



# More homes in less space: Living at high density in London

AN LSE LONDON/LSE CITIES PROJECT

NATIONAL PLANNING FORUM

FANNY BLANC

26.02.2019



# The research

# Methods

---

Surveys: postal invitations to online survey (517 responses, 8.5% response rate)

Resident focus groups, 'walking interviews', workshops, structured observations, key informant interviews

No involvement of developers or building managers in facilitating access

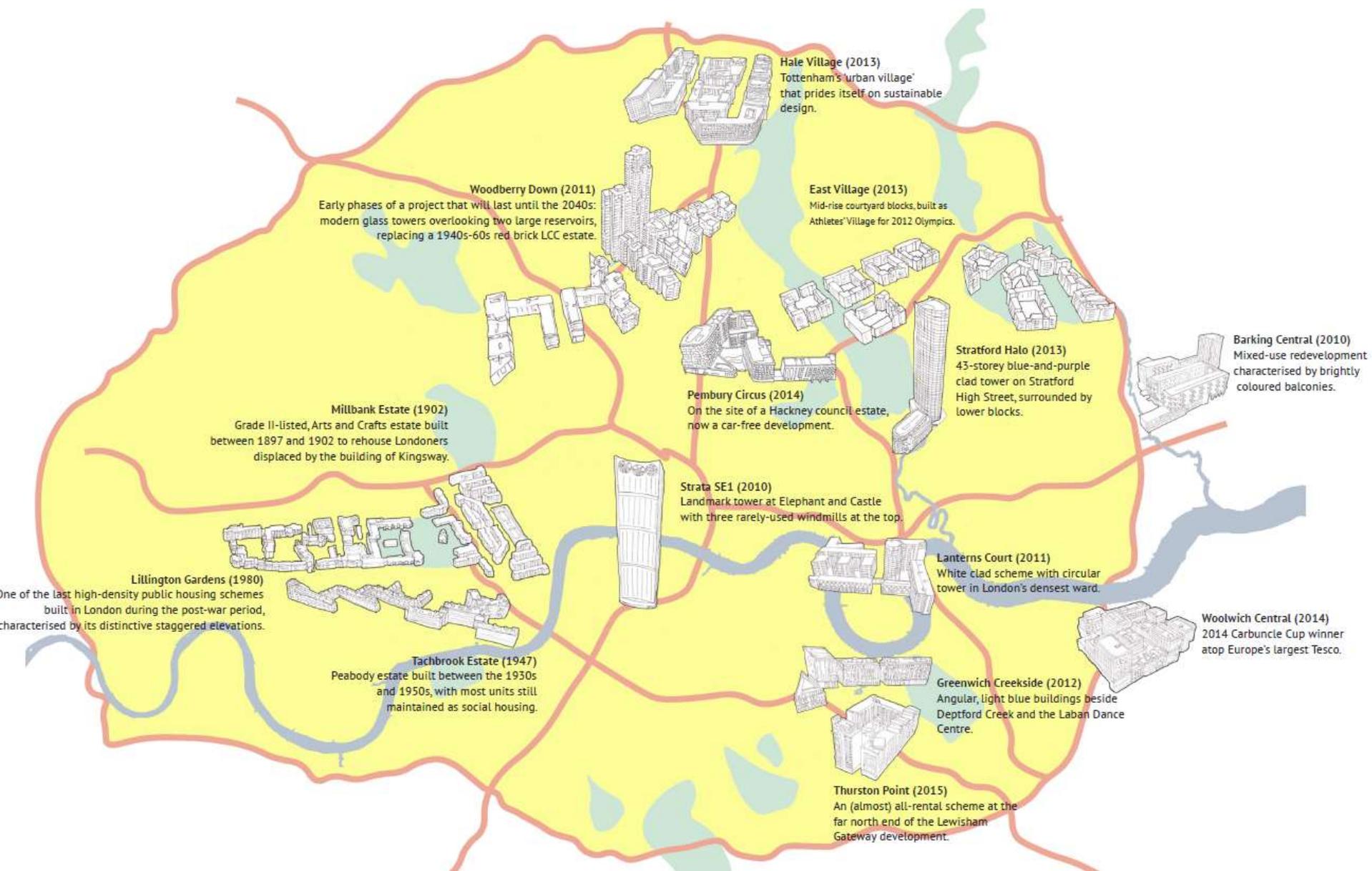
# Research questions

---

How do residents experience living in high-density residential schemes in London, and how does this differ by tenure, household type, and the characteristics of the scheme?

