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RESIDENTS of a Toxteth renewal zone fear they may be forced out of their homes – even if their properties are spared the bulldozer.

People living in the Granby triangle claim they are being squeezed out of the area by the Liverpool Council and a private developer, regardless of whether their houses are earmarked for demolition or simply “remodelling”.

Under council plans, Ducie, Jermyn, Cairns and Beaconsfield Streets are all up for renewal. A £27m project, still in its early stages, would see some terraces knocked down and replaced and others refurbished to create a development of 235 homes.

Building company Lovell has been appointed to carry out the scheme and an update report will be presented to the council executive in the new year.

But locals, many of whom are members of the Granby Residents’ Association, say they have been warned that all properties must be owned by the developer before work goes ahead.

If true, any compulsory buy-up of houses would be based at the market value at that time. Residents fear that with more than half the properties standing empty, and many falling into poor repair, prices would be low.

Property values following regeneration would increase massively, putting the new homes out of reach of most current residents.

Liverpool Council says discussions are still underway over “viability” issues and that no decision has yet been made.

But angry residents have vowed to fight any attempt to take their houses and blame the council for letting the area descend into a state of neglect.

Eleanor Lee, a Cairns Street for more than 30 years, said: “It’s is nothing short of legalised theft. If my house was down for refurbishment I’d be happy to fit in with their plans for its exterior. But that’s not enough.

“They want all properties vacant and in their possession. We will be forced to sell up and if we still want to live here – and can afford it – afterwards we’ll have to buy back at the going rate, which most of us can’t afford.

“Forget the capital of culture – I’d call this more a culture of capitalism.”

Over recent months, more and more properties on the streets have become vacant as housing associations move their tenants away.

On Cairns Street only 10 out of 60 homes are now occupied, and many of the empty buildings are in bad condition.

While campaigners admit some demolition is inevitable, they want more involvement in the plans.

They claim many terraces could be made structurally sound and fitted with central heating, double glazing and solar panels for about £30,000 each – far lower than the cost of replacement.

Hazel Tilley, also of Cairns Street, said: “We are stuck in a catch-22 situation. People can’t get mortgages or money for improvements because of the dereliction, which is being allowed to take place by the council. That dereliction is their reason for wanting to bulldoze.”

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A spokesman for Liverpool Council said: “We are aware of residents’ concerns and are in discussions with the developer, Lovell, to address the question of viability. A report is due before the council executive early next year.”

Paul Hulme, Lovell’s regional director, added: “This scheme is still at very early stages. We are currently in negotiations with the council with the aim of reaching a positive solution for people living in the area.”