

Better places to live: high-quality residential areas

1 Should all the homes on the High Path Estate be redeveloped?

SEE PAGE 15

As part of the transfer of homes from the London Borough of Merton to Circle Housing Merton Priory in 2010, a commitment was made to ensure all transferred homes met the Merton Standard. This included new kitchens, bathrooms, doors and windows where required.

When Circle Housing Merton Priory began to plan for the Merton Standards upgrades for High Path, their investigations and studies raised doubts on whether these improvements alone could bring the homes and the neighbourhood up to an acceptable, modern standard.

The Merton Standard works would not address issues such as poor insulation, dampness and condensation in the homes, overcrowding, parking, community safety and issues concerning the open and green spaces. Only homes owned by Circle Housing Merton Priory will be eligible for the improvements and leaseholders would be expected to pay for at least some of the upgrades. Any external issues on High Path would not be included.

Please select **one** of the following.

Option 1: Demolish and redevelop the entire High Path Estate

Redeveloping the whole estate would mean demolishing and replacing the existing buildings to provide a number of benefits, such as well-designed energy efficient new homes and general improvement to the neighbourhood, including connections to the surrounding areas.

Option 2: Partial redevelopment

Retain some buildings and redevelop the majority of the estate to provide a number of benefits, such as well-designed energy efficient new homes but with fewer benefits to the neighbourhood.

Option 3: Invest in existing properties to bring them to minimum modern standards

Refurbish all Circle Housing Merton Priory and leasehold properties to ensure they meet current minimum housing standards, and have reasonable kitchens, bathrooms, windows, wiring and insulation. All leaseholders would have to share the costs of this work. This would not include changes to the outside areas.

Option 4: Other, please state

Please note that the following questions relate to partial or full estate redevelopment. Should you decide to select the third option at Question 1, we would encourage you to respond to all the questions within this questionnaire as receiving all your feedback is important to us.

2 What size of homes should be provided within the High Path estate?

Please select **one** of the following.

Option 1: Mix of different sizes of homes

Provide a mix of different sizes of homes consisting: around 33% one bedroom, 32% two bedrooms and 35% three or more bedroom homes. This option reflects Merton's current policy to encourage a mix of dwelling sizes.

Option 2: If you do not agree with this mix, how would you change it?

3 What type of homes should be provided across the estate?

At the moment there is a wide range of different types of homes on High Path including flats, maisonettes and houses. If the regeneration plans go ahead the existing homes would be replaced and additional new homes built. What type of homes do you think High Path will need in the future?

Please select **one** of the following.

Option 1: A mix of mainly houses and flats on different parts of the estate

Better places to live: high quality residential areas

Option 2: A wide range of homes including a mix of houses, flats and maisonettes

towards Merton High Street to the north of the estate.

Option 3: Mostly flats

Option 3: Variety across the estate
Please select **one** of the following

Option 4: Other, please state

Some taller buildings evenly spread across the estate in general, amongst mainly lower buildings.

Taller buildings towards the centre of the site.

5 Are there any other issues or options we should consider regarding new homes?

Please feel free to continue on the sheet provided at the end of this questionnaire.

4 How should building heights be distributed through the High Path estate?

Currently building heights on High Path vary from two storey houses to 12 storey tower blocks. If the regeneration goes ahead, agreeing the height of new buildings will be important. That decision will need to take into account the relationship between High Path and the surrounding areas, local opinions, planning policies, how many homes are to be built and how to ensure there is enough open and green space for High Path to be a pleasant and attractive place to live.

What do you think about building heights?

Please select **one** of the following.

Option 1: Evenly across the estate
Buildings should be broadly similar height across the estate.

Option 2: Taller buildings around the edges
Please select **one or more** of the following

Taller buildings should be located by the roads to the south (High Path / Merantun Way).

Taller buildings should be located towards Abbey Road to the east of the estate.

Taller buildings should be located towards Morden Road to the west of the estate.

Taller buildings should be located

SEE PAGE 15

People and spaces

6 What type of outdoor space would you prefer to see within the estate?

All homes will be required to have some private space: all flats with balconies and all houses will have gardens. In addition, flats must have access to communal gardens. The estate also needs parks, playspaces and open spaces to serve its residents and the surrounding area. As there is a limited amount of space available, a balance therefore needs to be struck between the provision of private outside space for residents and public open space for everyone.

Please select **one** of the following.

Option 1: Concentrate on providing communal space for individual groups of flats

This would be communal gardens available for groups of flats and not open to the general public.

Option 2: Provide a single public open space for everyone to enjoy

This would be open to the general public. Communal gardens for groups of flats would remain, but may have to be significantly smaller to accommodate land for a public open space.

Option 3: Other, please state

7 What types of play areas and open space would you prefer to see?

Please select **a maximum of two** from the following.

Sports pitches such as grassed areas suitable for kick-about and picnicking.



Multi-use games areas such as fenced, hard surfaced areas for 5 a-side football, netball, tennis or similar sports.

King Georges new ball court - 10/05/06



Communal gardens such as areas with planting and seating suitable for picnicking and where ball games might be prohibited.