What factors make such developments perform well or badly as homes?

What lessons can be drawn for London planning and housing policy?





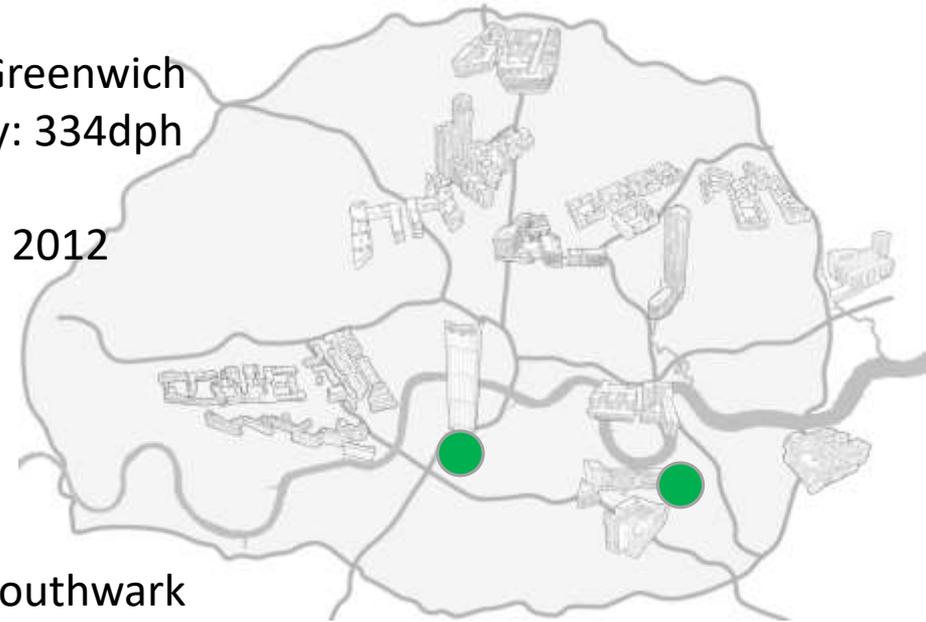
## Greenwich Creekside

Borough: Greenwich  
Net density: 334dph  
371 units  
Completed 2012



## Strata SE1

Borough: Southwark  
Net density: 1,295dph  
408 units  
Completed 2010





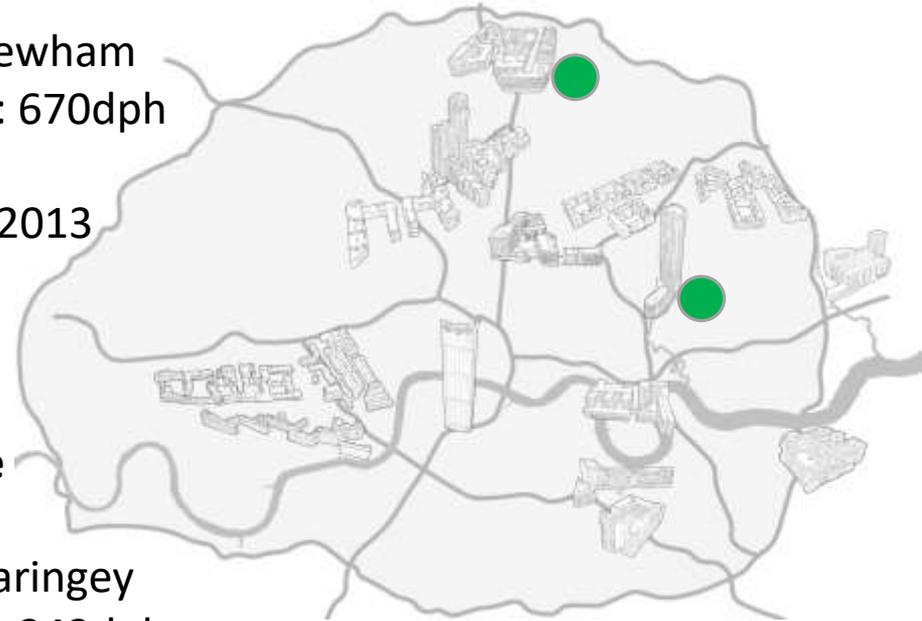
## Stratford Halo

Borough: Newham  
Net density: 670dph  
704 units  
Completed 2013



## Hale Village

Borough: Haringey  
Net density: 243dph  
1,200 units  
Completed 2013





