

**The London Borough of Merton (Eastfields No.1) Compulsory Purchase Order 2022 (APP/PCU/CPOP/T5720/3303017)**

**The London Borough of Merton (High Path No.1) Compulsory Purchase Order 2022 (APP/PCU/CPOP/T5720/3303018)**

**The London Borough of Merton (Ravensbury No.1) Compulsory Purchase Order 2022 (APP/PCU/CPOP/T5720/3303020)**

**Proof of Evidence of Michael Robbins Bsc(Hons), MRICS**

**dated 26 January 2024**

## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
	1.1 Qualifications and experience	1
	1.2 Involvement with the Scheme	1
	1.3 Scope of evidence	3
<b>2</b>	<b>CLARION'S DUTIES IN RESPECT OF THE ESTATES</b>	<b>4</b>
	2.1 Introduction	4
	2.2 Duties owed to the Regulator	4
	2.3 Decent Homes Programme	4
	2.4 Stock Transfer Agreement	5
<b>3</b>	<b>EXISTING CONDITION OF THE HOUSING STOCK</b>	<b>6</b>
	3.5 The Eastfields Estate	6
	3.6 The High Path Estate	8
	3.7 The Ravensbury Estate	9
	3.8 Conclusion	10
<b>4</b>	<b>OPTIONS CONSIDERED</b>	<b>12</b>
	4.1 Alternatives considered	12
<b>5</b>	<b>RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS</b>	<b>14</b>
	5.1 Introduction	14
	5.2 Energy efficiency of the existing dwellings at High Path	14
	5.3 Condition of existing housing stock	15
<b>6</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>STATEMENT OF TRUTH AND DECLARATION</b>	<b>17</b>
	7.1 Statement of Truth	17
	7.2 Declaration	17

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Qualifications and experience

1.1.1 I, Michael Robbins, am the Regional Planned Investment Manager for Clarion Housing Group (**Clarion**). I am a Chartered Surveyor and have been a member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors since 1987. I have been in this role since 2021, although I have been in a similar role since 2017. In my role I am responsible for developing and managing the major works planned investment programme for the South and South London region. I previously worked in a similar role for Clarion as the Senior Planned Investment Manager. Accordingly, I have extensive experience in developing planned works programmes and have worked in the property industry for approximately 40 years.

1.1.2 I have prepared this Proof of Evidence in support of the London Borough of Merton (High Path No 1) Compulsory Purchase Order 2022 (the **High Path CPO**), the London Borough of Merton (Eastfields No 1) Compulsory Purchase Order 2022 (the **Eastfields CPO**) and the London Borough of Merton (Ravensbury No 1) Compulsory Purchase Order 2022 (the **Ravensbury CPO**) (together, the **CPOs**) in connection with the wider Merton Estates Regeneration Programme (also referred to in this Proof of Evidence as the **Scheme**).

1.1.3 The facts and matters set out in this Proof of Evidence are within my own knowledge. The facts set out below are true to the best of my knowledge and belief. Where reference is made to facts which are outside my knowledge, I set out the source of my information and I believe such information to be true.

1.1.4 I have been assisted by other professional advisors and officers of the London Borough of Merton (the **Council**) with the preparation of this Proof of Evidence, some of whom will also provide evidence to the inquiry.

## 1.2 Involvement with the Scheme

1.2.1 I have been working on the housing stock of South London, including that within the London Borough of Merton, as part of my role at Clarion since 2017, including the stock comprised within the CPOs.

1.2.2 My role is to develop the long and short-term capital programmes to ensure that our stock is maintained to a high standard. This requires analysis of our stock condition data to develop our capital component programmes to ensure we meet our Decent Homes responsibilities. We also programme work to improve the external fabric and external

areas to our blocks, as well as internal and external repairs and decorations. We also have to consider other factors when programming our future work including any new fire regulations, meeting energy conservation targets and managing the various demands and requests from our internal and external stakeholders. Once budgets are agreed, the Planned Investment team then deliver the capital programme through our partnering contractor, United Living, ensuring that quality is maintained along with residents' needs.

