

# ALTERED ESTATES

How to reconcile competing  
interests in estate regeneration



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2016

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interests in estate regeneration

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# Foreword

Lord Kerlake

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We have a desperate need to build more homes of all types and tenures, particularly in London. Despite the regeneration successes over the last two decades, we still have housing estates in urgent need of regeneration that could take more housing. What could possibly go wrong with putting these together?

Well the answer is quite a lot, to which a long list of well-intentioned but ultimately unsuccessful initiatives bears testimony. Sometimes the failure is down to viability. In others, it is the result of rejection by existing residents. Whatever the reason, the outcome is the same.

As we embark on yet another Government led initiative therefore, it is timely and valuable to have this wise and sensible report. The prerequisites for successful regeneration are particularly powerful. These are long game, big investment, big return projects. They must focus on great placemaking with new homes as a part of this. Above all, they must have the active engagement and support of the existing residents.

I would strongly encourage anyone who is involved in regeneration to read this report. We may make new mistakes in the future but there is no need to carry on repeating the old ones.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "R W Kerlake". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

# Introduction

## Estate regeneration in the spotlight

In the 1960s and 70s nearly three million homes were built by local authorities in Britain. Most of them incorporated new ideas about town planning, the design of the home and methods of construction. It is these estates which have been – and continue to be – the main focus of subsequent major regeneration initiatives, including David Cameron’s recent declaration of action on ‘sink estates’.

The Prime Minister accuses the worst estates of ‘entrenching poverty in Britain – isolating and trapping many of our families and communities’. Like many observers he believes that non-traditional design is a significant part of the problem. Regeneration specialists know that the issues are far more complex, but most would at least agree that design can contribute to the social and economic success or failure of places.

The four architectural practices behind this report have been involved with the regeneration of housing estates for four decades. We started to

advise communities and local authorities on estate improvements soon after the last concrete panel was craned into place in the mid-1970s. Since then we have worked under successive political initiatives and funding models to improve, remodel or replace dozens of estates in London and around the UK. We have seen what works and what does not.

In response to the renewed political focus on estate regeneration, this report contains a distillation of our combined experience into a series of recommendations on how best to meet the challenges of today. One intended audience is Lord Heseltine’s Estates Regeneration Advisory Panel, although our interest is broader than the government’s focus on the ‘100 worst estates’. We hope our work will also be of interest to communities, local authorities, housing associations, our developer clients and professional colleagues, including other architects who have come more recently into the challenging field of estate regeneration.



CROSSWAYS ESTATE BEFORE EXTENSIVE REFURBISHMENT, TOWER HAMLETS

## Whose estate is it anyway?

There is another reason why we have produced this report at this time.

There has always been tension between the priority to be given to the wishes of existing residents and the potential of estates to provide a greater range of housing opportunity for the wider population, but now this has become politicised and polarised into two fiercely opposed positions.

In one corner are those who believe that housing estates belong to those who live on them and only their views should count in determining the future – and increasingly their preference is to be left alone. In the other corner are those who regard housing estates as public assets, which local authorities have a right and duty to use to meet wider needs – including the growing clamor for more homes, at affordable prices, for middle-income households. The views of both camps deserve respect.

Part of the reason for this polarisation is obvious to those who have been facilitating successful estate regeneration for decades: it revolves around the concept of ‘balanced communities’. A genuinely balanced community will contain a wide range of housing types and tenures for a wide range of households across the spectrum of age, ethnicity, income, occupation and household size. It will also balance the needs and aspirations of all the stakeholders, including existing tenants and leaseholders, and also ‘outsiders’ who would like to settle in the area and invest in it if only the opportunity was there.

The perception of many existing residents – and their champions in parts of the media – is that estate regeneration is no longer delivering balance: the proportion of affordable to market homes is dwindling, the definition of affordability is shifting, the cost of market homes is soaring, and the buyers of those homes seem like remote aliens – far removed from being ‘people like us who have a bit more money’. They condemn estate regeneration as ‘social cleansing’ and a ‘war on social housing’.

In our view it is essential that we are clear about the objective of estate regeneration: is it to improve the lives of those who live on and around existing estates, or is it to make more effective use of public land to help solve the ‘housing crisis’ by creating additional homes and widening access to home ownership?

Managing and resolving this tension has been a key objective of community engagement for the past 40 years.

With care, patience and respect we can and should be able to do both. We have managed it in the past, and there are many examples of successful outcomes in a set of case studies in the back of this publication.

## Estate regeneration and Superdensity

Our last piece of collaborative work was *Superdensity: the Sequel* (2015), which explains how to create successful neighbourhoods at high density, and also cautions against what we call ‘hyperdensity’ – very high densities above the top end of the London Plan guidance. We focused on the importance of street-based urban design in the creation of successful mixed communities and the advantages of mid-rise over high-rise development for integration of mixed-tenures and control of management costs. All of this has become very relevant to estate regeneration.

As London struggles to build enough homes to keep pace with demand, attention is increasingly turning to the regeneration of housing estates to provide more homes as well as better homes. Often estates were built to a low density, at a time when London’s population was falling, which potentially allows them to be updated in ways that create many more homes, mixed communities and a better place to live for those already inhabiting them.

However, the reduction of public investment in regeneration is transforming the well-tryed mixed-funding model (combining market investment with subsidy) into an increasing reliance on market-driven solutions. This means that the provision of new affordable homes on estates is becoming mainly or entirely dependent on cross-subsidy from homes for sale. Therefore, densities are being pushed up to create enough surplus income – with the risk that some outcomes breach our guidelines for successful superdense development and could be unsustainable in the long-term.

At the same time, other forms of low cost housing like shared ownership have moved out of reach for those on low incomes. These market-led developments, at a time of welfare cuts and depressed wages, all add to the perception that existing communities are losing out.

### No *banlieues* please - we're British

We hold to the principle that our cities prosper best as places if we encourage the integration of mixed communities within them. Indeed, it is the essentially democratic and fair distribution of people from all walks of life, and the idea that citizens have free access to all areas on streets that are policed by consent, that has endowed Britain with enduringly popular and peaceful cities. Putting low cost housing at the heart of revitalised estates is a key demonstration of this principle.

Established cities go through cycles of decline and renewal, often without the benefit of any organised intervention. Sometimes urban pioneers colonise run down and low cost areas, creating a hipster brand that generates value. Sometimes environmental blights vanish, such as when electric propulsion replaced steam, lifting the smog from around the marshalling yards of Camden Town.

Gentrification is neither sensitive nor fair, but it is an established and inevitable form of urban renewal and its effects can be dramatic. In the span of two generations the areas in the so called 'inner ring of multiple deprivation' in London have evolved into some of the most desirable neighbourhoods. This has happened almost entirely as a consequence of private investment in property, albeit with a following wind of fiscal subsidies to support the process.

In our work, we seek to avoid the creation of neighbourhoods that are exclusive to either the rich or the poor. We believe instead that people from all sectors of society thrive and prosper best with equal access to the benefits of urban life and the opportunity to interact with each other both socially and economically. The dilution of concentrated social deprivation, and raising the overall economic activity in an area, are good things, even though there is a lack of evidence to prove that estate regeneration improves the social mobility of the poorest people.

In his study of mixed communities in England, Alan Berube of the Brookings Institute in Washington summarised the key disadvantages of neighbourhoods of concentrated deprivation:

*High levels of worklessness limit job networks and employment ambitions*

*Schools struggle to educate overwhelmingly poor populations*

*Poor neighbourhoods experience higher levels of crime and disorder*

*Area-based deprivation exacerbates health inequalities*

*Concentrations of deprivation reduce private sector activity and raise prices for the poor.*

Finally, we recognise the importance of the democratic process employed to plan and deliver any major project of urban regeneration. Planning, masterplanning and urban design must deliver better and more sustainable living environments, but there will be cost, disruption and disappointment for some. Planning is the democratic process that legitimises the disadvantage suffered by a minority in favour of benefits for the majority. It is thus imperative that processes of regeneration are transparent and organisations are properly accountable for the decisions made in their name.



SOUTH LAMBETH ESTATE RESIDENTS VISIT TO PACKINGTON ESTATE, ISLINGTON - AFFORDABLE HOMES IN THE BACKGROUND

## Focus on London

We acknowledge that this report is focused on London and the South-east, where land values and house prices bring their own solutions and problems - a markedly different financial equation compared to what is possible with estates in south Yorkshire or the North-east, for example. However, our practical guidance for essential processes like options appraisal, urban design and engaging with communities are not location-specific, and will, we hope, be useful to those involved in estate regeneration throughout the UK.

## The structure of this report

Our report is arranged into four chapters followed by a set of case studies.

Chapter 1 *Appraising the options* explains how a methodical and transparent process of options appraisal can assist selection of the best regeneration strategy and lay the foundations for effective community engagement.

Chapter 2 *Engaging communities* sets out best practice in stakeholder engagement leading to community buy-in and avoiding top-down imposition of unpopular proposals.

Chapter 3 *Getting the design right* addresses the sensitive issue of re-integration of estates into the surrounding townscape and confronts the limits of high density intensification.

Chapter 4 *Achieving sustainable outcomes* tests some of the conclusions in the previous chapters against long-term measures of sustainability and explains why current government policies require review if unsustainable outcomes are to be avoided.

Each chapter concludes with some concise recommendations, which are combined to form the report summary on the following pages.

The practices have selected 12 case studies to illustrate the range of estate regeneration initiatives over the years and include a number of current live projects. The case studies cover most of the key government programmes and funding models, including the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), Estates Renewal Challenge Fund (ERCF), Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and others. They range from fully grant-funded programmes like Estates Action and Housing Action Trusts to private equity models for council housing, requiring no grant or cross-subsidy. Most involve some form of mixed private and public funding.

## What next?

Our report is only the beginning of this project. We have sought funding and we hope to go on to research the consequences of the schemes in which we have variously played a part, and carry out post-occupancy research into the experience of populations in the neighbourhoods affected. We see a pressing necessity that the designers and developers of such projects should build up a body of evidence about the consequences of their contribution to urban regeneration.



RESIDENTS POST OCCUPANCY EVALUATION AT PRIORY ROAD, SOUTH HAMPSTEAD

# Summary of recommendations

## Introduction: prerequisites for successful regeneration

Let's be clear about the objective of estate regeneration: is it to improve the lives of those who live on or around existing estates, or is it to help solve the housing crisis by making more effective use of public land? With care, patience and respect we should be able to do both.

Estate regeneration must maintain and enhance social diversity: it will not succeed without the broad support of existing residents, but it can and should also play a significant part in creating additional homes for buyers and renters.

The mixed-funding model (including public investment and cross-subsidy from market housing) has worked well in creating successful, diverse and financially viable estate regeneration, but that model does not work when public investment is reduced to a token contribution and too much reliance placed on the market. Estate regeneration is now under threat from unbalanced market-led solutions provoking resistance from existing communities.

We urge government to think again about the role of public investment in estates, and to review the application of current policies to estate regeneration. Right to Buy and the Starter Homes initiative should be applied flexibly to estate regeneration, with due attention to local priorities.

## Chapter 1 Appraising the options

1. Undertake an initial desk exercise to establish the viability in principle of options to be tested.
2. The range of options should be wide and as distinct from one another as possible, enabling alternatives – including redevelopment versus refurbishment or the degree of densification necessary to generate cross-subsidy – to be evaluated. The range should include the costs and benefits of doing nothing as a baseline comparator. Minimal intervention and meanwhile uses are alternatives that should also be evaluated – the benefits can be unexpected.
3. Recognise the connection between options appraisal and the stakeholder engagement process described in Chapter 2. Establish appropriate appraisal criteria for each stakeholder group and appraise options against these separately.
4. Use one of the many tried and tested appraisal methodologies. Make sure that non-financial and non-quantifiable costs and benefits are appropriately considered as well as empirical measures. Embrace holistic measures of success, as well as purely empirical and financial ones.

## Chapter 2 Engaging communities

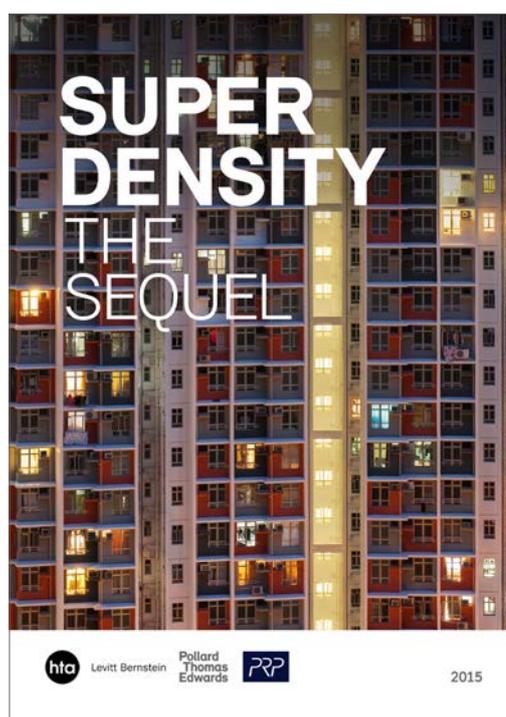
1. Ensure that residents are involved in the process as soon as a realistic prospect of regeneration is established. Always ensure anything shown to residents in consultation is deliverable.
2. Ensure that there is political and planning support, and that there is adequate time factored in for consultation.
3. What's in it for residents? Regeneration needs to have real benefits for existing residents. Make sure that there are embryonic but realistic ideas for the residents 'offer' from the beginning – residents will not engage effectively on other issues, such as design, until their future security is addressed.
4. Ensure that the process is transparent and auditable – a matter of record.
5. Ensure that residents have adequate skills and knowledge to be able to participate in the consultation. Provide training and other assistance if required.
6. The engagement process needs to be inclusive. Design the engagement strategy to reach a wide sample of the community – including neighbouring residents and businesses outside the estate – and ensure that small vocal groupings don't have a disproportionate voice in the process.

