



Understanding Woodberry Down

February 2024



About this report

This report summarises a social impact assessment carried out in summer 2023 on Woodberry Down. It looks at the experiences, attitudes and everyday life of people living on Woodberry Down alongside the impact of the regeneration programme, 15 years after it began. Over 70 percent of the planned new homes have now been built and the area is changing from a local authority housing estate to a more mixed area of north London.

The assessment was commissioned by Notting Hill Genesis, one of the regeneration partners. It repeats research carried out in 2019-20, and uses a social impact framework that was co-created at that time with all the regeneration partners.¹ The framework captures residents' perceptions of belonging, wellbeing and relationships with neighbours and between people from different backgrounds. It explores how the built environment and local services promote community life, whether people feel that they can influence local decisions and how they come together to take action to improve the area.

WHAT WE DID

A mix of approaches was used. This included:

- **a door-to-door survey of 422 residents** carried out by Savanta, an independent survey company. Residents were sampled by tenure and area. We reached the same number of residents as the 2019 assessment
- **25 in-depth interviews with stakeholders** including all the development partners, local councillors, organisations advising and supporting residents, community organisations, a school, faith centres and local cafés and retail
- **three youth engagement workshops**: two with The Edge and one with My Place
- **walking interviews** carried out with ten residents living in new and old homes and different tenures, giving a snapshot of their lives and experiences living in the area
- **a site survey** carried out by Matter Architecture to explore how the built environment is supporting community life
- **a review of official statistics and management data** gathered by the regeneration partners.

¹ http://www.social-life.co/publication/understanding_woodberry_down/

DATA COMPARISONS

The data has been analysed by tenure and compared to results from previous surveys and to comparable areas.

“Comparable areas” are neighbourhoods which share similar characteristics, based on national survey and census data. This method has been developed by Social Life.²

OF RESIDENTS
INTERVIEWED

422

OF
STAKEHOLDERS
INTERVIEWED

25

OF
YOUNG PEOPLE
INTERVIEWED

30+

SITE
SURVEY

OF
WALKING
INTERVIEWS

10

² http://www.social-life.co/publication/understanding_local_areas/

About Woodberry Down

The Woodberry Down Estate is 15 years into a comprehensive regeneration process. At the time this assessment was carried out in summer 2023, almost three quarters of homes on Woodberry Down were in blocks built as part of the regeneration. Only 28 percent of occupied homes were in older council blocks.

In summer 2023 2,317 new homes had been completed and 584 homes were under construction. This included 654 social rented and 476 shared ownership homes. The 2023 draft masterplan sets out aspirations for 3,200 new homes across all the stages of the masterplan - 42% of these will be considered affordable. This means that over 70% of the new homes planned through the regeneration have now been built.

The principles underpinning the 2014 masterplan, including that “affordable homes will be designed to be tenure blind with a equal rights to key views”, will be carried over to the new masterplan. The maximum height of blocks is proposed to increase from 17 to 21 stories.³

By summer 2023, the number of people moving to the estate after the regeneration began had started to outnumber longer-standing residents. People moving into new privately-owned homes tend to be on higher incomes than longerstanding residents. In contrast, on the older estate, properties that had become void awaiting demolition were being used by Hackney Council as temporary accommodation for families and single people in need, who had often experienced difficult life circumstances and were living on low incomes. The impact of these changes has been an increase in inequality in the area. The numbers of people on both higher and lower incomes has grown.

Official data from the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that the estate is among the 10 percent of most deprived neighbourhoods in the country.⁴

Who did we speak to?

- Annual household incomes of residents interviewed ranged from £7,000 to over £150,000 a year.
- 24% of residents interviewed had lived on the estate for less than one year; 49 percent between one and five years; 37% over five years and 27% over ten years.
- Between the 2013 and 2019 surveys, the number of white British residents fell.
- 21 percent of people interviewed had children 18 or under. More families with children appeared to be living in the older estate than in the new development.
- The number of people in paid employment is stable. Fewer people were self-employed and more were retired than those interviewed in 2019.
- Only four percent of people interviewed in 2023 reported that they had taken part in previous surveys in 2019 or 2017.

