



Residents' Voice: Defend Council Homes - Summary of Feedback 9 April 2019



Where do we get this information from? You! At the Residents' Voice we ask you to get involved in a variety of ways that gives us lots of insights – you talk with neighbours and officers on your tables, vote on key questions, ask questions during the meeting, and complete comments cards. Below is a summary of everything you've told us.

Headlines

- Over 93% of attendees at the Residents' Voice were tenants and the remaining 6% were resident leaseholders.
- 63% of residents were from an estate and over 31% of residents were from small blocks or street properties.
- Almost 44% of residents hadn't been to a Growth & Place meeting before
- Over 68% of attendees felt better informed about the Defend Council Homes policy and believe the policy will be of benefit to local communities.
- Over 88% of attendees would like to be involved in defending council homes and 100% of attendees support the idea of giving residents a say in securing the future of where they live.
- The majority of attendees think getting involved means getting things done and working with us to improve services.
- Meaningful involvement means being listened to and action as a result of being involved.
- Nearly 79% of residents enjoyed the Residents' Voice forum

You Said...	Our thoughts...
The policy, its context and the content	
31% of residents felt they needed more information to be better informed about the Defend Council Homes policy	That's very understandable – there are quite a lot of different parts to the Policy and it can be a challenge to understand all of it at once.
The policy is confusing and hard to understand	During the consultation period more information will be sent to all households and TRAs. It will also be on the Council's website – with opportunities to ask questions.

<p>People are getting worried on the White City Estate due to the development around the area over the past few years.</p>	<p>That's very understandable. If adopted, the DCH Policy won't apply to any developments in the areas surrounding your estates but it <u>will</u> apply to any development proposals on your estate.</p> <p>We hope that gives some reassurance to residents in areas where there has been significant development that they will be involved at an early stage in any discussions if there are proposals that directly affect their home or estate.</p>
<p>Residents would like to see contacts details available on the LBHF website for who is involved in the Defend Council Homes Unit</p>	<p>You can find those contact details here [provide link]</p>
<p>If another administration took over can they overturn the policy?</p>	<p>It is part of the Policy that any variations to it (including its full revocation) can only be made following full and appropriate consultation with residents. So no, a future administration would not be able to simply overturn the Policy.</p>
<p>Current practice for informing residents of redevelopment is short notice period, only 18 months before development started on my estate.</p>	<p>Development proposals can differ greatly in terms of the lead-in time. Some go ahead very quickly; others take a long while to "firm up" to become a proper project.</p> <p>The important provision within the Policy is that a senior Council officer has to decide whether the Policy applies very early in the process. If you think that officer gets this decision wrong (for example, by not applying the Policy when you think it should apply), you can appeal to an independent Advisory Body about this.</p>
<p>We've faced redevelopment at Lancaster court before and are keen for it not to happen</p>	<p>We understand how important peoples' homes are to them. That's why the Policy is being introduced.</p>
<p>I'm worried the policy may be about the privatisation of estates</p>	<p>The proposed Defend Council Homes Policy is about preventing the privatisation of estates and protecting residents against unwarranted redevelopment. It requires the Council to involve you right from the start if there are any redevelopment proposals that may affect your home.</p>
<p>Is the policy the start of a programme of redevelopment? Gentrification is a big worry for our communities</p>	
<p>This is the first I'm hearing about this policy</p>	<p>Yes. This is a new Policy going out for consultation with residents.</p> <p>The development of the Policy as a draft has been discussed regularly with residents' representatives at the Housing Representatives</p>