### Chapter 3 Getting the design right

1. Understand the existing and historic patterns of development on and surrounding the estate, and seek to reintegrate the estate with its surroundings, making connections and reducing visible difference. Create places around a network of streets and other public spaces, with clear edges reinforced by the built-form and a clear distinction between public, shared and private space.
2. Use new development to provide a variety of homes in a range of typologies to suit different households - potentially combining family houses with mid-rise apartment blocks and taller buildings for singles and couples. Integrate different tenures within neighbourhoods and minimise visible difference - but be realistic about the need for separate entrances, different management regimes and the affordability of shared facilities.
3. To maximise their catchment and promote integration, locate community facilities, workspaces and shops on main routes and at the interface with the surrounding area.
4. Give early consideration to the car parking strategy, especially on suburban estates, and avoid domination of the street scene and other public realm by parked cars.
5. Remember that visual richness can be achieved in subtle ways and can evolve over time - avoid the temptation to create instant variety through diverse architectural languages and materials.
6. Follow the *Superdensity* guidance - if the financial model is pushing the solution towards hyperdensity then it may be better to do nothing for now, rather than risk unsustainable regeneration. Beware costly shared spaces, facilities and systems.

### Chapter 4 Achieving sustainable outcomes

1. Address the local housing requirements of the wider area and rebalance tenures to reflect the needs of all sections of society including those of existing residents, vulnerable housing groups, the old, the young and families.
2. On large regeneration programmes, plan phased development to maximise the opportunity for existing residents to have the option to stay in the area (with a preference for a single stage decant), minimise the disruption to occupiers and create a series of complete places rather than fragments of a building site.
3. Consider new delivery models where local authorities retain a financial stake in the development and develop housing to suit their local circumstances, leading to solutions that deliver equitable outcomes for the benefit of existing and local residents and provide revenues for the council.
4. Review existing and emerging national housing, planning and fiscal policies where they conflict with sustainable estate regeneration outcomes - including Right to Buy, Starter Homes and the presumption in favour of demolition.



# Chapter 1 Appraising the options

There is seldom one simple and obvious strategy towards the successful regeneration of a particular housing estate. To try to shortcut the proper examination of issues and options is to invite opposition, delay and potential failure. By contrast, setting out a series of alternative options and appraising these in an open, transparent fashion builds confidence in decision making and dispels myths. This process must recognise the legitimate interests of different stakeholder groups, as diverse as existing residents and prospective investors, with differing priorities and preferences.

This diversity of interests can and must be addressed if resistance from stakeholders is to be avoided. The gains from regeneration can be considerable, but the costs and risks should be aired too. Thus the 'prospectus for investment' should be clearly established for all groups – whether it's investment of time, hope and collaborative effort from residents, or of money from funders.



CATHALL ROAD ESTATE, WALTHAM FOREST BEFORE REGENERATION (MUSEUM OF LONDON)

## The range and nature of options

The options offered for consideration should be distinct and dissimilar. Clear differences helps to flush out preferences. In the early stages the temptation to compromise the distinctive differences between options should be avoided, as this blurs the decision-making process. Options should test and compare the acceptability of distinct strategies for achieving prioritised outcomes: for example, redevelopment versus refurbishment, or various scenarios for the introduction of homes for private sale to increase the yield of subsidised housing.

## Appraisal tools

There are many different appraisal tools and programmes, and we do not propose to go into the mechanics of options appraisal in detail here.

It's not just about money, and not everything can be assessed in financial and empirical terms. The options appraisal process should treat aspects that are un-measurable as ranked priorities and these should be given adequate status. If stakeholders care greatly about aesthetic considerations or the loss of familiar streetscapes or views, then these matters should be treated with appropriate weight. Make sure that non-financial and non-quantifiable costs and benefits are appropriately considered as well as empirical measures.

## It's not just about money, and not everything can be assessed in financial and empirical terms

The residents of Cathall Road, in Leytonstone for example, were insistent on the benefits of streets and terraced housing, and, based on their experience of living in mid-rise balcony access flats and high-rise apartments with lift access, were adamant that only a street-based scheme of not more than three storeys in height would meet with their approval.

As architects we have been involved in many different methodologies over the years, generally structured and undertaken by specialist members of the team. The Estates Action process dating from the 1980s was as thorough-going as any, and since then BREEAM Communities, LEED for Neighbourhood, and SNAP (Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan) have been developed in order to capture aspects of sustainability in a holistic fashion.

## What is options appraisal?

An options appraisal is a technique for reviewing options and analysing the costs and benefits of each one. It helps to ensure informed decision-making by providing a process that requires:

- the key objectives that must be achieved to be identified
- the different ways of achieving these objectives to be described and
- the pros and cons of each of these ways to be considered in terms of the benefits (financial and non-financial) that they can deliver.

Options appraisals need to be planned, managed and properly resourced, irrespective of scale and complexity. A five-stage approach has been identified:

Phase 1:

Project start up, strategic content, key objectives and outcomes, levels of risk and control, delivery options available, governance and stakeholder management

Phase 2:

Gather information, develop evaluation criteria, conduct high level option appraisal

Phase 3:

Identify a short list of options

Phase 4:

Validation of processes and outcomes

Phase 5:

Determine the next steps for progressing

(Taken from Options Appraisal Workbook, Local Partnerships LLP, 2012. Local Partnerships is a joint venture between HM Treasury and the Local Government Association)

Each of these attempts to combine financial appraisal with assessment of less tangible and measurable environmental, social or economic impacts.

Different sets of criteria will matter more to different stakeholders – each group must be satisfied that its priorities are receiving proper consideration. An option that succeeds for a wide range of interests is clearly a desirable outcome, and so it is important to establish well-organised interest groups – typically building owners, residents (of different tenures), neighbouring communities, investors, the local authority – and engage them in identifying what their priorities are at the outset.

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### **Prolonged exposure to uncertainty generates consultation fatigue and results in poor levels of engagement**

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The options appraisal process will determine the rank order of importance of the various appraisal criteria. Therefore, it helps to accentuate the most important criterion for each distinct group to achieve as an outcome of the regeneration process. This helps immensely in getting across a convincing message when communicating the outcome.



### **Options appraisal as part of structured consultation**

Regeneration of post-war estates is typically initiated by the primary landlord – a local authority or housing association (following stock-transfer) – and sometimes in response to grass roots pressure from existing residents. In the very early stages it is legitimate for the landlord to carry out confidential feasibility studies to establish whether there is a realistic and viable prospect for some kind of regeneration.

There are good reasons why a responsible landlord may wish to examine the viability in principle of a regeneration programme before going public (although freedom-of-information legislation will limit the scope for confidential studies). The prospect of upheaval can create considerable anxiety for households, and the stress is heightened in proportion to the degree of uncertainty at the early stages. At the other extreme, prolonged exposure to uncertainty generates consultation fatigue and results in poor levels of engagement. It is therefore unwise to begin consultation with affected groups over proposals that might prove unviable. So establishing the in-principle viability of a possible range of realistic options creates a useful starting point from which a suitably empowered resident community can engage.

Thereafter, the options appraisal process should be carried out openly and in parallel with a structured engagement strategy of the kind described in Chapter 2. Consultation should be honest, comprehensive, representative, open, recorded and communicated widely at each stage. A robust process will withstand future challenge and effectively counter misinformation.

To take one example, the funding of regeneration principally through cross-subsidy from homes for sale has become increasingly controversial and contentious: it can lead to the doubling or trebling of the number of homes in a given area, and still struggle to deliver the type or amount of affordable housing to satisfy the existing community. The trade-off between increased density and the provision of more subsidised homes can be thoroughly aired by comparing the implications on neighbourhood character and scale in a range of options.

**WINTERTON HOUSE, WATNEY MARKET ESTATE, BEFORE (LEFT) AND AFTER (RIGHT) RADICAL REFURBISHMENT**



### Doing nothing is an option

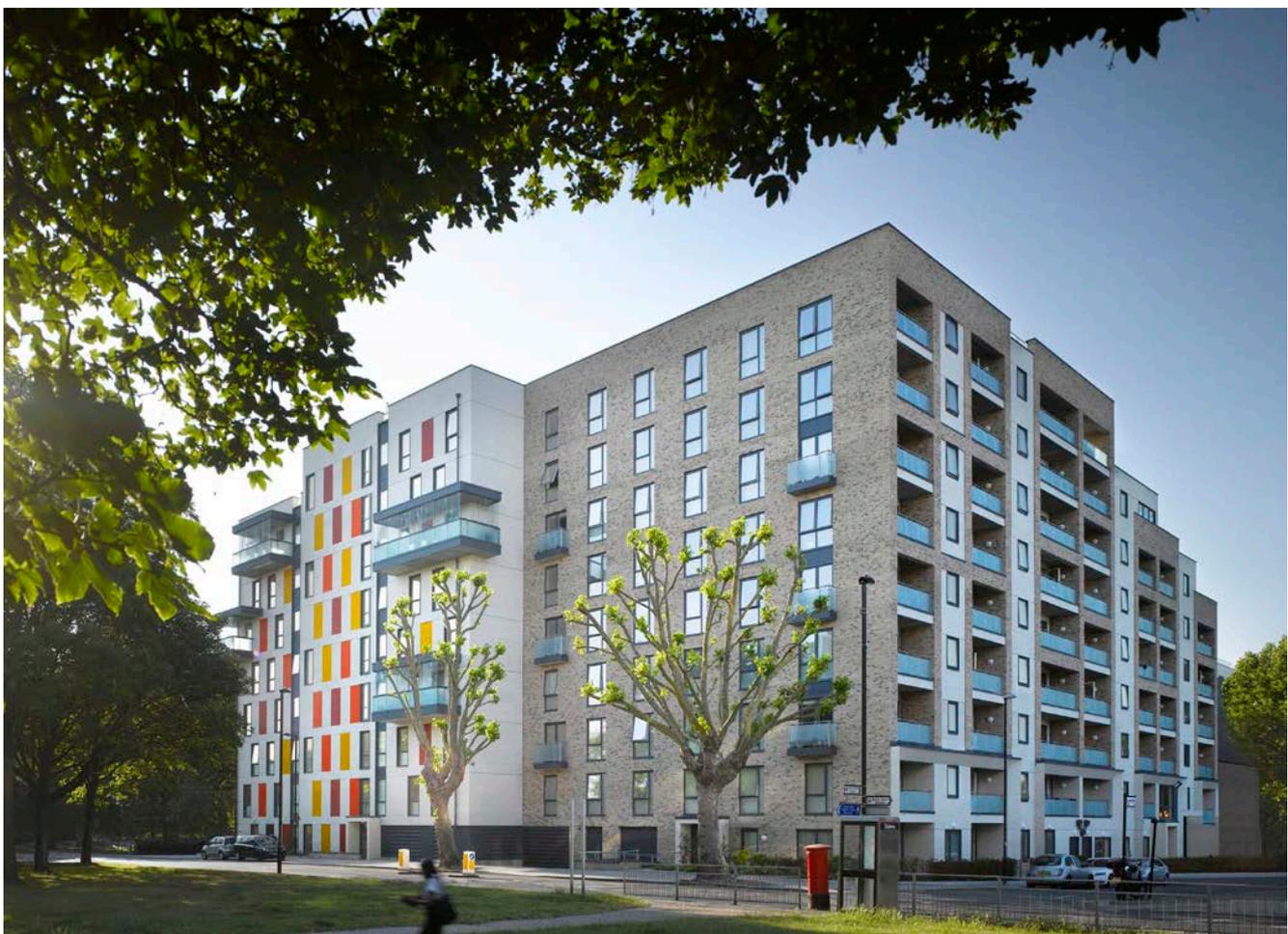
Sometimes, doing nothing is either not an option for structural, safety or maintenance reasons, or the accumulating revenue costs threaten the sustainability of the estate and demand action. At Cathall Road and the Packington Estate in Islington, for example, the prefabricated structures could not be economically repaired. However, it is perfectly reasonable for stakeholders to demand to know the justification for intervention – and sometimes doing nothing may be a legitimate option. So the costs of doing nothing should be spelled out, and not just in financial terms – often there will be environmental or physical deterioration implications that should be made clear. The costs and benefits of doing nothing also serve as a useful baseline comparator.

There are examples of regeneration having been brought about, or at least assisted, by enabling short-term use of non-residential space such as studio and workshop space, or by encouraging urban pioneers or homesteaders to establish new communities – these

can create value by transforming once unpopular neighbourhoods or estates into desirable places to be. Other well-meaning temporary uses have tended to add more cost than benefit – for example, converting vacant garages. Analysis of the alternatives should be realistic and rigorous, but minimal intervention and meanwhile uses are options that should be evaluated – the benefits can be unexpected.

### A transparent process

It is possible, in our experience, for a single multi-disciplinary team to gain the trust and willing co-operation of all the stakeholder groups in regeneration. It need not be the case that the process is turned into a battleground of adversarial behaviour among professionals representing different interests. Professionals with an appropriately ethical stance can fairly represent the interests of all affected stakeholder groups. However, sometimes it is necessary or helpful for residents' groups to have their own 'residents' friend' to help to validate or challenge the contribution of the professional team.