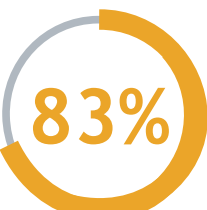
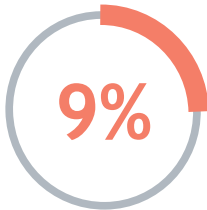
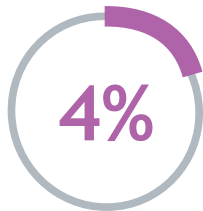
³ <https://woodberrydownregeneration.commonplace.is/proposals/woodberry-down-2023-masterplan-consultation/step14>

⁴ https://mapmaker.cdrc.ac.uk/#/index-of-multiple-deprivation?m=imdh19_dc&lon=-0.0848&lat=51.5691&zoom=13.29

RESIDENT SURVEY

- private owner
- shared owner & other
- secure social tenant
- private renter
- temporary social tenant

HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN UNDER 18



ETHNICITY

30%	20%	41%	11%	30%	White British
3%	4%	0%	62%	39%	Black or black British
31%	26%	3%	11%	4%	Asian or Asian British
30%	41%	44%	9%	17%	Other white
1%	3%	9%	0%	3%	Mixed
5%	6%	3%	6%	5%	Other

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

7%	3%	15%	6%	3%	Self-employed
78%	88%	82%	55%	41%	Paid employment
1%	2%	3%	22%	7%	Unemployed
6%	3%	0%	2%	36%	Retired
0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	Maternity leave
0%	0%	0%	6%	4%	Family care or home
9%	5%	0%	2%	0%	Student
0%	0%	0%	6%	10%	Long term sick/disabled

ARE YOUR DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES LIMITED BECAUSE OF A HEALTH PROBLEM OR DISABILITY?

0%	2%	0%	8%	14%	Yes, a lot
7%	4%	9%	11%	17%	Yes, a little
93%	94%	91%	81%	69%	No

NUMBER OF PEOPLE LIVING IN HOUSEHOLD

26%	17%	41%	2%	35%	One
56%	73%	50%	19%	28%	Two
14%	4%	0%	17%	20%	Three
2%	1%	9%	39%	10%	Four
1%	3%	0%	11%	3%	Five
0%	1%	0%	6%	3%	Six
2%	0%	0%	6%	1%	Seven
0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	Eight
0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	Ten

*all data from self-reported tenure

Monitoring social impacts

In 2019 the regeneration partnership came together and agreed five outcomes they want to achieve through the regeneration.



PRIDE IN PLACE: Residents love their home & are proud of their neighbourhood.

This dimension captures local identity & belonging, satisfaction with local facilities and with home, distinctive character and inclusiveness.



EMPOWERED: Residents are empowered, skilled & have influence over local decisions

This dimension captures voice & influence, quality & level of education, skills & aspirations, & residents' perceptions of the regeneration.



PROSPERITY: Residents & businesses prosper economically.

This dimension captures the strength of the local economy, job creation, residents' economic security and employment.



BALANCED COMMUNITY: The community is balanced, integrated & cohesive.

This dimension captures neighbourliness, the provision of social infrastructure, local integration, accessibility and adaptability.



