

Keep Hackney Building

Developing a new programme of Council homes in Hackney:
Blandford Court garages (N1 4SA).

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Background

Since launching our innovative, not-for-profit Council house building approach in 2011, the Council has led the way in delivering a new generation of high quality Council housing in Hackney. Despite the huge challenges caused by Brexit, the coronavirus pandemic, and the increased cost of building, the Council started or completed more than 1,000 new homes between May 2018 and May 2022.

Through a pioneering cross-subsidy model, more than half of the Council's new homes are for genuinely affordable Council social rent, shared ownership, or Hackney Living Rent - despite the absence of government funding. The Council is now developing plans for more new homes beyond May 2022 and wants to ensure that Hackney residents are part of this process.

This report summarises the engagement methods and feedback received during the second stage of the **Keep Hackney Building** consultation. This stage of consultation was a targeted site-specific discussion with neighbours and local residents around 15 individual locations that have been identified for potential development across the borough. This consultation took the form of 12 site-specific events and an online survey that ran for just over eight weeks from Thursday 7 July 2022 to Wednesday 7 September 2022.

The first stage of consultation was a borough-wide survey seeking feedback on the types of locations the Council should prioritise for new homes, the things the Council should consider when building, and suggestions for individual sites the Council owns that could accommodate new homes. This ran on the Council's consultation platform Commonplace from Tuesday 1 March 2022 to Tuesday 26 April 2022.

This stage one survey was engaged with by 199 participants, further details of the feedback received from across the borough during this earlier stage can be found in the full consultation report here. (bit.ly/3qY7EN2)

Purpose of this report

This report provides a neutral account of the engagement that took place and the feedback received. The scope of the engagement was not to decide whether or not to proceed with a new development on each location, but to gain a full understanding of the location from a resident's perspective at the earliest possible stage – including the opportunities and challenges that building new homes could create – before any design work or detailed planning takes place.

Blandford Court garages

About the location

- The garages at Blandford Court are one of a number of locations in Hackney that have been identified as an option to accommodate new homes. This is because the land could be better used, providing much-needed new homes and to improve the public spaces in the surrounding estate.
- This location was also identified because it could have the potential to unlock improvements to the wider estate or bring additional investment to benefit residents, such as through new community facilities or improved communal spaces.

Distribution

- 987 letters were sent to the surrounding area ([see distribution area](#)).

Engagement

- Engagement took place between Monday 11 July 2022 and Wednesday 7 September 2022.
- An event was held on Thursday 21 July in the open space adjacent to the disused neighbourhood office.
- An online survey was hosted for the duration of the engagement period.
- Contact details were provided in the letter sent to residents for one on one discussions outside of the event.

Responses

- 32 feedback forms were received, including 24 at the events and a further eight online.
- Around 50 local residents attended the event.

Feedback

General feedback

- The overall feedback from the engagement was mixed in regard to the potential development of the garage area. Opinion in the feedback was split equally, with supportive comments reliant on the proposed density of the new building and also the possible retention of some parking in the area. Opposition to the proposal was

based on the impact on current residents' quality of life through loss of light and privacy, and disruption from construction.

Specific issues raised

- A majority of attendees **raised concerns over anti-social behaviour**, with specific **issues with drug taking and vandalism** in the area discussed. As well as **unauthorised access to buildings**.
- Several attendees from Blandford Court stated there was **disrepair in and around their home that needed to be addressed**.
- In relation to any new homes in the area, **attendees expressed concerns about loss of light, proximity to existing homes and impact on privacy**. **Proximity to the main road** was also discussed as less than ideal.

Survey responses

Three open questions were asked, the aim of which was to give participants an opportunity to tell us their views and ideas and allow the Council to better understand how residents use and interact with the areas around them. The feedback to each of these questions is summarised below:

What do you think works well in the area?

- 10 participants praised the **sense of community and neighbourly feel of the estate**.
- Seven participants mentioned that the parking at Blandford Court was something they wouldn't want to lose as **"Parking in the car park feels safer than on the local streets"**. Parking spaces were also noted as needed by residents with accessibility issues and for those that receive regular visitors.
- One resident noted they were still **waiting for a video doorbell** that was promised by housing services and not yet installed. The **management of the local area, cleaning and maintenance was raised** by three participants as **needing improvement**. Four participants noted **the area was improving over time**, with one stating this has happened since the London Olympics.
- Five participants listed the **open and green spaces as assets of the area**, with three of these praising the **children's playspace as being good and safe enough for children to play unsupervised**.
- Three participants stated they **did not think there was anything good about the area**. One also stated they had **concerns over drug dealing, muggings, drunks and other anti-social behaviour**.

- **Three participants stated they would be against any development** on the site discussed, while **two participants supported new homes** on the site.

What would you like to see change or improve?

- **Anti-social behaviour was the most discussed response**, with 18 participants sharing their concerns. These concerns related to **drug use in and around the estate**, with one participant stating '**lots of drug addicts on open staircases**'. 14 participants raised **concerns over the safety and security of the area**, with two mentioning **video doorbells** and two others discussing that **new security doors were promised to access the building**. Three participants also raised complaints over the lighting in communal spaces being faulty or needing improvements.
- **General maintenance and cleaning of the estate** were raised by 16 participants, with the majority noting it was not good enough. **Drainage in the estate and leaks from roofs** were also raised by four participants. The **bin storage needing fob access** was also raised by two participants.
- **Bike storage and general storage for residents** were raised by four participants as something that was needed on the estate. The **communication between the Council and residents** was raised by three participants as needing to be improved, with one noting that **works taking place on the estate were not sufficiently communicated** to residents, while another stated **reporting repairs were difficult** and often took too long with no reasoning given.

Where do you think are the best places to build new homes in this area?

- 11 participants stated they were **against the proposed development for a variety of reasons**. These included **disruption from construction**, preferring to have the **space deliver community green space or resident storage**, the area becoming **overpopulated and confined**, the **effect on light and privacy in existing homes**, and **changing the character of the area**.
- 11 participants shared support for the development of the site, with some noting certain conditions such as **retaining some of the parking, not building too tall, delivery of new communal spaces** with homes, and one noted that **all of Blandford Court should be redeveloped**.
- Several sites in the local area were suggested as possible locations for new homes, this included; the **triangular site on Kingsland High Road and Enfield Road**, the **Vietnamese Community Centre** and the **Old Hoxton Fire Station**.

Next steps

- The feedback will now be considered alongside other factors such as affordability, capacity and planning issues, to help inform the Council's decision on whether to proceed in developing detailed plans for new homes at each location. It is intended to

take a report to the Council's Cabinet in late 2022, setting out the proposed locations to be included in a new programme of Council homes.

- Should this location be included, the Council will ensure the community is involved throughout the design process through workshops, drop-in events and online engagement.
- Any new project will require planning permission, with local residents given the opportunity to formally comment on a planning application before a decision is made by the Council's planning sub-committee.