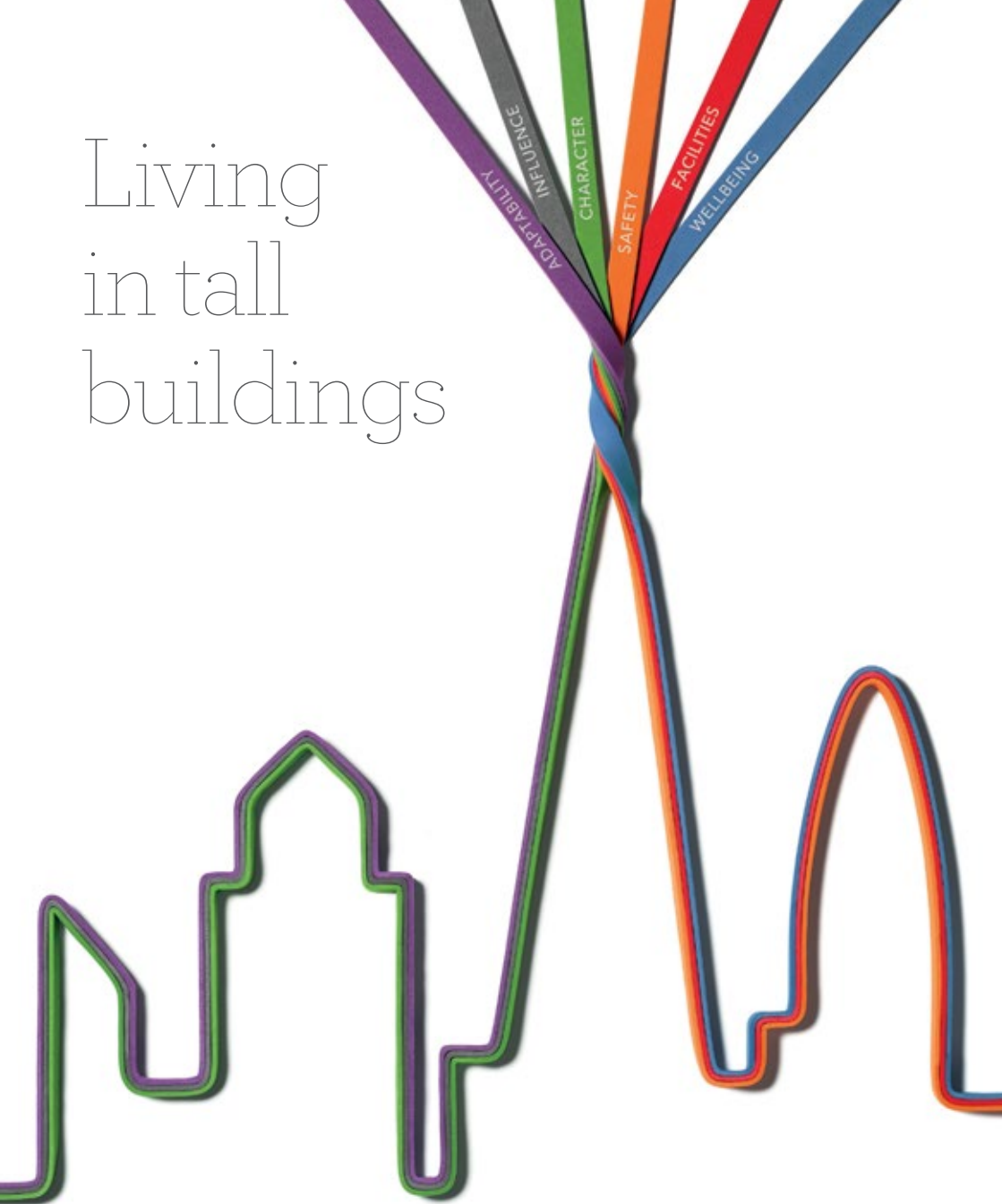


Living in tall buildings



A social sustainability assessment to
support proposals for South Quay Plaza

‘Tall buildings are not the only solution to London’s housing crisis. But they represent an important part of the response. Our job is to make sure they are delivered to the highest quality and for the greatest public good.’

2nd Edition: September 2014



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1.0 Foreword

I think there are four main reasons why tall buildings can make sense.

First, London needs to make the very best use of scarce development land. That means maximising density whilst having due regard for design and context.

Second, they can simply be the right architectural solution. A memorable building, with a strong positive identity, can create a fantastic sense of place. Well-designed landmark buildings with great public realm can become hugely popular elements of our urban landscape.

Third, developing tall buildings on brownfield sites reduces pressure on the green belt. The rapid growth of London is creating more demand for housing, commercial space and public amenity. If this city is not going to go out, it will often need to go up.

Fourthly, London's growing population also increases demands on the transport network. Higher density buildings can make the most of transport infrastructure by locating people close to it. This is inherently more sustainable in an urban environment than building homes at lower densities.

Many people have commented recently about the number of tall buildings submitted for approval. But in planning terms, these are exceptional. The numbers may seem high, but I would guess that relatively few of them are likely to be built. They are costly and complicated to construct; they cannot be phased; and there is often years of significant cost before any return is made, which makes finance hard to secure for some developers.

However, with the right team in the right location, tall buildings can be delivered and make a major contribution through the planning process. With a smaller footprint, they free up more of the ground plane to deliver public realm, play space and other amenities. They also bring considerable benefits through S106 agreements as well as further down the line in stamp duty.

The St George development at One Blackfriars in Southwark, for example, will contribute £29 million to affordable housing, create 200 full time permanent jobs and generate in the region of £35 million in stamp duty for the Treasury. If this and other sites were developed with lower height buildings, the contribution would be less.

But perhaps the key challenge for developers and planners is not about design and location but how you create a sense of community. Historically, when tall buildings have failed it has been because of poor management and maintenance and a lack of attention paid to the social life of people living there.

Research and experience tells us that life in tall buildings can work well for people in any kind of tenure. It suits professionals, older people and students alike. It works best if the design provides a mix of uses and easy access to useful, attractive communal space. The key challenge relates to the way we house families and children. They have to choose tall buildings and enjoy good access to all the facilities they need.

So as we consider the opportunity of South Quay Plaza, it is important to reiterate the benefit of tall buildings.

They can make the best use of scarce land; create fantastic architecture; maximise transport infrastructure; reduce pressure on the green belt; and deliver higher levels of affordable housing, CIL, S106 and stamp duty.

Well-designed landmark buildings with good public realm can make a hugely positive contribution to the skyline and streetscape of London. They are also increasingly popular. The Shard and Swiss Re building, for example, were bitterly opposed but have quickly become icons of London. In fact, some of the most recognisable and best-loved buildings in the world are tall structures.

46% of Londoners agree that tall buildings have made London look better (compared to 25% who don't), and more than a quarter of Londoners say they would be happy living in a tall building (27%), according to the latest research from Ipsos MORI (2014),

Clearly, they are not the only solution to London's housing crisis. But they represent an important part of the response. Our job is to make sure they are delivered to the highest quality and for the greatest public good.