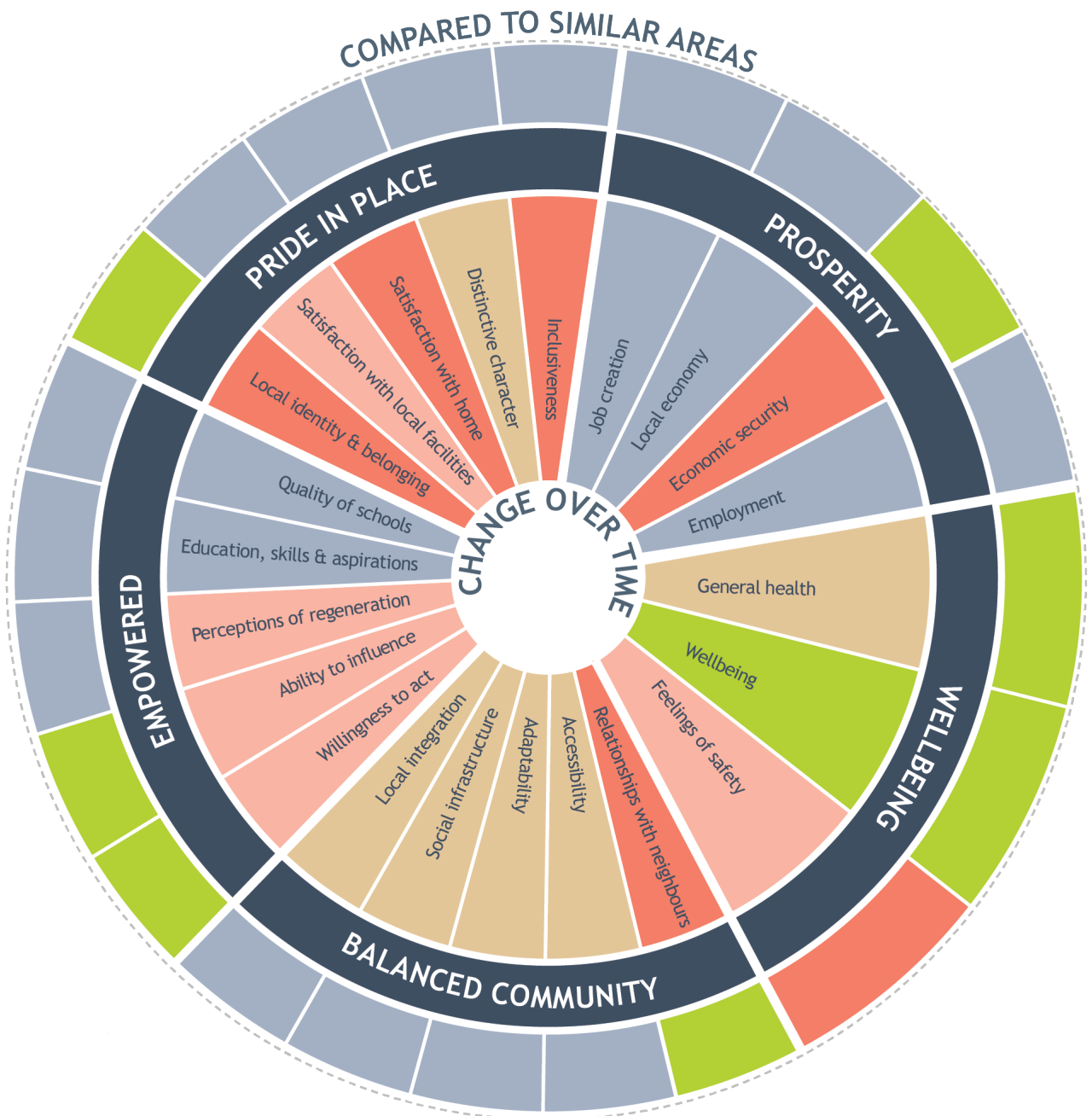
WELLBEING: Residents have high wellbeing.

This dimension captures wellbeing, health and feelings of safety.

Early in 2023 the regeneration partners updated the Woodberry Down social impact framework to reflect changes in the area and in everyday life since 2019. The revised framework includes new questions about residents' financial situation and economic conditions. This recognises the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The results

The social impact assessments results combine the results of the resident survey and the site survey, with the perspectives of stakeholders, residents interviewed in more depth and the young people involved in the workshops.



