

# Living at Woodberry Down



A social sustainability report  
commissioned by the Berkeley Group



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# Foreword

This work has been commissioned to explore what life is like for residents of Woodberry Down in the London Borough of Hackney, east London. It captures a moment in which the community is undergoing major change, as the post-war estate is gradually replaced with modern housing, public space, retail and community facilities.

Berkeley commissioned this research to inform work on this site, as well as the national policy agenda of delivering successful, sustainable places. It asks questions about what has worked, and what could be done better.

There is widespread consensus about the need to boost housing delivery in the UK, and growing recognition that this will involve creating new places on a significant scale. Berkeley believes that social sustainability must be central to any vision of a new generation of Garden Cities or large-scale settlements. More new housing must bring with it a better quality of life.

This research contributes directly to the debate on how wellbeing is supported in society. It utilises a bespoke measurement framework that has been devised for the

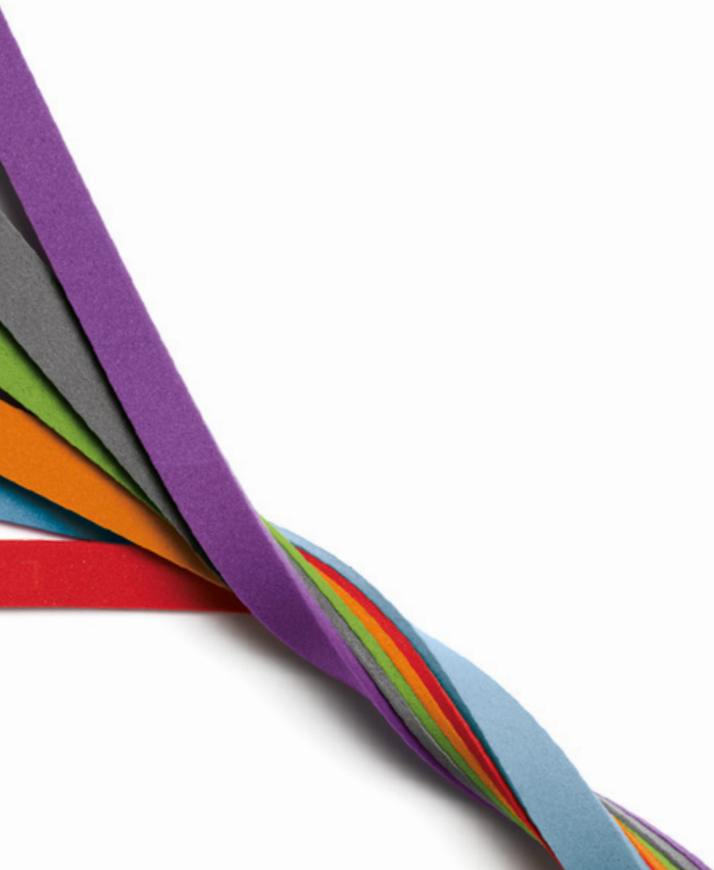
Berkeley Group by Social Life and the University of Reading to measure social sustainability in new housing developments.

Social sustainability itself combines design of the physical environment with a focus on how the people who live in and use a place relate to each other and function as a community. It can be 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.

The data in this report on Woodberry Down can be compared with the data for other similar places across Britain. It contributes to the emerging practice of measuring people's satisfaction with their lives and where they live, including the Office for National Statistics' Happiness Survey.

The term social sustainability is not yet widely used, although it has been the subject of academic research for over a decade. We believe it should become central to the way that everyone involved in the process of building new homes and regenerating existing communities understands sustainability in the years ahead.

‘More new housing  
must bring with it  
a better quality of life.’





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# Executive Summary

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This report examines people's quality of life at Woodberry Down in Hackney, five years into a major estate renewal programme that will increase the size of the community from under 2,000 to over 5,000 homes.

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- The assessment is based on in-depth research with residents, a survey of the physical quality of the buildings and landscape, and a series of interviews with local stakeholders.
- The results are benchmarked against 13 key indicators grouped into the three dimensions of social sustainability – Social and Cultural Life; Voice and Influence; Amenities and Infrastructure.
- Because it is an estate renewal programme, Woodberry Down has a large pre-existing community and a legacy of activity and attitudes, both positive and negative, which provide crucial context to this assessment.

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- The research has compared people's experience living in Woodberry Down with the data for comparable areas, and also compared the experience of new and existing residents.
  - The development scores highly on measures of wellbeing. Overall life satisfaction scores 90% – a full 30% higher than the average figure for the UK (60%) and higher than the average for comparable areas (77%).
  - Residents also feel they have a strong voice and ability to influence – 71% of people living at Woodberry Down feel able to influence local decisions, compared to a figure of 40% for the UK, 48% in London and 41% for comparable areas.
  - 81% of residents agree or definitely agree that they would be willing to work with others to improve things, and 70% of respondents had taken some action to make a change in their local area in the last year.
  - The physical characteristics of the site are still evolving, but score relatively well in this mid-stage assessment, except on distinctive character and adaptability.



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- Crime and feelings of safety score worse than in comparable areas; this may reflect a legacy of very high crime which is now falling.
  - Feelings of belonging and neighbourliness are higher in the private than in the affordable housing on some measures.
  - The proportion of people who plan to remain in the neighbourhood is significantly higher than in comparable areas.
  - The top five factors which residents say contribute most to their quality of life are transport, local facilities, safety, access to open space, and the quality of the environment.
  - Fundamental lessons for the development team and the Council include the crucial importance of partnership working (sharing goals as well as risks, and building relationships); the impact of an effective residents' organisation (to give residents the chance to influence their community); and the significance of delivering high quality facilities for the community early on.

## Quality of life: how Woodberry Down compares

	People living in new development in Woodberry Down	People living in London	People across the UK	People living in comparable places
I feel like I belong to the neighbourhood	80%	62%	67%	74%
I feel safe after dark	71%	65%	74%	79%
I feel able to influence decisions	71%	48%	40%	41%
I plan to remain in the neighbourhood	84%	63%	68%	73%
Satisfied with life overall	90%	Not available	60%	77%

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## Woodberry Down social sustainability assessment



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This wheel diagram indicates how Woodberry Down performs against the 13 social sustainability criteria and provides an overall rating for the site.

Nine of the 13 receive a positive rating, two are rated as satisfactory (Distinctive Character and Adaptable Space) and two are negative (Links with Neighbours and Feeling of Safety).

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# 1.0 Introduction

This report describes the findings of a research project exploring community strength and quality of life at Woodberry Down in the London Borough of Hackney. Berkeley, the developer behind the regeneration, has commissioned this work to understand what life is like for the residents and to understand how to support the community as the physical and social fabric of the estate changes.

The project utilises a framework for measuring social sustainability and its relationship to the built environment. This is based around three core dimensions of social sustainability:

- Social and cultural life;
- Voice and influence;
- Amenities and infrastructure.

These three core dimensions are underpinned by 13 criteria, identified from existing research, that reflect issues known to be important to local communities, such as involvement in local decision-making, links with neighbours, wellbeing, access to facilities, transport links, and perceptions of safety.

These 13 indicators are assessed through primary research, involving a household survey, a site survey, and a number of in-depth, one-to-one interviews. Because the survey

questions utilise existing questions from national surveys, they are capable of being benchmarked against the data from comparable places. This enables the framework to assess the experience of Woodberry Down residents on these 13 key indicators against what would be expected for similar communities across the country.

## Objectives of the report

The primary aim of the research is to understand what can be done by the developer, the local authority, local voluntary organisations and the residents themselves, to support people's quality of life at Woodberry Down.

The results of the assessment have been used to define key themes, which can be applied to emerging practice both by the Berkeley Group across its national portfolio, and to inform the practice of the wider development industry and stakeholders involved in housing and regeneration.

The secondary aim of the research is to contribute to the national debate over new housing delivery. It is essential that those involved in delivering large scale new settlements and new neighbourhoods, including estate regeneration programmes, understand why social sustainability is critical to their lasting success and how to encourage it.



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# 2.0 Woodberry Down

**W**oodberry Down is one of London's largest comprehensive estate regeneration projects. Over 25 years, it will replace the existing 1,890 post-war flats with over 5,000 homes of mixed tenure. The regeneration is being guided by two masterplans commissioned by the London Borough of Hackney and its delivery partners – one in 2007 and a revised version in 2013.

## Historic and social context

The Woodberry Down estate was built by the London County Council during the 1940s and 1950s as part of the government's policy to provide postwar welfare state housing. It was a key project within the Abercrombie and Forshaw London County Plan.

The estate was perceived to be an exemplar of planned housing, with its arrangement of 1,890 homes built in the typical LCC five-storey balcony access model, supported by community facilities such as healthcare and education. But during the second half of the 20th century, maintenance of the blocks waned.

Studies carried out in 1999 and 2002 reported extensive structural

problems including subsidence, water penetration, poor insulation and balconies breaking away from façades. The demolition of a large number of the blocks was recommended. The high concentration of homes 'beyond economic repair' led the London Borough of Hackney to omit Woodberry Down from its Decent Homes Strategy in 2003 and identify the site as an area for major regeneration.

The decline in the estate's physical fabric was mirrored by significant social issues with rising unemployment and drug-related crime creating the perception of an unsafe place. The layout of the buildings also contributed to poor security and a lack of useful public space.

Prior to the regeneration proposals, existing community facilities were judged to be adequately serving residents' needs. However, a study undertaken in 2003 noted that existing community buildings were scattered, of variable quality and not always exploited to their full potential. Levels of community activity at the Redmond Community Centre, for example, were found to be low despite it being well situated at the centre of the estate, with poor design preventing multiple activities from taking place. The study concluded that Woodberry Down did not represent a coherent geographical community or a single community of interest.

The physical limitations of the existing estate also meant that residents have been unable to make full use of the site's unique location. The New River meanders around Woodberry Down, providing direct borders to the north and south. Despite the potential amenity and landscape value inherent in this site, the waterway is fenced off along much of its length and there are no bridges. The river therefore acts as a physical barrier rather than a landscape and community asset.

To the south, two large reservoirs provide Woodberry Down with direct frontage onto clear open water and panoramic views to central London. Finsbury Park, the area's major open space, also borders the site to the north-west. Severing the community from these assets has proved a tragic waste.

## **Developing the masterplan**

Given its high levels of deprivation and poor housing conditions, the local authority identified Woodberry Down as a priority for housing renewal. Regeneration proposals began to emerge in 1999.

The programme was designed to be substantially self-financing as funds from Government sources were extremely limited. Private investment was targeted to deliver new social rented housing and community facilities.

Consultants were appointed by the Council to prepare a draft masterplan

in partnership with the Estate Development Committee and other local stakeholders. This process culminated in the preparation of an Area Action Plan (AAP), which was adopted by the Council in 2004. The AAP was subsequently translated into an Urban Design Framework (UDF), and again consulted on and adopted by the Council in 2005.

The UDF confirmed that the vast majority of existing buildings should be replaced with higher quality homes, set within a much better designed environment, complete with a range of facilities for existing and future residents.