## East Village

Borough: Newham  
Net density: 147dph  
2,818 units  
Completed 2013



## Lanterns Court

Borough: Tower Hamlets  
Net density: 532dph  
656 units  
Completed 2011





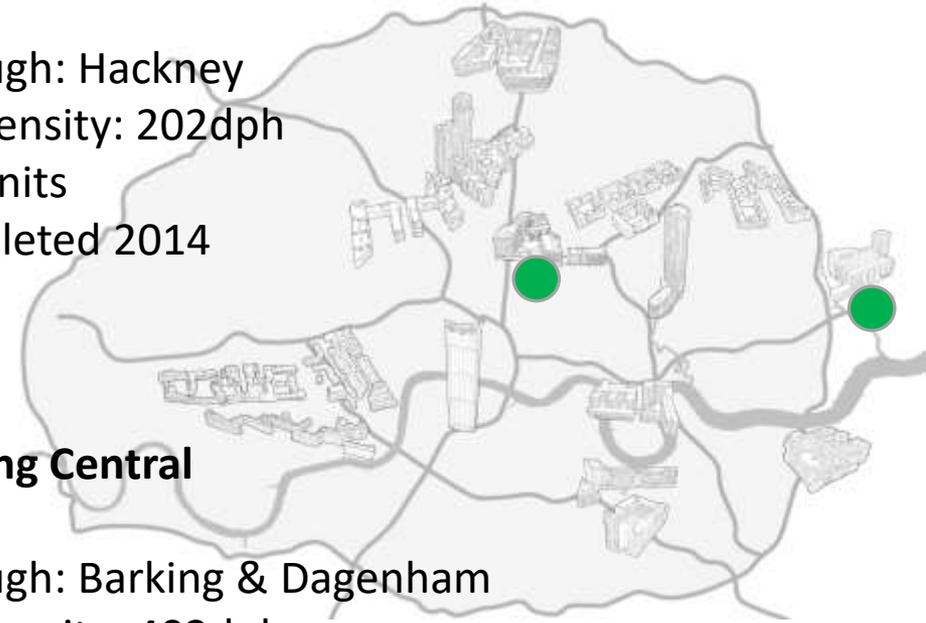
## **Pembury Circus**

Borough: Hackney  
Net density: 202dph  
268 units  
Completed 2014



## **Barking Central**

Borough: Barking & Dagenham  
Net density: 403dph  
500 units  
Completed 2010





### ***Thurston Point***

*Location:* Lewisham

*Architect:* ECE Architecture

*Developer:* L & Q

*Occupied:* 2015

*No. units:* 406 (~390dph)