And that is what we aim to do on South Quay Plaza.

AW Pidgley CBE

Chairman, the Berkeley Group



2.0 Introduction

The Berkeley Group has produced a toolkit that helps developers and planners assess the social sustainability of new developments. The aim is to improve people's quality of life and the strength of community. The toolkit involves a set of thirteen criteria and comparative data on the social characteristics of each location.

Planning and housing policy in London has moved over the last two decades towards encouraging higher densities. As a result, we need to understand more about how social sustainability applies to high density developments, specifically to tall residential buildings¹. These types of development will make a significant contribution to housing delivery across the capital over the coming years. As of June 2014, there were 189 new residential towers planned for London. The Mayor is generally supportive, believing tall and large buildings form part of a strategic approach to meeting the city's regeneration and economic development goals².

Tall residential buildings have a number of inherent challenges. In Britain, they come with a historical legacy of mismanagement and frequent

assumptions about poor social outcomes. These schemes present unique challenges in terms of management, security, service charges and privacy, for example.

Conversely, dense areas and tall buildings present opportunities to ensure the viability of high quality community facilities. They make the best use of scarce land, reducing pressure on green space. They provide people with excellent transport access and can reduce environmental impact. They could make a significant contribution to London's housing targets.

This report has two main strands: the first is a practical assessment of the key issues for the proposed development at South Quay Plaza in Tower Hamlets and the actions Berkeley intends to take to make sure this place is socially sustainable. The second, which formed the basis for the assessment, is a review of recent guidance and research on high density living, related to the thirteen criteria in Berkeley's framework.

¹ For the purposes of this report, tall buildings are considered to be those over 20 storeys, in line with the NLA's research, NLA, 2014, Insight Study: London's Growing Up!

² Mayor of London/GLA, 2011, The London Plan, Para. 3.28

The outcome of this assessment is a group of five priorities for South Quay Plaza. These were chosen because they addressed what are likely to be the most pressing needs of the South Quay residents and they could make a significant and lasting effect on their quality of life.

These five priorities are:

- **Well-being**
- **Willingness to act**
- **Community space**
- **Adaptable space**
- **Local identity**

Well-being

To address well-being, Berkeley will work with the Council to implement a system of choice-based lettings. This will maximise the chances of most residents making a positive choice to live in a tall building at South Quay Plaza. Research and experience suggest this is fundamentally important.

Willingness to act

To encourage people's willingness to act, Berkeley will fund the salary of a professional community organiser, help establish a community organisation and online forum, and create a small grants fund to invest in projects proposed and led by residents. These activities will be supported for a fixed period of time.

The management company and social housing providers will be required to agree a management plan which

complements these activities and work together to implement and monitor this as a condition of appointment.

Community space

South Quay Plaza will enjoy dedicated indoor space for the community which can be used for a nursery, crèche or to host events. The precise use of the space will be determined through consultation with the social housing providers and residents (not fixed in advance) and the facility will be accessible and affordable to people of every tenure.

Adaptable space

The design of outdoor space around South Quay Plaza will also be adaptable. Clearly, the mix and the interests of residents will change over time and so public space needs to be flexible and adapt to changing needs – either at different times of the day or week, or as the needs of residents change over time.

Local identity

Finally, to foster a sense of local identity, Berkeley will fund and facilitate a major social event each year. This local festival will help to connect people living on the development, draw people in and spread awareness of South Quay Plaza.

These commitments are set out in more detail in Section 4 below. They do not guarantee a strong community. But they give it a much better chance of emerging.





3.0 South Quay Plaza

3.1

The site and context

Berkeley's South Quay Plaza site is located on the South Dock of the Isle of Dogs, just south of Canary Wharf, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The South Dock is on the transition zone between the very tall and predominantly commercial northern part of the Isle of Dogs and the lower rise, predominately residential area to the south.

Tower Hamlets is a rapidly changing borough with the highest London Plan targets for both residential delivery and employment growth. The minimum ten year housing provision target in Tower Hamlets is 28,850 homes for the period from 2011-2021.

Draft alterations to the adopted plan have revised this target upwards – to 39,310. At least 10,000 of these homes will be built on the Isle of Dogs.

Tower Hamlets' planning policy requires that these new homes are brought forward with a range and mix of dwelling types and tenures to promote 'balanced, socially mixed communities' (Policy SP12). With such ambitious housing demands, new and innovative means of delivery will need to be tested. Part of the solution will be to build at higher densities, including in tall buildings.

South Quay Plaza will deliver two residential-led mixed use buildings of 36 and 68 storeys. South Quay Plaza will

‘South Quay Plaza will be a landmark new development, replacing or revitalising tired office and retail space and building high quality new homes on a critical site in the Isle of Dogs Opportunity Area.’

have approximately 900 new homes, together with retail and office space. These buildings will include affordable and family-sized homes. The retained office space in South Quay Plaza 3 will be refurbished. The development will be set in over two acres of significantly improved, high quality public realm comprising both open space and playspace. This is a rare inclusion in such schemes and is particularly relevant in Canary Wharf where there is a noticeable lack of public open space. The ground floor retail uses will have active frontages that are intended to promote a vibrant and animated public space, encourage more active and enjoyable use of the waterfront and create a destination area for South Dock.

3.2

The vision

South Quay Plaza will be a landmark new development, replacing or revitalising tired office and retail space and building high quality new homes on a critical site in the Isle of Dogs Opportunity Area. It will challenge perceptions of high-rise living and inform best practice for future developments like this across London.

Berkeley's vision is that the development will create:

- **A safe, vibrant place where people want to live**
- **A mixed and balanced community that is genuinely inclusive**
- **One of the few green waterfront spaces in London, known for its light and attractive public space**
- **A destination that brings together local people and businesses**
- **A place where residents feel like they play a part and can influence what goes on**

To help deliver this, Berkeley commissioned a review of current guidance and research on making tall buildings successful, sustainable places to live – feeding into a full pre-application Social Sustainability Assessment for South Quay Plaza.

The next section sets out the aims, methodology and outcomes of the assessment, including specific, practical and implementable commitments which Berkeley has made.

The final section summarises the main findings of the literature review, which informed the assessment. This section uses the thirteen Social Sustainability criteria to focus recommendations.

‘With such ambitious housing demands, new and innovative means of delivery will need to be tested. Part of the solution will be to build at higher densities, including in tall buildings.’



Principal pedestrian routes

- ←--→ Cross routes
- ←--→ North/south connections
- ←--→ Dockside promenade

Active frontages at ground floor

- Proposed A1 to A4 retail/F+B
- Proposed residential lobbies
- Existing office lobby





4.0 The Social Sustainability Assessment

4.1

Background

The National Planning Policy Framework has set out a 'social role' for development which it defines as,

'Supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being'.

Berkeley's Social Sustainability toolkit was officially launched in February 2014, after two years of testing and development. The framework and toolkit were created in partnership with Social Life and the University of

Reading, who specialise in the social dimensions of place-making and sustainability of the built environment.