During 2005 and 2006, the London Borough of Hackney commissioned work to translate the UDF into a comprehensive Masterplan. This served as the basis for an Outline Planning Application submitted in March 2007 for regeneration of the area.

## **Planning permission**

Outline planning permission was secured for comprehensive renewal of the estate in 2009. This provided for 4,684 new dwellings, non-residential uses including community uses and open space within five phases of development. It allows for a mixed tenure community with 41% of the new homes allocated for social rent and shared ownership.

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**Right:** Site plan of Woodberry Down







KONSTANTIN BINDER

The 2007 masterplan aspired to integrate and enhance community facilities within the estate. This included plans for a new secondary school, an expanded primary school, children's centre, multi-purpose community centre, youth centre, business and training centre, local shops and other community facilities.

Four main delivery partners have been involved:

- **The London Borough of Hackney** commissioned the original masterplan and facilitates the regeneration of Woodberry Down;
- **Berkeley** is the Council's appointed developer partner, with responsibility for delivering the new homes and facilities;

- **Genesis** is the appointed registered social landlord for the new affordable housing;
- **The Woodberry Down Community Organisation (WDCO)** represents all residents and those working within the community. It is elected by residents and acts as their negotiating body.

This partnership was formalised through a Development Agreement that set out (amongst other things) what was to be delivered and the respective roles of the partners.

In addition, a social enterprise called the Manor House Development Trust (MHDT) is closely involved. It runs art, employment, health and youth projects from the new community centre on the site, and aims to ensure that the community has the resources to influence and determine its own destiny.

**Above:** The estate prior to regeneration

Construction of Phase 1 of the 2007 masterplan commenced in 2009. At the time of this report, a number of the existing housing blocks (441 existing properties) have been demolished, and 835 new homes have been built and occupied.

Woodberry Down was one of the first recipients of funding for social rented housing from the newly-created Homes and Communities Agency in early 2009. The first construction work, building 117 affordable homes, was funded by the London office of the HCA.

At the current stage of regeneration, some of the proposed facilities have already been provided, including the secondary school (Skinners' Academy), Community Centre (Redmond Centre) and The Edge, a newly-refurbished youth centre. The space for the health centre is under construction, but this may eventually be used as flexible community space due to sufficient provision in the surrounding area.

A new riverside path by the reservoirs has also been completed, and a new park, called the Green, opened in April 2013.

## **A community of new and existing residents**

One of the challenges of regenerating Woodberry Down is that it is home to an existing community who are being re-housed within the site and living through the regeneration process.

Many people have lived in Woodberry Down for a long time, and like living

there. Every member of a focus group interviewed for this research, for example, had lived at Woodberry Down for more than 12 years. Whilst earlier research identified a need to build social cohesion, this has in fact been a settled community.

One of the objectives of the regeneration is that the existing community, comprising 1,200 council tenants and 350 leaseholders and freeholders, should be offered the opportunity to be rehoused on site.

This has been achieved so far. The early phases of new housing are occupied by many members of the original community, living alongside new residents moving into Woodberry Down. The Resident Survey conducted for this report found that 96% of the new social rented accommodation has gone to former residents. Approximately 400 existing tenants have become tenants of Genesis, the registered social landlord.

Whilst some existing residents have left temporarily, most are expected to return to occupy new homes. At present 30 households have a right to return.

At the end of 2013, 900 social tenants and approximately 270 leaseholders remain in the existing properties. These will be replaced by later phases of the regeneration, and each resident will continue to be offered the chance to remain in Woodberry Down.

On completion, the new community will be home to nearly 10,000 people, living in a range of new properties, over 40% of which will be affordable housing.







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## 3.0 Study methodology

### The research framework

**B**erkeley's measurement framework is based on 13 indicators that together constitute the three dimensions of social sustainability. These are tested through a resident survey measuring people's experience and perceptions of the strength of the community and their quality of life, a site survey of the physical assets contributing to social sustainability, and contextual interviews with stakeholders involved in the development process.

The results of the resident survey are benchmarked against the results of four national surveys run by the Government. The differences between the actual and expected scores are then subjected to statistical testing.

A RAG (red-amber-green) rating system is used to provide a simple graphic representation of the results,

where green indicates a positive result, higher or better than would be expected; amber a satisfactory result in line with what would be expected for a comparable place; and red a negative response, lower than would be expected.

The RAG rating shows the results across a range of indicators rather than as a single social sustainability 'score'.

The site survey data is assigned a RAG rating based on a scoring system established by CABE and the Home Builders' Federation for the Building for Life criteria.

### The resident survey

The resident survey was conducted with 135 residents of the new blocks, and 27 residents of the existing blocks. The residents of the new housing represented a mix of tenures, selected to reflect the tenure split of the new development.

The following table shows how the tenure split of the survey compares with the new development at Woodberry, the two local wards, Hackney and London as a whole.

Of those living in private tenure homes, the majority (70%) are renting their homes from a private landlord.

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'The results of the resident survey are benchmarked against the results of four national surveys run by the Government.'

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	Private	Shared ownership and shared equity	Social	Total
New residents interviewed	47	46	47	135
% of total	34%	33%	34%	100%
Woodberry Down new development tenure split	30%-37%	13%-20%	49%-55%	100%
Wards (New River and Brownswood)	60%	2%	38%	100%
LB Hackney	54%	2%	44%	100%
London	75%	1%	24%	100%

## Contextual interviews

Eight contextual interviews were conducted with stakeholders involved in the regeneration of the estate. These included Berkeley, officers and members of LB Hackney, Genesis, the estate management company, the residents association, Manor House Development Trust and community liaison workers. The role and needs of the existing community were explored in detail in the contextual interviews. In addition a focus group was held with eight women from the Turkish community at Woodberry Down.

## Site survey

The site survey element of each social sustainability assessment looks at the

Amenities and Infrastructure. It captures the contribution of physical assets to the success of the development, and the impact of design on the social life of the community. This includes an assessment of community space, transport links, character, integration, street layout and adaptability. Mirroring the approach used throughout these assessments, questions and methods are selected on the basis that they can be used to compare across a wide variety of different contexts.

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‘The role and needs of the existing community were explored in detail in the contextual interviews.’

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# 4.0 Results

**T**his section sets out the results of the resident survey and the site survey. It first describes the characteristics of the residents who were interviewed and then the results for each of the three Dimensions – Social and Cultural Life and Voice and Influence (based on the resident survey) and Amenities and Infrastructure (based on the site survey). Finally, it sets out responses to questions about what contributes most to people’s quality of life at Woodberry Down.

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## 4.1

### Demographic characteristics

#### Tenure and family circumstances

When asked to identify their previous place of residence, occupants of the new homes differed significantly between tenures. 96% of new social rented tenants previously lived at Woodberry Down or in the Manor House area, compared to 16% of the private residents. 41% of the private residents previously lived in Hackney or neighbouring borough and a

further 35% moved from elsewhere in London. 81% of residents in shared ownership previously lived within a 5km radius of the estate.

This has complicated implications for social sustainability. On one hand, there are existing community ties that tenants of social housing may draw upon, which could help to establish a sense of community from day one. On the other, the historic legacy of deprivation and the poor reputation of the old estate could lead to friction between newcomers and existing residents. These issues are explored further in relation to the analysis of Social and Cultural Life and Voice and Influence.

Across all tenures, there was a significant proportion of households containing one or two people: 26% of all respondents were living in single-person households, 43% were in two-person households, and 31% in households of three or more people. The single person social rented households are mostly occupied by retired people, or people who have long-term limiting health problems or disabilities.

#### Ethnicity

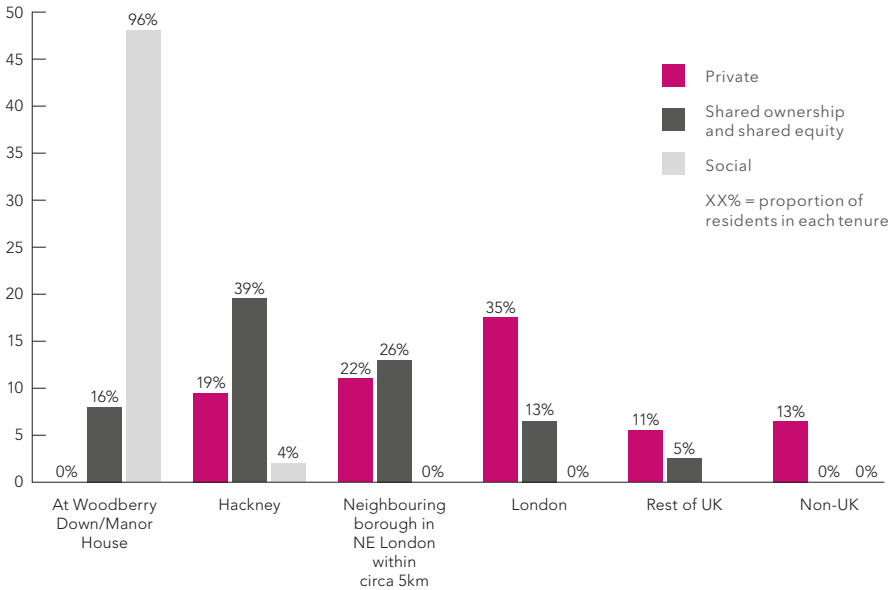
The responses reflect the diversity of the area, with 32% of respondents reporting their ethnicity to be White

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**Left:** Gloria Obliana, a resident of Woodberry Down

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## Where did you live before you moved to your current home?



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British and a further 14% reported themselves to be of another white background. The contextual interviews revealed that this includes a significant local Turkish population.

The remaining respondents were from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, with African, Bangladeshi and Caribbean groups among the largest. This broadly reflects the ethnic diversity of Hackney and London as a whole.

### Employment

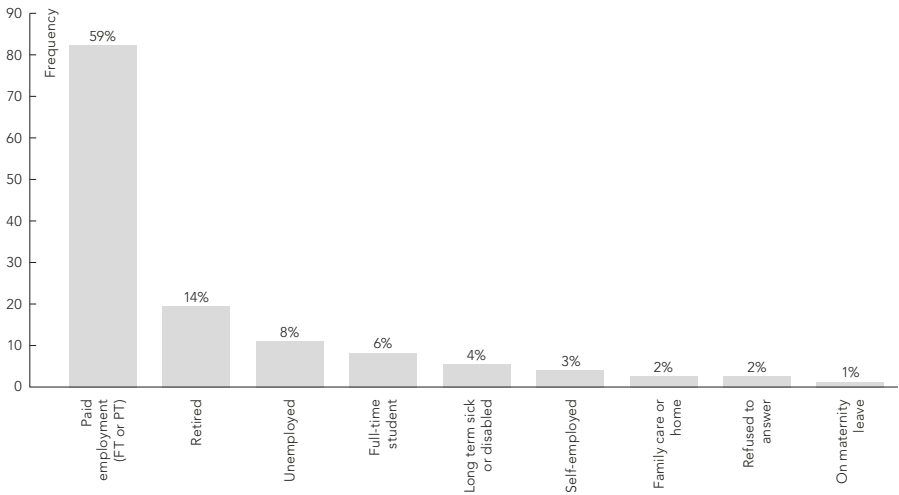
59% of respondents stated that their household's chief income earner was in full- or part-time employment. 14% of

respondents in the new homes were retired compared to 6% across Hackney. All the retired households were in social rented homes, with the exception of one shared ownership household.