- Positive change/More positive than similar areas
- No change
- Weak negative change
- Negative change/More negative than similar areas
- No comparable data

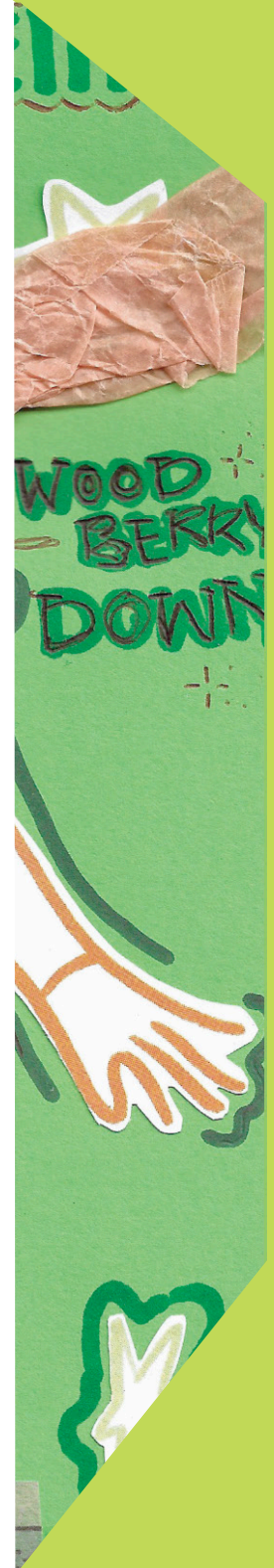
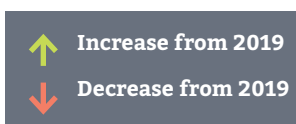
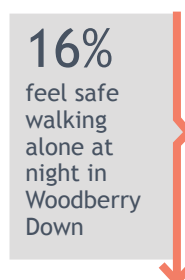
Changes since 2019

- Consistent with 2019 survey findings, residents living on Woodberry Down report a stronger sense of neighbourliness, belonging, influence over local decisions and wellbeing than people living in comparable areas.
- There has been a significant decline in residents' perceptions of their influence over local decisions compared to 2019.
- Perceptions of the regeneration have become more negative since 2019. In 2023, a lower proportion of residents than in 2019 agree that the regeneration has benefitted them or their family and that the regeneration process has been inclusive of all residents.
- Residents' perceptions of their general health have declined since 2019, however indicators of wellbeing have improved. Residents are now more likely to be satisfied with their quality of life and their wellbeing scores have improved. They are less likely to feel lonely than in 2019.
- Residents are more concerned about safety in 2023. There has been a decrease in the proportion of people who feel safe walking alone around Woodberry Down and in the wider local area after dark.

Better than comparable area



Worse than comparable area





The experience of people living in different tenures

- There is still a stark contrast between the experiences and attitudes of the temporary tenants interviewed and people living in other tenancies. Temporary tenants are more likely to feel lonely, find it more difficult to manage financially and have a lower sense of neighbourliness and belonging.
- However, temporary tenants are most positive about their voice and influence and least worried about crime.
- Secure tenants are most positive about their perceptions of neighbourliness, life satisfaction and satisfaction with the local area as a place to live. They are also most likely to agree that people with different backgrounds get on well together.
- Private owners are most likely to feel that they were managing financially. They are less likely to feel lonely and more likely to feel a strong sense of belonging to the local area. However, they are also most likely to be worried about crime.
- Private owners and private tenants are broadly similar in their perceptions of neighbourliness, life satisfaction and satisfaction with the local area as a place to live.