1.2.3 The three Estates which are the subject of these CPOs were initially omitted from our long-term capital programmes as the redevelopment of the Estates was imminent. This meant the three Estates were no longer included in our Decent Homes programme, the concern being we could spend significant resources (time and money) on homes that were due to be fully replaced in the short term. Instead, we agreed with the Council: to ensure that homes were kept safe (i.e. with appropriate fire and gas inspections and any necessary upgrades or repairs); that we continue to repair components such as kitchens and bathrooms; to replace any components which were at end of life on a case by case basis; and continue with the planned boiler replacement programme which was underway. As such, the Responsive Repairs team had lead responsibility for maintaining the quality of the stock. However, when it became apparent the regeneration of the three Estates was going to be delayed, much of that planned investment programme was reintroduced. This was to ensure the homes and quality of life of residents could be maintained whilst we waited for the construction of the new homes to get underway.

1.2.4 As a brief summary:

- (a) kitchens, bathrooms and boilers have been replaced at a number of properties on all three of the Estates;
- (b) at the High Path Estate, planned maintenance included the internal and external repairs and redecorations to the communal areas of the blocks at a cost of £500,000, along with fire safety work to the high rise blocks;
- (c) on the Ravensbury Estate, we undertook a major refurbishment of the four storey Ravensbury Court that does not form part of the Scheme. This work cost £1.08m and included the replacement of facias, soffits and rain water goods, replacement windows and flat entrance doors, waterproofing the walkways and communal redecorating; and

- (d) at the Eastfields Estate, Clarion has spent £1.8m to re-cover the flat roofs on all the blocks, other than those forming part of Phase 1 of the redevelopment of the Eastfields Estate, and these flat roofs have been maintained by the Responsive Repairs team.

1.2.5 In 2021 I assisted with the setting up of the Reactive Major Works team; this team was established to assist both the Planned and Responsive teams where components were identified as needing urgent replacement. If it was not possible for the work to be accommodated within an existing major works programme or completed by the repairs team, the Reactive Major Works team were able to undertake this work, and in fact completed the replacement of a number of components on the three Estates the subject of the CPOs.

### 1.3 **Scope of evidence**

My evidence provides an overview of the general condition of the housing stock on the land which is the subject of the CPOs and why there is a need for regeneration.

## 2 CLARION'S DUTIES IN RESPECT OF THE ESTATES

### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 I explain in this section Clarion's duties in terms of the management of the homes on the Eastfields, High Path and Ravensbury Estates (the **Estates**) and its contractual commitments.

2.1.2 Clarion acquired the housing stock at the Estates in 2010.

### 2.2 Duties owed to the Regulator

Please refer to Brian Ham's Proof of Evidence (CD 13.5) for information about Clarion's duties owed to the Regulator of Social Housing.

### 2.3 Decent Homes Programme

2.3.1 Our capital investment programmes are derived from our stock condition data. This shows when components were last renewed and, based on their life expectancy (as prescribed by the Decent Homes Standard), indicates when they should next be renewed.

2.3.2 As detailed above, Clarion negotiated with the Council to have High Path, Eastfields and Ravensbury exempted from the Decent Homes programme whilst we made the preparations for their full-scale regeneration. Commitments were made to ensure any components (e.g. kitchens, bathrooms, windows) which failed or could not be repaired would be replaced. All safety checks and related works would continue as before. The boiler replacement programme would continue. In response to the delays, we instigated the programme of major repairs and upgrades, outlined above.

2.3.3 Clarion are now looking at an enhanced minimum standard for our residents' homes, and it is our aim to raise our stock to the meet our standards set out within the Clarion 2050 Asset Strategy. This looks beyond the components that were traditionally picked up under the Decent Homes programme and seeks to ensure that all of our homes are good quality, fit for purpose, well managed, sustainable and affordable.