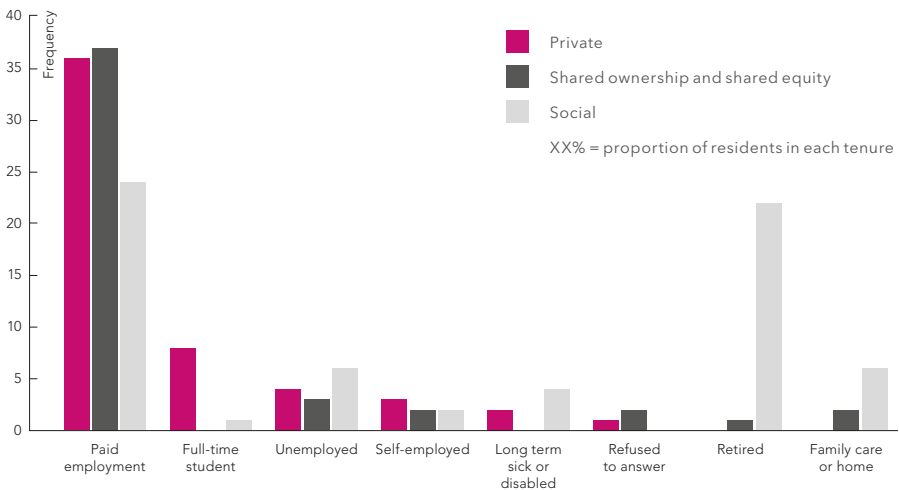
### Income

There is now a large range of incomes on the estate. Self-reported household incomes ranged from below £7,000 p.a. to over £80,000 p.a., with the median income bracket being £34,000 to £41,000. However, over half of the respondents living in social rented homes did not specify their household income or did not wish to answer this question.

## Which of these best describes your current employment situation?



## Which of these best describes your current employment situation? Results by tenure





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## 4.2

# Social and cultural life

## Criterion 1: Local identity

- I plan to remain
- I feel like I belong
- The importance of where I live to the sense of who I am

This criterion is designed to explore the impact of local identity through questions that investigate individual feelings about the importance of place and belonging.

There is considerable research exploring the role of local identity in creating a sense of place and

making people feel like they belong to an area. This identifies a number of physical and social factors that contribute to positive local identity including visible expression of the community's history, distinctive architecture or landscape, and social events that bring people together.

The issue of local identity is especially challenging for estate renewal programmes. How do they respect the legacy of an existing community without inheriting historic social problems? And how do new residents fit into this identity? Do they create a community of their own, integrate into the existing community, or contribute to an emerging community that evolves into a combination of both its constituent elements?

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**Above:** Residents' BBQ at Woodberry Down



The outcome is usually influenced significantly by the strategy for rehousing existing residents from their old to their new homes, and whether people are given housing next to the people who were previously their neighbours, if they want it.

For example, in a focus group at Woodberry Down with residents from the Turkish community, the women felt a very strong sense of community. They had all lived on the estate for over 12 years and they wanted to carry this sense of community with them to their new homes.

The survey results show that sense of belonging is high and especially so among residents in social households. 98% of all residents in new social rented homes agree or strongly agree that they belong at Woodberry Down. Successfully transferring these feelings of belonging to new households is a very positive finding of this research. People attribute this partly to a series of “meet your neighbour” events which have been organised for residents across all tenures, along with holding regular community events in the summer and at Christmas.

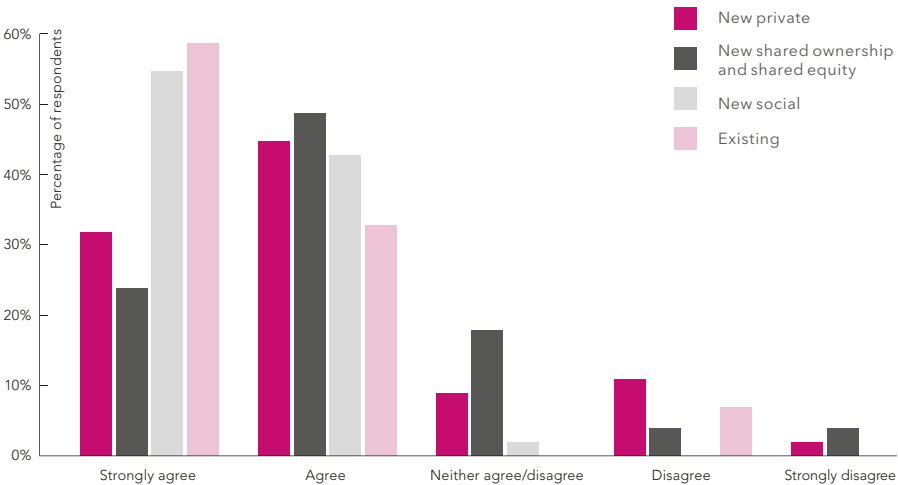
Compared to similar areas, Woodberry Down residents are more likely to feel they belong to their neighbourhood.

I feel like I belong to the neighbourhood	
People living in Woodberry Down	80%
People living in London	62%
People across UK	67%
People in comparable places	74%

There is slightly less sense of belonging in the new private and shared ownership tenures, where 13% and 8% respectively disagree that they feel like they belong. This might be expected in a place that is so new, where people may not know the area or their neighbours well yet. But it should be monitored in later assessments.

‘98% of all residents in new social rented homes agree or strongly agree that they belong at Woodberry Down.’

# I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood



This strong sense of belonging feeds through into a high proportion of residents who plan to remain living at Woodberry Down.

I feel like I belong to the neighbourhood	
People living in Woodberry Down	84%
People living in London	63%
People across UK	68%
People in comparable places	73%

As would be expected, those in social rented homes have the highest propensity to intend to stay in the area (98%). Residents with shared ownership or shared equity would also be expected to remain as a result of their tenure agreements, with 87% agreed or strongly agreeing with the statement. More interestingly, 75% of private residents, who might be assumed to be more transient, also plan to stay. This is especially positive considering how many of the private tenure residents are renting; 70% of the 39 who are renting from private landlords agree or strongly agree that they plan to remain.

As these rates match broadly, the community is likely to succeed in becoming settled evenly across all

tenures. This factor will positively influence the community in its ability to create ties regardless of tenure.

The intention of residents to continue to live at Woodberry Down is also significantly higher than the data for comparable places, particularly in relation to the London average. A major contributing factor is the focus by the developer, Council and partners on placemaking, not merely housebuilding. Residents recognise the positive improvements that have been made to all areas of the neighbourhood. They appear to be supportive and excited about the future vision for this area.

## Links with neighbours

- If I needed advice I could go to someone in my neighbourhood
- I borrow things and exchange favours with my neighbours
- I regularly stop and talk with people in my neighbourhood
- Friendships in my neighbourhood mean a lot to me
- Most people can be trusted

Social ties in neighbourhoods are acknowledged to make a positive contribution to individual wellbeing and community cohesion. Work by CABI and others has demonstrated that well-designed public spaces, street layouts that connect different neighbourhoods and shared facilities

like shops and parks can encourage informal daily interaction between people of different backgrounds.

Daily social interaction between people living and working in a neighbourhood has been demonstrated to encourage the type of loose social ties that are often described as 'latent neighbourliness'. Over time, these ties tend to build into networks of trust and support.

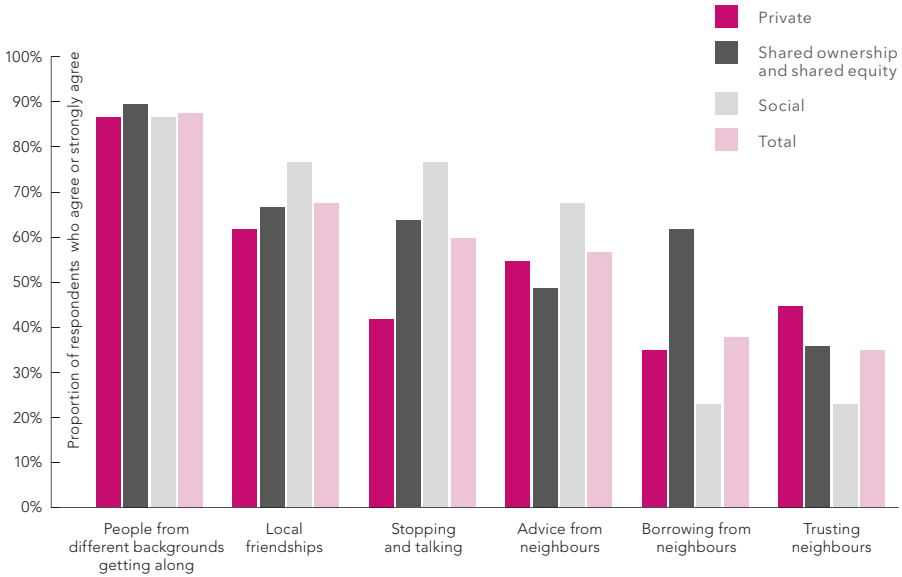
On the whole, Woodberry Down performs relatively weakly on this criterion, compared to comparable places, partly because not all of these spaces have yet been built, and partly because it is early in the lifetime of the development.

Residents from different backgrounds agreed or strongly agreed that they get on well. However, this did not seem to translate into strong feelings of trust, or stopping and talking to local people, seeking advice from neighbours or borrowing and exchanging favours.

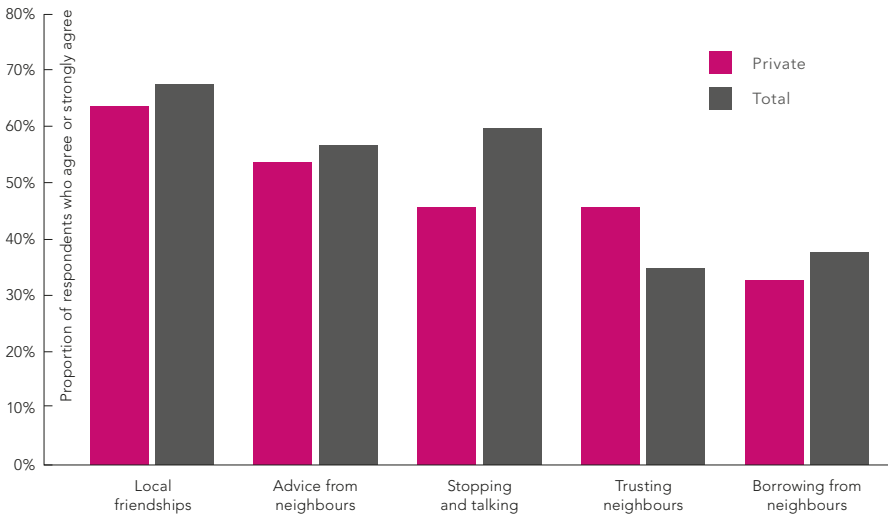
Private rental residents might be expected to have fewer or weaker links with their neighbours. However, as shown above, at Woodberry Down they are very likely to want to stay in the neighbourhood. Results from the survey show that private renting residents do have weaker links with neighbours than the average across the development, but the gap is not as wide as might be expected and levels of trust are actually higher.

