



**HOUSE OF LORDS
LONDON SW1A 0PW**

17 September 2015

Mick Sweeney
Group Chief Executive
One Housing Group
100 Chalk Farm Road
London NW1 8EH

Dear Mick,

38-44 Islington Park Street, London N1

I'm writing to express my very real concern at the actions of One Housing Group in relation to the properties at 38-44 Islington Park Street, which were taken over by OHG from Patchwork about ten years ago. These properties and their residents were in my parliamentary constituency, of course, and I'm very familiar with their history and present circumstances. The outstanding thing about these properties is that the residents have always been a genuine community, supporting each other and ensuring that many vulnerable people can be well housed and can lead full lives as a result. They have also been in all practical terms tenants, first of Patchwork and then of OHG. They have paid their rent regularly, have reported maintenance needs, have kept everything in good order, and have made sure that any new residents are people in real housing need, with referrals over many years for example from the Probation Service and Social Services.

Relations with OHG now seem to have broken down, and it does seem to me that the fault for this does not lie with the residents. There was a genuine dialogue under way some years ago, but this was broken off by OHG's unilateral decision in 2010. The tenants have regularly offered to continue the discussion, but have received no response. Surely the best way forward, rather than notices to quit, would be for OHG to sit down with the tenants and decide how best to address any issues that there might be?

The principal argument advanced, as far as I can see, is that, because of the special community nature of the tenant group, the individual tenants have no security of tenure. (This argument is allied with an accusation of new residents "jumping the queue".) These arguments simply don't hold water. Many of the residents have been tenants here for decades. The group have only been unable to accept referrals of those in need in recent years, since the action by OHG against them began. If these were housing association tenants in any other circumstances or location OHG would not, surely, dream of proceeding in this way with eviction proposals.

I really do hope that you will think again on this, and at very least re-start the dialogue that was broken off so peremptorily in 2010. I look forward to hearing from you. Best wishes,

*Your sincerely,
Chris*

Rt Hon Lord Smith of Finsbury