Berkeley defines social sustainability as follows:

'Social sustainability is about people's quality of life, now and in the future. It describes the extent to which a neighbourhood supports individual and collective well-being.'

Social sustainability combines design of the physical environment with a focus on how the people who live in and use a space relate to each other and function as a community. It is enhanced by development which provides the right infrastructure to support a strong social and cultural life, opportunities for people to get involved, and scope for the place and the community to evolve.^{3'}

³ The Berkeley Group, Creating Strong Communities: How to Measure the Social Sustainability of New Housing Developments

The Framework consists of three dimensions, which capture a key aspect of social sustainability:

- Infrastructure and social amenities
- Voice and influence
- Social and cultural life

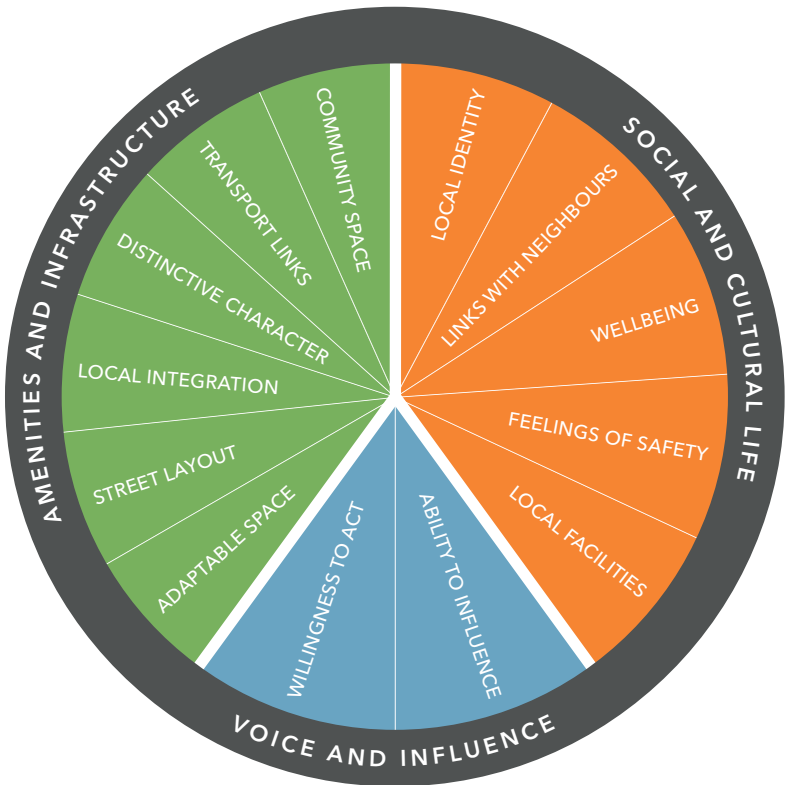
These encompass both physical and non-physical factors that contribute to people’s quality of life. These aspects of sustainability are underpinned by thirteen indicators reflecting many of the most important influences on social outcomes in a community. These are shown in the wheel below.

4.2

Methodology

By thinking about social sustainability from the start, Berkeley and its partners have the ability to shape decisions about design and management of the new development and maximise people’s quality of life.

This means the development will be designed in a way that ensures it performs well against the 13 indicators set out in the diagram below.



The social sustainability methodology for early stage assessments is as follows:

STAGE 1

Data analysis

Data analysis is undertaken to show what is likely to be strong and what might be missing in areas and communities like this.

STAGE 2

Workshop 1

A facilitated workshop with the project team and relevant external parties.

This looks at best practice and the data analysis, before selecting a small number of criteria to focus on.

Actions are then generated for each criteria.

STAGE 3

Workshop 2

About two weeks after the first workshop the project team present their ideas back to the consultant.

The consultant critically appraises the proposals to ensure they are appropriate, and suggests any other additional ideas which could be considered.

Key actions are agreed to inform the design and delivery of the development

STAGE 4

Proposal

The project team write up agreed proposals for the scheme and distribute this to relevant people, including the developer's Managing Director.

STAGE 5

Implementation

Key actions are incorporated within the masterplan, management strategy and procurement strategies.

The following boxes set out a brief summary of the socio-economic context of the site and the projected

demographic profile of the new development which were used to inform discussions.

The site in context

Detailed baseline data was produced for the area in which the development will be located, as well as benchmarks which compare social characteristics and attitudes in similar areas to the national averages. This provided an empirical basis for discussion on the needs and priorities of the area.

South Quay Plaza is positioned on the cusp of the financial centre at Canary Wharf. The economic and demographic history of the Isle of Dogs has been one of dramatic and significant change since the 1980s, and the area continues to be in flux as the focus on office space development over the last 20 years shifts towards more mixed use and residential development in the area.

As a result of this historical legacy, ethnicity, employment, housing type, tenure and family type all differ significantly between the north and south of the Isle of Dogs, with South Quay Plaza on the border between the two.

The north is dominated by office use and what residents there are, are less deprived, with fewer children

per household. The southern part of the Island is lower density, ethnically diverse, and has larger households with more children.

The site has excellent transport access and is located within easy walking and public transport distance of a wide range of community facilities including schools, healthcare, leisure and sport facilities.

These facilities will come under increasing pressure from population growth in the area but Tower Hamlets Council is attempting to address this through the provision of new services and through contributions from development to the improvement of existing services.

National survey statistics for neighbourhoods with similar characteristics to the area around South Quay Plaza show that these types of places tend not to have strong relationships between neighbours and yet residents still have a relatively high level of satisfaction with their local area and people are willing to pull together to improve things.



Tower Hamlets

The estimated demographic profile of South Quay Plaza, as proposed

Based on the illustrative residential unit mix (which is subject to ongoing negotiation with LBTH Council) South Quay Plaza would have an estimated residential population of between 1,600 and 1,750 people.

Of these, 210 would be children under the age of 18 as set out in the table below:

Age group (years)	Estimated number
Under 5's	90
5-11	70
12+	50
Total	210
All people	1,600 - 1,750

Figures have been rounded

The employment space on-site will accommodate around 2,000 FTE jobs in offices, shops, bars and restaurants.

4.3

Outcomes of the assessment

Informed by the research undertaken as part of this report (as outlined in Section 5), and the outcomes of the team workshops, Berkeley has prioritised five of the thirteen indicators. These priorities were chosen because:

- They addressed what are envisaged to be the most pressing needs of the South Quay residents
- Berkeley's actions under these priorities could make a significant and lasting effect on the quality of life of residents

These five priorities are set out below.

Well-being

Well-being is about people's day to day experience living on the development and their life satisfaction.

‘Berkeley wants South Quay Plaza to have a unique identity that helps new residents and visitors feel linked to it and to each other.’

South Quay Plaza will be a vertical neighbourhood and home to up to 1,750 people in different types of households and with different needs. It is therefore necessary to ensure that actions promote well-being for different groups and help people meet their own identified needs.