Impact assessment across the five dimensions



BALANCED COMMUNITY

- Neighbourliness on Woodberry Down continues to be stronger than in comparable areas. Residents have a significantly higher level of trust in their neighbours and are more likely to have relationships with their neighbours or other people in their neighbourhood.
- Stakeholder interviews reflected a disconnect between new residents and long-standing residents, and spoke of how this may get in the way of social integration.
- Young people who took part in the workshop were overall less positive about their perception of neighbourliness. Some of the young people who have grown up on the estate commented that neighbourliness has weakened over time as a result of the changes caused by the regeneration. In the survey residents under 25 responded least positively to questions about neighbourliness.
- In both the older estate and in the newly built areas there is overall a good level of social infrastructure provision ranging from community spaces, sports and exercise facilities, health facilities, cafés, restaurants and pubs, youth facilities, and green and outdoor spaces. These are generally well used by residents from different backgrounds.
- Stakeholders and residents find that community events and festivals are important occasions for bringing together people from different backgrounds, as these occasions attract residents from a wide range of backgrounds and encourage them to mix and socialise.

Better than comparable area

24%

Regularly stop and walk with people in their neighbourhood

19%

Agree that people from different get on well together

33%

People in the neighbourhood can be trusted

17%

friendships and associations I have with other people in my neighbourhood mean a lot





PRIDE IN PLACE

Better than comparable area

29%

Satisfied with area as a place to live

19%

Feel a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood

31%

Plan to remain a resident of the neighbourhood for a number of years

- Residents on Woodberry Down report a stronger sense of local identity and belonging than people living in comparable areas.
- Residents over 60 are more positive about their sense of belonging than to younger age groups, and are more likely to say that they plan to remain a resident of the neighbourhood for a number of years.
- Since 2019, there has been a shift in the balance of longstanding tenants and newcomers to the estate, with new arrivals starting to outnumber the former. Some stakeholders also commented on the increasing churn of residents, and how this is undermining the strength of local identity.
- Young people expressed a sense of ambivalence towards their future on the estate. Some issues raised were practical, such as the availability and the costs of housing.
- Satisfaction with facilities on Woodberry Down is generally high, with at least 70% of residents surveyed responding that they are satisfied with all facilities. Health facilities, sport and leisure facilities, and facilities for socialising with friends and family received the highest satisfaction scores. However, there has been a fall in satisfaction with childrens' facilities since 2019.
- The majority of residents are satisfied with the quality of their home. However, in conversations both stakeholders and residents raised issues around maintenance in both the older blocks and the new builds.
- Some stakeholders and residents had concerns that local facilities may not be able to meet the needs of the local population as it grows in the future.
- Overall, residents feel that facilities “cater to people like me”. These include community centres, sports and exercise facilities, parks and green spaces, and local restaurants, bars and pubs.
- Both young people and older people feel that local facilities could be improved. Affordability and feeling out of place were raised by young people. Older people discussed accessibility for different levels of mobility.



EMPOWERED

- Residents' perceptions of their voice and influence remain strong compared to similar areas. However, in 2023 fewer residents agree that they can influence decisions in their local area.
- Stakeholders generally agree that secure tenants have the strongest influence and willingness to act on local issues. Temporary tenants were described as having lower levels of engagement with decision-making, because of the precarity of their living situation. Language barriers can also stop people taking part in meetings or consultations.
- In the youth workshops, young people shared that they have had very little engagement with the regeneration process and local decisions. However, 72% of those surveyed under 25 agree that it is important for them to influence local decisions.
- Overall, residents are less positive about the changes taking place on Woodberry Down than they were in 2019. The proportion of residents who agree that the neighbourhood has improved in the last five years and that changes in the area have benefited them or their family have both fallen since the last survey.
- People under 25 are least likely to agree that changes in the area have benefitted them or their family. In workshops, young people commented on the positive physical changes that have been part of the regeneration. They also said that there needs to be a greater effort to make sure that residents of all ages and from all tenures benefit from these changes.