The relatively high proportion of private rented homes does not seem to affect feelings of 'neighbourliness' – the lowest scores on trusting and

## Links with neighbours indicators

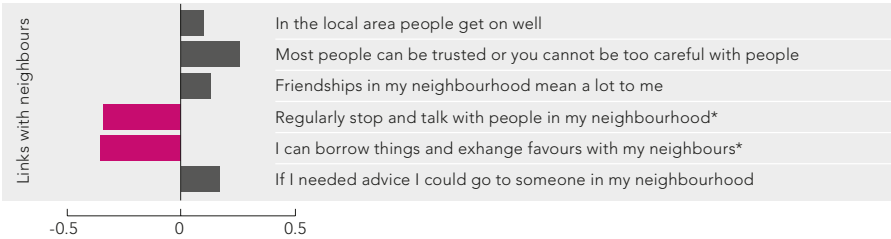


## Links with neighbours indicators: private rented vs average across all tenures





## Links with neighbours: Woodberry Down benchmarked against comparable areas



\*The answers to statements marked with an asterisk are statistically significant

borrowing from neighbours were amongst residents in social rented housing which suggests these are legacy issues from the old estate.

Woodberry Down performs slightly better on links with neighbours than comparable areas in relation to four of the six key questions for this indicator. However, those results are not statistically significant. Conversely, the survey responses show that on stopping and talking to neighbours and borrowing from them or exchanging favours, Woodberry Down performs significantly worse than comparable areas.

This is partly to be expected as many parts of the community are so new. Indeed, people living in the social rented homes (i.e. those that are from the area) have more positive responses to almost all these indicators, with the exception of borrowing and trust, than residents in the other tenures or the average across the development. This suggests that the sense of community from the old estate has not been lost.

## Wellbeing

- Have you recently felt that you were playing a useful part in things?
- Have you been feeling reasonably happy?
- How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with life overall?
- Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?

The government has put considerable focus on measurement of the nation’s wellbeing, following a policy direction set out by the Prime Minister after the 2010 election. This led to the ONS Happiness Survey, which adopts four questions to explore different aspects of wellbeing.

Wellbeing is also one of the key indicators identified in this social

sustainability framework. An alternative set of questions to those used by ONS has been selected from the national survey benchmark data, which pre-dated the ONS wellbeing questions. It includes one of the ONS questions; 'overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?' and three further questions that complemented the other residents' survey questions.

The surveys indicate that residents at Woodberry Down report high levels of wellbeing. 96% of residents surveyed reported themselves as being 'as happy or more happy than usual'. Levels of satisfaction with life overall are also very high, with 90% completely, mostly or somewhat satisfied with life.

The overwhelmingly positive response to this indicator suggests that the new development at Woodberry Down is allowing quality of life to flourish. Feelings of happiness are common across the respondent categories, with a third

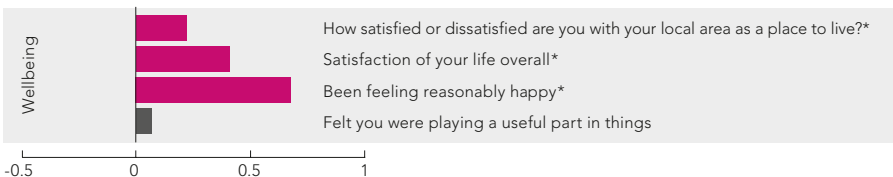
claiming to be experiencing higher happiness levels than usual. This is a very positive outcome that points to a community with a stable sense of wellbeing.

More specifically, satisfaction with the local area as a place to live is higher still; 93% across the tenures say they are satisfied, with residents in private homes marginally more satisfied than those in other tenures. Well-designed homes and landscaping have contributed towards this high sense of wellbeing, while play equipment and other elements of community infrastructure have helped to encourage social interaction and a sense of community which in turns contributes to people's feeling of wellbeing.

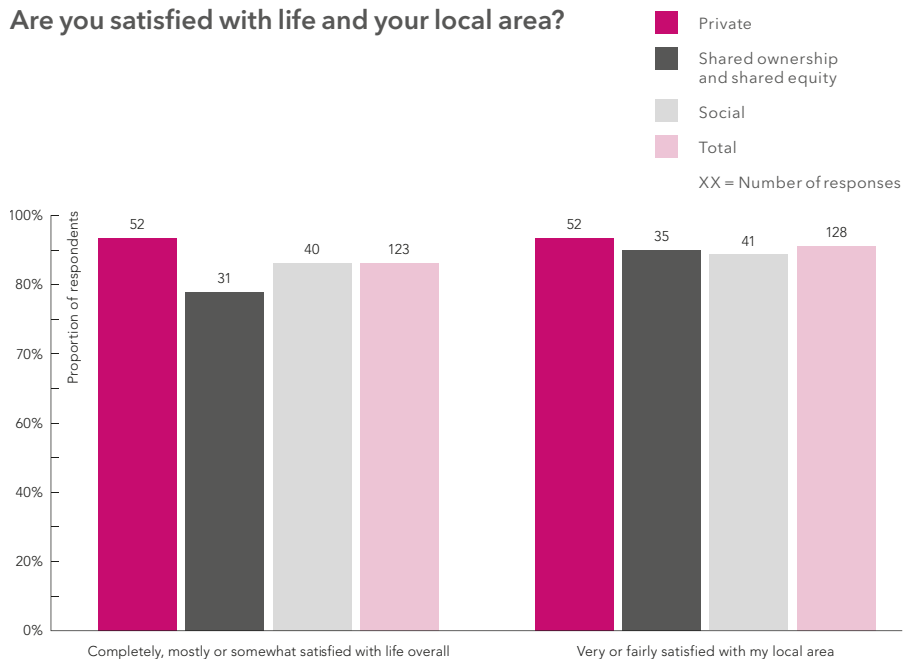
When benchmarked against comparable areas, Woodberry Down performs better on all four of the wellbeing indicators. For three of these, the difference is statistically significant. Levels of happiness are the highest performing of the indicators when compared to the benchmarks.

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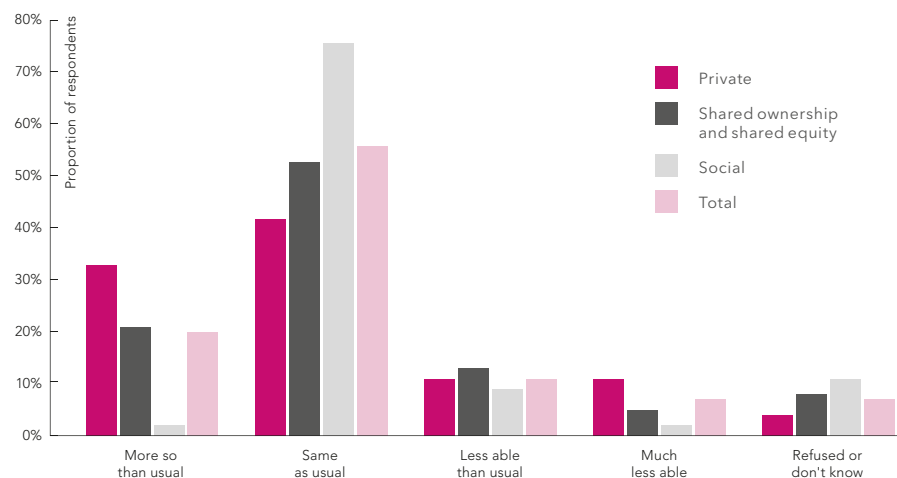
## Wellbeing: Woodberry Down benchmarked against comparable areas



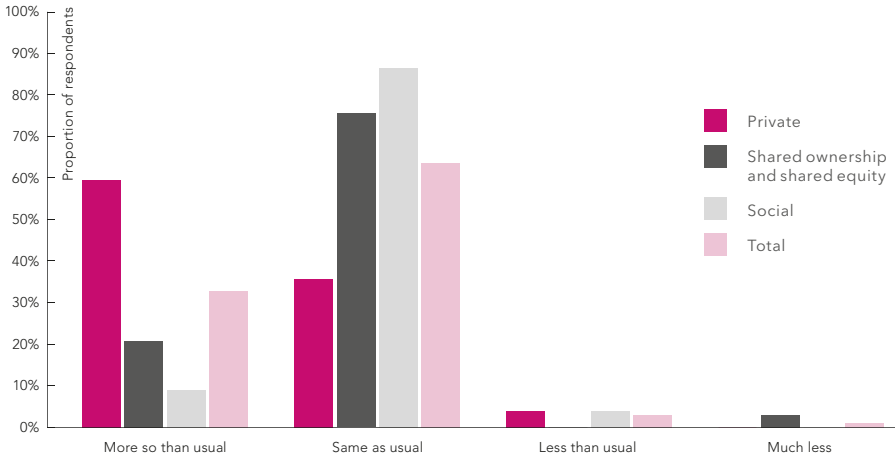
## Are you satisfied with life and your local area?



## Have you recently felt that you were playing a useful part in things?



## Have you been feeling reasonably happy?



## Feelings of safety

- How safe do you feel walking alone in this area during the day?
- How safe do you feel walking alone in this area after dark?
- Compared to the country as a whole do you think the level of crime in your local area is...

Residents were asked how safe they feel walking alone in the area during the day and during the night. In the survey, the area was defined as a 15–20 minute walk from residents' homes.

The majority of respondents claim to feel either very safe or fairly safe, both in daylight and after dark. However, feelings of safety at Woodberry Down are worse than in comparable places,

with the expected pattern that safety poses a bigger issue at night than during the day.

Whilst having relatively poor feelings of safety (compared with benchmark areas), 45% of respondents to the survey reported feeling more safe or much more safe in the new parts of the development. This suggests that the physical regeneration is exerting a positive influence on the perception of crime and safety.

Although 24% reported feeling less safe in the new parts of the development, all of these residents were new to the area - which may indicate that answers were reflecting other issues. None of the residents who had previously lived in the area thought the new parts of the estate were less safe.

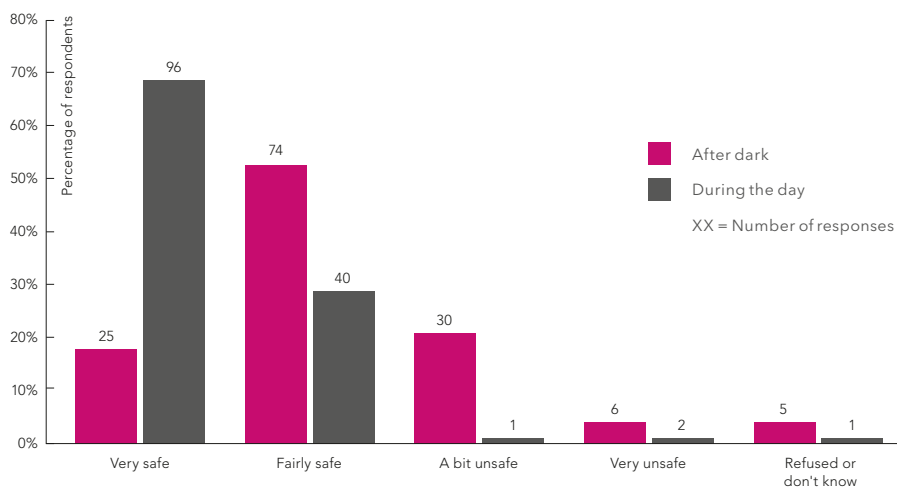
Performance on safety as a whole will need to be a focus for later assessments.