Children's play equipment



Other, please state

SEE PAGE 15

Getting around

10 How should greater use of public transport be encouraged?

Please select **one or more** of the following.

- Provide better bus facilities such as increased bus stops and bus frequencies, improved bus stops travel information
- Provide better walking routes to rail, tube, tram stations, shopping areas, open spaces and community facilities such as well lit, safe, convenient and well maintained footways
- Provide incentives to help residents use public transport more such as taster pre-pay oyster card and special rail deals
- Provide personal travel advice
- Other, please state

11 Walking and cycling are healthy life style choices. How can we support this?

Please select **one or more** of the following.

- Provide well-connected, attractive and safe cycle routes and footpaths
- Provide safe and convenient crossings of busy roads and junctions
- Provide secure and convenient cycle storage
- Provide cycling training and support, to encourage people to switch to cycling

12 How should parking be managed?

Please select **one or more** of the following.

- Introduce parking controls to ensure that residents and their visitors can park near their homes as well as to protect access and road safety such as Controlled Parking Zone; double or single yellow lines to ensure that residents and their visitors can park near their homes as well as to protect access and road safety
- No parking restrictions
- Reduce the need for parking spaces by providing alternative ways for residents to access a car when needed such as car clubs

13 Are there any other issues or options we should consider regarding the transport?

Please feel free to continue on the sheet provided at the end of this questionnaire.

Local facilities and economic opportunities

14 Should new community facilities be provided within High Path estate?

Community facilities cover a range of uses such as health care, schools, children's playing fields and services for older people and the disabled.

Please select **one** of the following.

Option 1: Yes, we need more community facilities such as:
please state

Option 2: No, the existing local community facilities on the estate and nearby are enough

15 How could refurbishment or regeneration support existing and new employment?

Please select **one or more** of the following.

Provision of space for businesses on or near the estate

Employ local businesses and apprentices through the refurbishment or regeneration process

Other, please state

16 Are there any other issues or options we should consider regarding social and economic opportunities?

For example employing local people, supporting local businesses, providing training for local people, improving local facilities and services.

Please feel free to continue on the sheet provided at the end of this questionnaire.

Separate sheet provided for you to tell us what you think. Please clearly indicate the option which you are writing about.

Question 1 – Option 4: Other, please state

Partial redevelopment with qualification.

Retain structurally sound buildings, refurbishing all Circle Housing Merton Priory and leasehold (where agreed with individual leaseholders) properties to ensure they meet current minimum housing standards.

Demolish / redevelop structurally unsound buildings.

Most recently constructed buildings (Will Miles Court; Doel Close; Vangaurd House; Mychell House; Tanner House; Dowman Close and Staine Close) are all structurally sound and fit for purpose. There is absolutely no need to demolish / redevelop these buildings (other than for reasons of Circle Housings' capitalist averice).

Question 5 - Are there other issues or options we should consider regarding new homes?

Homes offered for leasehold / freehold tenure should not be connected to communal heating systems / energy supplies which remove individual leaseholders' / freeholders' rights to choose and change systems & suppliers when they wish to.

Question 7 – What types of play areas and open space would you prefer to see? Other, please state

No sports pitches – there is adequate provision of good quality sports pitch facilities at Abbey Recreation Ground (approx. 200yds from High Path Estate).

Minimal multi-use games areas – existing multi-use games areas are not used to optimum by existing residents.

No outdoor gymnasium – existing facilities at corner of Hayward Close/ High Path are rarely used. I have never seen anyone using them! There are plenty of public and commercial gymnasium and health club facilities within easy reach of High Path (Latymer Road Swimming Pool and Health Centre / Virgin Active Health Club).

No communal gardens – existing small communal gardens /areas within High Path Estate are never utilised. Neighbouring communal gardens at nearby Nelson Gardens (100 yds away) are available but sadly rarely used because LBMerton consistently fail to maintain this site of Historic interest. If LBMerton took better care of Nelson Gardens and Wimbledon Police declared it to be and enforced an Alcohol Free Zone, I believe it might attract more users and visitors.

Question 8 – Are there any other issues or options we should consider regarding the estate's open spaces and streets?

Retain the historic street pattern but **DO NOT** create new traditional street forms. Existing street design has created "rat runs" for non-residents to bring cars / motorcycles through the estate as a means of shortcutting journey around Morden Road / Merantun Way / Christchurch Road / Merton High Street / Haydons Road and avoiding traffic lights etc. This causes traffic jams in Abbey Road / Pincott Road which hinders or prevents estate residents getting in or out of the estate during peak rush hours etc. New traffic controls are needed to stop this abuse.

Separate sheet provided for you to tell us what you think. Please clearly indicate the option which you are writing about.

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Question 1 - Option 4 – Other - Partial redevelopment AND invest in existing properties to bring them to minimum modern standards.

Circle Housing have failed to demonstrate that wholesale demolition and rebuilding of the entire Estate is necessary or desired by residents.

Many of the more modern blocks (Will Miles Court / Doel Close / Vanguard House / Mychell House / Dowman Close / Stane Close and Hayward Close are all structurally sound. There is absolutely no need to demolish these properties. Many of these properties are Leasehold or Freehold. Circle Housing have their avaricious eyes on these properties, as a way of financing their obligation to bring other properties up to Decent Homes Standards.