	Forum over the past 18 months, but the conversations with residents at Residents' Voice were the first part of wider consultation about the Policy.
This is the start of safeguarding the future of our homes, and especially the principle of legitimate expectations. Looking forward to it going forward.	We are pleased to receive these comments as it is the aim of this Policy to increase residents' security and give you the tools to protect your home and your community, should there be proposals for redevelopment in the future.
I'd like to thank the DCHU and the Council for their work on the DCH policy. As having had the shock of potentially losing my home to development, it's a very important policy for all Council tenants and residents. Well done, looking forward to seeing how it progresses with the consultations.	
How the policy would work	
When a ballot is needed residents would like to see majority resident agreement before any proposals can be progressed	In any ballots about housing redevelopment, the majority of those voting is the important test. If you don't vote, your voice won't be heard in making the decisions, so as ever, it's important to vote and to encourage your neighbours to vote too.
Residents proposed that on large estates only the part of the estate being redeveloped should be consulted	Thank you for this suggestion. We will take it under consideration.
Residents asked if the Defend Council Homes Policy covers estates where the council leases the land	Yes, the Policy applies. But one of the underlying legal safeguards – the registration by the Council of a Restriction on Title – may not be able to be undertaken, or only with the agreement of the freeholder.
If you need to move how many choices to you have?	This is the kind of issue on which the Council will need to give you clear and firm undertakings under the Policy. The details will depend on the nature of the scheme, but the Council's present decanting and allocations policies can be found here. [insert link]
Does the policy cover empty buildings that are unsafe, void, and non-habitable dwellings?	The aim of the Policy is to grant protections to <u>people</u> rather than buildings. Where empty/unsafe/unlet buildings are on housing land, they are within the scope of the Policy – but

	the Policy rights about them would apply to Council residents living nearby.
We want to be involved at the proposal stage of any development	That's exactly what this Policy would achieve.
Does the policy include commercial properties on estates?	No, commercial properties would be exempt.
What is community support and who will run it and monitor it?	The Policy anticipates that any community affected by a development scheme will need ongoing support, both from within the community and from the Council. These arrangements will need to be clearly set out as a commitment to residents before anything goes ahead.
I want to have a real say in local changes	That's good to hear. This Policy plus other opportunities for resident involvement should achieve exactly that.
Does this apply to developers as well as the council?	The Policy is about the Council's actions. It means that the Council cannot engage with developers about a development proposal for Council land without involving residents at an early stage.
How does this protect against redevelopers?	The Council's land cannot be released for sale to developers without the Council following this policy – and developers will be aware of that.
First notice should be clearer and more specific Doesn't clearly say what consultation will involve	Thank you for this comment. We will give it further consideration as the consultation period closes. The Council is also consulting on a new/revised Resident Involvement Strategy that will help to define good practice in consulting residents.
Consultation options should come from residents and include green credentials. It's patronising to say options are just presented to residents. Any consultation needs to be more than just yes or no answers.	The Policy gives you the right to be consulted. The nature and content of that consultation will depend on the details of any specific proposal and residents. And we agree that consultation that includes only closed questions will not pass the "best practice" test allowed for in the Policy.
Safeguards and protections	
The safeguards seem to be important	Yes, they are. The safeguards mean there are robust processes in place to ensure any future Council will have to follow the Policy – and that residents will have recourse to legal action if they try to avoid following it.

Residents affected should mean all tenants and leaseholders	'Residents affected' means all tenants and resident leaseholders.
What makes the policy have legal force?	There are a number of legal and procedural safeguards that underpin the Policy including the registration of the Restriction on Title to the Council's housing land.
What is the legal status of the policy - is it written in case law where this is a legislative expectation	<p>The operation of the independent Advisory Body gives extra force to the Policy's provisions.</p> <p>The way the Policy operates will give rise to a right by residents to Legitimate Expectation that can be tested in the Courts. Legitimate Expectation arises from case law.</p> <p>Further details on these safeguards can be found in the consultation material on the Council's website [link here]</p>
A legal right to challenge is needed. You'd need the money to challenge the council in court	<p>The Policy gives residents the opportunity to challenge the Council in the Courts where they think the Policy has not been complied with. While it's true that taking such a case to Court would be costly, the important issue is that the strong <u>potential</u> for such a challenge should be enough to ensure that the Council (as a public body) complies with the requirements.</p> <p>In the absence of Policy compliance, the Council's chief legal officer will not be able to sign-off the release of the Restriction on Title on the Council's land – effectively making that land unsaleable.</p>
Residents need more power; power to be listened to; power to stay in the area	<p>This Policy is intended to share power with residents so that they <u>do</u> have the right to be listened to and to fair treatment in the event of redevelopment.</p> <p>Fair treatment would include being able to stay in the area if having to move (temporarily or permanently) so that residents' lives would not be unfairly disrupted.</p>
Trust in the local authority is a concern. Things change and priorities of one administration vary from those of another	<p>This is why the Policy has been written in such a way that it places specific obligations on the Council – actions it <u>must</u> take in the event of redevelopment proposals.</p> <p>And it includes safeguards that will ensure that the policy is followed.</p>