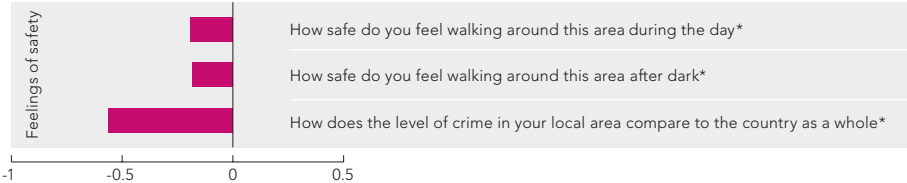
**Above:** Both residents and non-residents use the improved facilities on the development

## How safe do you feel walking alone in this area during the day and after dark?



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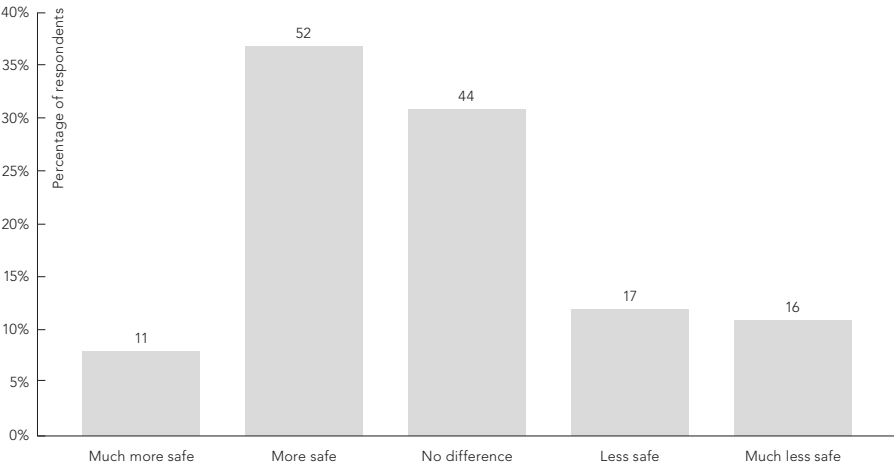
## Safety: Woodberry Down benchmarked against comparable areas



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## Is there any difference in the new parts of the estate?

XX = Number of responses



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‘The vast majority of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with access to facilities for children of all ages.’

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# Local facilities

- Quality of facilities for children and young people of all age groups from 0-18
- Quality of facilities where you socialise with friends and family.

This indicator includes seven questions about resident satisfaction with the availability and quality of community facilities in the development, with a particular focus on provision for young people of different ages, and spaces for people to socialise.

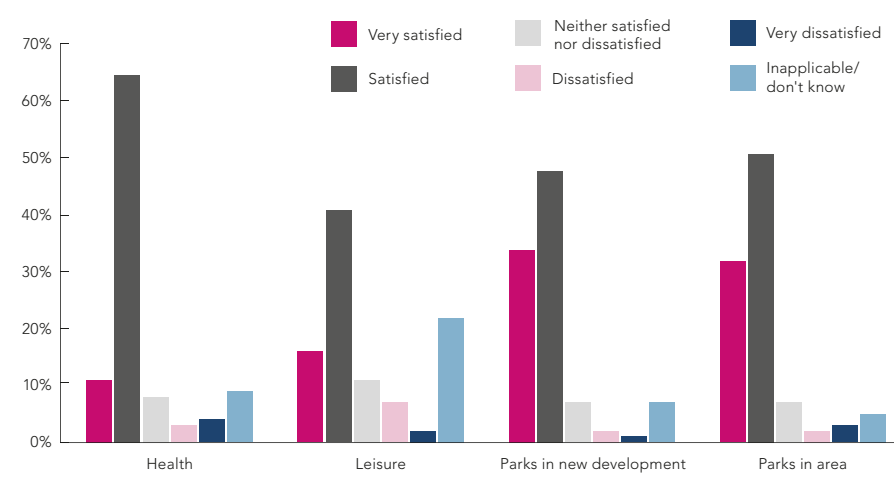
These questions are intended to capture residents’ perspectives about the availability and quality of community facilities, to supplement the assessment

of the professional site survey. These questions cannot be benchmarked against national datasets.

Clearly, the quality of the new landscape beside the reservoir makes a big difference to people’s ability to enjoy the area. There is also a high level of satisfaction with the existing local health care arrangements, which challenges a perception held among some stakeholders.

The vast majority of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with access to facilities for children of all ages. Where there was negative feedback, it concerned facilities for 12 to 15 year olds and came from social rented respondents in both new and existing homes. This is frequently an issue on new developments where provision is made for children but not young people.

## How satisfied are you with your local facilities?



## Voice and influence

### Willingness to act

- I would be willing to work together with others on something to improve my neighbourhood.
- In the last 12 months, have you taken any of the following actions to try to get something done about the quality of your local environment?
- To what extent do you agree or disagree that people in this neighbourhood pull together to improve this neighbourhood?

This is another area where Woodberry Down performs well; 81% of residents agree or definitely agree that they would be willing to work with others to improve things, and 70% of respondents had taken some action to make a change in their local area in the last year. The most common forms of action were joining the local residents' group, contacting the Council and commenting on the internet.

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‘70% of respondents had taken some action to make a change in their local area in the last year.’

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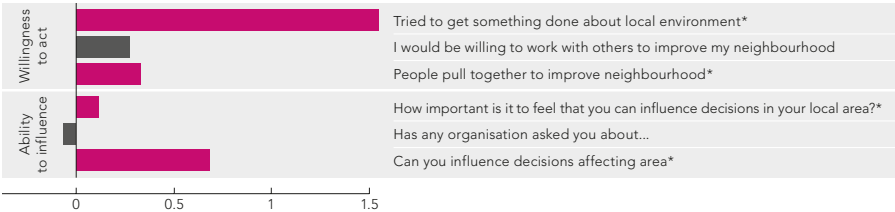




# Have you taken any of the following actions to try to get something done about the quality of your local environment in the last year?

Total number of people who responded 'Yes' (a single respondent may count in more than one category)	
Joined a local residents' group or attended a neighbourhood forum	37
Contacted the Council	33
Commented on internet such as a local forum, website or blog	26
Talked to/written to a sporting or cultural facility directly	16
Contacted a local councillor or MP	13
Attended a meeting or joined a campaign/action group	13
Helped organise a petition	11
Contacted a local radio station, television station or newspaper	5
<b>Took some action</b>	<b>70%</b>
<b>Took no action</b>	<b>30%</b>

## Voice and influence - Woodberry Down benchmarked against comparable areas



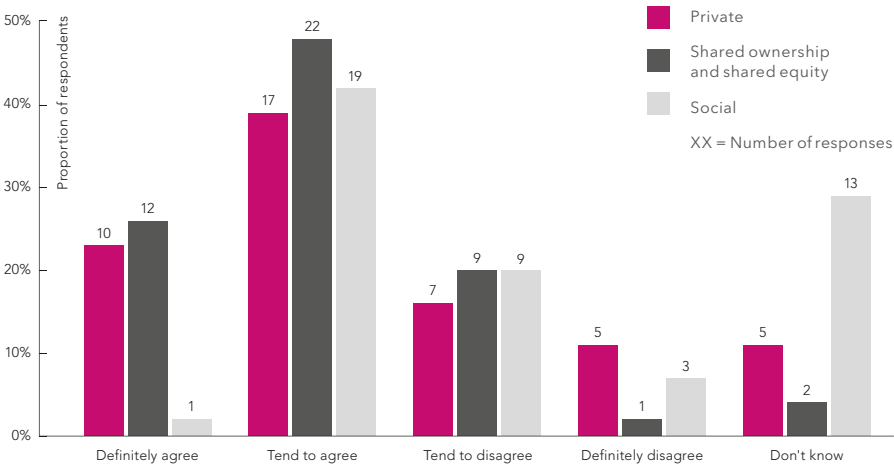
## Ability to influence

- In the last 12 months, has any organisation asked you what you think about (sporting facilities, cultural facilities, environmental facilities)?
- Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?
- How important is it for you personally to feel that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?

Ability to influence is another area with high positive scores for Woodberry Down. The contextual interviews suggest that this is partly due to the role the resident organisation, WDCO, plays as an important and influential partner. WDCO is perceived to be very open to residents, helping them get involved and raise issues.

This indicator suggests Woodberry Down residents enjoy access to a credible body through whom they are able to have a real say about their neighbourhood. This is a very important contributor to developing social sustainability, both for the current community and to enable a lasting sense of community to develop in future.

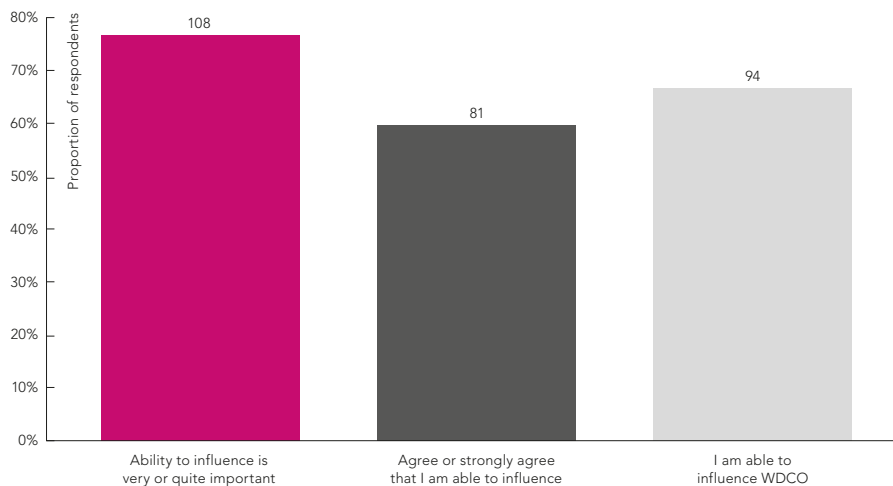
## Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?



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## How important is influencing decisions in your area, and do you feel able to do so?

