

1 March 2023

Dear Residents,

You will be aware that the Council, working with Highgate Newtown Community Partners, is building a new community centre and housing in your neighbourhood. The homes and new community centre are due to be completed later this year.

We are writing to you because a new opportunity has arisen with the announcement by the government of a special fund for safe haven housing. Part of this fund is designed to help secure permanent homes for people who worked for the British Government in Afghanistan until they were evacuated in 2021. These evacuees have been awarded special status to come to the UK and make their lives here because of their contribution to supporting the British Armed Forces as translators, doctors, special forces, civil servants, journalists, and many other roles. There are around 45 families still living in hotels in Camden – and they have built strong links to the area. They are sending their children to our local schools, many are working in Camden – and they want to make a home here and contribute to our community.

This new government funding, which has been secured as a result of lobbying by local councils, will allow Camden to convert the flats that were designated for private sale at the Highgate Newtown Community Centre site into council housing. The proposal is then to offer these homes under an affordable housing scheme to our evacuee families.

This would mean the homes stay as part of the council housing stock for future generations. However, the special funding scheme means we cannot allocate these properties to people on our general housing waiting list. We know that many local people are in need of housing or are living in overcrowded homes because we don't have enough council properties in Camden. This is why we are also delivering a programme of housebuilding and house purchasing for local people waiting for council homes. Camden Council has built over 700 council and living rent homes, bought back into use over 150 homes to house homeless families and has just launched a wider buy-back scheme to provide larger homes for overcrowded families on the waiting list.

The proposal to change the tenure of the flats at the Highgate Newtown site from private sale to council owned will not involve any changes or delays to the construction programme and will not change the plans for the new Community Centre. Highgate Newtown Community Partners are already making plans to involve new residents in their programme of activities and to support them to settle and thrive. Brookfield Primary School and Highgate Library are also keen to welcome the new Afghan children and families to the community.

There has been a lot of interest from buyers in purchasing the private sale homes which have been part of the new development. Prospective buyers have been informed that the properties are being withdrawn from the market and we recognise some may be disappointed.

There is still a long way to go and we haven't yet secured the investment but we are in positive negotiations and we wanted to share this news with local residents at the earliest opportunity. Should we be successful regarding the funding, we will work together with local partners to ensure these new residents are welcomed and supported to fully integrate into our community.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us.
Our email addresses are below.

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