2.3.4 The affordability of our stock to residents is vitally important with rising fuel costs, and it is our aim to raise the energy performance certificate (**EPC**) rating of our homes to a minimum of 72. Meeting this target will ensure our homes are warm, comfortable and affordable for residents whilst also contributing to carbon reductions. We are also committed to ensuring that our homes meet our building standard and contain quality

components that extend life cycles, reduce maintenance costs and improve the quality of our residents' lives.

#### 2.4 **Stock Transfer Agreement**

Please refer to Brian Ham's Proof of Evidence (CD 13.5) for information about the stock transfer agreement.

### 3 EXISTING CONDITION OF THE HOUSING STOCK

3.1 As mentioned above, Clarion acquired the housing stock at the Estates in 2010.

3.2 Reports were prepared by Ellis and Moore Consulting Engineers Ltd in 2014 to investigate the condition of the stock in respect of the Eastfields (CD 9.5) and High Path Estates (CD 9.1); and reports were prepared by Tully De'Ath in 2014 to investigate the condition of the stock in respect of the Ravensbury Estate (CD 9.7 and CD 9.8). These reports concluded that there were a number of issues with the stock and concerns over the longevity of the components and that works were required in respect of damp, mould and condensation.

3.3 Clarion commissioned Baily Garner LLP (**Baily Garner**) in June 2016 to carry out internal and external surveys to establish the condition of the housing (CD 9.6 (Eastfields), CD 9.2 (High Path) and CD 9.4 (Ravensbury)). The overall conclusion of the exercise was that extensive refurbishment, retrofit, maintenance and ongoing investment would be needed to bring the housing up to modern standards to ensure better quality of life for residents.

3.4 I have summarised the key issues that blight the current stock within each Estate below.

#### 3.5 The Eastfields Estate

3.5.1 The properties on the Eastfields Estate comprise three storey town houses and three storey blocks of flats. Both types were built in the late 1960s using the Wimpey No Fines method. Wimpey No-Fines is a type of non-standard construction house built from cast in-situ concrete. "No-Fines" refers to the type of concrete mixture used, which contains no sand or other small particles. Over 300,000 of these houses were built in the UK from the 1940s onward in response to the post-Second World War housing shortage. Since their original construction, enamelled steel panels have been inserted to the external elevations of the homes at Eastfields. The windows have been replaced in more recent years. The front and rear elevations are now showing signs of corrosion on the steel panels and replacement is hampered by the various tenures of the properties and the presence of asbestos-containing board between the cladding and original structure.

3.5.2 The continuous flat roofs to each block are now life expired and have been subject to a number of repairs and replacements, although this has been of an ad-hoc nature. The full replacement with a modern insulated flat roof system has been made very difficult with the varying tenure types of the town houses. In practice, although the roof is a common structure running across many properties, because each property in turn might be a Clarion-owned general needs home,



adjacent to an absentee landlord, adjacent to resident homeowners, etc., securing access, permissions and financial contributions to allow for comprehensive improvement to the Eastfield's roofs is extremely challenging. More recently Clarion have undertaken the recovering of these roofs ourselves, at a cost of over £1.8m. However, this has merely provided a waterproof coating and has not improved the thermal qualities of the roofs.

- 3.5.3 Baily Garner undertook a thermographic survey which indicated there was evidence of heat loss and thermal bridging at various points around the buildings. This clearly indicates that the buildings are not thermally efficient as a result of the limited insulation to the flat roofs and steel cladding. Improving this to bring the properties up to a modern standard would be extremely costly and challenging, given the various tenure types and the design of the homes themselves. The application of modern cladding to the elevations would improve the townhouses in our ownership, but there would still be cold bridging where our properties adjoin those of the freeholders.
- 3.5.4 A number of properties have suffered water ingress from the internal soil and surface-water downpipes. These frequently get blocked by leaves or the flat roofing stones getting washed down them, and this has recently occurred despite a recent project to clear all of this pipework and the drains. Relining these life expired pipes is only a temporary solution, and renewal or diversion of the pipework to external rainwater pipes is the only long-term solution. Again, this would be costly and difficult where the pipes flow within a freeholder's property.
- 3.5.5 Other components such as the heating, windows, kitchens and bathrooms are now becoming life-expired and whilst these are replaced where required the overall fabric of the buildings themselves needs to be addressed to improve the living conditions of residents to an appropriate level.
- 3.5.6 In their report, Baily Garner (CD 9.6) indicated that to undertake both the internal and external improvements, required to extend the life of the properties and improve the quality of residents' lives, would be in the order of £80m which equates to over £250,000 per dwelling. In addition, it must be borne in mind that these are 2016 prices and that construction costs have increased dramatically over the past eight years.

