

## PRESS RELEASE

### **LEWISHAM MAYOR SIGNS LEASE ON SITE FOR LONDON'S LARGEST SELF-BUILD AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT (AND BURIES TIME CAPSULE TO MARK THE EVENT)**

*Release date Tuesday 4 February*

Lewisham Mayor Damien Egan today officially signed the lease on a plot of land in Church Grove Ladywell, which is to be used to accommodate London's largest community-led affordable self-build housing project.

And to commemorate the deal a time capsule was buried by the Mayor, alongside Lewisham's Cabinet Member for Housing, Paul Bell, and Anurag Verma, the chair of RUSS, the local community land trust that is behind the project.



The capsule was buried next to the new Community Hub building that RUSS has recently completed. This was constructed by more than 90 RUSS volunteers over the last six months, and it forms the first phase of the project.

Later this year RUSS expects to start building 33 homes on the one-acre site. The project will include a range of homes, from one to four-bedroom properties. The cost of the homes will be lower than equivalent properties. RUSS has achieved this by: –

- Working in partnership with Lewisham Council to facilitate the site on a 250 year lease. The land will be held in a Community Land Trust, so the homes will be valued based mainly on the value of the building; not the building *and* the land.
- The residents have had the homes designed so they are simple and cost effective to build. It is also proposed that they will do some of the construction work themselves, bringing the costs down further.

The time capsule contains a number of items that represent Lewisham in 2020. These include: an album of photographs that shows the volunteers that built the new Community Hub space, a copy of the *Lewisham Ledger* magazine, a copy of 'Queenie' by Lewisham author Candice Carty-Williams, a list of groceries and other items from 2020 (with their current costs), a book about Lewisham's self-build history by RUSS member Alice Grahame, and a copy of the lease.



Mr Egan also included a letter for the people who open the capsule in the next century. In this he explains the Borough's diversity, its ambitions to build a thousand new social housing properties, and its support for refugees.

Soon the capsule will have a plaque inserted above saying that it is not to be re-opened until 2120.

RUSS Chair Anurgag Verma said: "It's been a long haul getting our project to this stage, and Lewisham Council has supported us on many occasions along the journey. Our site at the end of Church Grove is one of the main things they've assisted us with, so the signing of the lease on the land is an important hurdle for us to clear."

The Rural Urban Synthesis Society (RUSS) is a locally-based Community Land Trust that now has almost 1000 members. You can find out more by checking out our website. [www.theruss.org](http://www.theruss.org)

**Media enquiries or requests for photos to RUSS Trustee Ted Stevens on 07860 336087**



*Please credit the photographer - Jeff Teader*