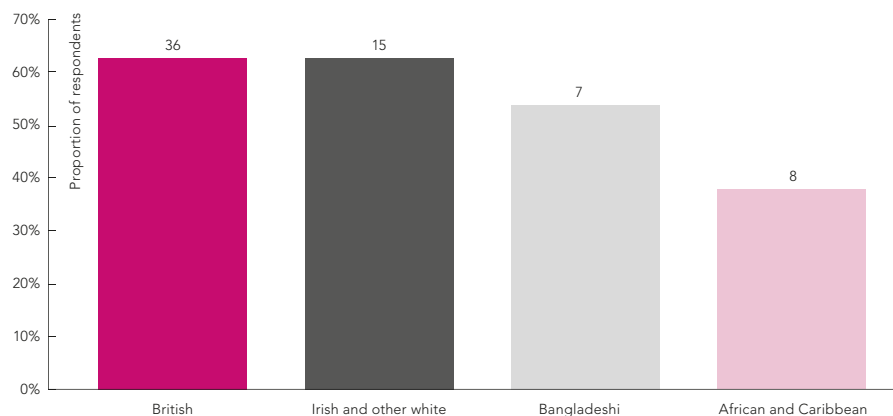
XX = Number of responses



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## Proportion of people who agree or tend to agree that they can influence things by key ethnic group

XX = Number of responses



The high levels of people who feel they can and do influence things reflect the longstanding process of consultation and engagement undertaken by LB Hackney and Berkeley. The evolution of regeneration has involved around nine years of participation and consultation work.

It was recognised from the outset that the involvement, support and early participation of local residents as partners in the process would be crucial. A variety of methods were developed to ensure full and meaningful community involvement. Consultation and engagement techniques have been designed around the objective of involving and including the whole of Woodberry Down, enabling people to agree priorities, consider options and identify solutions. The development of ideas and proposals in this way sought to build a strong local consensus in support of the masterplan.

The Statement of Community Involvement summarised the extensive public engagement that has taken place. It included:

- Roadshows
- Exhibition Days and Fun Days
- Focus groups and meetings
- Technical briefing sessions to explain the proposals in relation to transport, architecture, landscape, and socio-economic impact
- Newsletters, flyers, and local media campaigns
- Door-knocking to inform residents of the consultation exercise.

The main formal community involvement has been through WDCO and its board of about 20 people. The board is elected every two years with members typically representing two blocks each. It meets every month in open public meetings which anyone can attend and 50 or 60 people usually do. The constituencies, the representatives and the attendees are increasingly also drawn from the new private and shared ownership blocks.

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‘We’re seeing lots of people who are new to the area use the new Community Centre. Residents in the private flats seem keen to be involved in community activity.’

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#### 4.4

## Amenities and infrastructure

The rating for the amenities and infrastructure dimension of the framework is based on an independent site survey by a design or planning professional. It should be remembered that this research is a mid-stage assessment, five years into a 25 year construction programme. The amenities and infrastructure will develop further as new homes are built.





## Community space

- Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as a school, parks, play areas, shops, pubs or cafés? (What kind? Are the facilities appropriate for the whole community?)
- Have the community facilities been appropriately provided?
- Is public space well designed and does it have suitable management arrangements in place?

This indicator consists of three questions about the appropriate and timely provision of community facilities in the development. It

captures information about the type, adequacy and timing of provision of facilities, with a particular focus on provision for young people of different ages and on spaces to socialise.

Woodberry Down is well connected to a wide range of community facilities, both existing and newly built. There is now a health centre, primary and secondary schools, a library, youth space, sport and play facilities and places of worship all on or immediately adjacent to the estate. As part of the redevelopment, the youth centre (the Edge), the Redmond Community Centre and Skinners' Academy secondary school are all brand new and offer flexible, quality space for local people to meet and participate in activities from education to sport. These facilities also allow residents to organise events of their own.

There is currently no leisure centre on site, but the Skinners' Academy has a theatre and sports hall open for use by youth and community groups. The West Reservoir Centre and Finsbury Park open spaces also offer accessible leisure facilities, and access to the reservoir and New River has been substantially improved physically.

As a result, Woodberry Down scores very well on the provision of open space. The only issues to consider were the strong perception of being cut off by Seven Sisters Road and Green Lanes. These roads create a barrier (both physical and perceptual) between the two parts of the community, as well as separating residents from Finsbury Park. It also feels as if the place currently lacks a physical 'heart' to the neighbourhood which would draw people in and

connect people from different parts of Woodberry Down. This should be addressed by the central square planned for a later phase of the development, as well as the proposed narrowing and improvements to Seven Sisters Road.

## Transport links

- Does the development have easy access to public transport?

The development enjoys excellent transport links, with close proximity to Manor House underground station and a range of buses serving the area. This results in all parts of the site enjoying a public transport accessibility (PTAL) rating in the



highest three categories (5, 6a and 6b). The Piccadilly tube line connects the site directly with central London, whilst buses connect with other parts of north-west London.

## Distinctive character

- Does the scheme feel like a place with distinctive character?

Creating distinctive character through an estate renewal programme is complex. The legacy of a place with a long disputed history can be both an inspiration and a burden. The design of the new Woodberry Down has not referenced the past, but this would have been difficult considering the imperatives of scale and density and the poor visual quality of what previously existed.

The redevelopment is creating strong visual and thematic links to the reservoir, which is helping to create a new character for Woodberry Down and capitalise on the site's views and frontage to open water. The site survey also commends the diversity of designs and cladding used in the new development. This is creating interesting pocket neighbourhoods with their own distinctive characters, which is preferable to uniformity on a development of this scale.

However, the plant and parking accesses are, in places, detracting

from this positive character. There are also visually unappealing, generic ground floor frontages on Goodchild Road, which Berkeley will be seeking to address in future works.

## Local integration

- Is there an accommodation mix that reflects the needs and aspirations of the local community?
- Does the design of the site encourage people from different backgrounds and social groups to interact on a day-to-day basis (e.g. public spaces that are open to all, amenities situated for everyone to use, amenities accessible to all without entrance barriers?)
- Does the design of the site enable people from different backgrounds and social groups to share community, shopping, social and leisure facilities like parks and restaurants?

The balance and mix of tenures is among the most important considerations for successful estate renewal. The mix at Woodberry Down has allowed all social rented tenants the option to be rehoused on-site (and as the residents' survey showed, almost 100% of social rented tenants previously lived on the estate). The redevelopment will now diversify the

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**Opposite:** Manor House station is a five minute walk away



tenure mix and introduce a substantial amount of private housing, while also maintaining a high proportion of 41% affordable housing.

The provision of facilities and spaces with shared access for all members of the community has had a positive impact on bringing parts of the community together, especially existing and new residents.

However the evidence of gated areas detracts from other positive efforts at integration. In a development with a historical legacy as strong as it is here, and with the associated controversy surrounding new high-end market housing, it is imperative that the streetscape and building design do not create feelings of separation.

## Street layout

- Do the buildings and layout make it easy to find your way around?
- Does the scheme integrate with existing streets, paths and surrounding development?
- Are the streets pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly?
- Does the design of the local environment adequately support the needs of people with limited physical mobility?
- Are public spaces and pedestrian routes overlooked and do they feel safe?



Generally, the new streets are easy to navigate with good signage. They have been successfully 'weaved' into the existing street structure. Different character areas successfully define neighbourhoods, which helps people to find their way around. Natural linkages between the surrounding community and the reservoir have been enhanced, making the areas more permeable.

It is difficult to review the street layout fully as part of a mid-stage assessment, as parts of the new development are adjacent to areas undergoing building or demolition phases. The use of fences and level changes do, in some places, detract from connectivity and there are some missed opportunities for 'home zones' where children could play at street level around their homes.

## Adaptable space

- Do external spaces and layout allow for adaptation, conversion or extension?

The current provision of open space is attractive and high quality. However, some of it is small or has limited access. The gradient, split levels and planting mean it has limited potential to be adapted to a range of different uses.

As noted above, there is currently no central space on the development to encourage interaction either informally or as a space to host activities or events, like a market, festival or community garden.

However, later phases of the development do plan to provide a significant increase in open space and a central focal square for Woodberry Down. Should these be brought forward and designed well, the development should have an excellent provision of adaptable space.



**Opposite and right:** The footpath, landscape and public realm re-connecting people's homes to the reservoir

## 4.5

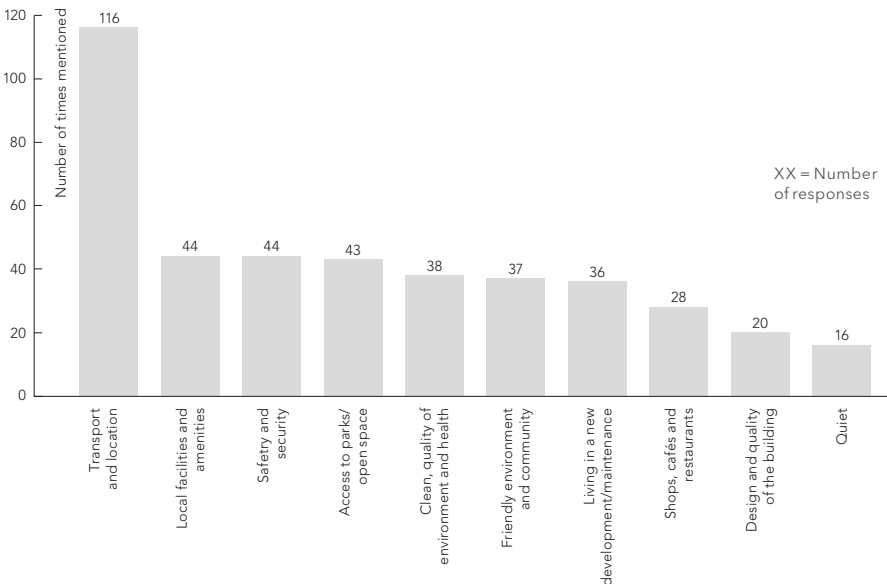
### Quality of life

Residents were asked what aspects of living in Woodberry Down contributed most to their quality of life. They were invited to give five unprompted responses. A wide range was given, with people valuing aspects of the development across all 13 criteria. Transport and location were the most valued but feelings of safety, access to open space and friendliness in the neighbourhood were all common answers. Local facilities were rated highly, including the reservoirs.

The most highly rated factor - transport and location - are clearly inherent to the site. However, most of the other factors can be influenced by good design and management and by proactive work to create a successful community.

‘Transport and location were the most valued, but feelings of safety, access to open space and friendliness in the neighbourhood were all common answers.’

**Overall, what five factors about living in this neighbourhood contribute most to your quality of life?**









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# 5.0 Key themes from the contextual interviews

**T**he survey work was complemented by a number of interviews with individuals and community organisations or businesses based in or near Woodberry Down. The purpose of these conversations was to capture insights that would enhance the analysis and interpretation of the survey findings.

The range of stakeholders interviewed included the four key partners in the development, the (new) local secondary school, estate management, community liaison workers, ward councillors, and the Manor House Development Trust.

A focus group of eight Turkish women selected through the Independent Tenants and Leaseholders Adviser was organised to capture specific views from a significant minority ethnic group living at Woodberry Down. This generated views about a range of issues from a group not always well represented in the mainstream.

The following is a summary of the main themes from these conversations. Quotations are from the interviews but not attributed.

## The masterplanning process

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‘There were unrealistic expectations at the outset about how the masterplan could solve longstanding social problems.’

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The original masterplan for Woodberry Down was developed by LB Hackney through successive formal policy consultations. Whilst this developed a strong community focus, it preceded the appointment of Berkeley and Genesis, the eventual main delivery partners.