*Tenure:* BTR, shared ownership and social rental



### ***Woolwich Central***

*Location:* Woolwich

*Architect:* Sheppard Robson

Winner of 2014 Carbuncle Cup

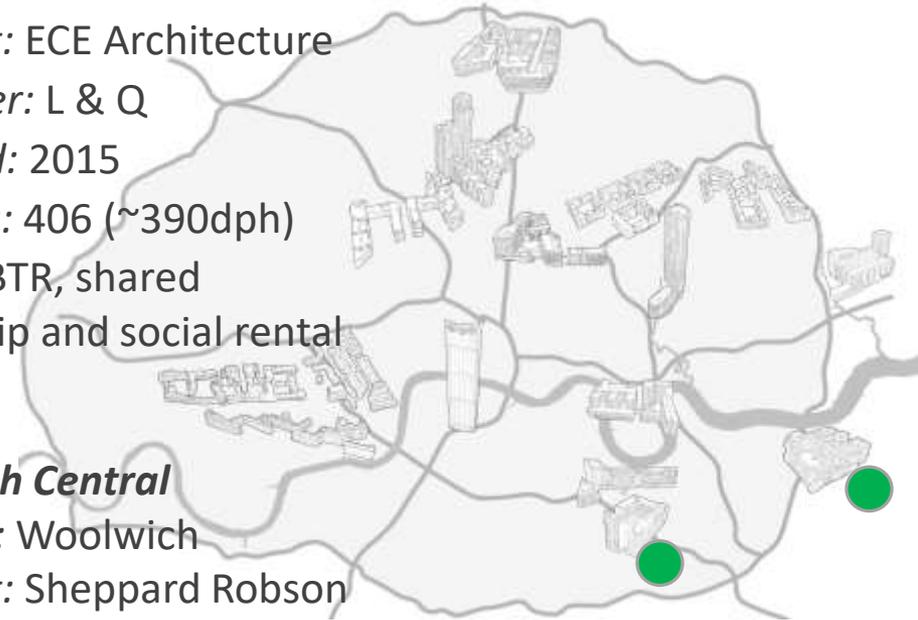
Phases 1&2

*Developer:* Spenhill

*Occupied:* 2014

*No. units:* 304 (~420dph)

*Tenure:* Private and Shared Ownership (L&Q)





## ***Woodberry Down***

*Location:* Manor House

*Architect:* Fletcher Priest Architects / Rolfe  
Judd Architecture

*Developer:* Berkeley Homes

*Occupied:* 2011

*No. units:* 807 (phase 1)  
(~ 300dph)

*Tenure:* Social rented, shared ownership  
(Genesis) and private sector.





