainability. Surely an irresponsible act by the LA. Tom said "no other housing association wanted to get involved" (So that was OK?)
- b) We said that if LCC properties were to be given as a gift to anyone then it should be to long standing LCC tenants, for example Marjorie and Billy in my street at no 7, who have over the 38 years not only surely paid for their house, but put in at their own expense new windows, a new kitchen, new bathroom and kept the house in the best order in the street, better than the owner occupiers. There are many such couples from back in the days when owning your own house wasn't considered normal

As we were told our community needed its roughly 40% owner occupiers, to be increased by this regeneration process' "aspirations" (along with disposing

of the disabled people) to more like 60% that seemed to us a simple way of achieving that, overnight!

But we had it explained to us that was a silly idea, "might cause problems" (!), and the reason generally for transferring all RSL properties to one umbrella (they tried to get other RSL's to transfer to C7, not as a gift, but as a swap for other Riverside properties outside our area) was for "economies of scale for refurbishment". We were advised that there would certainly be loss of rights by such tenants as assured tenancy was not at all the same as secured tenancy, but it was worth it to tenants to get their homes put to rights. And everyone said what they thought, and were ignored. Mr Lockhart-Mummery will not be aware as are we, that "consulted" as we have been, the super-tanker has not been affected whatsoever by what we said, whether we are mere resident, resident with a couple of relevant university degrees, local councillor, MP or government minister. IF we were consulted, such as that was, we were not listened to, which is presumably now being made evident.

Unfortunately the refurbishment in our immediate locality is as you see (by the voids). Immediately incentives were given to transient tenants to move out, which had a knock on effect to their other slightly less transient tenant neighbours, and we all soon found ourselves well and truly blighted. The blight I believe started as long ago as 7 years, when first RSL's were voided by the key agencies LLDC (then still Speke Garston), LCC and Riverside. Right now I cannot prove this, as you see from the E mail I am still waiting for information. The ownership / voids-making should be apparent from the council tax records, and these I will get, once they work out what they owe themselves and why. Possibly I will have all that by the end of the Inquiry.

So back to the start of point 3). LCC gave away public assets to C7. I am sure someone must have questioned the legality of such a concept at some point, or if not, that would be useful. The reasoning / explanation being that 70% of LCC housing was sub standard and they could not afford to refurbish it, and it was getting in some instances to a state where they might be sued. The reason they could not afford to maintain them was that the rents were used to pay of borrowing on LCC's previous mistakes, with nothing set aside for their essential responsibilities. And again because of previous Liverpool CC incompetence / lack of vision, LA's were not allowed to borrow for maintenance, whereas RSL's were. Which situation I believe is changing.

BUT not long after, for this scheme, the LA, under whatever acronym, needed the properties back again. And there were rules that required them to be sold back, not gifted back. Hence our LA gave away public assets, and then used public money to re-acquire them.

So the Inspector will see at the first page with all the yellow colour (which has drained my new cartridge and cost me another £23, as I could not get it off) the very poshest of our houses here were sold back to LCC or HMRI, it doesn't matter as it is all public agencies paid for by our taxes) for a dirt cheap £50,000 a throw. I invite the Inspector to look at 30 Edge Lane on his tour next week. It is the south side of Edge Lane, at the western most end, by the

funny little box building. If the Inspector wonders as did I if £50K was for each flat, then the answer is “No, for the lot”.

On the one hand one might think “Well that is decent, selling them back so cheaply”. But then on the other, as there are so very many of them, it rather muddies the waters regarding what actually is the average “market” price of the properties here at the moment, as the normal market is well outnumbered, so the “average” values as identified in the NRA are totally skewed (down).

So that is where another few million pounds of public money went, I haven't added it up (short of time, and I haven't the staff, as a guesstimate 100 x £50K-ish) as I said, explained to me by Mr Hassall, not quite in those terms, a few days ago. From his point of view that explanation was a “better” one he thought than that the extra £5million just granted to EP or whatever (I get muddled) because there is not market failure, my reasoning for the extra £5 million. He also explained that a) they were “surprised” (or dismayed) that they could not simply be given back these properties (I guess no-one read the small print when they were giving them away) and b) the extra money also had to be spent, in part, on council tax for the empty properties, as, being the council, they hadn't thought of it. The Inspector is invited to ponder on our confidence in the competence of our council.