The masterplan also preceded the economic crisis in 2008, and the cuts in public sector resources that have followed since the appointment of the coalition government in 2010.

As a result, not everything that was proposed in the 2007 masterplan is now deliverable and this has created some tension with the residents and between the development partners.

The interviews also revealed concerns that the original masterplan was predominantly focused on bricks





and mortar, rather than on the softer measures also needed to underpin regeneration. An example cited was that the masterplan's response to high unemployment and low skill levels at Woodberry Down involved the provision of a new business and training centre, rather than a strategy to define what skills were needed and where training could be accessed.

Interviewees recognised the role Berkeley has played in ensuring the scheme has proceeded at all,

when many estate renewal projects across Britain have stalled. However, there have been inevitable tensions between a commercial developer's focus on what is deliverable over the short to medium term, and the local authority and community focus on the longer-term. LB Hackney in particular was thought to have struggled with its dual role as landowner and housing provider and the timeframe it requires to make decisions.

This issue has been tackled to a certain extent by the joint working to produce a new masterplan in

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**Above:** Pottery class at the Redmond Community Centre

2013, but it remains a challenge for any partnership on a regeneration scheme. Flexibility and dialogue are crucial to allow conflicting priorities to be resolved and accommodated.

## **Open and community spaces**

Historically, residents' use of the green and open spaces surrounding Woodberry Down has been limited. This is partly due to poor access to the reservoirs, the New River and Finsbury Park; partly due to cost prohibiting use of facilities such as the sailing club; and partly perception, due to a mindset that the surrounding facilities were not Woodberry Down residents' to use.

This research reveals that the regeneration has gone some way to resolving these issues.

Physical access to the reservoirs has been opened up through the new river path, resulting in much greater use. The new open space is considered to be much higher quality and feels safer. The park that will be delivered as part of Phase 2 will build on this success and make a big difference to open space provision across the site.

The new Redmond Community Centre is perceived to be an excellent community asset. Historic studies indicated that the previous community centre was under-utilised and unable to accommodate multiple activities. The new centre is considered to be very well run by the Manor House

Development Trust, and well used by residents, including new residents in the private housing.

The new youth centre is also preferred to the previous centre, with a high level of use by the community.

The new Skinners' Academy building and its facilities are thought to be good. Whilst community access was promised, this is only allowed via organised groups and for a fee. Fees are lower than commercial operators, but residents thought they would get individual 'walk up' access (rather than through groups) and that access would be cheaper.

Overall, the main issue the community feel has not been delivered is affordable access to sports and leisure. Physical provision is not an issue. Indeed it will improve still further in Phase 2 with the provision of a new multi-use games area in a new 1.6 hectare park. But resources are needed to help the community make better use of what now exists. Where this has happened (for example at the community centre) it has contributed a great deal to the strength of the community.

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‘The fact the Community Centre has been delivered and people can see it’s great has built confidence that the community will get something out of this.’

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## The role and needs of existing residents

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‘The different chairs of WDCO have been really good at leaving their personal priorities out of their official roles.’

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Woodberry Down had a large existing community that had been involved in the process of shaping the masterplan. It has also been the focus of previous regeneration efforts including several rounds of funding from the Single Regeneration Budget. There is therefore a history of community involvement, an active residents’ association, and a range of other organisations that are active in the area.

Most interviewees said that WDCO had been effective and was influential. This stems from its openness, its accountability and its willingness to prioritise and address key estate-wide issues rather than the personal interests of those who were active.

Interviewees felt Berkeley had been very effective in many ways (see below) but they were relatively inflexible when it came to dealing with residents. In part, this reflects project-wide difficulties with re-housing existing residents and Berkeley’s relative inexperience in this area. In particular, it was suggested that Berkeley’s

local staff needed to be given more freedom to vary the company’s normal approach.

A particular problem appears to have arisen about the process of re-housing tenants and how much choice they get about the property itself and whether it can be modified. Berkeley builds the homes and then transfers the properties to Genesis who houses LB Hackney tenants. However, the tenants have certain rights and these limit the Council’s freedom to move them.

Berkeley’s lead-times for ordering internal features such as kitchens and flooring meant that these items were being decided before there was a clear idea which tenants would be occupying which home. As a result, some tenants were then offered properties they did not want, or that had fixtures and fittings that they wanted removed or changed. This also reflects difficulties within the Council and housing association related to managing the process of re-housing tenants.

The focus group with Turkish women highlighted some specific issues, but in general they felt that their views had been represented in the process through the Independent Tenant and Leaseholders Adviser (ITLA). The main cultural difference they perceived was in their preference for communal meetings taking place within homes, rather than in community spaces. This related to the design and fit-out of flats.

## Integration of the community

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‘The new open spaces and access to the reservoirs have ended some of the isolation of the estate – people from elsewhere now have a reason to visit.’

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The estate has historically been relatively self-contained. The 2008 Community Infrastructure Investment Plan also identified a lack of integration within the estate. The redevelopment has started to address both of those issues.

Interviewees felt that improvements to the public realm, including new access to the reservoirs, have attracted people onto the site from surrounding neighbourhoods. This has had a beneficial effect in creating a stronger sense of integration and interaction between Woodberry Down as a place and the surrounding neighbourhood. This will serve, over time, to promote social sustainability by preventing residents from feeling as though they are cut off.

The residents of the new private apartments in particular are more widely integrated into the local and London economy through work, and through the fact that a significant proportion have moved onto the site from surrounding areas.

Most interviewees felt that it is too early for integration between old and new communities to happen, although it is starting, through WDCO, and through shared use of community facilities and spaces. The residents’ organisation in particular has seen participation from people living in both the shared ownership and private housing.

This was reflected in the results of the resident survey which found high levels of a sense of belonging and of intending to remain in the neighbourhood, and of a willingness to act to improve the area, alongside relatively low links with their neighbours. This suggests that residents have developed a sense of involvement with their area but not yet directly with other residents.

## Community safety

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‘I feel much safer here than where I worked before – whatever time of day and even quite late at night there are people walking to and from the tube station.’

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Crime is a big issue in the area, and Woodberry Down has had significant problems with anti-social behaviour. Police had previously obtained a Dispersal Order to enable them to deal with street gangs around the

tube station, and drug problems were present in parts of the estate including some crack dens.

The interview responses indicated there to be general agreement that crime and anti-social behaviour had fallen significantly. This was considered to be partly as a result of the regeneration programme, but also a result of additional policing and other measures.

This key improvement is also backed up in the residents' survey, where a fall in crime was perceived most strongly

by those who had lived at the estate for the longest time. This finding emerged although the indicator for crime returned a worse result than the response found in comparable places.

Respondents liked the physical improvements that had been made to Woodberry Down. Changes to the physical fabric offer a visible signal that life in the community has evolved and added to a perception of increased safety.

However, convincing long-term residents that their new apartments really were safe has been challenging. One resident who had previously had bars fixed to the windows of her

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**Below:** Jake Winyard, apprentice at Woodberry Down





old flat had wanted them installed on her new flat. She had to be persuaded at length that the new buildings would be safe without them – which they now are. She is pleased and relieved. But the process offers a small insight into the work involved in regeneration.

There has also been a perceptible shift in residents' behaviour. Interviewees talked about a significant reduction in low level crime and graffiti which has emerged as people care more about their new environment and the estate management deals with these problems quicker and better than before.

### **Roles of the key partners**

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‘It’s got better as we’ve gone along, but partnership is hard work.’

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All interviews raised the difficulty of joint working to deliver the masterplan. The basic story was of high staff turnover at some partner organisations, different ability and willingness to be flexible, and the contractual relationship between

LB Hackney (as landowner), Berkeley (as developer), Genesis (the recipient of affordable housing) and LB Hackney (as the planning authority).

The relationship between the key partners is governed by a legal agreement. However, this has not been used effectively to guide changes to the masterplan or its delivery. Each organisation also has a different ability to act. Berkeley (and to a lesser extent Genesis) are seen as relatively nimble and able to take quick decisions, whereas the Council, as a democratic organisation, has longer, more complex and more difficult decision making processes.

The consistent theme about Berkeley from the stakeholder interviews is its ability to deliver. Nearly 900 homes have been built at Woodberry Down at a time when many other similar schemes have stalled. Similarly, Berkeley was praised for delivering a tight construction programme and running good construction sites.

The company and its contractors have worked hard to secure local employment. 20% of the workforce has been recruited locally and over 90 people from Hackney are currently working on the programme.

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‘20% of the workforce has been recruited locally and over 90 people from Hackney are currently working on the programme.’

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wheelytots.com

wheelytots.com

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## 6.0 Social sustainability rating

**T**his wheel diagram indicates how Woodberry Down performs against the 13 social sustainability criteria and provides an overall rating for the site. The key findings are summarised below.

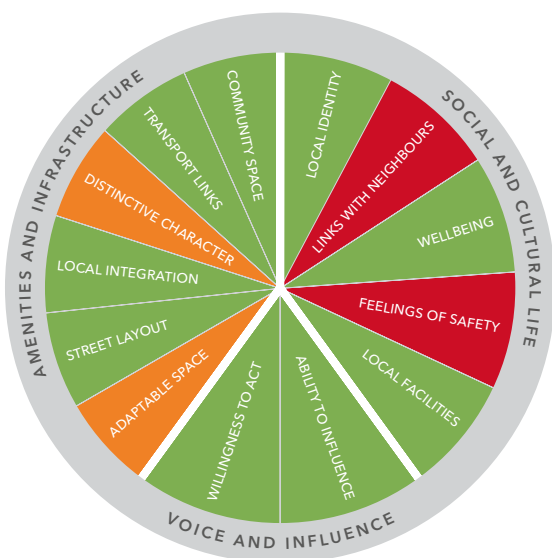
Nine of the 13 receive a positive rating, two are rated as satisfactory (Distinctive Character and Adaptable Space) and two are negative (Links with Neighbours and Feeling of Safety).

There is important context for these ratings.

The site survey, which informs the assessment of Amenities and Infrastructure, has been done at a time when large parts of the development are incomplete or not yet started. The assessment can only take into account what has been built and therefore is not reflective of the final end product. Some of the more distinctive elements of the

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### Woodberry Down social sustainability assessment





design and the larger open spaces will be in the later phases which could in due course lead to an increasingly positive assessment.

Crime at Woodberry Down was previously very high, so whilst 45% of people think crime has got better (which statistics show it has), there

is a prevailing sense that crime is still high. The survey also shows that the new parts of the development are felt to be safer than the old parts.

Similarly on links with neighbours, the survey revealed quite strong links, especially amongst the residents who lived on the site previously. This suggests that over time, links between neighbours are likely to get stronger as the development becomes more established.

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**Above:** Kristina Georgiou from Manor House Development Trust



Within the positive ratings three indicators stand out – both indicators under Voice and Influence are particularly strong and the wellbeing indicator also scores very highly.

The contextual interviews have acknowledged the strengths of the residents’ organisation, WDCO, and its openness to residents engaging and influencing its agenda and activities (including new residents). This means many residents will have been involved in trying to improve the neighbourhood, and given the influence of WDCO, in many cases they are likely to have succeeded.