PHASE 1 SOUTH ACTON - MASTERPLAN REDEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH ACTON ESTATE, A JOINT VENTURE BETWEEN EALING BOROUGH COUNCIL, L&Q AND COUNTRYSIDE

The options appraisal process can defuse confrontational behaviour by openly acknowledging negative aspects of regeneration. For this to work appropriately there must be a commitment to record and rank all of these downsides and to seek the affirmation of stakeholders that they have all been accorded appropriate weight. Transparent discussion and debate of the pros and cons serves as an antidote to the influence of unrepresentative voices. The rolling programme of redevelopment at Waltham Forest HAT was a major undertaking, involving extensive enabling works even before the phased decanting, demolition and rebuilding began. However, residents were fully aware of the temporary disruption, so much so that they marched on the Marsham Street Department of the Environment headquarters to insist on inclusion in the Housing Action Trust programme.

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### **The options appraisal process can defuse confrontational behaviour by openly acknowledging negative aspects of regeneration**

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It is healthy for the options appraisal process to be carried out in the full glare of stakeholder scrutiny, and there is a clear connection therefore between the techniques of option appraisal and the engagement process described in the next chapter. Therefore the algorithms used for calculating and ranking costs and benefits should not be over elaborate - but neither should they patronise by being oversimplified to the point of omission.

#### **Ballots and referenda**

Ballots were a legal requirement brought in with stock transfer legislation affecting programmes such as the Estate Renewal Challenge Fund - an initiative under the Blair government. In many subsequent regeneration projects the ballot has been dropped from the process or been circumnavigated, although some local authorities such as Westminster City Council favour ballots for all major regeneration initiatives. Meanwhile, relatively recent aspects of planning policy, such as Neighbourhood Planning, now involve referenda. In principle, we endorse the use of ballots as an effective way of crystallising support for regeneration proposals, and we discuss effective preparation in the next chapter.

#### **Recommendations**

1. **Undertake an initial desk exercise to establish the viability in principle of options to be tested.**
2. **The range of options should be wide and as distinct from one another as possible, enabling alternatives - including redevelopment versus refurbishment or the degree of densification necessary to generate cross-subsidy - to be evaluated. The range should include the costs and benefits of doing nothing as a baseline comparator. Minimal intervention and meanwhile uses are alternatives that should also be evaluated - the benefits can be unexpected.**
3. **Recognise the connection between options appraisal and the stakeholder engagement process described elsewhere in this paper. Establish appropriate appraisal criteria for each stakeholder group and appraise options against these separately.**
4. **Use one of the many tried and tested appraisal methodologies. Make sure that non-financial and non-quantifiable costs and benefits are appropriately considered as well as empirical measures. Embrace holistic measures of success, as well as purely empirical and financial ones.**

## Chapter 2 Engaging communities

### Best practice approach to resident engagement

Regeneration will not succeed without broad support from local people. This chapter is based on four decades of experience in engagement, working with communities to achieve a consensus for change.

Treating residents with the respect you would afford any client underpins the approach. Providing the right conditions that will facilitate an exchange of ideas is key. Invariably, local people have in-depth knowledge of their neighbourhood, both factual and anecdotal, which will help build the bigger picture of what is needed. Just as important is clear articulation

of what is possible. For a project to be a long-term success a wide variety of stakeholders – local residents and businesses, the local council and its development partners – must come together to form a consensus across a range of issues including the key regeneration objectives and how best to achieve them.

Regeneration rarely affects just the occupants of the particular estate; its influence reaches much further, both geographically and socio-economically, into the wider neighbourhood, and any consultation exercise must find a way of reaching the wider audience.



EASTFIELDS ESTATE CONSULTATION

## At the beginning

Estate regeneration normally derives from a combination of factors that come together as a 'critical mass' and indicate that physical change needs to be considered. Typically these issues would include: generally poor quality housing and public realm, community safety issues, poor security, inherent defects and housing maintenance and management problems. Increasingly another criteria is that redevelopment represents a good opportunity to provide additional new dwellings for the area through intensification, or with little grant available this is the only way to fund replacement housing.

Community engagement should start as soon as the need and the potential for some form of regeneration has been identified. The previous chapter explains how an initial desk study can establish the range of possible options and the realistic prospect of viability. Such a study should also focus the attention of local authority members and officers and ensure that there is political support to move forward. Without these prerequisites it is pointless – and potentially damaging – to start an engagement process.

There needs to be an embryonic, but realistic, idea of what is deliverable and what the residents 'offer' might be before consultation starts. Residents will not engage effectively on other issues, such as design, until their future security is addressed. The programming of the engagement also needs to be paced so residents see continuous progress without feeling bulldozed or overwhelmed. Above all, transparency of both the process and the agenda is the foundation of a productive exchange.

At the Eastfields Estate in Merton early development of an attractive freeholder and leaseholder offer unlocked the engagement process, thereby allowing consultation on design development and wider issues to progress with residents feeling more secure about their future.

A classic mistake is to present a community with a beautifully presented design concept – a masterplan or a series of seductive marketing images to sell the scheme. Estate regeneration is not like that: the majority of the issues are not about design in isolation. Early stages are about confidence building, understanding the problems and opportunities, and establishing the wider regeneration context. For this reason, it is very important to test the overall appetite for regeneration first, before trying to discuss design.

To begin with, simply establishing what is good and what is bad, no matter how obvious or obscure they may seem, draws residents into the process. As with any brief, good information-gathering forms a sound basis for design, and the early consultation stages should be concerned with flushing out any issues – the factual and the anecdotal.

## Building capacity

Before meaningful engagement can commence, people may need help to participate knowledgeably in the consultation process, especially on large or complex projects. Few residents have ever had to read a masterplan, a house plan or an elevation and many are far from understanding complex issues such as financial viability. At the Aylesbury Estate in Southwark enabling workshops were held with resident groups that explored drawing conventions, space standards, tenure distribution, public realm and landscape design and the principles of development viability.

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## Engagement also needs to be paced so residents see continuous progress without feeling bulldozed or overwhelmed

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Sometimes a 'residents' friend' is appointed to assist with training and capacity building, and will support residents throughout the whole development process. These are normally independently appointed consultants paid for by the local authority or the developer client. At the Maiden Lane Estate in Camden an Independent Tenants' Advisor (ITA) was employed by the council to help residents understand the process and to ensure that complex issues were adequately explained. The ITA provided support and guidance to residents and gave them the information they needed to make informed decisions on all issues affecting their homes and lives.

Much of the early work is dedicated to building residents' capacity to participate. The regeneration team must use tangible and easily understood means to illustrate design choices: visiting built schemes that demonstrate particular aspects of best practice (and sometimes things that do not work so well) and using three-dimensional illustrations wherever possible, such as perspective sketches, physical models, mock-ups or computer-generated walk-throughs. At the Eastfields Estate a computer-generated walkthrough was combined with hand-drawn perspective views to

better explain to residents the qualities of the streets and parks that were being proposed. At the Aylesbury Estate, where several thousand new homes were proposed, the council commissioned a fully furnished, full-size mock-up of one of the flats to ensure residents understood the size and quality of their new homes.

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### For physical regeneration to be successful it needs to have real, tangible benefits for existing residents and the wider community

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Simple graphic tools should also be used to explain non-design issues about the development process and timescales, through to viability, phasing and construction.



Often this stage of the process concludes with residents stating their priorities and the basis on which they are willing to participate in the regeneration process. This is commonly called a 'residents' charter' and should form part of the brief for the development.



EASTFIELDS ESTATE CONSULTATION

Lefevre Walk is one of three post-war estates in Bow redeveloped under the Housing Action Trust programme from the mid-1990s. This represents a high point both for grant-funding and resident representation. Although unthinkable in today's political climate, it is an important example of what can be achieved through government investment in rented social housing: a forthcoming post-occupancy evaluation will assess the long-term outcomes in detail. There was strong resident representation on the HAT board, and influential steering groups. The objective was to provide new homes and improved economic prospects for the existing community – there was no requirement to diversify tenure or to expand the housing stock.

#### What's in it for the existing community?

For physical regeneration to be successful it needs to have real, tangible benefits for existing residents and the wider community, and for proposals to be endorsed they need to be clearly explained and communicated. The message also needs to be tuned for different audiences.

#### Leaseholders and freeholders

Often the single most controversial issue, with the most potential to cause delay, relates to the status of leaseholders and freeholders. The Right to Buy has meant that all local authority estates contain a significant proportion of homeowners who need to participate in the process – which might ultimately involve the upgrading, remodelling or replacement of their home, or at minimum, changes to the shared public realm.

We commonly find that most home owners will not engage in wider discussions unless the security of their future home is known. Who can blame them? They will have major concerns over how their property is valued and how they are compensated. Will the value of their ex-local authority property, if based on current market value, be sufficient to buy a new property either in the development or the surrounding neighbourhood?

Where homes are to be demolished, there is a variety of solutions that all form part of the viability of the project – shared ownership or shared equity in a new property or like-for-like replacement – and the appeal of each will depend on each individual's circumstances.

It is critical that the consultation strategy is inclusive and representative, and that support for regeneration is widespread



#### 'Residents' charter'

*Circle Housing Merton Priory and Merton Council  
"10 commitments"*

1. Circle Housing Merton Priory will consult with residents, consider their interests at all times, and address concerns fairly.
2. Current homeowners will be entitled to at least the market value of their home should they wish to take the option to sell their home to Circle Housing Merton Priory.
3. Current tenants will be entitled to be rehoused in a new home of appropriate size considering the number of people in the household.
4. Existing Circle Housing Merton Priory tenants will keep all their rights and have the same tenancy agreement, including rent levels, in the new neighbourhood as they do now.
5. All new properties will be more energy efficient and easier to heat than existing properties, helping to keep down residents' fuel bills.
6. Circle Housing Merton Priory will keep disruption to a minimum, and will do all it can to ensure residents only move once if it is necessary to house them temporarily while their new home is being built.
7. Circle Housing Merton Priory will offer extra help and support for older people and/or disabled residents throughout the regeneration works.
8. Circle Housing Merton Priory will continue to maintain the homes of residents across the three neighbourhoods throughout the planning process until regeneration starts, including ensuring a high quality responsive repairs service.
9. Any growth in the number of homes will be in accordance with the Council's Development Plan so that it is considered, responsible and suitable for the area.
10. As a not for profit organisation, Circle Housing Merton Priory will not profit from any regeneration and will use any surplus to provide more housing or improve existing neighbourhoods.

Within an estate, an offer that appeals to one agegroup or demographic of leaseholder or freeholder may not appeal to a different group, so it is important to understand the leaseholder's position in order to develop a tailored offer.

The offer to leaseholders and freeholders will have a significant effect on the viability of a scheme, so it is important to address this issue early and build in the associated costs. There must be a well thought-out, financially equitable and transparent strategy. If uncertainty persists too late in the process then trust can break down and momentum is lost.

### Tenants

Tenants will be concerned that they have a right to be rehoused in the new development in a similar property. Any divergence from this will need to be explained and justified. For tenants, it will be about the level of rent, service charge and energy bills – guidance on all of these must be offered early in the consultation process, alongside discussion on the type, location and design of new homes.

### The wider community

Successful regeneration will also deliver wider neighbourhood benefits – both physical improvements and positive socio-economic impacts. Not only do these need highlighting to estate residents on the estate, but the consultation needs to go further afield to neighbouring residents, businesses and other stakeholders, such as local schools. This is commonly achieved through public exhibition and a variety of neighbourhood publicity and engagement tools. This is an important opportunity to explain how the benefits of change will outweigh the perceived drawbacks, including temporary disruption: additional and improved housing, new amenities, open spaces, safer streets, more customers to support local businesses and community facilities.

### Explaining the delivery processes

Regeneration involves a complicated set of delivery processes such as planning permission, procurement of development partners and contractors, ownership issues, phased decanting, construction and occupation – all of these need to be explained and justified. Individuals will want to know about the impact on them and will demand timescales, which are often difficult to predict with accuracy – the regeneration team needs to explain any caveats or qualifications to the programme.

Community engagement by the regeneration team needs to be aligned with formal statutory planning consultation, which will follow the planning submission – and the difference between these processes needs to be made clear to the community. If the pre-application consultation is full and effective, then the planning process is potentially so much smoother. At Lefevre Walk in Bow the resident steering group members were named as part of the applicant on the planning application and attended the planning committee as active advocates for change.

### Resident choice

Further down the line, residents may be invited to make individual choices about their new home and neighbourhood. It must not be assumed that all residents want the same thing: most people have preferences based on their lifestyle, income and age.

Residents should be consulted on every aspect of estate regeneration, from the macro (the masterplan) to the micro, with very specific individual choices to be made about their new homes. Some of these are consensus issues and some are individual. Best practice is to keep them as separate as possible, discussing one without the distraction of the other.



EASTFIELDS ESTATE CONSULTATION

The key to the micro scale choices is timing – too early and residents may simply not engage as it all seems too far away, too late and the contractor may not be able to deliver the choices requested.

### **Inclusive engagement**

It is critical that the consultation strategy is inclusive and representative, and that support for regeneration is widespread. The process needs to be designed to reach as wide a sample as possible. This means being flexible and innovative with regards to timetabling, location, groupings and style of consultation. Hard-to-reach groups such as pensioners, younger people and minority groups all need their own special strategies if the process is to be inclusive and comprehensive.

Few people respond well to large group meetings: smaller surgeries and one to one engagement tends to be more productive and reach a wider audience. In this context, beware of small, politicised vocal groupings exerting a disproportionate influence on the process. Make particular efforts to reach the less vocal majority, so they can be heard and express an opinion.