***Millbank Estate***

*Location:* Pimlico/Victoria

*Architect:* London County Council

*Built:* 1897-1902

*No. units:* 562



***Tachbrook Estate***

*Location:* Pimlico/Victoria

*Architect:* Milton Harvey

*Owner:* Peabody

*Built:* 1930s/40s

*No. units:* 427



***Lillington Gardens***

*Location:* Pimlico/Victoria

*Architect:* Darbourne & Darke

*Developer:* LCC

*Built:* 1960s/70s

*No. units:* 738





# Findings

# About the respondents

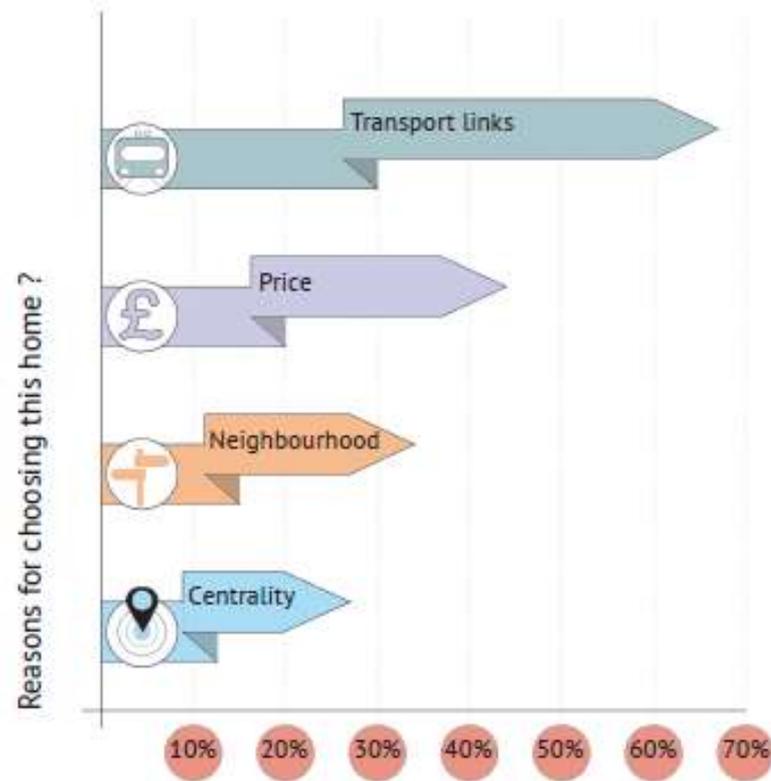
---

- 50% owner-occupation (including s/o), 35% PRS, 15% social rented
- 71% of respondents were between 20 and 40 years old
- 78% of respondents lived in households with one or two persons
- 14% of respondents had children (vs. 31% of London households overall)
- Most respondents said were from UK (60%), the rest from elsewhere in Europe
- Broad spectrum of income across respondents
- In new schemes, high proportion of households spent more than 1/3 of their income on housing



# Reasons for moving to scheme

---



# Design

---

*‘What do you like about living in XX?’*

- For recent schemes, most common word is ‘modern’
- Many residents sought out new homes—not seen as a tradeoff. (A cultural shift?)
- Integration of greenery and built form praised in older schemes but also master planned schemes
  - Harder to achieve on small, constrained sites

# Outdoor space

---

Outdoor space use varied significantly -



47% of Lillington Gardens respondents use the outdoor spaces more than once a week



Vs. 6% of Thurston Point respondents

# Amenities and facilities

---

Amenities like co-working spaces and gyms often emphasised on marketing material, but least cited reason for choosing to move to developments (6%)

No negative comments from those living above supermarkets – convenience generally embraced

Most households agreed that these high-density developments offered good communal services and amenities.

# Physical issues

## Storage

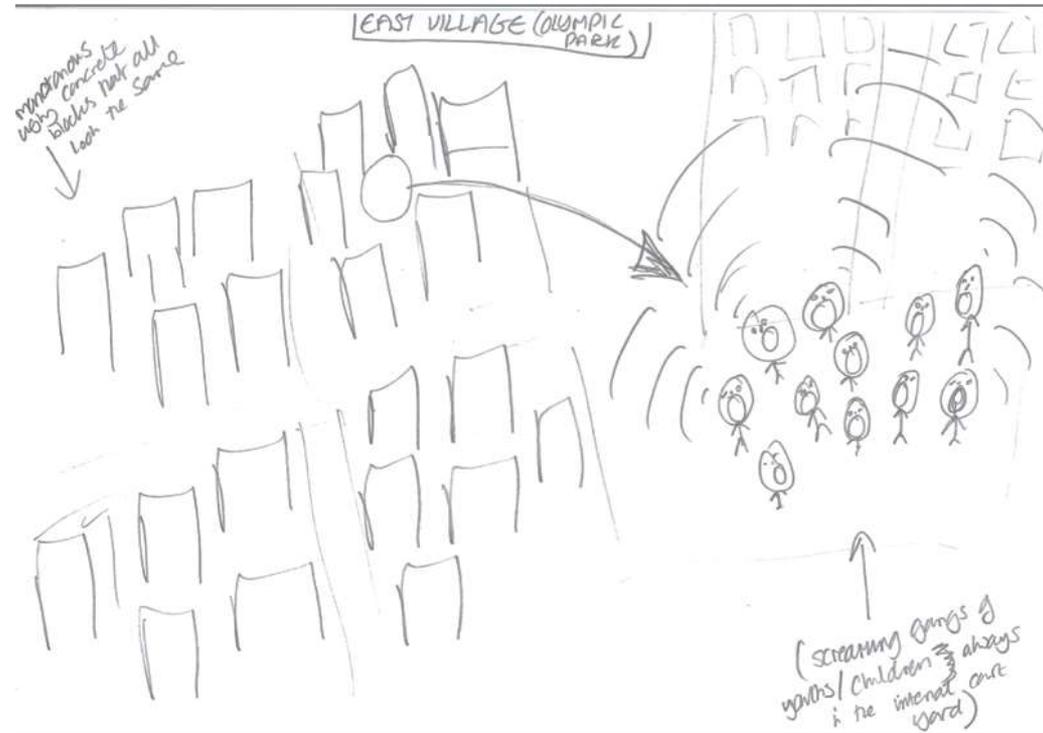
Over half of residents (in both new and old schemes) saw this as an issue – particularly problematic for social tenants (64%) and families with kids.

