

STANDSTILL.

'Cheap' houses that have cost much more than a million . . .

POLITICAL DEADLOCK on Liverpool City Council has brought the housing programme almost to a standstill:

- Only one council contract — for 34 houses — has got the go-ahead this year.
- Slum clearance will be held up.
- Modernisation is down drastically.

And the houses-for-sale scheme, which was supposed to cost the city "not a penny" has already cost over £1 million.

"SMALL private estates built at no cost to either rent or ratepayer. People attracted back to our City." That was the Liberals' promise at the elections last May. The houses would be cheap to buy. And there was a lot of sentimental talk about them being intended for "newly weds."

It sounded too good to be true. And it was.

The first of these estates — 190 houses — is being built by Wimpey at Stanfield Road, Everton.

The scheme had already cost the city well over £1 million before a single brick was laid. The corporation had spent £1,500,000 buying up businesses and land, and clearing the 12½-acre site.

Then they sold it to Wimpey for a knock-down £200,000.

PROMISES

It's hardly a good time for selling houses. But Wimpey have nothing to worry about. The corporation have promised to buy any house on the site which is not sold within a month of being completed and advertised.

Council tenants may end up making an extra contribution. The Conservatives and Liberals have agreed to make £100,000 available towards legal fees and removal costs of tenants who buy houses in the city (not

just at Stanfield Road). The money will come from the Housing Revenue Account (tenants' rents).

Anyone who wants to buy the houses will not find them particularly cheap. In April the price quoted for some of them was £8,375. Now it's £9,660. To qualify for a mortgage, buyers will have to be earning around £70 a week.

STANDARDS

Still, there have been some economies. Wimpey got the land cheap. Fewer houses are being built to the acre than is normal with council housing — and for technical reasons low-density housing is cheaper to build.

Other savings have been made by lowering standards. The kitchens in some of the houses are so small that the only thing stopping them qualifying for immediate improvement grants is that they are not old enough.

In 1961 the Parker Morris Committee recommended minimum standards for such things as floor space and heating. Eight years later they were made compulsory for all council housing, but not for private housing.

The idea of council-sponsored building of houses for sale grew partly out of a belief that normal council



The Stanfield Road site.

house building is slow and inefficient. The Stanfield Road scheme was supposed to cut through all the red tape and lead to houses being built fast.

Originally it was thought that the 190 houses would be ready this year. So far four — show houses — are built, and 20 should be completed by the end of the year.

The Liberals have argued that the scheme would ease the pressure on council housing. People living in clearance areas were to be given the first chance to buy.

APPLICANTS

There hasn't exactly been a rush. By August, 130 people had applied to buy houses at Stanfield Road. Only one was from a clearance area.

Six applicants lived in Housing Action Areas, 75 were council tenants, 17 were on the waiting list, and 31 came under the heading "General Public".

It's not yet known how many of these will be able to raise the necessary deposit or have a big enough income to qualify for a mortgage.

Building programme — a political football

BUILDING houses for sale is having a drastic effect on Liverpool's housing programme.

The May elections resulted in a political deadlock on the council, with Labour as the largest party but the Tories and Liberals able to out-vote them when they combine.

They accuse Labour of being doctrinaire in opposing houses-for-sale schemes. They are demanding a review of all sites earmarked for council housing, and pressing for houses-for-sale instead.

The entire housing programme is coming to a standstill as plans are kicked back and forth in the political football match.

In the first eight months of this year only one council housing contract was approved — for 34 houses. (Last year as a whole there were contracts for 1,544 houses.)

At the same time there are 20,000 people on the waiting list and 6,000 houses have to be built by 1980 just

to keep up with the slum clearance programme.

House-for-sale schemes are now being proposed for land needed to rehouse people from slum clearance. One of these sites is the Fearnside Street area of Edge Hill, where 496 council houses were to be built. That has now been stopped, and the site may eventually go for private housing.

To make matters worse, modernisation of older council homes has fallen sharply over the last few years. 2,159 homes were modernised in 1974; 963 last year; and the expected total this year is 329.

Even if the political situation changes, there may be delays in designing new council schemes. The City Architect's Department is being run down through lack of work. Vacancies are not being filled and Council Leader John Hamilton says architects will have to be transferred from designing houses to other work.

Massive Corporation estates built at massive costs to rent and rate payer alike. People uplifted and moved to the far edges of Merseyside.

OR THIS With LIBERAL Control



Small private estates built at no cost to either rent or ratepayer. People attracted back to our City.

**Keep Liverpool In Safe Hands
Vote LIBERAL On May 6th**

Printed and Published by Trevor Jones, 509 Smithdown Road, Liverpool

From a Liberal election leaflet.



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