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### **Make particular efforts to reach the less vocal majority, so they can be heard and express an opinion**

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For some proposed estate regeneration projects, an approval by community ballot is a prerequisite and represents the culmination of a long process. Organising this is a substantial piece of work involving many different stakeholders. It needs good preparation and planning with excellent quality material that explains in simple terms the regeneration vision and practical impacts. It also has to be demonstrably open and transparent.

At the Winstanley and York Road estates in Wandsworth a series of option studies were developed in workshops over a two-month period exploring a range of interventions from minimal change to significant redevelopment with larger gains in terms of new facilities and housing. Laying the ground in this way provides a good trail of evidence that the consultation was meaningful and open and the options process collaborative.

### **Recommendations**

The key is to be honest about the drivers for change and what this means for residents. If one of the objectives is to provide additional new homes through intensification then be clear about it from the outset and explain why.

For most residents it is a balance of potential gains and losses, and they will be looking for things which affect them adversely as well as positively.

- 1. Ensure that residents are involved in the process as soon as a realistic prospect of regeneration is established. Always ensure anything shown to residents in consultation is deliverable.**
- 2. Ensure that there is political and planning support, and that there is adequate time factored in for consultation.**
- 3. What's in it for residents? Regeneration needs to have real benefits for existing residents. Make sure that there are embryonic but realistic ideas for the residents' 'offer' from the beginning – residents will not engage effectively on other issues, such as design, until their future security is addressed.**
- 4. Ensure that the process is transparent and auditable – a matter of record.**
- 5. Ensure that residents have adequate skills and knowledge to be able to participate in the consultation. Provide training and other assistance if required.**
- 6. The engagement process needs to be inclusive. Design the engagement strategy to reach a wide sample of the community – including neighbouring residents and businesses outside the estate – and ensure that small vocal groupings don't have a disproportionate voice in the process.**

## Chapter 3 Getting the design right

Before we talk about the potential for a different design approach to create better homes and places on post-war estates, let's remember that these estates were often popular with their residents when first created. Older residents have fond memories of moving from a slum dwelling to their new centrally-heated home with indoor sanitation and a modern kitchen. They blame decline on poor management, physical deterioration and demographic changes – not necessarily on the original design.

However, few would deny that the experimental nature of post-war housing design has failed to adapt successfully to the changing demands put upon it – in some cases leading to the prime minister's bleak picture of "dark alleyways that are a gift to criminals and drug dealers". It is notable that older estates have tended to adapt better – for example the brick-built neo-Georgian and free-style London County Council estates of the inter-war years.

It is also worth remembering an alternative model of social housing which emerged in the 1970s in reaction to the big post-war estates, and has been so successful that nobody notices it. This was the practice of local authorities or housing associations acquiring multiple street properties and improving them through a mix of refurbishment, conversion and infill development. For example, the Woodbridge Estate in Islington uses the word 'estate' in its traditional sense of a London neighbourhood substantially in one ownership, but seamlessly blending with adjoining areas. It is based entirely on a traditional street pattern with public realm, private gardens and no ambiguous shared space.



CLAPTON COMMUNITY CONSORTIUM, HACKNEY - REFURBISHMENT OF POPULAR OLDER STOCK

### What is the right degree of physical change?

We need to be more rigorous and holistic in assessing the options for improving or replacing our estates, comparing the physical, social and economic benefits of alternative strategies – as we used to do under the options appraisal process which prevailed in the 1990s.

### Efforts to correct the deficiencies of post-war estates began the moment the last ones were completed in the mid-1970s

We set out in Chapter 1 the importance of an objective and methodical assessment of the options, which may range from ‘do nothing’ through ‘improve what’s there’ to ‘take it down and start again’ – plus hybrid solutions. Clearly, the degree of proposed physical change will determine how far the design outcomes recommended below can be accomplished.

In Chapter 2 we emphasise the importance of engaging the community in the definition and consideration of options, with a view to obtaining buy-in to the preferred strategy. This, too, will have a profound influence on the design outcomes. Since one of the key objectives of estate regeneration is to promote balanced communities, the constituency for engagement should include neighbouring residents and businesses as well as those who live on the estate.



WOODBIDGE ESTATE, ISLINGTON – FULLY INTEGRATED WITH ITS SURROUNDINGS



BRADWELL STREET, TOWER HAMLETS – SMALL SCALE INFILL DEVELOPMENTS

### Why not improve rather than replace?

Efforts to correct the deficiencies of post-war estates began the moment the last ones were completed in the mid-1970s and have continued through a series of major funding programmes from Estates Action to Decent Homes. Some have been successful, but others now seem wasteful examples of treating the symptoms rather than cause, when more radical change was required. Those estates which combine failures in urban planning, poor building layout and physical deterioration ultimately need replacement – modernisation works can only delay the inevitable.

Similarly, infill development can be a successful way to create more and better homes on existing estates, but sometimes it is a short-term pragmatic solution, which then prevents implementation of a bolder scheme for the next several decades. It’s even more difficult to demolish poor quality stock if it is closely hemmed about by newer homes filling every available gap.

In some cases, a combination of improvement and infill will emerge from the options appraisal process as demonstrably the best solution. Bradwell Street in Tower Hamlets demonstrates the scope for small infill developments on housing estates, replacing under-used parking areas with affordable housing and public realm improvements. The 12 homes include wide-frontage houses with courtyard gardens. This is also illustrated in Dover Court, one of our case studies at the back of this report.

### How can we transform the design of post-war estates?

Post-war housing estates are often very inefficiently planned by today's standards. They can look big and forbidding, but they actually achieve quite modest densities. This is partly because the common typology of deck-access flats and maisonettes has a very shallow building section and poor ratio of common circulation space to private living space - and partly because of large areas of land given over to surface parking and degraded outdoor space. It is entirely possible to create better homes and places at significantly higher densities - and without resorting to tall buildings.

Lefevre Walk was a largely mono-cultural traditional East End community. Older tenants remember moving from Victorian houses, demolished under a slum-clearance programme, into the brave new world of 'Brutalist' deck-access blocks often proclaiming "it was lovely when we moved in." So, for them, the new development of terraced houses and four-storey walk-up apartment blocks on traditional streets and squares was a return to urban normality - but with infinitely better accommodation. The new low-rise neighbourhood, with 60% of the homes being houses,

achieves almost the same density as its forbidding predecessor - such was the inefficient land-use of post-war planning for a depopulating city. It is easy to forget that today's superdense and hyperdense developments are a very recent arrival in London: just 20 years ago the norm was two to four storeys.

Post-war estates were designed to look to the future and turn their backs on the decaying urban fabric around them, often literally. They are mostly inward-looking, impenetrable and deliberately disconnected from their surroundings. In fact, the current canon of best practice in urban design, observed by most design and planning professionals, has evolved in precise reaction to the 'modernist dogma' of post-war estate planning and has re-embraced traditional place-making.

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### The spaces between buildings are as important as the buildings themselves and should provide a positive network of streets, squares and gardens

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Therefore, we begin with a process of 'visible mending' - that is to say, we look for the frayed edges of the pre-existing street pattern, which can often be discerned in the area surrounding an estate, and we supplement our observations with the study of historic maps and photographs. When we are replacing an estate we lay down a new network of streets - also parks and squares on larger projects - which connect up those frayed edges, so that the new blends seamlessly into its surroundings as demonstrated in the Packington neighbourhood. The spaces between buildings are as important as the buildings themselves and should provide a positive network of streets, squares and gardens, with clear differentiation between public, private and shared spaces. Development should create a legible neighbourhood or 'piece of town' and encourage pedestrian movement through the surrounding area.

Transforming an estate into a connected neighbourhood is much more than a design process. It challenges the perception of the estate as a place apart and of its residents as different from their surrounding neighbours. This is a very sensitive issue: many residents of council estates are fearful of barriers being taken down and thus losing their identity as an estate.



LEFEVRE WALK, TOWER HAMLETS - RESIDENTS IN THEIR NEW HOME



LEFEVRE WALK, TOWER HAMLETS

### Going beyond generic design standards in estate regeneration

There is a great deal of generic best practice, published design guidance and design regulation in circulation and most of it will be relevant to estate regeneration.

For example, the contribution of urban design in the creation and mending of residential neighbourhoods will invariably consider placemaking, public realm and the creation of mixed neighbourhoods: most successful towns and cities are made up of mixed-use neighbourhoods, with workspace and local services integrated with housing and active public outdoor spaces.

Recent reforms to national planning policy and building regulations have gone a long way towards rationalising design standards and reducing the confusion, contradiction and overlap which existed before. In the capital, the London Plan and related Housing Design Guide have raised the quality of housing and harmonised standards across the boroughs. However, it is a small step from

harmonisation to homogeneity. What began as guidance has ossified into fixed rules, which tend to promote particular design solutions, when others may be more appropriate for a particular context.

### The well-intentioned promotion of dual-aspect homes has become a witch-hunt against single aspect

For example, the well-intentioned promotion of dual-aspect homes has become a witch-hunt against single aspect. This tends to make efficient 'mansion block' layouts 'non-compliant' and to encourage a revival of deck access. 'Streets in the sky' evoke particularly strong reactions on post-war housing estates, where they were often the prevailing typology. Some view them nostalgically but more remember complaints about leaking and slippery decks and anti-social behavior, including noise nuisance and petty crime.



PACKINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD, ISLINGTON

## High-density living

That said, high-density living can be more sustainable than other forms and provides the intensity of use to support local facilities and public transport. Relatively high densities can be achieved with mid-rise buildings and can include attractive family homes.

This group's earlier reports, *Superdensity* (2007) and *Superdensity: the Sequel* (2015), explain how to create successful neighbourhoods at high density, and also caution against what we call 'hyperdensity' - very high densities above the top end of the London Plan guidance. A summary of our recommendations is included in the Appendix to this report.

*Superdensity: the Sequel* focuses on the importance of street-based urban design in the creation of successful mixed communities and the advantages of mid-rise over high-rise development for integration of mixed-tenures and control of management costs.

On previously mono-tenure social housing estates, the introduction of market and intermediate homes for sale and rent is particularly sensitive - and designing for their seamless integration and practical management is a very important challenge. We aim to mix different tenures within neighbourhoods and to minimise visible difference - this is sometimes called 'tenure blind' design.

However, we are also realistic about the need for separate entrances, different management regimes and the affordability of shared facilities. Recent media coverage of so-called 'poor doors' is a simplistic reaction to a complex issue. A traditional London street of terraced houses or mansion blocks handles this effortlessly, with people across the income spectrum living side-by-side, but benefiting from separately managed common spaces to suit their very different requirements.

In *Superdensity: the Sequel* we argue that with hyperdense developments, which require a predominance of high-rise buildings, it is very difficult to create the conditions which allow mixed communities to thrive. Therefore, we contend that hyperdensities are generally not suited to estate regeneration. If the financial model for a particular estate requires a massive increase in housing numbers, which in turn pushes the solution towards hyperdensity, with all the issues that this entails, then it may be better to do nothing for now, rather than risk unsustainable regeneration.

## Recommendations

Estate regeneration has the potential to transform whole neighbourhoods and, over time, to create a renewed piece of the city. Our recommendations focus on design guidance, which is especially important to successful estate regeneration, over and above generic best practice in urban design.

1. **Understand the existing and historic patterns of development on and surrounding the estate, and seek to reintegrate the estate with its surroundings, making connections and reducing visible difference. Create places around a network of streets and other public spaces, with clear edges reinforced by the built-form and a clear distinction between public, shared and private space.**
2. **Use new development to provide a variety of homes in a range of typologies to suit different households - potentially combining family houses with mid-rise apartment blocks and taller buildings for singles and couples. Integrate different tenures within neighbourhoods and minimise visible difference - but be realistic about the need for separate entrances, different management regimes and the affordability of shared facilities.**
3. **To maximise their catchment and promote integration, locate community facilities, workspace and shops on main routes and at the interface with the surrounding area.**
4. **Give early consideration to the car parking strategy, especially on suburban estates, and avoid domination of the street scene and other public realm by parked cars.**
5. **Remember that visual richness can be achieved in subtle ways and can evolve over time - avoid the temptation to create instant variety through diverse architectural languages and materials.**
6. **Follow the Superdensity guidance - if the financial model is pushing the solution towards hyperdensity then it may be better to do nothing for now, rather than risk unsustainable regeneration. Beware costly shared spaces, facilities and systems.**

# Chapter 4 Achieving sustainable outcomes

Previous sections have focused on best practice drawn from 40 years of collective experience – and there is no shortage of good examples of successful regeneration to examine in the many government-led initiatives over that period.

It was recognised through most of this period that private and public sector had to work together in partnership for sustainable outcomes and that government intervention in the form of policy direction, subsidy and incentive was required to regenerate our estates. The challenge for policy makers now is how to deliver the equivalent outcomes – mixed,

sustainable communities, genuine options for existing residents, attractive built environments and economic regeneration – all with low or no public investment.

This is particularly challenging in the context of escalating housing costs in London, where even sub-market and shared ownership tenures are out of reach for many, and estate regeneration is perceived as displacing existing communities for private gain.

This concluding section suggests what a successful outcome should look like, the challenges for policy-makers and the potential conflicts in current policy that might mitigate against these objectives.



