

Questions and Answers re: Ledbury Estate residents (July 2024)

As a result of the need to ask you to move out of the three remaining blocks on the Ledbury Estate, please see some answers to questions you may have.

We know there were existing problems with the buildings, but does this mean that the building is more unsafe than before?

All over the country we are seeing a rise in fires involving lithium batteries, which are used in e-scooters and mobility scooters. When combined with the buildings' issues, which have worsened, the risk of fire is increased. While the situation can be managed in the short-term, the safest option is to move residents out on a permanent basis before the blocks are demolished and replaced as planned.

Am I safe living in the building while you find me somewhere to move to?

Yes. In addition to the waking watch remaining in place, we will be carrying out works to mitigate the risks in the short-term as we support everyone to move out. This will include:

- Maintaining a zero-tolerance approach in all three buildings to lithium batteries used in electric modes of transports, including e-scooters, e-bikes, and mobility scooters.
- Installing additional smoke detection in the corridors and lobbies.
- Additional fire compartmentation works in flats and communal areas.

When will the works begin?

We will write to you to confirm the programme of works as soon as possible and do expect that to be within the coming days. We would be grateful for your cooperation by providing access to your flat when our contractors get in touch to arrange works.

When will I have to leave?

You will be required to move as soon as we can find suitable housing for you to move to, so any time from now. We will work with you on this, in a one-to-one way.

Will my move be permanent or temporary?

It could be either. Your one-to-one conversation with our housing officers will help you decide.

Where will I be moving to?

The council has enough homes in the borough for everyone to move into. This includes new council homes, recently vacated council homes, or council-owned temporary accommodation. We will look at your individual needs and where we are not able to meet those needs through the available homes, we will explore

alternative temporary accommodation, such as hotels or accommodation in the private sector.

Where can I put my things?

Your possessions can stay in your flat at the moment, then we have storage for your things so they will be safe and we will help you with the move. You should take valuables, special possessions that you can easily carry, and any important ID with you.

Will I have to pay for my things to be moved?

No, we will help you with the move and you will not have to pay.

Will I get compensation for my decor and furnishings when I move?

Yes, permanent tenants and leaseholders will receive Home Loss payments when they move to their new homes.

How will I get to my children's school or important doctor's appointments?

Please ask your housing officer or visit the Tenants and Residents Hall on the estate for any help or support you need.

How long do we need to move out for and when can I return?

You will not be returning to the existing three Ledbury Towers as they will be demolished. Permanent tenants have the Right to Return to the estate when it is rebuilt with new homes. Indeed, some have already chosen their new home.

Where can I get help and advice?

Your housing officer will come and talk to you. We will write to you with any updates and you can visit the Tenants and Residents Hall, on the Ledbury Estate, from 8am to 8pm to talk to someone who can answer any questions you have. You can also call **020 7732 2757** or **020 7732 2886** or email Ledburyhousingteam@southwark.gov.uk

I am living in temporary accommodation; where are you moving me to?

You have options; either a permanent move or temporary move. As part of the moving process, we will conduct a suitability assessment to ensure the property you move to meets the needs for you and your family. Where we do not have enough permanent homes, we will move you to alternative temporary accommodation. If this is the case, once you have moved, we will be making further contact to determine the next steps to provide you with permanent accommodation.

I rent from a private landlord; what are my options?

You can choose a permanent move or a temporary move. As part of the moving process, we will conduct a suitability assessment to ensure the property you move to meets the needs for you and your family. Where we do not have enough permanent homes, we will move you to temporary accommodation. If this is the case, once you have moved, we will be making further contact to determine the next steps to provide you with permanent accommodation.

I am a secure council tenant; what are my options?

You have options, including a permanent move or temporary move. We retain the records of your preferred rehousing options relating to the new homes at Bromyard House, which will also be part of your long-term housing solutions. Our officers will be in contact to re-confirm these options.

As a leaseholder, where will I live and how will I pay rent?

We can either offer you somewhere to live and discuss your options if you are a resident leaseholder, or the tenant of one, or you can choose where you would prefer to live.

I am a leaseholder; what is the value of my flat now nobody can live in it and how can I sell it?

The process has not changed from what has happened with the redevelopment of Ledbury Estate. Independent valuations of your home will be offered and you are able to seek your own valuation alongside this. The council will buy back your property. For advice on who to speak to, please call **020 7732 2757** or **020 7732 2886** or email Ledburyhousingteam@southwark.gov.uk

What size property will I be entitled to?

We aim to rehouse residents within the same size property currently occupied. However where residents are under-occupying accommodation, we may move you to a temporary accommodation that meets the household property size requirements. Where this is the case, our officers will make further contact to discuss a future permanent move that matches the property size you occupied within the Ledbury towers.

Will you be in contact with me about where I am moving to or do I need to contact someone?

The Ledbury Housing Team will be in contact directly to confirm your household details and housing needs. We will then match you up with an available property that is suitable for your needs. However, should you want to discuss your rehousing needs before then, you can visit the Tenants and Residents Hall, on the Ledbury Estate, from 8am to 8pm to talk to someone who can answer any questions you have. You can also call **020 7732 2757** or **020 7732 2886** or email Ledburyhousingteam@southwark.gov.uk

What is happening to the building when we move out?