Berkeley will put in place strategies to reduce the risk of isolation and ensure that residents make positive choice about living in South Quay Plaza.

To help ensure that new residents have high level of satisfaction in their new homes, Berkeley commits to:

- Work with Tower Hamlets and social housing providers to try and ensure that families in social rented homes have made a positive choice to move to SQP and are happy with living in tall buildings. This should involve monitoring and controlling the child density of the development and location of family accommodation. It may also include providing some of the affordable homes for people who research shows have a greater preference for this type of housing such as older people.
- Engage with local community projects. The Isle of Dogs already has a wealth of successful and well-run community projects, such as City Gateway and the East End Community Foundation. Berkeley commits to consult and forge links with local groups with a history of community action. This will provide invaluable local experience, build on success and avoid duplicating services. Berkeley commits to act as intermediary and support these links between residents and these groups. It will be the job of the community facilitator (discussed below) to co-ordinate joint activities which are for the benefit of the South Quay Plaza community.

- Provide small grants to facilitate community projects. These could be granted in small tranches with recipients decided by the community forum and/or any partnership which is formed with an existing community project. Grants would be offered on the proviso that there was a system in place to ensure fair distribution to groups of a range of ages and interests. Funding should be allocated and ring-fenced so as to maximise benefits for the SQP community, especially those groups who may find living in tall buildings most challenging, such as families.

Willingness to act

Willingness to Act is about creating a community in which people work together to manage and improve their neighbourhood.

Berkeley aims to ensure the residents at South Quay Plaza have the opportunity, should they wish to, to engage with other residents, housing providers and estate management services to communicate their concerns effectively and realise solutions or to organise community events. The key issue is how residents can be encouraged to involve themselves in their community. Initiatives should, as a priority, have a sense of ownership amongst the

community, should be seen to be open to all types of people with different needs and be able to effect real change.

As such Berkeley commits to:

- Facilitate a community organisation or forum with a broad base and provide early support to get it underway. This would be open to, and encourage, membership from residents in all tenures and age groups. Facilitation will entail an initial drive for new residents to join and small financial grants to meet running costs if required.
- Have a professional events or community facilitator in the early stages (time period dependent upon the period over which people move in). The role of the facilitator will be to kick-start the community organisation/forum with a view to handing it over to the residents themselves.
- Facilitate a website or online forum for residents to use to connect with each other: this should be run by residents themselves to ensure it is appropriate and relevant. This should

make individual and collective action cheap and easy for residents, in order to make positive changes and deal with potential issues.

- Ensure that the management plans of the social housing provider and the private tenures are aligned and that their teams work together to maximise the opportunities for positive and efficient outcomes and respond to residents' concerns.
- Provide all these opportunities in a tenure-blind manner. Berkeley will aim, through their procurement process, to require the housing provider and Estates Management Company to agree to the measures set out in this assessment, set and monitor performance indicators (KPIs) and seek creative solutions to working with residents for the improvement of the development as whole.
- Seek to include in the contract with the social housing provider a requirement to monitor resident well-being at set intervals over the lifetime of the development (e.g. every five years) and maintain or re-employ a community facilitator if necessary.

‘An attractive landmark that transforms or complements its surroundings can create a sense of belonging and local pride.’



Community space

Community Space is about the design and management of public space, including multi-functional space, and putting in place the right management arrangements.

In keeping with findings of this report, and in order to ensure the well-being of new residents at South Quay Plaza, Berkeley commits to provide indoor and outdoor community spaces that are adaptable to a range of uses. Detailed uses are not decided - they will depend on the partners chosen to manage the space and the types of needs of the community, but broadly speaking the space could provide:

- Shared areas where residents can socialise with each other and their friends;
- Space for parents to take the children outside the home

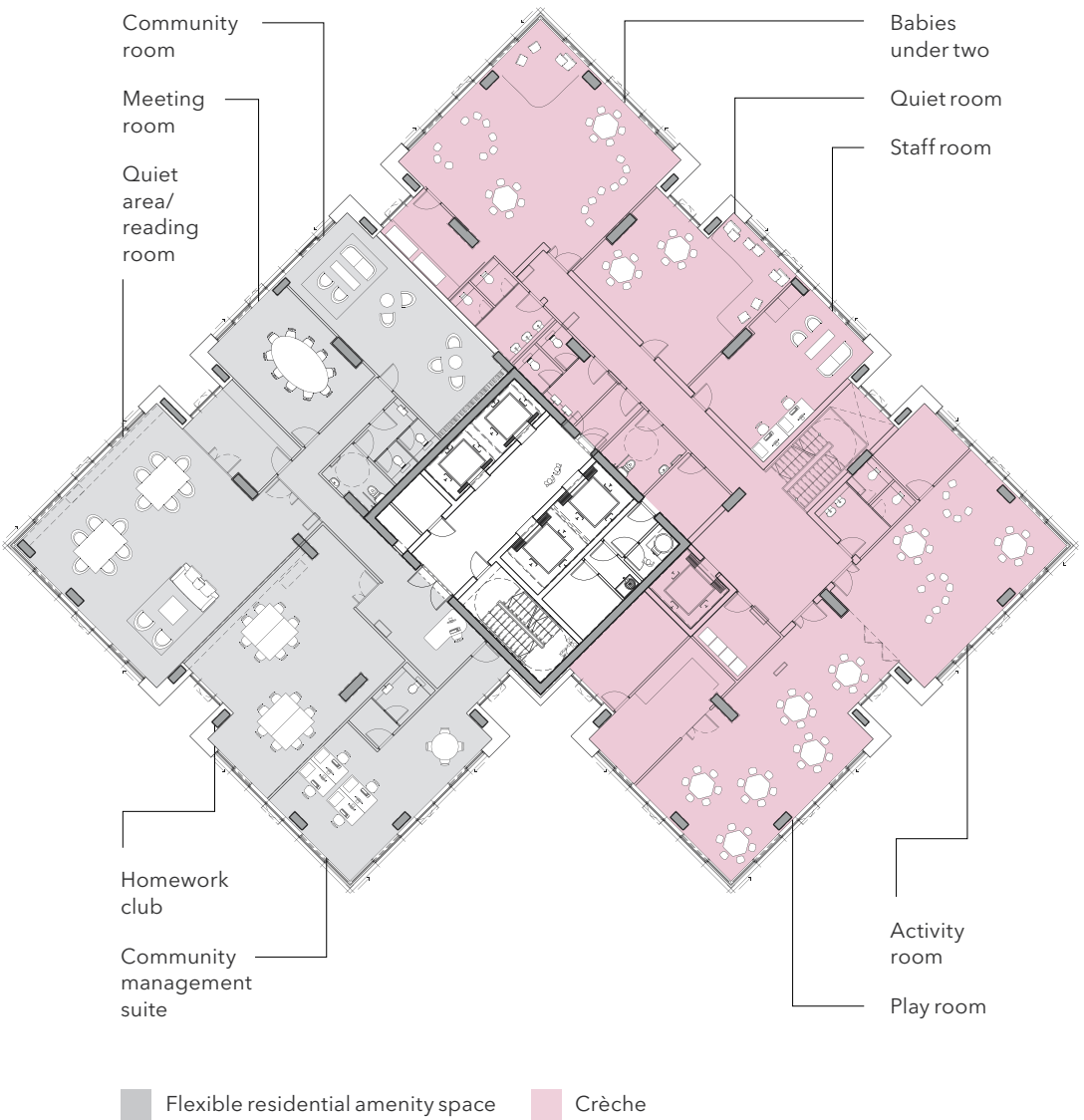
- Nursery or pre-school facilities with access for the wider community
- Space for older children to safely play or socialise away from their parents
- Quiet spaces that could be suitable for work and homework

These facilities will be accessible to those who may need them most - so they should be both physically accessible and be affordable.