## Creating sustainable communities

*Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.*  
(Living Geography)

This quote encapsulates the objectives and preferred outcomes we are seeking. Sustainability requires a balance of social, economic and environmental outcomes, and needs to satisfy a diverse range of housing needs. Developments which provide a range of housing for a wide cross section of society lead to balanced and sustainable neighbourhoods, inherent community strength, social cohesion and quality of life for all.

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## Retaining an existing community at the heart of a regenerated neighbourhood is an important building block

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The best developers recognise the importance of social sustainability, and differentiate their approach from their competitors by demonstrating the benefits of an inclusive, supportive neighbourhood that can build a sense of community. They know it is popular with customers and generates enhanced value.

The legitimate objectives for sustainable estate regeneration are wide and ambitious: to alleviate poverty, maximise the value and use of the public asset, increase the supply and quality of homes and invest in a solution that will endure without future public or private sector interventions.

Estates are often large areas of relative social and economic deprivation with a 'red line' boundary that separates them from their surroundings. Breaking down this separation and integrating new development into the wider context unlocks potential to create value, and enhances the sustainable characteristics of a wider area. These aims can be difficult to reconcile in the current political and economic environment where financial drivers take precedence over social outcomes.

## Some key criteria for sustainable outcomes

### Environmental impacts

Previous chapters set out methodologies for appraising whether an estate should be demolished and comprehensively redeveloped or retained, in part or in full, and refurbished, taking account of economic, social and environmental benefits now and into the future. Comprehensive redevelopment of 'sink estates' is often assumed to be the desired outcome, but this is not always either desirable or preferable.

For example, Crossways Estate in Bow comprised three tower blocks accessed by high-level pedestrian walkways. It was isolated, unpopular and crime ridden, but has been retained and improved with a new network of streets that connect with their surroundings. Economic and social assessments suggested that refurbishment of the towers, with partial demolition and new build was the favored option.

Conventional wisdom amongst environmentalists is that retention of existing residential stock, rather than demolition and rebuild, is preferred unless there is a very clear justification to do otherwise. Upfront capital costs are less, residents may not need to be decanted and communities can stay intact - plus the reuse of existing fabric is less wasteful of material.

However, when viewed in terms of socio-economic as well as environmental impacts over a 60-year lifetime, a strong case for comprehensive redevelopment can be made. That's because the existing stock performs poorly in environmental terms and the new development represents a significant improvement in quality of place and increase in housing provision.

From a social sustainability perspective, consideration must be given to existing community cohesion and how the various development scenarios and decant strategies would impact on the protection of the social ties and cohesion within these communities.

### Seeding communities

As set out in previous chapters, retaining an existing community at the heart of a regenerated neighbourhood is an important building block for cohesive new communities and successful regeneration. Residents with roots in the area have valuable insights, strong community ties and may contribute to its security by having in depth local knowledge. Tenants living in social housing are more

often present in their neighbourhood and can take an active role in policing these challenging environments. Such attributes need to be harnessed and not lost in the process of refurbishment, infill or comprehensive redevelopment. The involvement of residents beyond the boundary of the estate is also an important ingredient for success.

### Lifetime neighbourhoods

In terms of redevelopment, the objective should be to create a wide range of accommodation to suit local housing need and market demand by optimising the density, with the aim of generating value to fund the housing re-provision and other community benefits. Rebalancing tenures and diversifying the social mix will be essential to reintegrate the estate into the surrounding area and create a sustainable neighbourhood. The housing mix and range of tenures should be determined by the local context, not generic borough or regional targets.

### The housing mix and range of tenures should be determined by the local context, not generic borough or regional targets

In the comprehensive redevelopment of the Haggerston and Kingsland Estate in Hackney, local residents were extensively consulted and eventually rehoused in a new mixed-tenure development which took account of local housing demand and the needs of existing residents. It provided family accommodation in the form of maisonettes accessed at ground level, with shared ownership and market sale apartments in medium rise, high-density blocks.



HAGGERSTON AND KINGSLAND ESTATE, HACKNEY

Addressing affordability, so that those who live on an estate and others from the wider neighbourhood can afford to remain in the area, is an important ingredient to successful regeneration. Creating 'lifetime neighbourhoods' should be the objective, where a range of housing typologies and tenures is provided to enable all age groups to move up or down the property ladder or relocate to new affordable accommodation as their circumstances change.

The needs of the wider London population should be taken into account, including those of first time buyers, mobile professionals in need of homes for rent, families in search of more suitable accommodation and older people wishing to downsize, as well as those on low incomes and vulnerable households needing subsidised rental options.

Housing for people who provide essential services on low salaries, such as nurses, teachers and social workers, often require sub-market rented or low cost home ownership products.

New models of housing are emerging, including cluster flats and micro-flats in the rented housing sector, multi-generational housing typologies for extended families and specialist housing for older people. Some of these new investor-led products lend themselves well to estate regeneration: as well as diversifying the overall offer, they can provide a more stable delivery programme than sales products that rely on a buoyant housing market for delivery.

Conversely, a regeneration programme that is dominated by a single tenure will lead to unsustainable outcomes.

### Sustainable management

A placemaking approach to management is required to deliver lasting quality and liveability. This requires a robust, fair and long-term management regime both for market and sub-market tenures. Service charges must be equitable and affordable for existing and new residents, with a menu of options for market sale and rent.

For the estate to be integrated successfully in the surrounding area, there should be no visual distinction between tenures along a street or in a single block, with a tenure blind approach for market sale, shared ownership, low cost home ownership and sub-market rent. The challenge for housing providers is how to provide high quality affordable management in high density, mixed tenure developments.

## Barriers to sustainable communities and the challenges from current policy

A combination of factors poses a threat to sustainable estate regeneration: financial austerity, an unbalanced housing market, public sector budget cuts, rising housing need, and public and political concern about the social impacts of regeneration. The challenge for government is to develop policies that support, and do not conflict with, sustainable outcomes for estate regeneration. We summarise below areas where potential conflicts arise.

### Affordable housing

The definition of affordable homes is being expanded to include Starter Homes, a form of discounted home ownership that is planned to replace Affordable Housing in Section 106 agreements. If imposed on estate regeneration projects, this creates a clear risk in obtaining community support for new development. Although offering a 20% discount against market value, Starter Homes will require a large deposit and an average household income of £77k in London, putting them beyond the reach of most people living in council property. While some existing residents may have the resources to purchase a Starter Home, the majority will inevitably require some form of sub-market housing for rent, with rents capped at affordable levels.

Leaseholders are more likely to find shared ownership a more realistic option than outright purchase. The absence of any funding for social or affordable rent in the current programme limits the ability of housing providers to satisfy the needs of existing residents. This in turn is pushing densities to excessive levels to cross-subsidise re-provision.



CROSSWAYS ESTATE, TOWER HAMLETS

## Right to Buy

The extension of Right to Buy and the disposal of high value council assets to fund it add to the difficulty of estate regeneration.

Central government needs to take a non-ideological look at the true impact of Right to Buy on estates in London, especially now that it is extended to housing associations. Although the policy has helped to diversify tenure on previously mono-tenure estates and dilute concentrations of poverty, the practical effect has been a huge increase in the cost of regeneration, along with controversy, uncertainty and delay.

## Central government needs to take a non-ideological look at the true impact of Right to Buy on estates in London

For many post-war estates, physical condition and layout means radical change, including full or partial replacement, is the best long-term way to improve conditions for existing residents and create additional homes for a more diverse population. Right to Buy limits options for partial or comprehensive redevelopment by contributing to a spiral of increased costs to be met by cross-subsidy from market homes. The upfront cost of leaseholder buy-outs is sometimes met by pushing density to highly contentious levels, and an unsustainable imbalance in favour of market-sale properties against a spectrum of rented homes. This in turn leads to resistance



MAIDEN LANE, CAMDEN -  
INTEGRATED NEW HOMES WITH RETAINED STOCK

among existing communities. To provide a stable financial basis for regeneration – and to avoid abuse of the system – Right to Buy should be suspended when an estate is earmarked for regeneration and during the regeneration process.

## Superdensity in estate regeneration

Regeneration has never been easy, but it has become much harder in the past 5-10 years due in part to increasing density expectations and reductions in government subsidies. Ever-higher proportions of private housing are required to self-fund re-provision of affordable homes, and the overall amount of affordable housing has reduced as a proportion.

Our work in *Superdensity* and *Superdensity: the Sequel* highlighted the challenges of designing sympathetically to the London context with the recent emergence of hyperdense development (over 350 homes per hectare) in the form of increasingly tall buildings. While height in itself is not a problem for appropriately located buildings for the right occupants, it can present a problem in delivering mixed communities and sustainable neighbourhoods. These are more successfully delivered in high density medium-rise street-based developments, which can be tenure-blind, easier to manage and have lower service charges. Such developments are more likely to be supported by local people and existing residents.

## Local authority role

The government's Estate Regeneration Statement, while welcome, expresses a presumption in favour of private sector delivery. However, other models can and should sit alongside this. For example, joint ventures between local authorities and investment partners offer an effective alternative – both taking a long-term view of their investment and sharing the returns. Furthermore, there is evidence that local authorities can successfully deliver regeneration without conventional private-sector-led partnerships – and councils can recycle profit directly for the public good. Reform of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) has opened the way for local authorities to be innovative in the use of their assets to generate value and satisfy local housing need in new ways. New forms of ownership, management and community-based models are possible where councils retain a financial stake in the development and create housing to suit their local circumstances. This leads to solutions that deliver equitable outcomes for the benefit of existing and local residents and provides

revenues for the council. Lifting the HRA cap would provide more scope for councils to deliver more and better housing.



The London Borough of Camden adopts a bold approach to developing its assets to generate revenues and rebalance tenures on existing estates. On Maiden Lane Estate, an example of iconic 20th century urban housing, the council elected to retain the architecturally sensitive existing blocks and develop a mix of new housing types and tenures, including mid-rise blocks and a tower to maximise shared ownership and market sale development. The council maintains a stake and manages the development.

Housing PFI (Private Finance Initiative) programmes, such as Oval Quarter Regeneration project in London Borough of Lambeth, retain a public asset for the long term using a private sector delivery consortium to deliver development and ongoing management.

### **Presumption in favour of demolition**

The Estate Regeneration Statement expresses a presumption in favour of demolition without due consideration to the social, environmental and architectural implications. The lower VAT regime for new build versus refurbishment favours redevelopment options and can be to the disadvantage of existing residents, depriving them of alternative deliverable approaches.

### **Complex procurement**

Complex procurement processes, such as competitive dialogue, can get in the way of effective and timely consultation - especially if there is insufficient consideration given to the masterplan prior to approaching the market, with bidders working in isolation from existing residents. New mechanisms for raising private finance and long-term investment will be required as an alternative to public subsidy but the interests of existing residents should not be compromised as a consequence.

### **Recommendations**

National policies need to be tuned to deliver sustainable outcomes, and to allow for local flexibility: each estate requires a bespoke approach, taking account of the views of the local community, its elected representatives and other stakeholders. Solutions should reflect local housing need while also addressing the needs of the wider area in order to create truly sustainable neighbourhoods.

- 1. Address the local housing requirements of the wider area and rebalance tenures to reflect the needs of all sections of society including those of existing residents, vulnerable housing groups, the old, the young and families.**
- 2. On large regeneration programmes, plan phased development to maximise the opportunity for existing residents to have the option to stay in the area (with a preference for a single stage decant), minimise the disruption to occupiers and create a series of complete places rather than fragments of a building site.**
- 3. Consider new delivery models where local authorities retain a financial stake in the development and develop housing to suit their local circumstances, leading to solutions that deliver equitable outcomes for the benefit of existing and local residents and provide revenues for the council.**
- 4. Review existing and emerging national housing, planning and fiscal policies where they conflict with sustainable estate regeneration outcomes - including Right to Buy, Starter Homes and the presumption in favour of demolition.**

# Case studies summary sheet

## Aylesbury Estate SW Corner



**Architect** Levitt Bernstein  
**Client** London Borough of Southwark and L&Q  
 Construction value: £44m  
 Location: Southwark  
 Dates: 2007-2013  
 Funding: Cross funded, supplemented by grant

### No of Homes:

Before: 42  
 After: 261  
 Demolished: 42  
 Improved: n/a  
 Constructed: 261  
 Tenure mix before: 38 affordable, 4 private (Right to Buy)  
 Tenure mix after: 101 affordable, 33 intermediate, 127 private  
 Density: 240dph, 679 hr/h

## Eastfields Estate



**Architect** Levitt Bernstein (with Proctor & Matthews and Cullinan Studio)  
**Client** Circle Housing Merton Prioory  
 Construction value: £130m  
 Location: Merton  
 Dates: 2014-2028 (estimated)  
 Funding: Cross funded

### No of Homes:

Before: 464  
 After: 671  
 Demolished: 464  
 Improved: n/a  
 Constructed: 671  
 Tenure mix before: 250 affordable, 214 private (freehold + leasehold)  
 Tenure mix after: 156 affordable, 234 intermediate, 281 private  
 Density: 105dph, 293 hr/h

## Winstanley and York Road Estates



**Architect** Levitt Bernstein  
**Client** Wandsworth Council  
 Construction value: £495m  
 Location: Wandsworth  
 Dates: 2013-2030 (estimated)  
 Funding: Cross funded, supplemented by LA funding

### No of Homes:

Before: 708  
 After: 1910  
 Demolished: 708  
 Improved: n/a  
 Constructed: 1910  
 Tenure mix before: 542 affordable, 166 private (freehold + leasehold)  
 Tenure mix after: 734 affordable, 110 intermediate, 1066 private  
 Density: 207dph, 454 hr/h

