

# UPDATE, JULY 2017

# HEATON GREENS



Andrew Gray



Homes should be built for People not Range Rovers!

## HOUSING — LET'S MAKE IT SECURE, AFFORDABLE AND DRY

### TOO MANY PEOPLE IN HEATON ARE LIVING IN SUB-STANDARD PRIVATE RENTED HOUSING

During the General Election campaign, our manifesto proposed rent controls and an end to letting fees to cut the costs of private rented housing. We also called for more secure tenancies for private renters and the introduction of mandatory licensing for all landlords, and we support the development of renters' unions to give tenants a voice.

Over 2,000 Heaton residents registered to vote during the campaign, many inspired

by a vision for a society that would better value Generation Rent. This was hugely positive.

But a great vision is not enough. Too many of you are living in accommodation that does not meet decency thresholds, and paying over the odds in rents and letting fees. In this newsletter, we focus on policies that could be implemented locally, to improve our private rented housing.

## PRACTICAL MEASURES TO IMPROVE PRIVATE RENTED HOUSING IN HEATON

### WE CAN PUT PRESSURE ON THE BAD LANDLORDS AND SUPPORT THE GOOD ONES, TO RAISE STANDARDS

We need joined-up working between the Council and local people, to:

- Strengthen the voluntary landlord accreditation scheme, by making it harder for non-accredited landlords to advertise locally.
- Align the Acorn Ethical Lettings Charter with the Council's accreditation standards and its private rented service.
- Publicise the Council support available, especially Environmental Health and other regulatory services.
- Work with universities, letting agents, landlords and community groups to share information on

local services and 'good neighbour' practices.

- Provide capital grants for draught-proofing and insulation, to improve housing quality and cut energy bills.

Andrew Gray has worked with members of Acorn, an independent community union, to develop their Ethical Lettings Charter (ELC) locally. Support from residents and targeted campaigns have ensured that several letting agents in our area have signed up to the ELC. By working together with Acorn and aligning their accreditation standards with the ELC, the Council could help secure and enforce better standards in Heaton's private rented housing.



Putting pressure on local lettings agents to sign the Ethical Lettings Charter



This graffiti in Heaton sums up our housing crisis

## COUNCIL DOES U-TURN ON BEDDING BAN, THANKS TO GREEN CAMPAIGN

### LABOUR COUNCIL PROPOSAL TO CRIMINALISE HOMELESSNESS CHALLENGED BY NEWCASTLE GREEN PARTY

In 2016, Newcastle City Council proposed a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) covering the whole city. The proposal would have criminalised non-aggressive begging, and threatened anyone in possession of bedding materials with a £1,000 fine or fixed penalty notice.

Andrew Gray worked with Liberty, Keep Streets Live and other national groups to oppose the PSPO. Following an online petition and street protest, the

Council revised its proposal to exclude the 'bedding' clause, redefine begging and end a 'one size fits all' approach.

We have thanked the Labour Cabinet for making these major changes. We do not think that a PSPO is the best way to deal with the complex issues and addictions that underlie much of the begging or use of lethal highs within our city. But the U-turn on the bedding ban was very welcome.

# BUILD HOMES FOR THE LONG-TERM, NOT FOR A QUICK BUCK

## POOR QUALITY HOUSING HARMS THE WHOLE COMMUNITY



Student housing being 'assembled' from shipping containers, Ouseburn, 2015

Substandard private rented housing does not just impact on the renters. The whole community suffers when residents have to move repeatedly to secure better housing, or when front gardens and back yards alike are left in poor condition.

As more students move into purpose-built accommodation, we need to redouble efforts to support renters, to prevent the worst properties being left empty and to ensure that only the best landlords do business in our neighbourhood.

## MAKING LANDLORD ACCREDITATION MORE EFFECTIVE

### THE BAN ON LETTING BOARDS COULD BE USED TO 'FREEZE OUT' UNACCREDITED LANDLORDS

The ban on letting boards in our terraces provides an opportunity to starve unaccredited landlords of publicity. The Council's private rented service could be working with universities and local businesses to ensure that they do not fill the advertising gap left by the boards.

Andrew Gray has reported many letting boards to Planning Control since the ban came into force, ensuring that a few agents are not able to ignore the ban. Contact Andrew if you see a 'To Let' board where you think it should not be allowed, and he will check the regulated area, report to Planning and monitor the removal of any that should not be present.



Letting boards have been banned in most Heaton terraces

## CONTACT DETAILS

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For news from Newcastle Green Party, to deliver leaflets in your street, or to view copies of previous updates from Heaton Greens, see the website or contact Andrew.

<http://newcastleupontyne.greenparty.org.uk>

facebook.com/NewcastleGreenParty

@NCLGreenParty



## LEARNING LESSONS FROM THE GRENFELL TOWER TRAGEDY

Andrew Gray writes:

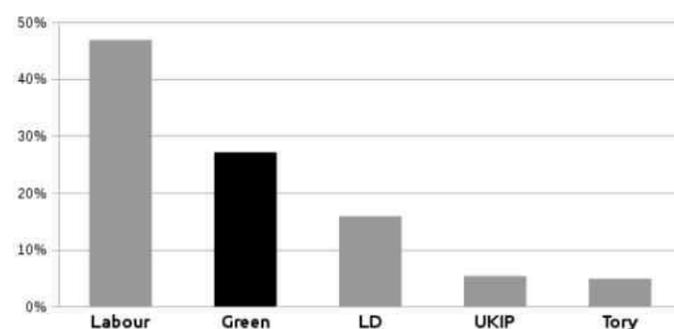
"As I write this newsletter, the death toll from the Grenfell Tower fire is rising, and the systemic failures of government, council and housing management organisation are being increasingly exposed.

"Your Homes Newcastle (YHN, who manage Newcastle's council housing) have confirmed that they have not installed the kind of external cladding used at Grenfell Tower. I have asked YHN to publish details of exactly what materials they HAVE used in recent refurbishments, so that tenants locally can be independently reassured that their homes are safe. They deserve nothing less.

"Looking forwards, all Councils must ensure that they do not take an 'outsource and forget' attitude to the provision of public services. Previous budget cuts for Public Safety and Regulation, which have reduced many services in Newcastle to a 'statutory minimum', may also need review.

"All government, both local and national, needs to learn lessons from this shocking tragedy."

How South Heaton voted March 2017



Join us to campaign for a fairer, greener Heaton. Click 'get involved' on the website.

## UPDATES IN BRIEF

### NEXT BACK LANES LITTERPICK

Next community litterpick Sunday 23rd July, meet 1pm outside TSB on Chillingham Road.

### NEWCASTLE WASTE COMMISSION CONSULTATION

Help form the city's waste strategy, 19th and 26th July, See 'Waste Strategy' page on our website for details.