In their case for Regeneration of High Path, Circle Housing have published a report "Statement of Community Participation" dated September 2013 in which they have deliberately misrepresented the views of the High Path Community. On the strength of 108 questionnaires gathered at Have Your Say Day Events 1 & 2, 115 questionnaires gathered at Have Your Say Day Events 3 & 4 and 76 questionnaires gathered at Have Your Say Day Event 5 they have produced numerous pages of statements claiming that "XY% of residents say.....", all the statements of course supporting Circle Housings' assertions that Regeneration is what residents want. This is not factual and is a callous distortion of the truth!!!! There are over 600 households on High Path Estate. The data they have used has been collected from a very small minority of the residents of High Path Estate and must not be taken to be representative of the thoughts / feelings of the whole of the residents of the Estate.

Circle Housing have throughout 2014 held a number of "drop-in sessions" / Design Workshops / Site Visits, all of which have been poorly attended and driven by Circle Housing using leading questions and pre-determined models / visual aids to directly influence the feedback / ideas / suggestions from participants. As a result of these "consultation exercises", Circle Housing have made even more sweeping statements, purporting to reflect the views of High Path residents. Yet more misrepresentation.

In October 2014, Circle Housing have published their "Draft regeneration plans for High Path". Their plan is to create a divided High Path!. The way they are proposing to "phase" decanting of residents / demolition and construction will result in an extremely high concentration / density of social housing Ghetto to the East of the new Pincott Road grand boulevard and a rather more up-market, higher density private ownership village to the West. Which of course is where Circle Housing can maximise on the sale price revenue from the newly built 600 + private properties. This plan is obscene and anti-social!

Separate sheet provided for you to tell us what you think. Please clearly indicate the option which you are writing about.

In 2013/14, Circle Housing's property assets stand valued at £3,185.5million and they generated a surplus (profit) of £44.5million.

Circle Housing are now stating that they cannot meet their legal obligations (under "Decent Homes" legislation) to their 358 tenants without a total demolition and rebuild (regeneration) of High Path Estate and the displacement of 213 leaseholders and 37 freeholders. Circle Housing assert that the only way of achieving their Decent Homes legal obligations, is to demolish all existing properties on the estate, rebuild and more than double the number of properties and selling off the excess new build properties (after housing their 358 tenants).

This will mean that the 213 leaseholders and 37 freeholders, will be bullied into Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) on their properties and will be faced with the choice (or rather no choice) of buying new build properties at hugely inflated prices and having to take on new/extra mortgages to pay for the privilege; entering into shared ownership agreements with Circle Housing or leaving the area because the value of the CPO compensation packages will never enable them to purchase like-for-like properties in the surrounding SW19 area. "Social Cleansing" of the existing leasehold/freehold residents!

I am aware of Housing Minister Kris Hopkins' press release 14th July - Improving the rented housing sector, Increasing the number of available homes and Housing . In this press release it states "But he insisted that demolition would only ever be a last resort in consultation with residents and urged councils to comply with George Clarke's 12-point plan, published by the Empty Homes Agency." He is deliberately widening the use of George Clarke's 12-point plan from the original context of "empty homes", implying that it should act as a model for occupied homes too.

Thinking laterally, Circle Housing are proposing to decant their social housing tenants and bully / CPO leaseholders / Freeholders out of their current properties, thus deliberately creating 608 "Empty Homes" and then deliberately doing the exact opposite of George Clarke's 12-point plan. How can this be allowed?

Being aware of Kris Hopkins' view and George Clarke's recommendations, I have asked Circle Housing to share with me the evidence they have to support their assertion that the majority of residents of High Path Estate are in favour of their Regeneration proposal. They have failed to do so.

I have asked Circle Housing to share with me:

Question 1 – What "forms" of Market Testing and options for refurbishment" of High Path Estate were considered by Circle Housing?

Question 2 – Can I have sight of the responses and results of any "forms of Market Testing and options for refurbishment" of High Path Estate undertaken by Circle Housing?

Question 3 – What evidence does Circle Housing have, that proves "demolition is the preferred choice of the community" of High Path Estate?

Question 4 - Why, at all public meetings I've attended so far, does Circle Housing refuse to consider " a mixed and balanced" urban design scheme for High Path Estate, where existing properties are retained and improved while being mixed with appropriate new build development?

Needless to say, they have failed to provide me with answers.

I have attended meetings with Circle Housing/ LBMerton / appointed agents and architects. I have also attended a Design Workshop. In my experience the views / thoughts / ideas of residents are simply rejected and disregarded if they do not fit with the preconceived ideas of Circle Housing and their agents. The behaviour of Circle Housing representatives and their agents is arrogant and patronising.

I think it is clear that Circle Housing's Regeneration proposal is driven purely by a desire to increase the value of Circle Housing's property assets and operating surplus and their CEO and Board of Directors' annual bonuses. Circle Housing have absolutely no genuine concern for the welfare or future financial / housing circumstances of the current leaseholders and freeholders of High Path Estate.