## Packington Neighbourhood



**Architect** Pollard Thomas Edwards  
**Client** The Hyde Group/Rydon  
 Construction value: £132m  
 Location: Islington  
 Dates: 2006-2017  
 Funding: Mixed funding

### No of Homes:

Before: 538  
 After: 791  
 Demolished: 538  
 Improved: 0  
 Constructed: 791  
 Tenure mix before: 100% social rent  
 Tenure mix after: 38% private, 58% social rent, 4% shared ownership  
 Density: 143dph

## Thames View East



**Architect** Pollard Thomas Edwards  
**Client** London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, Explore Investments - a Laing O'Rourke Company and Jerram Falkus Construction Ltd  
 Construction value: £37m  
 Location: Barking  
 Dates: 2011-2014  
 Funding: Asset based model

### No of Homes:

Before: 247  
 After: 276  
 Demolished: 247  
 Improved: 0  
 Constructed: 276  
 Tenure mix before: 100% social rent (tbc)  
 Tenure mix after: 100% affordable rent  
 Density: 60dph

## Dover Court



**Architect** Pollard Thomas Edwards  
**Client** London Borough of Islington  
 Construction value: £17m  
 Location: Islington  
 Dates: 2011-2016  
 Funding: Council funded

### No of Homes:

Before: 18  
 After: 70  
 Demolished: 18  
 Improved: 0  
 Constructed: 70  
 Tenure mix before: 100% social rent  
 Tenure mix after: 30% private, 70% council rent  
 Density: 101dph

## Oval Quarter Regeneration



**Architect** PRP  
**Client** Higgins and Regenter  
 Construction value: £120m  
 Location: Lambeth  
 Dates: 2010-2017  
 Funding: PFI funded

**No of Homes:**  
 Before: 477  
 After: 985  
 Demolished: 300  
 Improved: 177  
 Constructed: 808  
 Tenure mix before: 92 leasehold/freehold,  
 385 council housing stock  
 Tenure mix after: 355 affordable,  
 236 shared ownership, 394 private  
 Density: 102dph, 430hr/h

## Crossways Estate



**Architect** PRP  
**Client** Swan Housing Association & Countryside Properties in partnership  
 Construction value: £80m  
 Location: Tower Hamlets  
 Dates: In phases 2007-2011  
 Funding: Single Regeneration Budget funding and cross-subsidy. Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) Funding, securing £39,000 from central government in 2010

**No of Homes:**  
 Before: 298  
 After: 679  
 Demolished: 0  
 Improved: 296  
 Constructed: 383  
 Tenure mix before: 50 private ownership,  
 248 affordable rent  
 Tenure mix after: 256 private sale,  
 423 affordable rent/shared ownership  
 Density: unknown dph, 567 hr/h

## Maiden Lane



**Architect** PRP  
**Client** London Borough of Camden  
 Construction value: £53m  
 Location: Camden  
 Dates: 2012-2016  
 Funding: HRA investment

**No of Homes:**  
 Before: n/a  
 After: 265  
 Demolished: 0  
 Improved: 0  
 Constructed: 265  
 Tenure mix before: n/a  
 Tenure mix after: 124 affordable,  
 94 shared ownership, 47 private  
 Density: 153dph, 410hr/h

## South Acton



**Architect** HTA Design LLP  
**Client** Acton Gardens LLP (Countryside Properties and L&Q)  
 Construction value: £600m  
 Location: Ealing  
 Dates: 2009-2026  
 Funding: Joint Venture

**No of Homes:**  
 Before: 1,800  
 After: c2,800 (for overall masterplan)  
 Demolished: Circa 400 (ytd)  
 Improved: n/a  
 Constructed: 2,800 (by 2026)  
 Tenure mix before: 80% Social Tenants,  
 20% Leaseholders  
 Tenure mix after: 50% private, 50% affordable  
 Density: 133dph (for overall masterplan)

## Waltham Forest Housing Action Trust



**Architect** HTA Design LLP  
**Client** Waltham Forest Housing Action Trust + Community-Based Housing Association  
 Construction value: £289m  
 Location: Waltham Forest  
 Dates: 1989-2004  
 Funding: Privately funded, supplemented by grant

**No of Homes:**  
 Before: 2,500  
 After: 1,500  
 Demolished: 2,500  
 Improved: n/a  
 Constructed: 671  
 Tenure mix before: 100% social rent  
 Tenure mix after: 100% social rent  
 Density: 150dph

## Watney Market and Winterton House



**Architect** HTA Design LLP  
**Client** Wapping Neighbourhood Housing Association  
 Construction value: £15m  
 Location: Tower Hamlets  
 Dates: 1994-1999  
 Funding: Estates Action finance and Corporation grant funding

**No of Homes:**  
 Before: 350  
 After: 350  
 Demolished: n/a  
 Improved: 350  
 Constructed: n/a  
 Tenure mix before: 100% social rent  
 Tenure mix after: 100% social rent  
 Density: 150dph

## Aylesbury Estate South West Corner, Southwark



Following option studies the Aylesbury SW Corner project was the first delivered project to come out of Southwark's New Deal for Communities (NDC) bid and was used as a pilot project for the wider Aylesbury Estate regeneration. This first phase delivers 261 dwellings spread across six buildings and includes a day centre for disabled and vulnerable adults and local shopping.

The council's declared aim was to create a truly mixed community with an even split of affordable (affordable rent, shared ownership and intermediate rent) and private tenures. The need to re-provide housing for existing tenants coupled with the relatively low level of grant funding available meant that the brief was to double the existing density of the estate. At the same time, resident aspirations were for a lower rise, street-based design solution rather than the existing Aylesbury 14-storey slab blocks so the challenge was to create a masterplan that increased density without resorting to increasing building height. The project was mainly made viable through cross-funding from

the private sales element of the housing but this was supplemented by a small amount of grant funding.

The SW Corner averages around six storeys with one taller block of 10 storeys overlooking Burgess Park as a local marker building. The density of around 240 dwellings per hectare doubles the existing density in a built form of tightly planned urban scale blocks closely lining both existing and former 'lost' streets that have been re-opened, which increases pedestrian permeability of the estate. This approach has allowed the new buildings and streets to better integrate with the surrounding neighbourhood.

The urban form encloses a series of three open courtyards, one of them publicly accessible using a converted Victorian school building as an attractive backdrop while the other two are entirely enclosed shared amenity spaces. All spaces between new buildings have been designed to provide the maximum amount of amenity space for all age groups.

**Architect** Levitt Bernstein  
**Client** London Borough of Southwark and L&Q  
 Construction value: £44m  
 Location: Southwark  
 Dates: 2007-2013  
 Funding: Cross funded, supplemented by grant

### No of Homes:

Before: 42  
 After: 261  
 Demolished: 42  
 Improved: n/a  
 Constructed: 261  
 Tenure mix before: 38 affordable, 4 private (Right to Buy)  
 Tenure mix after: 101 affordable, 33 intermediate, 127 private  
 Density: 240dph, 679 hr/h

### Awards

- Civic Trust Award 2015
- London Evening Standard New Homes Awards 2013: Best Regeneration Project
- London Planning Awards 2012/13: Best New Place to Live
- Affordable Home Ownership Awards 2012: Best Design
- Affordable Home Ownership Awards 2012: Best Regeneration Commendation

Engagement was at the heart of this project and a long-running relationship was built up between council officers, the design team and the residents' steering group. The process began at the first brainstorming session where residents, together with key council stakeholders, discussed and agreed the brief for the project. Another example of how this worked was when the council and NDC commissioned and built a fully furnished, full sized mock-up of one of the flats to ensure that residents understood the size and quality of the new homes they were being offered. Residents were able to vote for their preferred option and this directly informed the flat layouts in the built scheme.



## Eastfields Estate, Merton



**Architect** Levitt Bernstein (with Proctor & Matthews and Cullinan Studio)

**Client** Circle Housing Merton Priory

Construction value: £130m

Location: Merton

Dates: 2014–2028 (estimated)

Funding: Cross funded

**No of Homes:**

Before: 464

After: 671

Demolished: 464

Improved: 0

Constructed: 671

Tenure mix before: 250 affordable, 214 private (freehold + leasehold)

Tenure mix after: 156 affordable,

234 intermediate, 281 private

Density: 105dph, 293 hr/h

**Awards**

– AJ120 Architectural

Collaboration of the Year 2015:

Shortlisted

Circle Housing Merton Priory acquired the Eastfields Estate in Mitcham through a stock transfer from the Merton Council in 2010. The estate is a 1970s Radburn plan which has poor quality housing stock and equally poor connectivity to the surrounding neighbourhood. Replacement of the housing is particularly complicated as there are high levels of freehold and leasehold properties pepper-potted throughout. Around 45 per cent of the 464 homes are privately owned, including over 150 freehold three-bedroom townhouses. The nature of this Radburn plan means that it is almost impossible to leave some homes undeveloped while redeveloping others meaning that this regeneration required an 'all or nothing' approach. Buy-in from residents, particularly leaseholders and freeholders, was therefore essential.

Initially Circle Housing, together with Merton Council, developed a residents' charter, called the '10 Commitments'. An intensive period of consultation followed, including workshops, public events and

site visits to other developments. Following this an innovative and fair 'Residents' Offer' that gives tenants and resident homeowners the right to remain in their neighbourhood was produced with all social rented housing replaced and a high provision of family housing that addresses overcrowding among tenants. The publication of this residents' offer unlocked the engagement process, giving residents the assurances they required and allowing consultation on the design elements to progress positively.

Lack of grant funding combined with significant buy-back costs has meant that there is a need for a marked increase in density to fund the project. At the same time, Circle Housing is seeking to completely regenerate a further two estates in Merton, including a large development in South Wimbledon. By treating the three estates as a single business plan, Circle Housing has been able to cross-subsidise the regeneration with much of the funding realised through the redevelopment of the much

more valuable South Wimbledon estate. There is very little existing planning policy in place to support regeneration on this scale in Merton so Circle Housing, their design team and the council have collaborated in the preparation of a Development Plan Document (DPD) to pave the way for the regeneration.

Working in collaboration, Proctor and Matthews, Cullinan Studio and Levitt Bernstein devised a concept which turns the existing Radburn plan inside out. The central green has been retained along with its mature trees, but the housing has been recreated as a series of buildings of varied scale, with a hierarchy of routes leading to the green. Of the 671 homes proposed, many now front onto this central new green space enabling it to be better used and more secure. By reinstating a more traditional street pattern the scheme better integrates to the surrounding neighbourhood while significantly increasing the density on the site.

## Winstanley and York Road Estates, Wandsworth



**Architect** Levitt Bernstein  
**Client** Wandsworth Council  
 Construction value: £495m  
 Location: Wandsworth  
 Dates: 2013-2030 (estimated)  
 Funding: Cross funded, supplemented by LA funding

**No of Homes:**  
 Before: 708  
 After: 1910  
 Demolished: 708  
 Improved: 0  
 Constructed: 1910  
 Tenure mix before: 542 affordable, 166 private (freehold + leasehold)  
 Tenure mix after: 734 affordable, 110 intermediate, 1066 private  
 Density: 207dph, 454 hr/h

**Awards**  
 – Urban Design Group Practice Awards 2015: Shortlisted

Winstanley and York Road are two 1960s estates that suffer from the typical problems of mid-twentieth century council housing: disconnected routes, scattered amenities and deteriorating homes. The estates sit side by side between Clapham Junction station to the south and new luxury housing along the Thames to the north. In an area of the capital that is otherwise very wealthy, both estates suffer from very high levels of unemployment and deprivation and were at the centre of the August 2011 riots in south west London.

Levitt Bernstein was appointed to develop a long-term spatial masterplan tying together both the estates and the wider neighbourhood. A consultation process was initiated with the community, with workshops outlining four different options on a sliding scale of intervention from minimal intervention and upgrade of existing housing stock through to wholesale redevelopment of the York Road estate. In each case the design was fully explained including the costs and benefits that each option would bring. An options questionnaire and options

consultation booklet were delivered to all residents of the estates with further opportunities to reply given through door to door discussions with residents of potentially affected blocks. Throughout the workshops the responses from the options questionnaire were taken on board by the masterplanning team and these informed the direction of development for design solutions for the new neighbourhood. The conclusion of this process was that over 70 per cent of the 300 responses received wanted greater change for the area.

The design of the masterplan is a direct result of this consultation process. For the areas of the neighbourhood that currently work best the proposal is for smaller interventions to improve the environment: new lighting, pocket green spaces and innovative street furniture. For the areas of the estate that residents agreed were less successful, namely the barrier blocks of the York Road Estate, the redevelopment is more comprehensive with the masterplan splitting broadly into three character areas: tall buildings with a combination of residential, office

and retail uses near the station; a more traditional street-based pattern of housing in perimeter blocks in the central area; and taller residential buildings above a new leisure centre as an interface with the existing high value riverside developments.

The masterplan also brings the school, youth centre and health centre together into an activity hub, and relocates York Gardens into the centre of the community and away from the busy York Road. Critically it reintroduces clear, legible routes through the estate and reconnects it with the surrounding neighbourhood.