## 3.6 The High Path Estate

- 3.6.1 On the High Path Estate there are over 600 properties in a variety of styles, including terraced housing, maisonettes, medium and high-rise flats. The buildings were constructed between 1950 and 1980 and range from two storey houses to twelve storey blocks of flats.
- 3.6.2 The three twelve story tower blocks have poor thermal qualities and require a major refurbishment to bring them up to an acceptable standard. The asphalt flat roof has limited insulation and requires replacement with insulation to a modern standard. The windows are now 25 years old and need replacement by windows with high performance glazing; this work would require fully scaffolding the blocks. In order to fully utilise the scaffolding for the windows, full external wall insulation could be installed to increase the thermal performance of the walls to the blocks. However, these improvements would need to be carried out at the same time as improving the ventilation to the flats, through either the communal ventilation system or the installing of individual systems to each flat.
- 3.6.3 The 1950s four storey blocks are of solid wall construction with poor thermal qualities and the roofs are now 70 years old and are life expired. The blocks now require major refurbishment, including the windows that are now 25 years old. It is hard to find parts for such windows, and in any event, even if repaired they would continue to perform badly in terms of thermal insulation.
- 3.6.4 The 1970s and 80s blocks require concrete repairs and repointing to the brick elevations and the best solution would be to apply external wall insulation to the elevations. However, the presence of concrete walkways and balconies, such as at Norfolk House, can still create issues of cold bridging. The roofs will require replacement in 5-10 years however, the rain water goods, fascia and soffits are life expired and will require full scaffolding to be replaced. Whilst the blocks perform better thermally having cavity wall insulation, the concrete lintols over the windows may be the cause of damp, mould and condensation through cold bridging. These properties which are already 40-50 years old will require major investment to ensure that they meet Clarion's long-term sustainability strategy to form energy efficient and affordable homes.
- 3.6.5 We have just completed the cyclical redecoration to the external and internal areas to the medium rise blocks on the Estate. This work has included the replacement of fascia, soffits and rain water goods where asbestos was found or where their condition was too poor to redecorate. This work cost in the region of £500,000 and was

undertaken to address the immediate and urgent concerns of residents whilst the regeneration of the Estate is underway and to reduce the costs of ongoing repairs.

- 3.6.6 The Baily Garner report (CD 9.2) estimated that the costs of the internal and external upgrades will cost in the order of £100m which equates to approximately £165,000 per dwelling. It should be noted that these projected costs are now 7 or 8 years old and do not reflect the increase in the cost of labour and materials that has happened in that time. Further, whilst this work would improve the quality of the stock on the estate, the longevity of these improvements is limited.

### 3.7 The Ravensbury Estate

- 3.7.1 The Ravensbury Estate comprises a mix of traditionally constructed two and four storey blocks of flats and Orlit prefabricated houses constructed in the late 1940s and early 1950s.
- 3.7.2 The four-storey block of flats, Ravensbury Court, does not form part of the Scheme and will not be improved through the regeneration project, but their surroundings and public spaces will be improved as part of the new landscaping that the regeneration project will bring. The smaller two storey blocks, which do form part of the Scheme, are over 70 years old and the main components are becoming life expired. The internal components and windows have been replaced in the past but are now in need of major overhaul and refurbishment.
- 3.7.3 There are 72 Orlit houses on the Estate which are constructed using prefabricated reinforced concrete (**PRC**). These PRC buildings were constructed across the country after the Second World War, as they were a quick and economical way to combat the housing shortages at that time. In the 1980s, this type of construction was deemed defective because of the corrosion often found in the concrete frames. Given their defective status, the majority of UK mortgage providers will not lend money against them. Whilst there are no obvious signs of deterioration to the concrete frames to the properties on the Estate, a survey did identify various levels of carbonation within the concrete frames which indicates variable levels of quality within the original construction. Water ingress was noted to a number of properties on the Estate and this a major problem to this type of property as this accelerates the corrosion of the concrete frame.
- 3.7.4 The energy performance of the properties on the Estate is poor with the Orlit buildings having very poor thermal qualities. To improve this would require very extensive work with external wall insulation, new windows, roofs and central heating systems. This is all consistent with