Berkeley will ensure that there are strategies in place for the long term stewardship of any community space to ensure that it is used, maintained in good condition. The maintenance of these spaces will be guaranteed through the Management Plan, as will residents' ability to influence how the space is used.

‘Initiatives should, as a priority, have a sense of ownership amongst the community, should be seen to be open to all types of people with different needs and be able to effect real change.’

Plan of how the community space might work



Adaptable space

Adaptable space is about creating public space that can be used flexibly now and could change easily and affordably in the future.

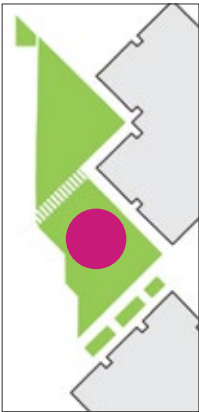
Whilst efforts have been made to accurately estimate the number of people, including the age range and household types, there will inevitably be change over the life of the development. Therefore South Quay Plaza’s shared outdoor space should be adaptable to changing needs over time.

The public realm is therefore designed to be flexible to different uses. Should, for example, there be an increased requirement for playspace or space for events, these could be accommodated.

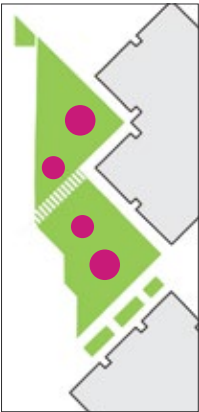
The area around South Quay Plaza is set to change dramatically when the full area-wide masterplan is implemented. South Quay Plaza should not only be adaptable the changing needs of its own residents but also the changing context in the wider area.



Outdoor screen



Temporary art exhibition



Pocket Park key

- ◀--▶ Pedestrian circulation
- ◀-▶ Play trail



PLAY ZONE

OUTDOOR DINING

PLAY ZONE

WILDFLOWER MEADOW AND PLANTED EDGE

PLAY ZONE

OPEN LAWN

Local identity

Local identity is about creating a place where people feel like they belong and where they hope to stay.

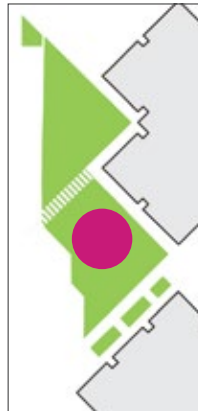
The Northern Part of Isle of Dogs is mainly a commercial district, with offices, shops, restaurants and leisure facilities. This character will change as mixed use developments such as South Quay Plaza introduce thousands of new homes. There is therefore a question as to what the new residential neighbourhood, of which South Quay Plaza will form one part, will feel like and how its identity will develop over time. Berkeley wants South Quay Plaza to have a unique identity that helps new residents (and visitors) to feel linked to it and to each other, with a sense of belonging.

The area has a rich history. It has changed from docks, to dereliction to an international financial centre over the space of 50 years – all the time remaining home to a community with a strong sense of identity. As more and more residential buildings are planned for the northern part of the Island, its character will continue to change.

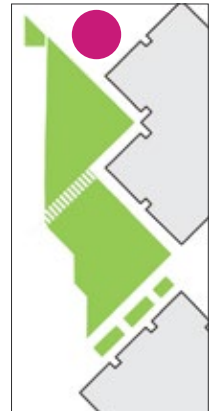
Berkeley would like to see South Quay Plaza as a landmark development that helps to change the negative perception of tall residential buildings in London. South Quay Plaza should



Summer
fair



Summer
beach



be a place where residents of all tenures are proud to live.

The open space and public realm around the site will be waterfront green space, rare for London. This will contribute to changing the northern part of the Isle of Dogs from a place focused on work to one with a lively community and space to relax and have fun.

This type of feeling cannot be artificially created but Berkeley aims to achieve this by:

- Facilitating and funding an annual professionally managed event to spread knowledge about the site, create an identity ('The place where they hold...') and forge social links between residents and non-resident visitors, such as employees of Canary Wharf. Local businesses would be encouraged to help to run and sponsor the event.
- Creating a series of unique outdoor spaces that are bright and sunlit. These will soften and green the hard landscape of the docks.
- Encouraging the outdoor space to be used for a variety of purposes: bustling with office workers during the week; family friendly and tranquil during the weekends.
- Drawing together the initiatives under all of the five key priority areas to make sure that people feel they have a focal point for their local community.





5.0 Life in tall buildings – learning from the past

5.1

Legacy and resurgence

The UK is starting to see tall residential buildings as an opportunity once more. After a period of backlash against tall buildings since the 1970s there has been an increasing recognition that well managed high density buildings have a role to play in meeting London's rapidly growing housing needs.

The GLA is supportive of the delivery of tall and large buildings as part of a strategic approach to meeting the regeneration and economic development goals laid out in the London Plan⁴. The market is responding: New London Architecture produced an Insight Study on London's tall building trend in June 2014, revealing a London planning pipeline of 236 tall buildings above 20 storeys, of which 189 would be predominantly for residential use, although it is unlikely that all will be built.

These new buildings present an excellent economic and social opportunity to bring forward thousands of new homes in accessible locations, which are close to transport hubs, jobs and services. However, tall buildings have a poor reputation in the UK as a result of the mistakes of the past. In particular the legacy of the poor management of some council owned blocks in the 1960s and 70s left strong public perceptions of them characterised by disrepair, anonymity and a lack of social cohesion or well managed public space⁵.

The tall buildings that are delivered now will differ significantly from the social housing blocks of the past; they will be mixed use and, in many cases, mixed tenure. However the requirements for their long term management will be no less demanding.

⁴ The Mayor of London/
GLA, 2011, The London
Plan, Para 7.25

⁵ NLA, 2014, Insight Study:
London's Growing Up!
p.40

Tall, mixed tenure, residential buildings have not been built before in this country and, whilst there are lessons to be taken from past experience, these present new and different challenges. Working in partnership, developers, councils, registered housing providers and academics need to share knowledge and experience and establish a clear idea of best practice in the design and management of tall buildings. Berkeley's Social Sustainability Framework provides a structured starting point for this knowledge sharing. The following section discusses the Framework specifically in the context of life in tall buildings, using an evidence base drawn from existing guidance and research.

