

## Better places to live: high quality residential areas

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

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 see  
comments on  
pages 15-16

**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?**

Mostly one bedroom  
and two bedroom  
homes

### 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**

**Option 3: Mostly flats**

**Option 4: Other, please state**

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towards Merton High Street to the north of the estate.

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

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.

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### 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

## 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**

Do not add a large park in the middle of the estate

### 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**

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## People and spaces

**8** What do you think is important in deciding the layout of buildings, spaces and streets on the estate?

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

**Making easy connections within the estate and to the surrounding area**

Creating convenient and safe routes across the estate, making it easy to walk or cycle to neighbours and easily get to places like Merton High Street, the Underground station or Merton Abbey Mills.

**Retaining the historic street pattern and create traditional street forms**

Pincott Road, Nelson Grove Road and High Path are old streets that existed before the current estate was built and the buildings on them were demolished, this historic street pattern could be reinstated.

Traditional street forms are streets that usually have buildings facing on to the street, on-street parking in front of properties and with street trees helping shape its feel and character. Nearby streets to the north and west of the estate, like Nelson Road, Victory Road, Brisbane Avenue and Queensland Avenue are good examples of this.

**Creating a mixture of types of buildings and spaces**

Similar to the existing layout with a mix of types of buildings and spaces that give the estate a different character from its surroundings.

**Other, please state**

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

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

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## 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

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

### 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.

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### 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**

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

My choice for Question 1 is Option 2: Partial **redevelopment**. The High Path Estate townhouses (e.g., Doel Close, Hayward Close, Stane Close, Dowman Close) and the newer blocks of flats (including Vanguard House, Will Miles Court, Tanner House and Mychell House) do not need any extra work to bring them up to current standards and they should be excluded from any regeneration plans, if partial regeneration does go ahead.

All of these aforementioned blocks and townhouses on High Path are in sound structural condition. Any deterioration to any of the buildings has been the result of neglect by the freeholder, who is responsible for maintaining the building. All room sizes in Mychell House (for example) already exceed current London housing standards, except that the blocks of flats have no private outside space (which we don't believe that we need and which we were fully aware of when we bought the flat on the open market). Our flat in particular has cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, double glazing and it has an EPC rating of C, which we know because we had an EPC survey carried out when we put the flat onto the market two years ago. Our flat does not suffer from any form of damp, and we use a dehumidifier to deal with condensation that can occur in any property due to washing clothes and hanging them out to dry, etc.

The following points are for Merton Council's consideration if partial or full regeneration of the High Path Estate is approved. Homeowners in general take a risk on the rise and fall of property values based on factors such as the economy and the location of the property. High Path Estate residents have seen the value of homes located in the "Battles" area, directly across Merton High Street increase significantly in value in the past few years, even where improvements to the buildings have not been carried out. This rise in prices is due to externalities driving London house price rises generally, not because these crumbling Victorian and Edwardian structures are becoming any more valuable in and of themselves (except when homeowners are carrying out improvements such as ground floor and/or loft extensions, modernisation and general redecoration, which does not account for all of the increase in prices in this, or other areas).

CHMP want to redevelop a number of estates for their own benefit, not for the benefit of the homeowners on their estates. CHMP could have chosen to adopt a win/win approach by encouraging homeowners to share in something exciting for the greater good, but instead, they have chosen to take an adversarial approach by telling homeowners that we would have less equity in a new home on the estate and by refusing to acknowledge any rights for homeowners who may chose to remain on the estate in their 10 Commitments.

If CHMP want to engage homeowners to share in this journey of this very disruptive and upsetting process for the greater good, they must offer like for like to all homeowners. The like for like concept does not have to be complicated (unless CHMP wish to overcomplicate it in an attempt to refute it). Like for like can simply mean that if (for example) I own a 700 sq foot 2 bedroom flat with the mortgage paid off through many years of hard labour, personal sacrifice and delayed gratification, then I will continue to own a 2 bedroom flat that is at least 700 sq foot, mortgage free, with no additional costs being foisted onto me for someone else's benefit, to subsidise a redevelopment project that I did not ask for.

The so called "market value" that CHMP would claim to pay homeowners who sell and move off the estate would not enable them to buy a comparably sized property within the

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

same general area, forcing them to move further away from central London, thus disrupting connections within the local community and imposing higher costs of commuting to central London for work. The like for like principle has nothing to do with greed or keeping up with wealthier neighbours in the Battles area, directly north of the High Path Estate. Like for like merely means the ability to remain in our own community. It means that as a homeowner, I would not be socially cleansed off the High Path Estate.

Regarding Question 1, Option 3, there is an error in the survey about who is liable to pay costs of bringing homes up to minimum standards. Leaseholders share in the costs of maintaining their own block, plus a share of general services such as for estate lighting.

It is not the responsibility for leaseholders (or freeholders, who were omitted from mention in the survey) to pay to bring council tenanted homes throughout the estate up to decent homes standards, which was a commitment that CHMP made to Merton Council when they bought the stock. These costs will be covered by council rents and from leaseholders who are part of the block that is affected only, NOT from any other form of funds taken from leaseholders and freeholders.

Further to the stock transfer, when Merton Priory Homes (now CHMP) bought a number of estates a few years ago, including High Path, they had stock condition surveys carried out before they completed their purchase. CHMP purchased these estates with access to the full knowledge of the information in these stock condition surveys, and they committed to Merton Council to uphold certain standards as a housing association that they have subsequently failed to carry out. Now they claim they cannot afford to maintain their estates without regeneration.

If CHMP now want to redevelop all or part of the High Path Estate, then they, as well as Merton Council, have a moral obligation to ensure that homeowners on the High Path Estate do not bear any of the financial costs. This means ensuring homeowners do not pay any legal fees, stamp duty, moving costs, temporary accommodation costs (if required); that there would be no increase in monthly service charges aside from normal increases due to inflation, etc., and no there would be other additional costs to live in a newly built home that homeowners such as myself do not want and that we did not ask for.

To cause any additional financial liability to homeowners beyond what we willingly took on when we originally bought our homes is to play Robin Hood in reverse, by robbing the (relatively) poor to give to the (relatively) rich. CHMP have been very clear that they are using the surplus of funds from the High Path Estate proposed regeneration to fund redevelopment of other estates, so it is clear that a transfer of wealth from the poorer to fund this project would happen. To allow homeowners to be robbed of their rightful ownership of their homes in this manner would send a very perverse message to society, which is that if you work hard and take responsibility for yourself, then you will be punished. Such a message does nothing to encourage social mobility and would only create ill will amongst different types of estate residents.

I remain hopeful that Merton Council will represent High Path Estate homeowners fairly when considering planning applications submitted by CHMP.