the findings of the Building Research Establishment (BRE) studies on the structural condition of Orlit houses, based on a review of 83 Orlit houses across the UK. The findings are summarised in their 1983 report 'The Structural Condition of Orlit Houses'.

- 3.7.5 The two storey flats are roughly 70 years old and were constructed from materials that do not meet our new standards. The components of these properties are now becoming life expired and are no longer energy efficient and require comprehensive refurbishment to try and bring them up to modern standards. The Baily Garner report (CD 9.4) recommended improving the thermal performance of these blocks through internal wall insulation, however this is costly and very disruptive to residents.
- 3.7.6 Baily Garner believe that undertaking both the internal and external improvement work to these properties to be around £29m which equates to £181,000 per dwelling. These costs were provided in 2016 and do not take into account cost rises in labour and materials (as discussed above). These high costs will not improve the lives of our residents in the same way that a regeneration programme would. Such regeneration would provide a higher quality of life at a more affordable cost.

### 3.8 Conclusion

- 3.8.1 The Eastfields Estate is externally in very poor condition, we have spent nearly £2m – as a stopgap measure – on ensuring that the roofs are watertight, however this has not improved the thermal performance of these blocks. As mentioned above, the external fabric of each block needs to be completely upgraded with external wall insulation and a completely new roof. With the current mix of tenures this is virtually impossible to undertake. This is to say nothing of the life expiry of internal facilities such as kitchens and bathrooms.
- 3.8.2 The development at the High Path Estate has taken place over many years and this has led to buildings with a range of ages being scattered throughout the Estate. Each block has differing problems that need solving to improve the thermal performance and reduce the risk of condensation, damp and mould. The three high rise blocks require extensive refurbishment and considerable investment to bring them up to a modern standard, however even then they still would not meet the thermal performance of a new-build block.
- 3.8.3 The Orlit properties on the Ravensbury Estate cannot economically be upgraded to meet our required standards. They have been classed as defective under the Housing Defects Act 1985 and the majority of

mortgage companies will not lend money against them given their known construction defects. The two smaller blocks are more than 70 years old, and their main components are life expired.

- 3.8.4 Looking at matters in the round, the scale of the works entailed in refurbishing the properties on the Estates including in the CPO area, and the resulting thermal performance that would be achieved, means that replacement is the only realistic and cost-effective option open to Clarion. Even if significant sums were spent on these homes, they cannot achieve the thermal and quality performance of a modern home, and we may only be able extend their lifespan to a limited degree. The construction of new buildings to modern space and thermal requirements will provide residents and future generations with homes that are safe, dry, and affordable to heat, and that they can be proud to live in.

