

10th December 2023

STATEMENT FROM THE RESIDENTS OF BARTON HOUSE

We the tenants of Barton House have over the past few weeks faced a very stressful and traumatic time, removed from our homes at extremely short notice and plunged into dark and uncertain times where our very futures hang in the balance. However we feel as if we have faced these challenges with dignity, courage and fortitude. We have managed to do this because we are not just a group of council tenants, not a group of random individuals; we are a strong and united community that has been sixty five years in the making.

We are diverse, we are from many different backgrounds, speak many different languages, our ages range from folks in their eighties to a baby born just days before the evacuation, we are of many religions and none. We are teachers, nurses, we are office workers, taxi drivers, bankers and broadcasters. We are many things but what unites us is that we are friends, neighbours and tenants of Barton House.

We are a community that cares, we supported each other through the Covid crisis, leaving food parcels outside the doors of those who were isolating. We look after each others children, helping them with their homework, and stand by each other in times of need. When one family was being racially abused by some youths from the wider neighbourhood, it was the tenants of Barton House would stood by them and drove the thugs away in a non-violent show of solidarity. This is just one example of how we, as a community stand together.

Throughout the whole period from the events of the evacuation onwards, our unity and solidarity has brought praise from councilors, council workers and the media alike, and this is only possible because we are a strong community. We are the sort of community that modern Britain strives for, caring, diverse and united, please do not throw our community away. We love Barton House, yes it is not perfect, but it is our home and we feel the very layout of the building helps bring us and bind us together, from the lifts and communal laundry to the open walkways and the garden, it is to quote a 1960's BBC report, 'A village in the sky', and a large majority of the villagers wish to stay.

However, we also understand that some of our community do wish to leave as they no longer feel safe in Barton House or any high-rise. We respect their opinion and wish to support them as well, so we also request that these members of our community be given maximum support so that their relocation is carried out quickly, smoothly and they be offered suitable accommodation that serves their needs.

We understand that Bristol City Council are currently facing a series of tough choices over this and many issues at the moment, but we ask that if at all possible our community with in the block is cherished and preserved and not consigned to the dustbin of local history.

Finally we would like to point out why Barton House is bright cream and orange in colour. Twenty years ago the community of the block stood and fought together to save Barton House from demolition under the then 'New Deal For Communities' scheme. This was a battle we won and the block was renovated. When asked to choose a colour scheme we chose cream and orange so the block would stand out as a beacon, not just for the community of Barton House, but for Barton Hill and Bristol as well, and indeed it stand out on the city skyline and glows in the sunlight. It is a sign of a strong, inclusive and welcoming community, our community, our area, our city. And we hope and pray the beacon will stand just as proud into the future.

SAVE OUR HOMES, SAVE OUR COMMUNITY.

ENDS