Better than comparable area

23%

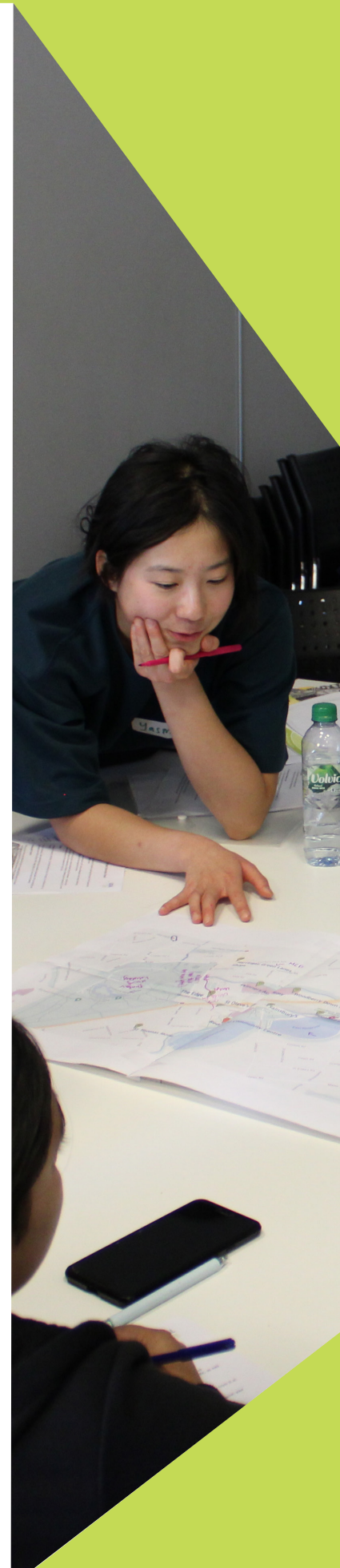
People around here are willing to help their neighbours

31%

Can influence decisions affecting local area

21%

Feel it is important to be able to influence decisions in the local area





WELLBEING

Better than comparable area

41%

Health is generally good

23%

Satisfied with equality of life

Worse than comparable area

12%

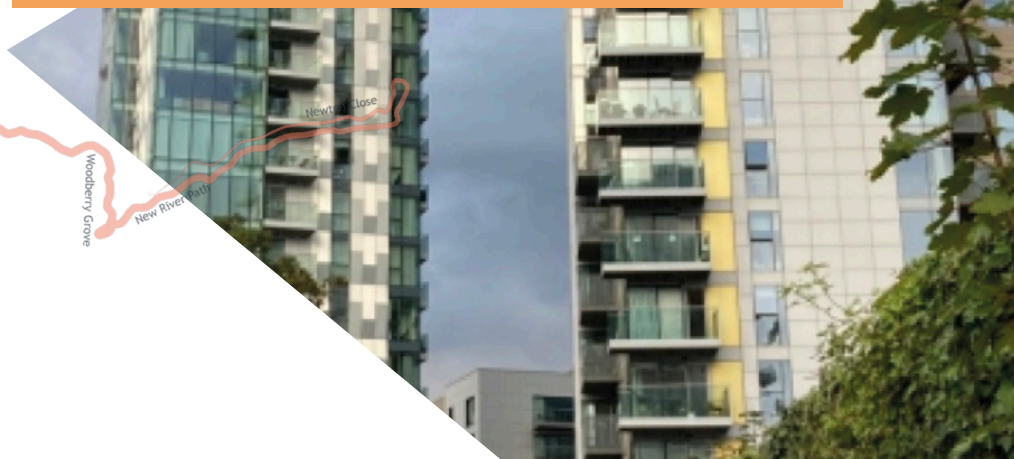
feel safe walking along in local area after dark

- Residents' health and wellbeing is generally good compared to similar areas.
- Temporary tenants and social housing tenants are most likely to experience health issues and report worse health, but they are less likely to feel lonely than people living in other tenures. Residents over 60 experience worse health and are more likely to feel lonely.
- Some residents living in old buildings shared concerns about the impact of damp and mould on their health and wellbeing.
- Perceptions of safety and fear of crime in Woodberry Down and the surrounding area have worsened since 2019. Compared to similar areas, local residents are less likely to feel safe walking alone in the area after dark.
- Stakeholders however largely agree that safety has improved over the years, some of this is related to changes in the built environment.
- Young people worry about a range of safety issues. They have some worries about walking alone at night on the north of the estate and in some surrounding areas, including Finsbury Park.