## **4 OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

### **4.1 Alternatives considered**

- 4.1.1 In addition to full-scale regeneration, two alternative options were considered for the three Estates:
- (a) the first was partial refurbishment up to the Decent Homes (Merton) Standard which would include the internal works; and
  - (b) the second was an enhanced refurbishment scheme to a standard above the Decent Homes standard – this would have included both internal and external works.
- 4.1.2 Options 1 and 2 would improve the quality of the stock and, at 2016 prices, cost in the region of £209m. The ‘repaired stock’ would provide residents with a better quality of life but would be inferior to the housing provided by a comprehensive regeneration. Furthermore, the properties in some cases are up to 75 years old and the work undertaken would not extend the life of these blocks by a significant amount, and there would be a continuing requirement to patch up and maintain the aging fabric of these buildings. Accordingly, it would neither be cost effective nor in the interests of residents to pursue refurbishment of the Estates instead of full regeneration.
- 4.1.3 The work undertaken under options 1 and 2 would improve the thermal performance of the blocks but this improvement would be limited as compared to that delivered by the construction of a new building using modern construction methods and materials. Furthermore, the cost for residents to run their homes and keep them warm would reduce under options 1 and 2 but not to the extent of the savings that a full-scale regeneration pursuant to option 3 will generate.
- 4.1.4 On the Eastfields Estate our ability to undertake options 1 and 2 are severely hampered by the mixed tenure on the Estate. The presence of other freeholders will affect our ability to upgrade the continuous flat roofs and provide an alternative solution to the water ingress from the internal drainage. This mix of tenures and the fact that asbestos has been identified within the cladding will affect both the aesthetic appearance of the finished blocks and be a detriment to the thermal performance.
- 4.1.5 At the High Path Estate, the blocks are of a variety of ages and construction and Baily Garner noted in 2016 that the cost of options 1 and 2 would equate to £100m or roughly £165,000 per property. Whilst this work would significantly improve the quality of the stock, the

longevity of the improvements would be limited. The presence of balconies and walkways to the medium rise blocks would affect our ability to apply external wall insulation and reduce cold bridging in the future.

- 4.1.6 The Orlit properties on the Ravensbury Estate would benefit from work under options 1 and 2 however, this would not alter their defective status and as such mortgage companies would still not lend money against them.
- 4.1.7 In general, the work under options 1 and 2 would cost, at 2016 prices, £209m and would undoubtedly improve the quality of the properties across all three Estates. However, it would not extend the lives of the properties to a great extent and would not improve the neighbourhoods which the wholesale regeneration of the Estates would address.

## 5 RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS

### 5.1 Introduction

In this section I have considered objections received in respect of the High Path CPO which raise issues relating to the existing housing stock, namely points raised by the objector at 23 Norfolk House, Nelson Grove.

### 5.2 Energy efficiency of the existing dwellings at High Path

5.2.1 The objection received in respect of 23 Norfolk House, Nelson Grove raised the following concern:

*"The Council may make a case that replacement properties are more energy efficient than those existing, but no figures as to heat loss through walls or windows as comparatives have ever been provided other than a mention that existing over window lintels are of a design that does not have an insulation sandwich that modern regulations demand – potentially leading to cold bridging – not something that I have noted in the properties fitted with double glazing to be significant problem itself in terms of damp or major additional demand for thermal heating. It should be noted that existing properties are generally double glazed, (or easy to do so at the owner's desire), loft insulated and all were built with brick and block cavity construction with later infill of insulation materials or for flats of a cast in situ concrete with brick sandwich externals (which is the same construction method the replacement flats have generally been made of)".*

5.2.2 I have set out in Section 3 above the condition of the existing building stock on the High Path Estate. Norfolk House (which is not included within the area subject to the High Path CPO) and other 1970s and 1980s blocks perform better compared to other buildings on the Estate in terms of thermal performance, although Norfolk House still requires major investment to ensure that it meets Clarion's long-term sustainability strategy as some properties suffer from the presence of damp and mould. As I have explained above, the three twelve storey tower blocks and the 1950s four storey blocks do have windows which are now 25 years old and do suffer from poor thermal performance. As noted in Brian Ham's Proof of Evidence (CD 13.5), *"all homes in High Path Phases 2 and 3 will be built to EPC B. Homes in the areas subject to the High Path CPO are currently far worse than this: 68% EPC C; 30% EPC D; and 2% EPC E."*

5.2.3 The refurbishment of existing buildings under options 1 and 2 can improve the energy efficiency of properties but will not bring these buildings up to the same standard as a new building. Clarion have



experience of energy efficiency refurbishment work, having been invited to take part in the Government's Sustainable Homes Decarbonisation Fund project, and completing work under the Demonstrator and Wave 1 programme. This work to occupied properties increased the EPC to a C or B. The work was extensive and to some properties included new roofs, PV panels, new windows, new doors and external wall insulation and took several months to complete. The work to some properties cost up to £90,000 for just the external fabric improvements and reduced residents heating bills. However, such work did not provide the longevity of the buildings that a new build property would nor did such work provide the improvements to the neighbourhood that the Scheme would bring in relation to the Estates. In all these circumstances I remain strongly of the view that the Scheme, to regenerate the High Path Estate together with the Eastfields and Ravensbury Estates, is the appropriate option.