Where do local government and central government meet when it comes to this policy?	This is a local government (Council) policy that is specific to Hammersmith and Fulham. Central government is not involved in the policy's development or implementation.
The importance of independent advice and legal advice and guidance being available to residents is recognised by the council	It is. And the Mayor of London has also issued specific guidance about access to independent advice for residents in the event of estate redevelopment proposals. <i>[query – insert link to Mayor's guidance?]</i>
I would like to be able to have a say about where I live, but I don't feel I am able to at the moment, and tonight has changed nothing.	At the same time that this policy is subject to consultation with residents, the Council is also consulting on a new Resident Involvement Strategy. We hope you can read that document and comment on it – and that it also reassures you that the Council takes resident involvement very seriously. Please take the opportunity to make your voice heard in that consultation. If you think we get it wrong, please let us know what we could do better.
How we should consult on the policy more widely with residents	
Where will we find the press release on consultation findings?	This will be in the early autumn 2019 and it will be published on the Council's website. We will publish links to the press release in many places and will email those residents who have consented to be on our emailing list. You can sign up to this here. <i>[insert link]</i>
Resident ambassadors would be helpful to explain the policy to other residents	We agree that it would be very helpful if residents who understand the policy could help to explain it to their neighbours. The timing of the consultation is such that there is not enough time to formally recruit and train ambassadors but we would welcome expression of interest from residents who would like to become well-informed about this policy in order to explain it – for instance at TRA meetings.
Working with you	
Over 88% of residents at the forum are already actively involved in up to four different ways	This is fantastic and we're really grateful for all the time you give to your community and to work with us to improve services.
23% of residents at the forum feel we involve them in decision making.	We're disappointed that this figure isn't higher. We also need to do some more work around the

	<p>fact that 41% of attendees said we neither consult, listen to, or act on feedback. We clearly need to show you in more meaningful ways and through our actions that we're hearing what you're telling us and doing something about it.</p> <p>As we noted earlier, we're also consulting on a new Resident Involvement Strategy and we hope to hear your views and voices in that consultation. Please tell us what we can do better.</p>
<p>34% of residents told us that the best way to support better involvement would be for teams and departments to be more joined up and talk better to one another</p>	<p>We know this is an area that we've got to improve. The Council is investing in new technology to make working from anywhere on laptops and tablets much easier and encouraging colleagues to talk and collaborate more.</p> <p>We're also consulting on a new Resident Involvement Strategy. Officers and councillors will be expected to work to the principles of this strategy.</p>
<p>25% of residents want to work with us in more targeted ways through task and finish activities</p>	<p>We can really see the benefit of working with residents to achieve clear aims over an agreed period of time and want to promote this type of involvement going forward.</p>
<p>How was it for you?</p>	
<p>Residents would like more questions to focus discussions and more discussion time</p>	<p>This is an important point. Thank you. Balancing the giving out of information with the opportunity for discussions in relatively short meetings is always a challenge.</p>
<p>After working with us on the new repairs service in July, residents would like to discuss greening the borough for housing communities next time.</p>	<p>Thank you. We've taken note of this decision.</p>
<p>So pleased that I attended tonight, came to the 1st one. These meetings are great source knowing what is taking place within the Council and our homes. Seeing all at the next event.</p>	<p>Thank you.</p>
<p>Presentations too dry. Microphones need to be tested before use. This room very echoey. Awful screen position. If so, can the screen be lower.</p>	<p>We agree about the room and layout. The Town Hall contains a limited number of meeting spaces for these sorts of events and we now know we would have been better in a smaller room. However, even with prior registration, predicting</p>

<p>Not enough time for table to discussion.</p> <p>We asked more questions than any other table, yet didn't get all of the answers. Best part of evening was looking at results of poll. Very telling. Still elements of distrust. Julie's team were awesome.</p>	<p>numbers attending on the night can be tricky.</p> <p>We're sorry that you thought the presentations were too dry. It is true that the DCH Policy is written in a legalistic way – but that's necessary as we want it to have legal force.</p> <p>Please keep asking your questions. This event was the very beginning of the consultation, so you'll have plenty of time to make points and pose questions in the next few weeks.</p>
<p>Very informative. Good balance of presentations and discussion.</p>	<p>Thank you.</p>