5.2

The social context of life in tall buildings

The relationship between high density living and social and economic outcomes is complex. High density areas in London display polarised social and economic profiles: the highest density neighbourhoods can be found amongst the most deprived and amongst the least deprived. This illustrates clearly that it is not density that drives socio-economic outcomes,

but other factors that magnify either the opportunities or the challenges of this type of living for different people.

A study undertaken by the LSE establishes that affluent residents can use higher densities to their advantage whereas poorer residents who live in more deprived high density areas do not. This is linked to the fact that poor residents may live in higher density areas not by choice but because that is the housing offered to them by the local authority. In this case, they are less able to turn density to their advantage⁶.

A number of prominent housing research bodies have produced reports setting out principles for building and living at high density. Their aim is to ensure that tall buildings (and other high density housing) are seen as an economic and social opportunity and the barriers to their success are overcome. These studies, which form the core evidence base to this section, include:

- CABE, 2005, Better Neighbourhoods: Making Higher Densities Work
- Design for London 2007, Recommendations for Living at Superdensity
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2008, Residents' Views of New Forms of High Density Affordable Housing
- East Thames Housing Group, 2008, Delivering Successful Higher-Density Housing: A toolkit (second edition)

⁶ Burdett, R. et al, 2004, Density in Urban Neighbourhoods in

London, LSE/Minerva LSE Research Group. P. 31

⁷ Russell James III, 2008, Residential Satisfaction of Elderly Tenants in

Apartment Housing, Social Indicators Research Volume 89 No. 3

This Section addresses Berkeley's thirteen Social Sustainability Indicators, detailing in what particular ways each is relevant to life in tall buildings, and what measures need to be put in place to improve social outcomes of residents.

Well-being

Well-being is about people's day to day experience of living in a place, and their life satisfaction. The well-being of residents in tall buildings is of great concern after the poor social outcomes of many social housing schemes of the 1960s and 1970s.

There is no standardised method of measuring well-being and it is difficult to collect and compare data on the subject. Broadly speaking, there are some types of households that may be more suited to living in tall buildings than others.

There should be a three pronged approach to promoting well-being amongst all residents: the first is to ensure that as many people as possible have made a positive choice to live in a tall building; the second is to manage the balance of the community through the types and sizes of homes and keep child densities within acceptable levels; and the third is to provide facilities to reduce the disadvantage of some groups.

For a number of complex and inter-related reasons, middle and higher income families tend to be more satisfied with tall buildings. What is likely to be most important, however, is not

the income of families per se but the opportunities and space that residents have to leave the house and travel easily. This dictates their ability to meet and socialise with friends and neighbours or have personal time away from family members. Middle and higher income families are likely to be able to access services and opportunities to socialise outside of the home more easily, which makes higher density living more appealing. Whilst a developer cannot affect the income of new residents, good access to public transport and access to community space to socialise cheaply outside of the home could improve the satisfaction of lower income residents in tall buildings.

A study by James suggests that high-rise living could be more suitable for older people⁷. A significant factor of residential satisfaction is the ability to control our environment. Where larger homes with gardens may provide the opportunity for greater control during younger years, there is an increasing risk that in older age the obligations of upkeep may cause a feeling of being burdened by the home environment. Older people could derive significant benefits from having contracted-in

‘There are ways of replicating the benefits of houses in other dwelling forms through careful design and planning.’



maintenance and management facilities and living closely with other people who can provide a support network.

Young single people and young working couples may also be particularly suited to living at higher densities, spending much of their time at work or socialising

outside the home, and also wanting minimal maintenance obligations.

Conversely, families with young children may be less suited to living in tall buildings. According to Gifford 'That high-rise dwellers with small children are dissatisfied is one of the most consistent

trends in the literature'⁸. It has been suggested that living in tall buildings could be associated with behavioural problems and learning difficulties in children, although the results are inconclusive. Children in tall buildings spend more time playing alone or in restricted play than children living in single family dwellings⁹. However, Gifford suggests that 'if children have access to green space, these problems may be ameliorated.'

Developers (and their partners, the Council and social housing providers) should consider what types of household are likely to benefit most from, and be most satisfied in, tall buildings, and consider policies for housing allocations based on this. Child densities should be kept to a minimum, particularly in higher floors. Gifford highlights that choice in living at high density is also important: residents are much more likely to consider tall buildings to be appropriate for their lifestyle and be more satisfied if they have chosen to live there.

Nonetheless, developments should not be designed just to accommodate young working people. Families can bring stability to an area. A balanced mix of household types, including families, is required to sustain a range

of services and a vibrant community. Design for London states that 'there are ways of replicating the benefits of houses in other dwelling forms'¹⁰ through careful design and planning.

The provision of, or easy access to, good quality open space, playspace or other facilities for children and young people could also improve the well-being and satisfaction of families in tall buildings. Easy access to facilities for parents or other people who may be socially isolated living in tall buildings should also be considered.

Well-being draws together many of the recommendations under the twelve other indicators; some of the issues addressed above will be touched on again in the sections that follow.

Local identity

The historical legacy of tall buildings in the UK lies at the heart of negative perceptions of this type of housing. LSE's research into people's perceptions of high density found that 60% of people identified crime and vandalism as an issue related to high density living, 38% of respondents identified community problems and 33% identified poor quality of life¹¹. These results were balanced against positive attributes including diversity and access to infrastructure. Nonetheless, residents' identity will be tied in some way to their own perception, and the perception of others, about life in a tall development. Research into the well-being of residents of social

⁸ Robert Gifford, 2007, *The Consequences of Living in High-Rise Buildings*, Architectural Science Review Volume 50.1

⁹ Gittus, 1976, *Flats, families and the under-fives*, Routledge & Kegan Paul

¹⁰ Design for London, 2007, Section 3

¹¹ Burdett, R. et al, 2004, *Density in Urban Neighbourhoods in London*, LSE/Minerva LSE Research Group. P. 302

rented tall buildings in Glasgow found that residents felt their homes in tall buildings bestowed upon them a lack of status and a poor reputation¹².

Ultimately, it is effective management that will ensure that a new development has a positive reputation and make residents proud to call it home. In addition to this, measures that foster a sense of community and belonging such as encouraging community groups, providing good quality shared facilities and facilitating residents' events can help a building create its own local identity.

Distinctive character

Due to their scale and massing, tall buildings have the potential to change the character of an area. In the London context, a new tall building can be a contrast to the surrounding neighbourhoods, both in height and in building materials, and may be visible in the skyline. This is less significant at South Quay which is adjacent to a significant cluster of tall buildings. CABE states that higher density developments can make it easier to create a sense of identity and place due to their scale, helping them to transform locations into desirable and distinctive places¹³.

The opportunity to create a distinctive positive land mark should be taken, avoiding the risk of blighting the landscape. This should aim to foster positive associations with a new tall building. Linked to Local Identity, an attractive landmark that transforms or complements its surroundings can create a sense of belonging and local pride.

