

# Keep Hackney Building

Developing a new programme of Council homes in Hackney:  
Morris Blitz neighbourhood office (N16 7UJ).

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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.

(<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZHjueW8Nsc68ECMXwAYODXpEvvOUcolg/view?usp=sharing>)

### 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.

# Morris Blitz neighbourhood office

## About the location

- The disused neighbourhood office at Morris Blitz Court is one of a number of locations in Hackney that has 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

- 672 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

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

## Feedback

### **General feedback**

- The overall feedback from the engagement was supportive of development on the site of the neighbourhood office. There was a desire to see the building used for something, as well as an appetite for investment in the open space around the estate for the benefit of residents.

## Specific issues raised

- Attendees noted that the disused **neighbourhood office was an eyesore and should be redeveloped**. One attendee asked for the neighbourhood office to be **redeveloped into a community space**.
- It was noted that only one of the garages was used by residents, and the other undercroft areas could be used to **deliver alternative community benefit or workspace** so the area was better used.
- A majority of attendees discussed the **greenspace and landscaping around the estate** and noted it **could be put to better use and made more accessible to residents**.
- Several attendees expressed an **interest in establishing a TRA**.

## 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?*

- Four participants stated that **the community feeling in the area** was the best thing about living here, “The neighbours are amazing, so many things to do with the children”. Three participants described **nearby parks and greenspaces as local assets**. Participants also noted **shops, schools, and links to local transport** as positive aspects.

*What would you like to see change or improve?*

- Four participants stated that the maintenance of the **communal space could be better**, with specific reference to a **vermin issue in the bin storage areas and neighbouring residents using the bin storage**.
- Three participants mentioned the overall **security of the estate** and raised concerns about drug use around the garages. Two of the participants suggested CCTV to help mitigate the issue.
- Two individuals requested **space for children to play on the estate** and one participant requested a **community garden in some of the green space**. One resident also noted that **pigeons were a continuing issue for residents on higher floors**. Other items requested by one individual include better **recycling bins, bicycle storage, better energy efficiency in existing homes**, more **biodiversity across the estate**, and **solar panels being installed on the roof**.

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

- Four participants **agreed with the development of the neighbourhood office**, with one suggestion that the **entire estate needed to be rebuilt**.

## 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.