### 5.3 **Condition of existing housing stock**

5.3.1 The objection received in respect of 23 Norfolk House, Nelson Grove also raised the following concern:

*"The Council may present a case as to the development enhancement of an area for demolition of houses that are only 40 years old built of substantial brick (and the photographic evidence submitted was deliberately misleading showing "missing" downpipes to building fronts)."*

5.3.2 As I have described above the refurbishment of existing properties, even those built in the 1970s and 1980s, can indeed improve the quality of our stock, their energy efficiency and residents' quality of life but not to the extent of a new building. The costs of maintaining refurbished properties is still higher for Clarion than that of a newly built property and would still cost more for residents to heat.

## 6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 As is explained above, I have been working on the Scheme since I joined Clarion in 2017. My role has involved a particular focus on assessing the condition of the Estates and establishing the best way to improve their condition. Clarion are dedicated to improving the lives of our residents and therefore careful consideration has been given to all of the available options, ensuring that the residents have always been at the heart of those decisions.
- 6.2 I am of the opinion that Clarion has taken due regard to the three options available to it to improve the Estates and, whilst it is recognised that options 1 and 2 will improve the properties and residents' lives, it will not be to the extent proposed as part of the Scheme.
- 6.3 The Eastfields Estate is adversely affected by the mix of tenures present which will create difficulties when upgrading the continuous flat roofs and the internal drainage systems. The presence of asbestos in the elevations and similarly the mix of tenures creates difficulties in applying external wall insulation, which will not improve the energy efficiency or aesthetic appearance of the buildings that the full regeneration will create.
- 6.4 On the High Path Estate, the high rise and older medium rise blocks will benefit to a greater extent than the more modern blocks. However, under the Scheme, the improvements in the thermal efficiency of all the blocks will be greater using modern materials and modern construction methods. The longevity of the buildings will be far exceeded through the construction of new buildings as will the quality of residents lives through more energy efficient homes and a better living environment.
- 6.5 At the Ravensbury Estate, the Orlit buildings are in poor condition and are considered defective by the Government and mortgage companies and regeneration is the only realistic option. The two storey blocks are now 70 years old and the main components are becoming life expired.
- 6.6 The wholesale regeneration of the Eastfields and High Path Estates, and the partial regeneration of the Ravensbury Estate, will offer value for money to both Clarion, through reduced maintenance costs and longevity of the buildings, and to residents with reduced costs to heat their homes. Options 1 and 2 will not offer the improvements in the quality of residents' lives, via the provision of new affordable homes with environmental improvements, which would be delivered by the Scheme.

## **7 STATEMENT OF TRUTH AND DECLARATION**

### **7.1 Statement of Truth**

I confirm that I have made clear which facts and matters referred to in this report are within my own knowledge and which are not. Those that are within my own knowledge I confirm to be true. The opinions I have expressed represent my true and complete professional opinions on the matters to which they refer.

### **7.2 Declaration**

- 7.2.1 I confirm that my report has drawn attention to all material facts which are relevant and have affected my professional opinion.
- 7.2.2 I confirm that I understand and have complied with my duty to the inquiry as an expert witness which overrides any duty to those instructing or paying me, that I have given my evidence impartially and objectively, and that I will continue to comply with that duty as required.
- 7.2.3 I confirm that I am not instructed under any conditional or other success based fee arrangement.
- 7.2.4 I confirm that I have no conflicts of interest.
- 7.2.5 I confirm that I am aware of and have complied with the requirements of the rules, protocols and directions of the inquiry.



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: 26 January 2024

**MICHAEL ROBBINS**