## Overheating

Seen as a consequence of centralised heating systems that they could not control. Residents of homes that were dual-aspect were less likely to report this as a problem (23%, vs 39% for those with single-aspect homes).

## Noise

Some 42% of respondents said their developments were excessively noisy



# Community

---

**Old vs new:** Households in older schemes tend to know their neighbours: Tachbrook Estate, 57% of respondents knew at least 7 people; at Lanterns Court 55% of respondents knew no one

However, only 2% of respondents listed sense of community as one of their 'most important aspects of a home'

**Tenure:** 45% social housing tenants agreed that there was a 'strong sense of community' in their development compared to 29% owners and 19% PRS

# Neighbourhood

---

In some schemes people came *because* of the neighbourhood (Pembury Circus, Greenwich Creekside, Pimlico)

In others they moved in *despite* the neighbourhood (Barking Central, Woodberry Down)



# Management

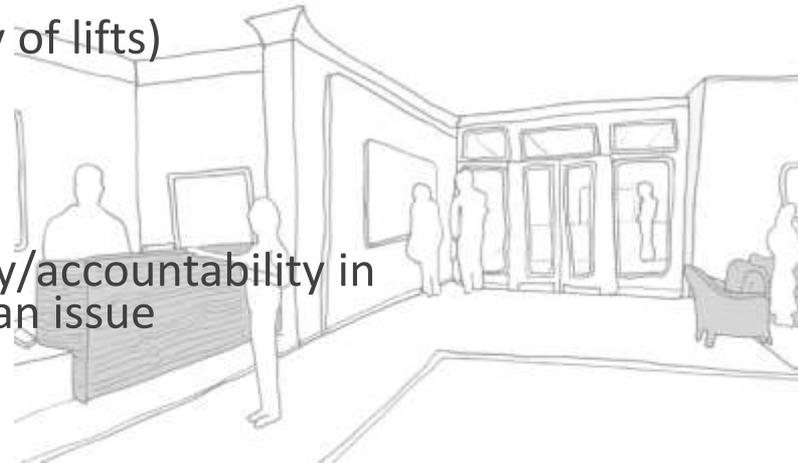
---

Wide range of service charges (£2.39 to £5.07 per year per sq ft)

- No correlation between service charges and how residents rated the facilities and services

Some praise (concierge) for good management—but more complaints, e.g.