In-depth interview with residents

“Woodberry Down has always been known for having a powerful strong community spirit. Maybe over the years it’s kind of waned a little bit. But I will say my hopes are for it to really be really getting that essence back.”

Young man, council tenant





PROSPERITY

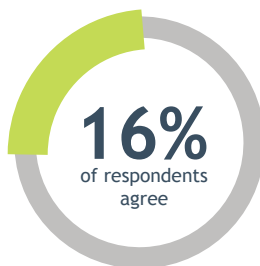
- Indicators of economic security have weakened since 2019. A significantly greater proportion of residents report that they are finding it difficult to manage financially, and feel that their economic situation has worsened since the regeneration began in 2009, or since they moved to the estate.
- Temporary tenants are faring worst economically, followed by secure social housing tenants.
- Shared owners, private tenants and private renters tend to be managing financially better than people living in other tenures. Private renters are least likely to report that their financial situation has worsened.

Better than comparable area

Worse than comparable area



MY FINANCIAL SITUATION HAS GOT WORSE SINCE THE REGENERATION BEGAN OR SINCE I MOVED TO THE AREA



↑ Increase from 2019





Implications of COVID and the cost-of-living crisis

- This assessment was carried out in the middle of the cost-of-living crisis, and the impact of the COVID pandemic was still being felt. This was reflected in the survey responses and in conversations with stakeholders and residents.
- Older residents are particularly affected by COVID and its aftermath. Some older people have not yet returned to socialising.
- Post-COVID, many services have moved online and are being delivered remotely. This poses a barrier for residents who are digitally excluded or who struggle with online activities.
- Stakeholders and residents commented that affordability can be a barrier to using local shops and amenities.
- Both community organisations and local businesses face a challenging economic landscape. They described how increasing business rates and competition for funding are making them increase their prices.

Conclusion

- The assessment has shown that Woodberry Down residents continue to share a strong sense of neighbourliness and belonging to the area and are committed to taking part in community life and decision-making.
- The findings capture how these experiences and perceptions vary across different ages, between people living in different tenures, and between longstanding and newer residents. Changes in housing and the built environment have affected residents differently, with temporary tenants and social housing tenants saying that they are less likely to feel included. They also voice concerns that they are not benefitting from the changes.
- It is important to continue to ensure that the whole of the estate - including residents living in new and older housing - benefit from the regeneration, leaving no one behind. It is also vital to continue to involve residents of all backgrounds and ages in decisions affecting the local area and to sustain Woodberry Down residents' energy and care for the place where they live.

ABOUT SOCIAL LIFE

Social Life was set up by The Young Foundation in 2012 to work on innovation and placemaking. All our work is about the relationship between people and the places they live. We work in the UK and internationally.

THIS REPORT

This research was carried out by Social Life researchers, with input from Matter Architecture on the built environment site assessment.

Savanta, an independent market research agency, carried out the door-to-door residents survey.

www.social-life.co

@SL_Cities

THE WOODBERRY DOWN PARTNERSHIP



The London Borough of Hackney delivered the early masterplan and they are the current local planning authority.



The Woodberry Down Community Organisation (WDCO) represent all residents and those working within the community, is elected by residents, and acts as their negotiating body.



Notting Hill Genesis is the appointed registered social landlord for the new affordable housing.



MHDT is a social enterprise which runs art, employment, health and youth projects from the Redmond Community Centre, and aims to ensure that the community has the resources to influence and determine its own destiny.



Berkeley is Hackney Council's appointed developer partner, with responsibility for delivering the new homes and facilities.