The contextual interviews also help explain why the wellbeing indicator is so positive. The long-standing residents of the estate have moved from small, often damp, flats into brand new flats with modern fixtures

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‘There’s no doubt the sense of wellbeing is improving. There are still issues about fear of crime but everyone can see it’s getting better.’

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and fittings. The residents of private and shared ownership flats have also made a positive choice to move to the area.

The following summary table demonstrates that Woodberry Down is achieving high levels of social sustainability based on key criteria, and in particular on measures of happiness and wellbeing. These are significantly higher than for the rest of London and the UK and for the benchmark comparison areas.

	People living in new development in Woodberry Down	People living in London	People across the UK	People living in comparable places
I feel like I belong to the neighbourhood	80%	62%	67%	74%
I feel safe after dark	71%	65%	74%	79%
I feel able to influence decisions	71%	48%	40%	41%
I plan to remain in the neighbourhood	84%	63%	68%	73%
Satisfied with life overall	90%	Not available	60%	77%





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## 7.0 Conclusions

**T**he Berkeley Group defines social sustainability as being 'about people's quality of life and the strength of a community, now and in the future.'

This mid-stage assessment of social sustainability has attempted to identify the extent to which the development is contributing to the wellbeing of its residents through its physical design, through the relationships that residents are developing and through the infrastructure provided to support a strong social and cultural life.

As a mid-stage assessment, it is particularly focused on the scope for the place and the community to evolve and on understanding what the partners can do to support people's quality of life at Woodberry Down as delivery continues.

It also has an important contribution to make to the national debate over new housing delivery. Large-scale new housing, including estate renewal schemes, is likely to play a significant part in solving the housing shortage. This is particularly true in London where local authorities are significant land owners through their stocks of social housing and will increasingly need to intensify and diversify those sites to be able to maintain and increase their housing offer.

It is essential that people involved in delivering new housing, garden cities and estate regeneration programmes, understand why social sustainability is critical to their lasting success and how to encourage it.

### What has happened at Woodberry Down?

The overall levels of wellbeing reported at Woodberry Down are significantly higher than the averages for comparable areas as well as for London and the UK as a whole. There is a high sense of belonging and overall satisfaction with life, and a high proportion of people intend to remain in the area. In particular, residents feel able to influence decisions in their neighbourhood which is a testament to the quality of the partnership that has helped deliver the programme at Woodberry Down so far.

### Delivery

Achieving any form of delivery is a major achievement in itself given the background of the global financial crisis and ensuing public sector austerity. Many schemes across London that got planning permission in 2007 to 2009 have not yet been implemented,

including several estate renewal schemes. That nearly 900 homes have been delivered at Woodberry Down in these circumstances is a major success.

Viability has been a key issue – the project was programmed to be substantially self-financing as funds from Government sources were extremely limited. Private investment was targeted to deliver new social rented housing and community facilities.

The original masterplan for Woodberry Down was of its time and it was inevitable that the development partner chosen by LB Hackney would have its own view on effective delivery, especially around phasing, priorities and viability. The changed economic and public funding circumstances placed further pressure on the original vision.

Berkeley has maintained an overarching focus on delivery and ensuring the early stages of the project could progress. It has done this by ensuring each phase is viable and able to draw down public funds where available and appropriate. It has also been pragmatic. Where changes in approach or design were needed it has focused on delivering these within the outline planning consent to ensure visible progress was made on delivery before seeking a more comprehensive review of the masterplan.

This focus on the short to medium term has helped build the confidence of residents and partners – both in terms of the outcome (e.g. so residents had first hand evidence that the new housing

is substantially better than the old housing) and that the shared objectives and vision for Woodberry Down were not being significantly changed.

## Partnership

Partnership has been key to delivery. Large estate renewal schemes are inherently complex, even when a developer is effectively brought in to deliver an agreed masterplan. The developer needs to invest in working with those who have drawn up the masterplan to ensure that it can be delivered in a way that is effective and viable and retains the support of partners.

At Woodberry Down, the four development partners (Berkeley, Genesis, LB Hackney and WDCO) are all responsible for some elements of social sustainability. Partnership is therefore essential – not just for delivering the masterplan but for ensuring that residents find Woodberry Down a happy place to live.

There seem to be three key elements to the particular effectiveness of the arrangements at Woodberry Down.

Firstly, all parties have been committed to work in genuine partnership and secondly that they have been guided by a Development Agreement. This meant that the partnership has got stronger over time as the organisations have learned how to work together more effectively and to respect each other's areas of expertise. The Development



Agreement provided the basis for delivery, although there are areas where it has either not been followed or was not sufficiently clear at the outset. However, the willingness and ability of partners to be flexible within the overall framework of the masterplan and Development Agreement has ensured that delivery got under way and has been received very positively.

The third key factor has been the complementary roles played by the partners. Berkeley has provided a focus on delivery which has maintained momentum and ensured there are visible results for residents

to see. The role of WDCO has been very important in representing residents' views and this has contributed to the exceptionally high scores in the Resident Survey for voice and influence. Meanwhile, Hackney Council has consistently held a long-term view and taken responsibility when others have not been willing or able, as well as funding community organisations and ensuring there were people on the ground who could respond to residents' concerns.

## Lessons learned

In addition, there are a number of areas where lessons can be learned for future phases of the scheme.

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**Above:** Topping out of the Residence Tower

## Support for community initiatives

The developer has funded and contributed a wide range of activities to support the community at Woodberry Down. These include:

- 1 Holding local labour jobs fairs aimed at young people and skilled workers. The adults' events are attended by subcontractors who conduct interviews and employ local labour on the day. The young persons' event involves Berkeley apprentices explaining their work, how they got there and their qualifications.
- 2 Committed to build a bridge and reed-bed walk for the Woodberry Wetlands Project which will open up the East Reservoir to the public.
- 3 Pledged £5,000 towards a 'meanwhile' pocket park on an poorly-used area of green space, and provided grow bags and tools to local residents.
- 4 Provided a commercial office unit for the residents' organisation (WDCO) and paid for half of the fit-out costs.
- 5 Hosted workshops and research trips with architects and the secondary school to develop designs for the new park - pupils were invited to plant a tree at the opening and received certificates to record their involvement.
- 6 Hosted local school visits to the site and careers talks on the construction industry.
- 7 Helped with organising the New River Festival, sat on the Steering group for the Woodberry Down History Project, a Heritage Lottery funded project, and been partners in 'Prepare Adapt Create Thrive', an MHDT initiative funded by the Big Lottery.
- 8 Contributed to the Community Fun Day (Summer) and Community Feast (Christmas).
- 9 Run an artwork competition for young local residents, with the winning designs printed on the hoardings.
- 10 Sponsored the residents trip to Clacton in the summer and the Woodberry Down Football Club away kit.

The Development Agreement set out what was to be delivered and the respective roles of the partners. This has been an important document,

but it has not dealt adequately with some issues. The structure of the partnership - with Berkeley responsible for the delivery of the



masterplan, Genesis for managing the affordable housing and the Council with dual responsibility for managing some community facilities and for housing residents – means that there are some overlapping areas of responsibility.

The most significant of these has been the re-housing of existing residents where there has been a lack of a shared understanding of the issues, for example about tenants rights and lead-times for internal fixtures and fittings, that have led to some discontent for residents and potentially greater difficulties in releasing old blocks for demolition.

LB Hackney has also faced problems in delivering some community facilities. The 2007 masterplan contained a number of facilities that did not have an operator signed-up or in some cases even identified. It is clear from the contextual interviews that the focus should have been on what services are needed; who will deliver them and what physical space is required for that delivery (if any).

This in turn reflects a wider lesson about what communities need. Alongside the physical provision of community facilities and spaces, the developer has invested in a large number of small projects that help develop the community. Often these have been run by established groups (including the Woodberry Down Community Organisation and the Manor House Development Trust)

and have been equally as significant contributions to community wellbeing.

## Happiness

When benchmarked against comparable areas, Woodberry Down performs better on all four of the wellbeing indicators. Levels of happiness are the highest performing of the indicators when compared to the benchmarks.

In part this reflects the improved living conditions for existing residents, but even this is a positive outcome. But there were concerns that the negative legacy of the old estate would crowd out the positives from the new development for old and new residents alike. This seems not to have happened. The new private residents have a lower perception of safety, but apart from that, their views are closely matched to the long-standing residents.

The most telling statistic is that 90% of residents say that they are happy with their life overall. This compares to 60% in the UK as a whole.

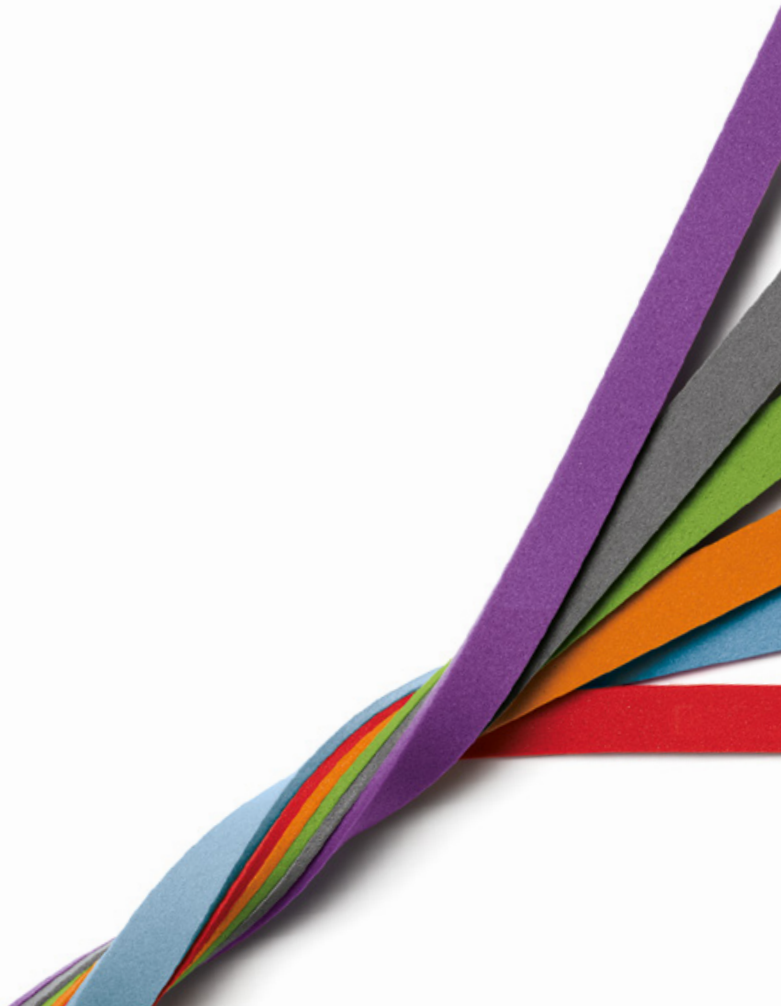
This suggests that all the partners have together delivered a scheme that is making Woodberry Down an increasingly desirable and attractive place to live.

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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 renewal schemes. They have detailed knowledge of Hackney and the Woodberry Down site itself, as well as experience working with public and private sector clients in nearly all the major conurbations of Britain.

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