## Oval Quarter Regeneration, Lambeth



**Architect** PRP

**Client** Higgins and Regenter  
 Construction value: £120m  
 Location: Lambeth  
 Dates: 2010–2017  
 Funding: PFI funded

**No of Homes:**

Before: 477  
 After: 985  
 Demolished: 300  
 Improved: 177  
 Constructed: 808  
 Tenure mix before: 92 leasehold/  
 freehold, 385 council housing  
 stock  
 Tenure mix after: 355 affordable,  
 236 shared ownership, 394 private  
 Density: 102dph, 430hr/h

The low rise family housing at Myatts Field Estate in Lambeth was an unsafe and challenging environment for those living on the estate and in the wider area. The public realm was particularly challenging, with alleyways and undulating landscape that led to crime. It was subject to extensive consultation and review through a structured Options Appraisal process during the 1990s to determine the optimum outcome. The preferred option was extensive redevelopment, retaining some fragments of the existing buildings.

The project was included in the Private Finance Initiative for housing projects and subject to a protracted competitive procurement process entailing dialogue with the contracting agencies, leading to the appointment of the Higgins and Regenter team. Funding was through allocation of PFI credits and the project is a mix of market sale and shared ownership to help subsidise the social rent.

Existing residents are rehoused, retained blocks refurbished, a new urban park and community facilities are delivered.

The rebranded Oval Quarter is now a major regeneration project, creating a new urban village that will deliver 808 new homes and 172 refurbished

properties, a new function hall, café and crèche. Environmental sustainability is addressed through provision of a combined heat and power system. The new central park is one of the largest new parks in London, enhancing the ecology of the area.

The site is retained by Lambeth Borough Council and is being developed by the PFI consortium led by Regenter and Higgins Construction. Notting Hill Housing is the affordable provider partner for the 146 shared ownership homes included in the scheme.

Focused on quality, value and deliverability, the project team made an early commitment to an OSM light gauge steel superstructure solution and the use of BIM to drive design, co-ordination and manufacture.

Early technical input from the specialist supplier improved co-ordination, standardisation and buildability based on collaborative working and full integration of the supplier's models with the Architectural BIM. This integrated approach enabled the team to achieve the contractor's accelerated start dates and an extremely aggressive build programme.





## Crossways Estate, Bow



Built in the early 1970s Crossways Estate in Bow is a high-rise development in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) that suffered serious physical and social decline due to poor investment and physical isolation from its surroundings. Cut off from the local street pattern and bounded by railways and changes of level on all sides, the estate was in one of the worst conditions in the borough. It became a flagship project of the LBTH Housing for Choice programme and SRB funding was committed to the comprehensive regeneration of the estate, which comprised three 22-storey tower blocks and stacked maisonettes on the periphery, with open space and community facilities at a sunken lower-ground-floor level.

The masterplan retains three towers and demolishes all low rise buildings. A new street layout integrates the estate with its surroundings, enabling pedestrian and vehicular movement through the area, with urban blocks with front doors to maisonettes and flats at street level, all contributing to improved neighbourhood security. Creation of communal courtyards and a detailed landscaping strategy, ground remodelling

and a new road and bridging structures over the adjacent railway break down the perceptions of the area as an estate.

The community were involved throughout the process once the masterplan to retain the towers was conceived. Existing residents were rehoused in the new development or newly refurbished flats.

The new estate provides a total of 397 new homes and 273 refurbished homes in the three tower blocks. The new housing comprises a mix of tenures including social rent and shared ownership for the existing tenants and leaseholders and new housing for sale to cross-subsidise regeneration. The retained towers have been comprehensively improved and existing residents have been rehoused in refurbished flats on a rolling decant programme. The last tower to be refurbished is for market sale and has been marketed successfully at the end of a comprehensive regeneration programme when values were favourable. The location of the site, close to a transport hub, the improved quality of environment and balanced social and economic outcomes have generated high value.

### **Architect** PRP

**Client** Swan Housing Association & Countryside Properties in partnership  
Construction value: £80m  
Location: Tower Hamlets  
Dates: In phases 2007-2011  
Funding: Single Regeneration Budget funding and cross-subsidy. Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) Funding, securing £39,000 from central government in 2010

### **No of Homes:**

Before: 298  
After: 679  
Demolished: 0  
Improved: 296  
Constructed: 383  
Tenure mix before: 50 private ownership, 248 affordable rent  
Tenure mix after: 256 private sale, 423 affordable rent/shared ownership  
Density: unknown dph, 567 hr/h

## Maiden Lane, Camden



PRP is delivering the regeneration of the architecturally iconic Maiden Lane estate, which will provide an additional 273 new homes for the London Borough of Camden and new commercial spaces. The new homes have been sensitively designed to blend with the retained buildings on the estate, with a high-quality approach to architectural design.

Maiden Lane is a flagship project for the council and forms part of its innovative Community Investment Programme, a 15-year plan to invest over £400 million in Camden's housing, schools and other public services. Unlike other regeneration schemes the council has elected to retain the existing estate as part of its much coveted social housing legacy and invest its resources into developing new homes to generate income and rebalance housing need on the estate. Proposals have been developed for Maiden Lane that will deliver much needed affordable housing and provide investment to revitalise the estate and link into the wider regeneration of this part of Camden.

The regeneration includes the provision of an additional 273 new homes for the London Borough of Camden, 36 per cent of which are for social rent, 23 per cent for market rent, 27 per cent for shared ownership and 14 per cent

for market sale. The new homes have been sensitively designed to blend with the renowned estate, with a high-quality approach to architectural design and detailing. The proposed scheme reconciles the low rise buildings to the North with the larger emerging buildings of the King's Cross masterplan, culminating in a 20-storey residential tower for market sale, to complement the King's Cross cluster on the other side of York Way. It includes an element of retail and workspace to front York Way, which will revitalise the street frontage and enhance employment opportunities.

The masterplan follows the pattern of the existing estate while resolving the definition of public and private space. The mid-rise high density new blocks reflect the scale and character of the existing, with the addition of a 20-storey tower at the south west of the site to act as a marker for the estate at its closest point to the King's Cross masterplan and the suite of tall building within.

A Community Consultation Strategy was implemented and the community's aspirations and those of the council and other stakeholders for the wider regeneration of the area in terms of housing, health, education and community uses were reflected in the masterplan.

**Architect** PRP

**Client** London Borough of Camden

Construction value: £53m

Location: Camden

Dates: 2012-2016

Funding: HRA investment

**No of Homes:**

Before: n/a

After: 265

Demolished: 0

Improved: 0

Constructed: 265

Tenure mix before: n/a

Tenure mix after: 124 affordable,

94 shared ownership, 47 private

Density: 153dph, 410hr/h

## Packington Neighbourhood, Islington



This troubled 1970s estate is being transformed into a network of new streets and squares knitted into the surrounding urban fabric and fronting on to Regent's Canal. The neighbourhood will contain 850 tenure-blind new homes plus community and youth centres, shops and business units. The first three phases are occupied and will all be complete in 2017.

Packington shows how a blend of public investment and cross-subsidy from homes for sale can achieve viable estate redevelopment, combing an attractive offer to the existing community with a wider range of homes for new residents. However, even with meteoric growth in local property values, an injection of grant-funding was essential to kick-start the project.

Packington suffered from a number of problems, including a gang culture and vulnerable elderly and ethnic minority residents, but the decision to redevelop was triggered by structural issues with the post-war estate. A strong residents' group with local political support had significant input into the selection of the developer, housing association and architect – and the subsequent evolution of the design and replacement housing offer. Replacement affordable housing occupies the prime canal frontage and the grand neo-traditional houses on Union Square.

The masterplan reconnects the frayed ends of the pre-war street plan and reintegrates the estate into the surrounding high-value conservation area. It achieves a relatively high density with mid-rise apartments (six storeys) and a high proportion of family town houses with private gardens (30 per cent of the affordable homes).

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg visited the Packington Estate in March 2012 and said: "This is the best social housing I have ever seen!" And a Phase 2 resident wrote: "The Packington Estate is being transformed from isolated blocks of intimidating and soulless housing into a living community with real heart and purpose. I never in my life thought I would get a home as spacious as this and it is by far the best of its type in London, it really feels like a palace!"

**Architect** Pollard Thomas Edwards

**Client** The Hyde Group/Rydon

Construction value: £132m

Location: Islington

Dates: 2006-2017

Funding: Mixed funding

**No of Homes:**

Before: 538

After: 791

Demolished: 538

Improved: 0

Constructed: 791

Tenure mix before: 100% social rent

Tenure mix after: 38% private, 58% social rent,

4% shared ownership

Density: 143dph

**Awards**

- National Housing Awards 2013: Best Regeneration Project and Best Large Development
- Housing Innovation Awards 2013: Most Innovative Affordable Housing Scheme
- London Planning Awards 2012/13: Best New Place to Live: Commendation
- What House? Awards 2012: Best Development Gold
- London Evening Standard New Homes Awards 2012: Best Regeneration Project
- Regeneration and Renewal Awards 2012: Best use of housing in regeneration: Shortlisted
- Housbuilder Awards 2012: Best regeneration project: Shortlisted
- The Daily Telegraph British Homes Awards 2011: Development of the Year



## Thames View East, Barking



Thames View East provides 276 new affordable homes for Londoners, achieved without grant-funding or cross-subsidy.

The isolated eastern end of the large Thames View Estate in Barking contained unpopular tower blocks and poor quality low-rise stock. The council took the decision to rehouse residents and clear the site with support from the GLA. A traditional network of streets, courtyards and green links now provides a legible neighbourhood, connected into the adjoining estate and highway network.

The scheme includes 151 new family houses with front doors to the street and private back gardens. To meet the cost and programme objectives, a carefully limited range of townhouse-types was developed. Variety is achieved through subtle variations in plan, roof-form and window arrangements. For example, first floor living rooms are located at the front or rear of the house according to orientation.

Oriel windows mark the corner houses and alternate along the terraces to provide enhanced space, light and view.

The new homes at Thames View East are all for affordable rent, and yet this is achieved without grant-funding or cross-subsidy from private sales. This is the outcome of a novel investment model devised by asset management firm Long Harbour.

Under this model the council has granted a lease over its land for a fixed period to a private joint-venture funder. In return for a regular income derived from rental receipts, the joint venture body has financed the construction of the scheme and will cover all lifecycle and maintenance costs. The council retains the freehold interest in the land, it will receive ownership of the properties (at no extra cost) at the end of the investment period, and it manages the stock on a fully funded basis. By creating a ring-fenced corporate entity, Right to Buy legislation does not apply and the local authority retains control over its stock.

**Architect** Pollard Thomas Edwards  
**Client** London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, Explore Investments, a Laing O'Rourke Company and Jerram Falkus Construction Ltd  
 Construction value: £37m  
 Location: Barking  
 Dates: 2011-2014  
 Funding: Asset based model

**No of Homes:**  
 Before: 247  
 After: 276  
 Demolished: 247  
 Improved: 0  
 Constructed: 276  
 Tenure mix before:  
 100% social rent (tbc)  
 Tenure mix after:  
 100% affordable rent  
 Density: 60dph

### Awards

- London Evening Standard New Homes Awards 2015: Affordable development
- Housing Innovation Awards 2015: Most Innovative Affordable Housing Scheme
- New London Award 2014: Housing: Commendation
- London Planning Awards 2014: Best new place to live: Finalist
- Housing Excellence Award 2014: Best New Affordable Housing Scheme: Commendation
- Sunday Times British Homes Award 2014: Affordable Housing Development: Commendation
- Partnerships Awards 2013: Best Alternative Deal Structure

## Dover Court, Islington



The Dover Court project, which is now under construction, showcases a local authority acting as a developer and using its landholding to achieve four key outcomes:

- Comprehensive improvements to the public realm and community facilities, for the benefit of the estate's residents and the wider neighbourhood
- 70% of new homes for social rent
- 30% of new homes for market sale to widen the tenure mix and provide cross-subsidy
- Focus on infill development with minimal loss of existing homes.

The existing 1960s blocks are popular and generally well-maintained, but the external spaces are poor, and the project offers an opportunity to improve relationships with the surroundings, creating 70 new homes in the process. The existing community on and around the estate has actively shaped the development proposals. The new council homes are aimed at two specific groups in housing need: older people (some in poor quality existing flats and others in oversized homes, which can be freed up for families) and larger families in overcrowded accommodation. A local-lettings policy enables residents to relocate within the estate. A new apartment block for older people follows the HAPPI report guidance, with enhanced standards, generous windows and balconies, sociable common areas and a shared south facing garden.

New courtyard house typologies offer outstanding homes for sale while closing off awkward boundaries and creating new street frontages.

When the estate was built, the Victorian street pattern was disrupted, with streets being blocked and confusion over backs and fronts. This project is an exercise in urban mending, stitching the area back into the existing street pattern. Bespoke interventions are grafted on to the existing estate to overcome the shortcomings in its original planning. New terraces close off exposed back gardens, animate blind flank walls, turn corners and create new frontages, reinforcing routes and enclosing the park, which becomes a proper London square.

**Architect** Pollard Thomas Edwards  
**Client** London Borough of Islington  
 Construction value: £17m  
 Location: Islington  
 Dates: 2011-2016  
 Funding: Council funded

#### No of Homes:

Before: 18  
 After: 70  
 Demolished: 18  
 Improved: 0  
 Constructed: 70  
 Tenure mix before: 100% social rent  
 Tenure mix after: 30% private, 70% council rent  
 Density: 101dph

#### Awards

– Housing Design Award 2016  
 (currently shortlisted)



## South Acton, Ealing



South Acton is an ex-Greater London Council housing estate transferred to the London Borough of Ealing at the demise of the GLC. It constitutes a large area of mixed housing typologies, from mid-rise balcony access blocks, maisonette slab blocks and point blocks. It is well located with easy access to three rail connections and the shops and buses on Acton High Street. There are two schools within the estate precinct and the surroundings include typical suburban streets of relatively high value as well as quite substantial areas of employment use. The estate was designated as a Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) area on account of the relatively high levels of social and economic deprivation among its population.

