

Keep Hackney Building

Developing a new programme of Council homes in Hackney:
Blackwell Close garages (E5 0TA)

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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.

Blackwell Close garages

About the location

- The garages at Blackwell Close 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

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

Engagement

- Engagement took place between Friday 1 July 2022 and Wednesday 7 September 2022.
- An event was held on Tuesday 12 July in the open space adjacent to the garages.
- 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

- Five feedback forms were received, including three at the event and a further two online.
- Around 10 local residents attended the event.

Feedback

General feedback

- The overall feedback from the engagement suggests there are relatively few concerns over the prospect of future development, with three participants stating their support. Further investment in community facilities in the area is desired, with the possible addition of sports or community facilities.

Specific issues raised

- Attendees stated that more housing was needed locally, with an acknowledgement that the site could be better used.
- The garages are currently used as a playspace for ball games.
- The community garden is only used by a small number of residents.

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?

- Three participants stated that the area had a **good community** and was a **peaceful area**. One participant put this down to the area being **diverse** and **full of multi-generational families** with **good youth clubs**. **Good access to public transport** and **available green spaces** was also discussed by one participant.

What would you like to see change or improve?

- Four participants asked for a **variety of community facilities** such as **sports areas**, **play equipment** and **community centres**. One participant requested additional **lighting in the area to improve safety**. Another participant raised concerns about drainage and flooding in the local area.

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

- No specific suggestions were made through the feedback forms, but three participants did state their **support for the development of the garage space**. One participant suggested **building in disused buildings that have no community benefit**.

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.