Local integration

Design for London recommends that consideration of the neighbourhood context of high density schemes should be the primary issue for determining their appropriateness in any given location¹⁴. Ensuring integration between a high density new development and its surrounding and existing community is essential for success¹⁵. Barriers between new and existing spaces can be created by, for example:

- Poor links to existing streets
- Disparities in feelings of safety between new and existing areas
- Separated community facilities
- Poor visual and spatial links between neighbouring buildings and public spaces¹⁶

A tall building in particular is at risk of becoming an isolated – and

‘Residents are much more likely to be satisfied if they have chosen to live there.’

isolating – enclave. Such barriers risk segregating communities and increase the risk of conflict.

An essential part of placemaking for a tall building is to relate the physical form to the social, economic and cultural context of the neighbourhood and integrate it into this space¹⁷.

This should take into account the needs of people already living there, promote shared use of public space and facilities, consider opportunities and spaces for new and existing residents to meet and carefully plan streetscapes to create safe and permeable public realm.

A placemaking approach such as this should bring together local stakeholders with developers and their professional advisors to create a shared, context driven, masterplan¹⁸.

Street layout

Tall buildings should be built in places with excellent transport access and other facilities within walking distance. The streetscape should have the capacity for a substantial increase in footfall arising from the new community. The streets should be safe and, where possible, have pedestrian

and cyclist priority areas. Streets should be designed to account for the fact that public realm will provide a valuable leisure asset for residents seeking to socialise outside the home, especially families. (See Community Space below).

Transport links

Excellent transport links are essential to service the needs of tall buildings. East Thames Housing Group recommends a minimum of PTAL rating of 4 for a high density scheme¹⁹. Tall buildings offer the opportunity to maximise the economic benefit of transport infrastructure investment and should be planned alongside transport investment where possible.

Residents in tall buildings are at risk of feeling isolated, especially if they spend long periods of time at home due to age, illness or caring for young children. Accessible, affordable and good quality transport links help to increase opportunities to socialise and access services and facilities. Places that are not dependent on cars have the added benefit of having livelier streets and neighbourhoods, with greater natural surveillance²⁰.

¹² Glasgow Community Health and Well-being (GoWell), 2011, The Effects of High-Rise Living within Social Rented Housing Areas in Glasgow p.13

¹³ CABE, 2005, Better Neighbourhoods: Making Higher Densities Work p.12

¹⁴ Design for London, 2007, Recommendations for Living at Superdensity Section 1

¹⁵ East Thames Housing Group, 2008, Delivering Successful High-Density Housing – A Toolkit (Second Edition)

¹⁶ East Thames Housing Group, 2008, p. 9

¹⁷ East Thames Housing Group, 2008, p. 9

¹⁸ Design for London, 2007, Recommendations for Living at Superdensity Section 1

¹⁹ East Thames Housing Group, 2008, p. 8

²⁰ CABE, 2005, p. 12

Feelings of safety

In the past, tall buildings in the UK have experienced very high actual and perceived levels of crime for residents and the wider neighbourhood. In a Joseph Roundtree Foundation (JRF) study into life in high density affordable homes, feelings of safety were found to be closely linked to general site maintenance. Feelings of insecurity appear to be heightened by graffiti, pet fouling and vandalism on-site. Broken or damaged lighting and security systems that are not quickly repaired are felt to increase opportunities for more serious crimes²¹. Therefore, a constant high standard of maintenance should be ensured.

JRF's survey found a tendency for residents to feel their own homes and developments were safe, whilst the wider neighbourhood was not, with residents from adjacent neighbourhoods representing a threat. This is supported by some evidence that finds that elderly people living in tall building experience less fear of crime²². It is possible that well designed and managed tall buildings can provide defensible space for more vulnerable residents. JRF found that elements in scheme architecture and design that

enhanced a feeling of security were viewed positively amongst residents.

Feeling safe within homes in high density developments relies on robust systems of entry control. Design for London recommends that wherever possible this should include a 'person behind a desk' at each core²³. Concierges are invaluable at monitoring activities in a building and getting to know residents. Quod's own research on Berkeley developments has established the significant contribution that an on-site management presence can provide for both 'hard' and 'soft' security. Where a 24 hour on-site presence is not feasible other options such as remote monitoring or random checks of shared spaces should be pursued²⁴.

Often the external threat to residents involves young people who may or may not actually be committing crime but who socialise in shared street spaces. JRF's research emphasises that the fear of crime is linked to presence of other people who are interpreted as being a risk²⁵. In the case of young people in particular, developers and designers must acknowledge that they will want to spend time away from their family homes, especially in cases where their personal space is limited. Allowance should be made for space for young

²¹ Joseph Roundtree Foundation (and Chartered Institute of Housing), 2008, Residents' Views of New Forms of High Density Affordable Living p.41

²² Normoyle & Foley, 1988, quoted in Gifford, R. (2007) *The Consequences of Living in High Rise Buildings*, Architectural Science Review V.50.1

²³ Design for London, 2007. Section 5

²⁴ Design for London, 2007. Section 5

²⁵ JRF, 2008, p42

²⁶ JRF, 2008, pp.46-47

²⁷ East Thames Housing Group, p.12



people to socialise. It should be well maintained and informally monitored i.e. with a degree of natural surveillance, but should not feel controlled.

Links with neighbours

Despite households living in close proximity to one another, tall buildings have a reputation for unfriendliness or even isolation. Links with neighbours cannot be forced and some people do not wish to be actively involved in their community, and are no worse off for that decision. Nonetheless, successful developments may facilitate social interaction between residents to increase feelings of trust and to encourage those residents who wish to be more involved.

JRF's survey respondents highlighted the fact that living in close proximity to one another could magnify tensions,

especially if the layout or design of the building highlights differences in tenure. This allows residents to apply their preconceived ideas about tenure to their neighbours. Negative attitudes could be based on this perception rather than actual negative experiences of other residents²⁶. Opportunities to meet and build trust could diffuse tense situations and dispel unfounded negative attitudes.

Design for London and CABE recommend designing-in opportunities to interact. This could include attractive shared space. More structured interaction could take place via community groups, which should be supported financially or practically by a developer where required. Wherever possible visible differences between homes of different tenures should be avoided²⁷.



It should be noted that Social Housing Providers will often require separate building cores and servicing arrangements to allow them to keep service charges affordable.

Local facilities

Local facilities are essential to meet needs that residents may not be able to meet at home. This includes finding a quiet space away from other family members, space for exercise and leisure and space to entertain friends and guests. A tall building may lack these opportunities, especially for families. Suitable space should be made accessible and affordable to all residents. Options could include:

- Lounge and relaxation space
- Meeting or workspace
- Homework space
- Gyms or kick-about areas
- Playspace

- Indoor or outdoor space suitable for older children and young people to socialise away from their parents.

