

## SUTTON ESTATE

16 February 2015.

Affinity Sutton, the social housing association that owns William Sutton's 1912 philanthropic estate in Cale Street, Chelsea, plans to rebuild most of it. Many residents have already been moved but some remain and some are highly critical of what Affinity seeks to do.

This is a complicated case. Here is how the Chelsea Society sees it.

- Affinity has been in negotiation with the Borough Council over rebuilding for years and intends to submit a planning application shortly.
- In the past money for modernising social housing estates was available from Westminster.
- This is no longer the case so the practice of raising money by selling parts of estates for private flats has grown up.
- In this case, Affinity plans to sell 40% of the area of the estate. This would leave 60% for new, high quality, social housing.
- Opponents of such a scheme call this 'social cleansing': out with the poor, in with the rich.
  
- Over the years some of the existing blocks have been modernised, have lifts and are said by tenants to be satisfactory.
- Could the rest of the estate be modernised at lower cost than rebuilding thereby reducing the amount needing to be sold? Affinity has not offered such an approach.
- Would tenants accept the lower quality flats that would result? Almost certainly if the rents were reasonable.
  
- The Chelsea Society would like to see figures for such an approach. We would also like to see the Borough Council make a capital contribution to Affinity to enable less of the estate to be sold.
- Would this be legal and practical? We are trying to find out.

Terence Bendixson