4) Which (not) lack of market failure takes us to the next point. The pitiful amount on the price tags of most properties is irrelevant as explained above, they were selling them to “themselves”. If we look at the price of 93 Durning road, not quite specific but if we take it as £165K, and compare that with a rather finer 30 Edge (£50K) we see that even though we are well and truly blighted there is the acknowledgement that substantial sums need to be paid. This was not an owner occupier, (no 93) but a landlord, and he must have sold it off as he didn't want the “grief” of doing as a number of us more committed to the community have, which is decide to fight. If our homes were given a more accurate price tag the value is around £40,000,000 or more.

On the sheet that is all marked blue the Inspector will see there are more substantial price tags indicated. Not enough for us to replace such buildings with, but still not peanuts. He will remember Adrian Rodgers evidence that his landlord was misinformed in 2002 that if he didn't accept £25K and this went to CPO then he might get only £5K. Of course that is hearsay, but I can assure the Inspector that I heard such as that, and others told me so did they, which I have to some extent indicated in my evidence. Such misinformation, and lack of accurate information must surely be the responsibility of the agencies. I offered last year to produce a pamphlet for uninformed residents with accurate information on CPO (as we had none) for KNDC to print and post, but my offer was declined by Lynn Spencer the Chief Executive. Yet Karen Turner of LLDC, now of Keppie Massie, told me that it was KNDC's responsibility to inform residents. LLDC to some extent informed businesses. It seemed that businesses also were told their solicitor's fees would be paid (Edge Hill dentists) whereas we, ordinary residents, had to pay our own. So of course most people couldn't afford to do that. As I am a student I have a generous free overdraft facility, so I did.

The Inspector will see that on one sheet I have marked 3 red boxes. Of course every property is supposed to be individually valued, but as differences in condition between adjacent properties are “cosmetic” in nature, he will see how the prices paid, for those samples, increases rapidly over time. Ged Massie said under my cross examination that he has made 50 only, of 200 acquisitions necessary, in this last 2 years, (200 private being those 170 not already owned by the agencies at the start). Prices tend to have doubled in the last year, having also doubled the year before (we have the best growing market in the country).

The Inspector will also see some very pitiful price tags in the earliest of days, where people succumbed in fear for a pittance. Very often this was due to the (agency owned and emptied and left insecure) property next door having an arson attack. After the first swathe of tinnings-up, people were very scared. Rumours were rife, particularly south of the Lane, where attention was concentrated, (by the KNDC process I would assert), that these homes “had to go”. If residents from that side do come to the Inquiry, which I doubt, as they are well brain washed into believing their homes are “obsolete”, they will give evidence that the entire focus of KNDC was to encourage them to go. And that at this moment they, just as some people here, are “worried to say too much as they will be “punished” for standing up when the compensation is sorted out. “You don’t want to upset ‘em Elizabeth”. But I have decided to go for a sheep not just a lamb while I am at it. It is only more recently (as funds have been made available) that those of us north of the lane have been made to also feel threatened. Prices started to drop soon after KNDC began, and they bottomed out in early 2002, and have come up ever since, particularly since the Capital of Culture award summer 2003, but they were coming up before that, and they are still rising.

If I had the resources a great deal more could be exposed. Due to my lack of experience / understanding of this process I was not able to make enough of Karen Flynn’s evidence re our “New Deal” betrayal. I request the Inspector to pay particular attention to the series of letters she provided as evidence.

5) Is a hopefully verbatim transcript of the BBC 2 Programme “How to rescue an empty house” 7.30, 5th October, where Max Hutchinson helps a woman called Judy chose a house. Nothing quite like expert advice, (hence I got Clive Brand to tell me the CPO, on top of everything else, was “illegal” in layman’s terms, he said I had to say “arguably unlawful” in law-speak, that was well before I did the NRA analysis, and the rest of this work).