Plans were already in place for the Ledbury Towers to be demolished making way for 340 brand new warm, dry and safe homes for you or other people in Southwark.

You can find out more about this on our website here:

<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/housing/new-council-homes/where-we-re-building/old-kent-road/ledbury-towers-estate>

Why can't I bring my e-scooter, e-bike or mobility scooter into my flat or the rest of the building?

These types of electric vehicles use lithium batteries, which can be efficient and convenient, but also carry certain risks if not used and maintained properly or when involved in a fire. On average, there was a fire from a lithium battery in an e-bike or e-scooter every two days in 2023 in London.

They are not safe for the Ledbury Towers, which already have problems with the buildings. **They must not enter the building under any circumstances.**

Where can I store my e-scooter, e-bike or mobility scooter if I can't bring it into my flat or the rest of the building?

There are a number of garages available for you to store your electric vehicle. The Tenants and Residents Hall is open for you from 8am to 8pm to talk to someone about this. You can also call: **020 7732 2757** or **020 7732 2886** or email Ledburyhousingteam@southwark.gov.uk

Where can I charge my e-scooter, e-bike or mobility scooter if I can't bring it into my flat or the rest of the building?

The Tenants and Residents Hall is open for you from 8am to 8pm to talk to someone about this. You can also call: **020 7732 2757** or **020 7732 2886** or email Ledburyhousingteam@southwark.gov.uk

What happens if I do bring my e-scooter, e-bike or mobility scooter into the building?

Our zero-tolerance approach to fire-risk items is for everyone's safety. If these items are seen in the buildings they will be removed immediately without notice.

Why can't the waking watch enforce zero tolerance on e-bikes and e-scooters so that this accelerated process isn't needed?

It is very difficult for any landlord to 100% guarantee that no modes of transport needing lithium batteries will enter a building whatsoever. While the situation in the remaining Ledbury towers can be managed in the short-term, the safest option is to move residents out on a permanent basis before the blocks are demolished and replaced as planned.

I have other items that use lithium batteries – are they banned too?

Some essential everyday items – like smartphones, laptops, tablets, and power tools – use lithium batteries. These are exempt from the ban. They are allowed in the building because there are safety precautions you can take to minimise their fire risk.

Please follow these guidelines:

- Avoid overcharging – do not leave devices charging unattended for long periods and unplug them once they are fully charged
- Check batteries regularly – inspect for signs of damage or wear, such as swelling, leakage, or overheating. Replace any damaged batteries immediately.
- Store batteries properly – store batteries in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight and heat sources
- Avoid damage to batteries – handle batteries and devices with care to prevent drops or impact that could damage the battery
- Dispose of batteries safely – do not put batteries in your household bins. Anything smaller than a standard microwave can be brought to your nearest electrical recycling bank or the Reuse and Recycling Centre, 43 Devon Street, Old Kent Road, SE15 1AL

What should I do if there's a fire or explosion involving a lithium battery?

Please follow your existing fire evacuation plan.

On hearing the communal fire alarm you should:

- Leave your flat immediately, ensuring your flat door is closed behind you
- Exit the building safely
- Inform the waking watch (who are based on site) and call 999 when safe to do so

Always follow the guidance of the waking watch and the London Fire Brigade.

On hearing the fire or heat alarm in your flat, you should:

- Leave your flat immediately, ensuring your flat door is closed behind you
- Exit the building
- Inform the waking watch (who are based on site) and call 999 when safe to do so

Always follow the guidance of the waking watch and the London Fire Brigade.

Which blocks on Ledbury Estate are affected?

All three tower blocks: Skenfrith, Peterchurch and Sarnsfield

How many residents live in the three blocks?

There are 131 households, 98 of which are temporary accommodation; 18 are council tenants; 15 of the 131 are leaseholders and 8 of these have tenants of leaseholders living there.

What is the issue with the buildings, how was it discovered and by who?

The buildings have problems with cracking and gaps between the concrete walls, first raised by residents in 2017. The council responded by asking structural engineers to carry out surveys of the buildings.

Emergency work was carried out by the council based on the recommendations of the structural surveys to make the buildings safe, in agreement with the fire brigade. These included:

- removal of the gas system
- installation of automatic fire detection in flats
- introduction of waking watch patrols
- change of fire evacuation strategy from 'stay put' to 'simultaneous evacuation'

In 2021, we worked with residents to decide on a long-term plan to redevelop the Ledbury towers which was voted on by residents in a ballot. Given a range of options, 86% of voters chose to demolish and rebuild the blocks with Right to Return for permanent tenants which saw residents begin to move out. This also triggered the demolition of Bromyard House in 2022.

As part of our building safety programme, we pro-actively carried out further invasive fire risk assessments to the high-rise buildings on the Ledbury Estate. These reports have shown that the risk of fire has increased due to the problems with the buildings being worse combined with the emerging risk of fires associated with lithium batteries. This has made things more urgent and residents are required to move out sooner than expected.

The Ledbury Towers have reached the end of their life and must be demolished. Hundreds of new council homes will be built on the estate.