One respondent to the JRF survey mentioned a desire to use the community centre to meet people but felt it was oriented to day-time and family activities which were not suitable for her²⁸. The space provided should balance the needs of different groups, being suitable for a range of uses at different times of the day. Developers should consider the types of people who will live in the building and their needs early on in the masterplanning process. Where an existing community is being moved in, such as in an estate renewal, local consultation should feed into plans.

Children's playspace is one of the most important facilities that will need to be provided. This should meet the needs of all children, not just toddlers. The design, location



and management plan for this space should include consideration of how conflicts between children and residents living in adjoining units, such as noise, will be resolved²⁸.

Community space

The physical provision of the type of space outlined above will require careful planning. Its cost and management must be considered from the earliest possible stage bearing in mind service charge implications on affordable tenants. A space that is poorly maintained could serve to exacerbate social problems – this must be avoided.

Space will be at a premium in a tall building. Community Space should be planned and allocated at the earliest

possible stage, not as an afterthought. This allows separate entrances, stairwells and security needs to be accommodated where required.

Adaptable space

Adaptable space is difficult to plan for in tall or high density developments. The pressure on space for services, utilities and vehicle access means that outdoor spaces require careful forward planning and control. This leaves little flexibility on how outdoor spaces can be used. However, some thought must be given to how the changing needs of the resident population could be accommodated over time, at minimal cost. Examples of this could include thinking about how more playspace could be added to the site, or how underutilised playspace could be altered for use by the wider community, depending on how the development matures.

²⁸ JRF, 2008 p.45

²⁹ East Thames Housing Group, p.25

Residents should be able to influence how shared spaces are used and adapted over time through any management plan.

Willingness to act and ability to influence

In the least successful schemes of the 1960s and 1970s, there was a breakdown in the link between management and residents. Management was poorly funded and as a result, both the physical and social fabric of these buildings suffered. Throughout this report, the importance of management is emphasised. However, this management cannot come across as being only about control. In both their relationships with management bodies and with the wider community, residents should be encouraged to act to effect positive change. And they should be able to see that these efforts influence the decisions made.

Rent and service charges can be very high in a tall building, especially for residents in affordable homes. Residents must see that their money is well spent and that they can influence priorities. The JRF

survey identified many residents who found maintenance and service provision lacking and poor value for money. They often found the management company unresponsive to complaints³⁰.

Design for London sets out a detailed list of requirements to make sure that a robust system of management accountability is in place. This is set out in Section 4 of Living at Superdensity. A Management Plan should set out the rights and responsibilities of all groups. This should consider residents of all tenures as well as the freeholders, social housing providers and Management Company. Residents should be encouraged to influence the content of this Plan and it should be reviewed on a regular basis.

Residents should feel empowered to get involved. This is closely related to issues under Links with Neighbours and Community Facilities. Where people feel there is a physical and social space in which they can trust others or feel welcome, they may be more willing to get involved.

³⁰ JRF, 2008, p. 44

‘Residents should be encouraged to act and they should be able to see that their efforts influence the decisions that are made.’





6.0 Conclusion

Berkeley is committed to making South Quay Plaza a socially sustainable place to live.

As the research identified in this report shows, there are multiple, complex factors that influence people's experience of their homes. Berkeley has used the Social Sustainability Framework and the research that underpins this report, to ensure the plans for South Quay Plaza reflect and lead best practice in delivering tall, high density, mixed use buildings.

This kind of development has the potential to contribute strongly to London's housing need over the next generation. Tall buildings can provide a good housing option, allowing

people to live close to services, to their work and to transport links. If well designed, they make economic and environmental sense. But the design and management required to make tall buildings socially sustainable presents challenges that need to be addressed.

This report has set out how Berkeley intends to tackle these issues. They will work with partners as the development progresses, to implement and monitor the activities set out in this report. They also intend to share this experience with the industry, public sector and academics to try and ensure that the new generation of residential tall buildings can learn the lessons of the past and create great places where communities thrive.

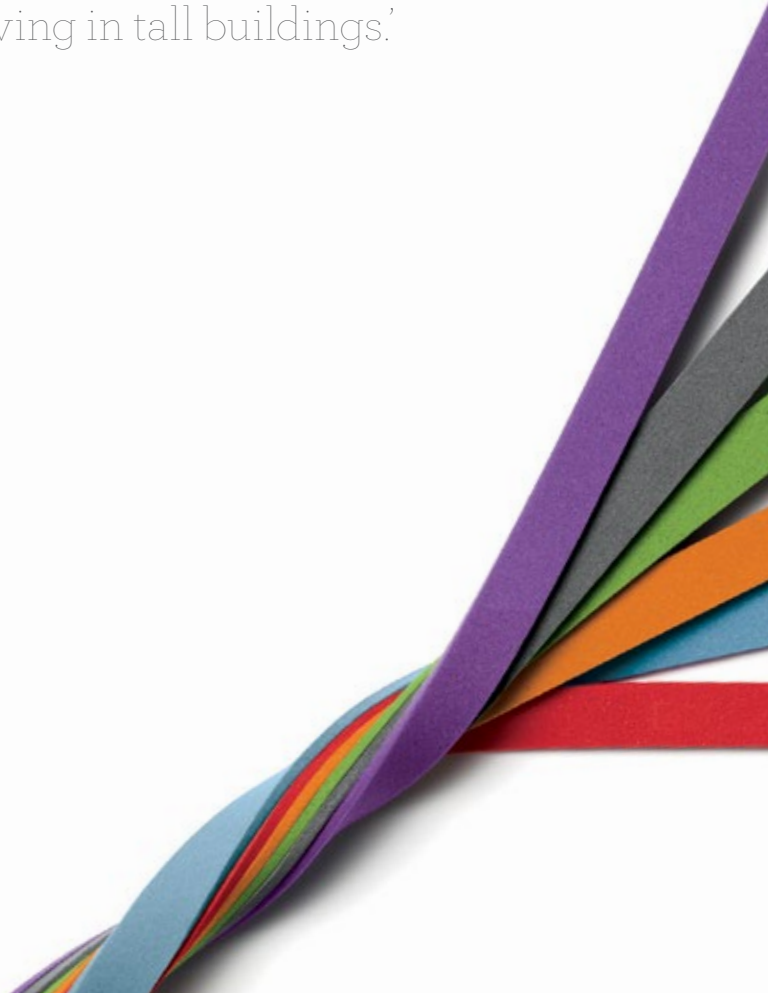
‘The new generation of residential tall buildings can learn the lessons of the past and create great places where communities thrive.’

This research was undertaken by Quod, a planning consultancy that provides strategic advice on major development schemes.

Its socio-economic team are leading specialists in the assessment of large-scale housing developments and estate renewals including tall and superdensity residential schemes. They have an extensive and detailed knowledge of Tower Hamlets and the Isle of Dogs in particular, as well as experience working with public and private sector clients in nearly all the major conurbations of Britain.

Quod is working with Berkeley Group to apply the principles of social sustainability across their major housing developments, aiming to establish industry best practice in sustainable placemaking.

‘The key challenge for planners and developers is not about design and location. It’s how we support the social life of people living in tall buildings.’



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