- Slow response times to repairs (especially of lifts)
- Poor initial build quality
- High utility bills from monopoly suppliers
- Rising service charges
- General concern over lack of transparency/accountability in management – many layers/outsourcing an issue



# Family living

---



Only 13% of respondents had children (compared to 31% of all London households)

# Lessons from old developments

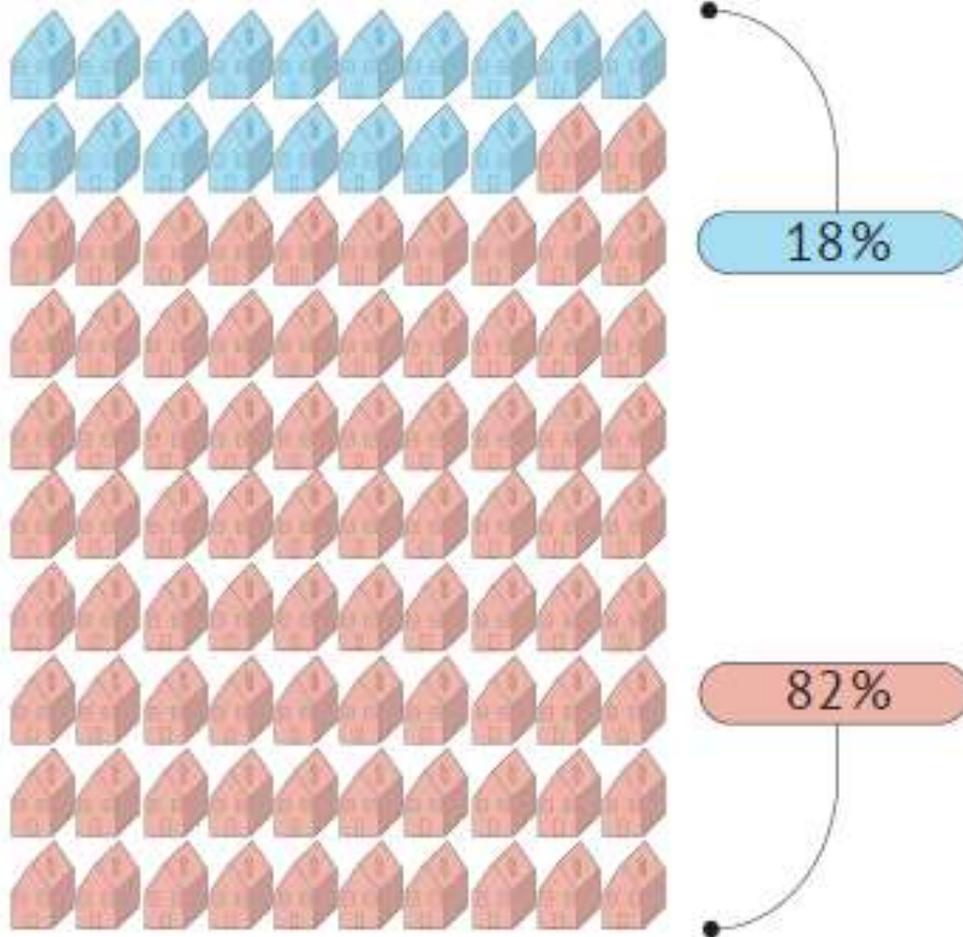
---

All three are low-rise high-density—respondents emphasised they were ‘not towers’

Some evidence of strong mixed communities

Lillington & Millbank now mixed tenure through RTB—seems to work well generally though some tensions/resentments

Residents feel privileged to live on these estates



Do you think that high density developments like yours are a good long-term option for people in London?



No



Yes

- There was a notable lack of pushback against the high-density nature of the housing in and of itself.
- 63% stated that they planned to remain a resident of their development for a number of years.

An architectural line drawing of a city street scene. The drawing is in black lines on a white background. It shows a street with several buildings. On the left, there are several smaller, multi-story buildings with gabled roofs. In the center, there are three taller, rectangular buildings. The building on the far right is a cutaway, showing its internal structure, including floors, walls, and furniture like desks and chairs. The street has cars and pedestrians. The overall style is a detailed architectural sketch.

# Developing recommendations

# Activities

---

*Interviews*

*Benchmarking tours*

*Steering group*

*Residents workshops*

# Outputs

*Website*

*Report*

*Film*

# What we learnt

---

*Housing numbers*

*Scale of planning*

*Building regulations & design*

*Housing mix & tenure*

Thank you!