The reason for this inclusion is that it indicates what our local authority (off stage of the programme) thinks is professional, in our best interest, and appropriate use of resources. The reputation of our LA, and the RSL’s here and elsewhere we feel is something that this Inquiry needs to address as a secondary issue to the CPO, not as a priority but in order to grasp how the tail (elected and / or paid public servants) seems to be wagging the dog (by spending vast sums of public money to damage the public, the natural environment, and civilisation, possibly quite inadvertently “as they know not

what they do” so we are telling them now, while we have the arena. We have said as much when we were consulted, but there is no evidence whatsoever that we were heard.

Judy and Max walk with Mr DB the CE of Liverpool Housing Trust (an RSL) into a house on Fen Grove L8 (we here are L7). “Gosh are empty properties always made this secure?” says Max.....”Don’t worry about it being so gloomy Judy”. DB points out the RSL’s converted fine large houses into flats in the ‘70’s. They find a ceiling has collapsed (soon sort that out) where a roof has been left leaking, but the original staircase is good and should be restored to firmer glory.

“Considering it has been abandoned for 4 years it is in a pretty good state”. “Why has it been left empty when it has such great potential?” “Yes it does, it really should have been smartened up (new coat of paint) 4 or 5 years ago, but the uncertainty about what is going to happen to the area is what’s left it empty for the last four years”. “Oh so you kept it (empty) because you weren’t sure of what the future of the area was(?)”. DB “That is exactly right”. MH “It’s not good though is it?” (to do that). **“No but it’s a deal we did with the local authority which was that we would hold onto it** (that would be our LA) (deal re keeping it empty until after their NRA?) until we knew” (Presumably the deal when they were given it, in need of repair after almost 30 years un-maintained). MH “But why couldn’t you put people in here in the meantime, for example the homeless people living (at additional public expense) in Bed and Breakfast accommodation?” Well I’d have had to spend a pretty large amount of money on doing it up and then.....Unfortunately MH then interrupted, so we didn’t hear what was coming next, presumably another clanger.

“Well I’d be happy to spend money on it if we had confidence it would last more than another 5 or 10 years, but there is a need to knock down loads of properties which are sub-standard and nobody wants to live in”. MH “But people do want big old family homes”. Judy says “I know for a fact that I do”. MH “Don’t you think it is a national disgrace that properties like these are held empty when we are putting people up in B and B. Then DB “Yes, except there are, there is, more property than people on Merseyside”. MH “So no-one wants to live in Liverpool” (incredulously). DB “Not at all, people do, and in fact the population is going up again, so the property market has picked up as a result everything is transforming”.

We have in Liverpool now roughly 16,000 homes boarded up. We have 18,000 more homes wanted (by the people waiting to be housed) and New Heartlands were proposing to demolish 18,000 homes, now reduced to 10,000 (not because that was a sensible idea, but because they couldn’t afford the acquisitions for demolition. The Inspector will remember surveyor Peter McLachlan’s evidence that it would cost possibly £30K to refurbish those properties in need of it, with the potential then to last indefinitely, and £100K to demolish / rebuild (for if lucky 30 year life span).

He must surely agree that the proposals of the scheme do not add up. As Jane Kennedy said the NRA aspirations to reduce the number of disabled people and so on is “social cleansing” for the prestigious city gateway 2008, except that (hopefully Mr Edgington will produce a full portfolio) Bellways do not do “prestigious” and the funds for a road, for a deprived community, (some from Europe) and for provision of more affordable housing, are not being used for the purpose intended. QED.

More of this is shown in our response to Cath Green’s evidence. I left reading her proof until last, and have delegated that task. I am sure the Inspector will have sympathy that I was not able to prepare to cross examine all witnesses, and left the worst two to our barrister (who said he would make time to do a couple).

Time was limited for me particularly as it took 2 full days to get our evidence across. Then as I overwhelmed the Programme Officer I was asked to spend another couple of days putting it on CD, and then soon after make another check of everything on paper taking another 2 days. So besides putting together our evidence, and assimilating their evidence, I lost 5 days in the logistics of Graham being overwhelmed. That, in addition to not being given information until the last moment, or not at all, has forced us into the situation that such as this is late.

That is not, as Mr Cameron suggested to me confidentially because we are trying to pull any tricks. Nor is it as suggested by him that we have produced an excess of evidence on matters that are irrelevant. If he was as intimate with the scenario as we are he would I am sure have a grasp on what matters.