Ealing Borough Council undertook substantial preparatory work as part of its estate renewal strategy and, following option appraisals, sought proposals from consortia of developers and housing associations in a competitive process leading to the formation of a joint venture. The competition was won by a consortium of Countryside Properties and London & Quadrant Housing Trust with HTA Design as masterplanners for the redevelopment proposals and architects for phase 1 of the partnership scheme. HTA Design was responsible for the street based mid rise masterplan and two of the individual building phases.

Other phases have been designed by Alison Brooks Architects, PCKO, Stitch, Levitt Bernstein and Maccreeanor Lavington.

The development partnership proposed a seven-point programme to reflect the importance of securing social and economic regeneration alongside the physical redevelopment. This included the establishment of a Community Board, which has been in existence for three years and brings together all stakeholders. It oversees the delivery of the programme and was heavily involved in reviewing the draft planning applications.

There is a Community Chest which creates a £50k per year grant facility for local groups. New social and commercial community facilities include the Hub, a 55,000 sq ft facility. Ground rent from commercial activities is ring-fenced to ensure the long-term sustainability of the non-commercial facilities and activities. And there is a dedicated local employment and training programme, which also targets work with local businesses.

As part of our on-going work exploring social impacts of the regeneration we commissioned Reading University to carry out an independent long-term study. Early findings from summer 2015 have found positive observable impacts.

**Architect** HTA Design LLP

**Client** Acton Gardens LLP (Countryside Properties and L&Q)

Construction value: £600m

Location: Ealing

Dates: 2009-2026

Funding: Acton Gardens LLP is a 50:50 Joint Venture between Countryside Properties and L&Q, a developer and registered housing provider that both specialise in estate regeneration and partnering. The project is funded largely from cross-subsidy with modest levels of HCA grant for housing association affordable provision.

**No of Homes:**

Before: 1,800

After: c2,800 (for overall masterplan)

Demolished: Circa 400 (ytd)

Improved: n/a

Constructed: 2,800 (by 2026)

Tenure mix before: 80% social tenants, 20% leaseholders

Tenure mix after: 50% private, 50% affordable

Density: 133dph (for overall masterplan)



## Waltham Forest Housing Association Trust



HTA Design was appointed by the London Borough of Waltham Forest to investigate options to solve the problems experienced by residents and the council with three of its housing estates constructed of large panel pre-cast concrete pre-fabricated components. These had been declared unsafe and unable to meet the progressive collapse standards introduced after the partial collapse of Ronan Point following a gas explosion. In addition the estates were hard to let, suffered a high turnover of tenants, and were very expensive to manage and maintain. HTA undertook a feasibility exercise, appraising options and concluded that a complete redevelopment was feasible, if costly. The preferred option for these system-built ex-GLC 1960s high and mid rise deck-access housing estates was a phased rolling programme, rehousing all tenants in a street-based scheme, at their insistence of no more than three stories.

The Housing Action Trusts were a mechanism devised by the then Conservative Government to effect investment in problem estates without local authority involvement. Initially rejected by neighbourhoods suspicious of loss of rights and rising rents, the Waltham Forest HAT succeeded because residents were offered guarantees in a tenants' expectations document, detailing rent levels and space entitlements. Once satisfied on these matters, and engaged in an intensive and thoroughgoing structured consultation programme, residents became fierce advocates of the project - at one stage marching on the Marsham Street offices of the Department of the Environment to secure funding. The legislation required a ballot and the transfer of the housing to a Housing Action Trust with residents' involvement in governance at the highest level. The stock was transferred to a community-based housing association on completion of the project.

**Architect** HTA Design LLP  
**Client** Waltham Forest Housing Action Trust + Community-Based Housing Association  
 Construction value: £289m  
 Location: Waltham Forest  
 Dates: 1989-2004  
 Funding: Privately funded, supplemented by grant

**No of Homes:**  
 Before: 2,500  
 After: 1,500  
 Demolished: 2,500  
 Improved: n/a  
 Constructed: 671  
 Tenure mix before: 100% social rent  
 Tenure mix after: 100% social rent  
 Density: 150dph



## Watney Market and Winterton House, Tower Hamlets



The Watney Market estate, including Winterton House, was built in 1968. The ex-GLC estate comprised a brick-clad mid rise central spine of complex section with ranges of apartments either side of a raised street market, built over servicing and car parking. Either side were two 25-storey point blocks, Winterton House and Gelston Point, dressed in light grey fibreglass cladding. Residents complained about a lack of privacy owing to the flimsiness of the internal partitions, as well as asbestos poisoning, water leaks and heat loss though the grp cladding.

The issues for residents of Winterton House and Gelston Point were notorious. Two identical blocks in west London had been demolished following a long drawn out campaign by their residents and resentment built up in the Tower Hamlets blocks as the borough did not have access to the funds necessary for repairs. For months leading up to their eventual evacuation, the words 'HELP US' were visible in large letters formed in the windows of Gelston Point. A survey of asbestos in the blocks had concluded that the health risk to residents was not confined to the material used to fireproof the blocks' steel frames, but that the movement of the blocks during high winds and the voids in the construction system gave rise to very high levels

of free floating asbestos fibres in the interior of the flats. Crude taping of joints within the flats had failed to solve this problem.

Tower Hamlets Council engaged HTA to make a bid under the Department of the Environment Estates Action programme. This involved a two-stage process whereby a feasibility option appraisal was undertaken to establish the viability in principle of regeneration proposals. This 'Form A' stage was successful and the project proceeded to 'Form B' in much greater detail, working with residents which demonstrated their support for this clearly preferred course of action.

Neighbourhood residents were engaged in a structured consultation programme in which a range of options were put, including complete redevelopment, minimal refurbishment and a mixed scheme. The latter was ultimately preferred by residents and became the subject of the successful Estates Action bid. The high rise refurbishment, featuring a radical structural brick cladding and sustainable environmental systems, has proved extremely popular with tenants, contrary to popular belief that tall buildings are unsuitable for social housing tenants.

"I was born in Whitechapel. Tower Hamlets wasn't even invented then! I was a fracture clinic receptionist and for extra money I used to work at A&E in the Royal London. It's a fabulous place here – a vibrant, buzzing place to live. I'd never move out of the East End."

Barbara Beasley,  
Winterton House  
resident from Inside  
Housing (15 June 2015)

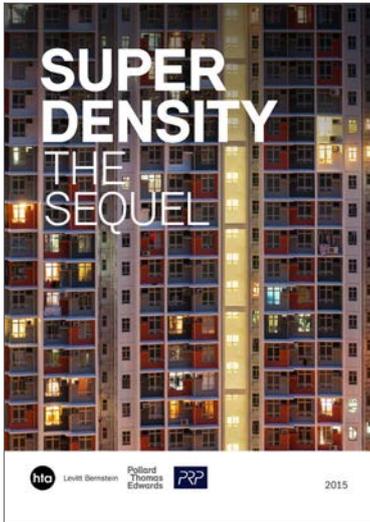
[click here to read the full article](#)

**Architect** HTA Design LLP  
**Client** Wapping Neighbourhood Housing Association  
Construction value: £15m  
Location: Tower Hamlets  
Dates: 1994-1999  
Funding: Estates Action finance and Corporation grant funding

**No of Homes:**  
Before: 350  
After: 350  
Demolished: n/a  
Improved: 350  
Constructed: n/a  
Tenure mix before: 100% social rent  
Tenure mix after: 100% social rent  
Density: 150dph

**Awards**  
– Steel Construction Design Award  
Merit 1998





# Appendix: Further Recommendations for Living at Superdensity

Here are our key recommendations for making superdensity work in 2015. More detailed exploration of the issues and guidance is interwoven into the topic-based essays and the case studies.

Download the report here [www.superdensity.co.uk](http://www.superdensity.co.uk)

- 1 Adopt mid-rise development to meet London's housing needs:** apartment blocks of between five and eight storeys, including family apartments and duplexes, create successful homes and neighbourhoods at surprisingly high densities, are cost-effective and perpetuate the character and street life of London. Creative combinations of mid-rise mansion blocks with taller elements can make room for family houses within high density neighbourhoods.
- 2 Resist 'hyperdensity':** there should be a presumption against 'hyperdense' developments over 350 homes per hectare, which should be confined to exceptional locations and subject to exceptional justification. At these densities, and even with the best practice approach we advocate, it is very difficult to create the conditions that allow mixed communities to thrive. The Mayor's new Housing Zones should not become populated with such hyperdense schemes.
- 3 Integrate towers with street-based typologies:** taller buildings do have a role within well-connected developments, provided they are integrated with other typologies and contribute to the creation of successful streets and other public realm. We must avoid trophy towers dropped at random into our unique city: they are alien to our street-based culture, socially divisive and make little contribution to meeting London's housing needs.
- 4 Promote street life:** the streets and squares of London provide an unbeatable model for successful urban living and are the envy of the world. We need to continue this tradition of urban place-making, ensuring all new development begins with a coherent strategy for the public realm.
- 5 Build on London's tradition of mixed communities:** unlike other global cities, London's residential neighbourhoods have evolved by successfully integrating diverse people of different income, age and household size. Larger developments should contain a balance of homes for families, the elderly and young people. The economic and social health of our city requires it.

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**6 Provide a wider range of housing typologies:** planning policies and standards are focused on conventional models of permanent housing for long-stay households. We also need alternative types of housing design and tenure to attract and retain London's young mobile workforce.

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**7 Harness space above public buildings:** recent precedents show that successful new homes can be built above schools, libraries, shops, cinemas and workspace. There is much more scope to exploit air-rights to meet housing need and intensify street-life - including making better use of public-sector land.

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**8 Design for management:** intelligent management plans are essential to avoid future social and management problems in high-density housing. We need to balance capital and maintenance costs through tighter specifications, closer collaboration with suppliers and early involvement of housing managers in the design process.

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**9 Make service charges affordable for all:** very dense developments, and especially tall towers, have higher management and maintenance costs than other typologies, and create more intense pressure on shared space and infrastructure. More rigorous projections of service charges are required to ensure that dense developments pay their way, but do not become unaffordable for future occupiers.

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**10 Develop new funding streams for long term management:** we should under-write the long-term management of shared space and community facilities through capital endowments at planning approval stage and ring-fencing income from ground rents.

**And finally, let us not give in to collective amnesia. We have spent the last 30 years trying to understand and correct the mistakes of post-war development. Let's use this knowledge and not repeat the same mistakes.**

# About the authors

## Four architectural practices

This report – like its predecessor – is the product of collaboration between four architectural practices, specialising in the design and delivery of residential and mixed-use neighbourhoods. We have been at the forefront of housing debate, design and delivery for 40 years or more, and are currently delivering a significant proportion of London's supply of new homes. We are therefore able to take a long view, and to bring experience from across the whole spectrum of housing by type, location and tenure. We are creating homes for all sorts of people: young and old, wealthy and poor, singles and families. Our regeneration work, engaging with local people, has given us particular insights into what has worked – and failed to work – in the past.

## Why collaborate?

Although we are competitors, we also recognise the benefits of collaboration when it comes to understanding and influencing the wider context in which we operate. We therefore meet regularly to discuss current issues in relation to housing and place-making, and the way they are shaped by the pull of market and regulatory forces.

With a wide range of clients and huge collective experience, embodied in our 600 combined staff, we find that we can bring knowledge and insight to contemporary issues, and we are keen to share that with the wider community of developers, local authorities, practitioners and politicians. We certainly don't agree about everything, and we bring four different voices to each debate, but we typically discover a high degree of consensus about what are the problems and what might be the solutions.

We also collaborate, individually and collectively, with other organisations such as the NLA, the Housing Forum, Future of London, NHBC, RIBA and Design for Homes.

## Some of our collective work to date

The group has produced a number of reports and discussion papers including:

- *Superdensity: the Sequel.*
- *Recommendations for Living at Superdensity.*
- *Space Benchmarking: Helping Consumers to Make Informed Choices about Homes to Buy and Rent.*
- *London Housing Design Guide: detailed involvement in drafting and a consultation response on the draft.*
- *Yes! In our backyard. Reflections from 30 years of experience of community architecture on how Localism can be made to work.*
- *Red Tape Challenge and Innovation in Housing.*
- *Bonfire of the Regulations – Rights to Light.*
- *Home Performance Labelling.*

Collectively and individually, members of our practices have participated in the Housing Standards Review, undertaken research for government and many other national organisations, written numerous design guides and published articles, papers and books about housing.



Levitt Bernstein  
People.Design

Pollard  
Thomas  
Edwards

PRP

## Credits

Recommendations were written and compiled by Ben Derbyshire of HTA, Matthew Goulcher of Levitt Bernstein, Andrew Beharrell of Pollard Thomas Edwards and Andy von Bradsky of PRP.

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- Chapter 1 Appraising the options**  
Ben Derbyshire
- Chapter 2 Engaging communities**  
Matthew Goulcher
- Chapter 3 Getting the design right**  
Andrew Beharrell
- Chapter 4 Achieving sustainable outcomes**  
Andy von Bradsky

Edited by Denise Chevin

The team would especially like to thank Denise Chevin, Barry McCullough at Levitt Bernstein, Tim Metcalfe at Pollard Thomas Edwards and other contributors at the four practices.

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**Photography and image credits:**

Rejash Bhela (cover image), Carl Vann, Tim Metcalfe, Robbie Pooley, Tim Crocker, David Bank, Galit Seligmann, Paul Tyagi and Museum of London





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